

London Music Digest

LONDON CONCERT-GOERS this season are to have one of the best chances ever to get to grips with certain European and Japanese works through the enterprise of the pianist Roger Woodward and his manager Robert Slotover, who are presenting a series of nine programmes in the Roundhouse on six Sundays between October and July. Three of the days each contain two programmes.

The London Music Digest, as it is to be known, is intended to be a regular event each season so that the choice of music for this year does not by any means represent all the music which Slotover and Woodward feel deserves a hearing in this context. Indeed there were originally twelve programmes — three had to be

dropped because of the large amount of extra work they entailed. These included evenings of Xenakis and Ives, whom Woodward sees as father-figure to the series in preference to Schoenberg or Stravinsky, and these programmes are now planned for next year.

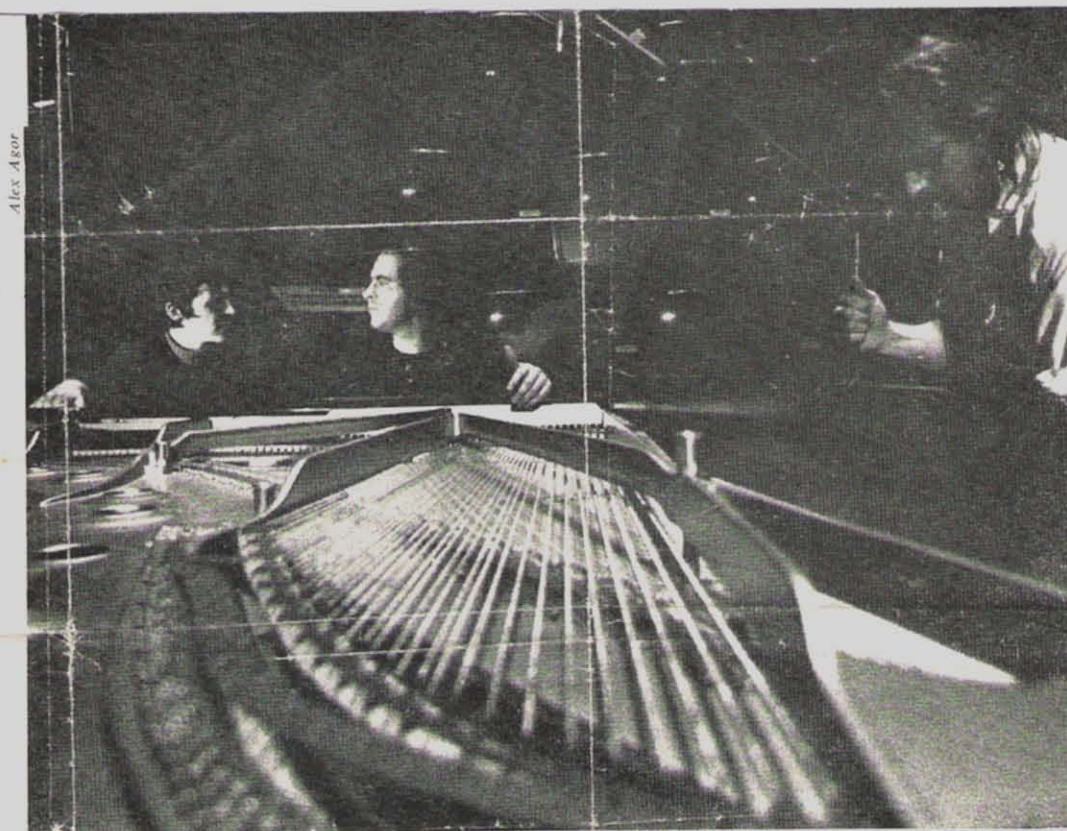
Slotover and Woodward are aiming to present a good deal of music that has been heard here before and has a certain reputation in avantgarde circles, but which still remains largely unfamiliar to British audiences due to the fact that it is never sufficiently played — and not always presented in the right context either. In a sense, then, some of the programmes are in the nature of retrospectives — the more so since each programme is given over entirely to the works of one composer, who will, it is hoped, be present to introduce his own works and answer questions informally either before or afterwards.

This season is flanked by two Stockhausen programmes — *Stimmung* on October 22 and *Mantra* on July 8. The latter will be performed by Woodward and the young Russian-born pianist Jerzy Romaniuk. This will be the first time that *Mantra* has been played by anyone else apart from the Kontarskys.

Jerzy Romaniuk's only appearance here prior to the Digest has been in the premiere of Stockhausen's *Interval* at this year's English Bach Festival — with Woodward, who met him in Warsaw where both were students and who has been responsible for introducing him to this country. When Romaniuk left the Moscow Conservatoire, he was given a certificate saying that he was the most outstanding pupil that had ever passed through their doors.

Since Woodward and Romaniuk form the mainstays of the season, there is naturally a lot of piano music. The programme on February 18 presents probably the toughest fare in the Digest — a retrospective concert of all three sonatas for piano by Boulez, Nos 1 and 2 played by Woodward, and the Third by Romaniuk. Romaniuk's honours have so far been earned only in the classical repertoire. This extremely taxing programme (for both players and audience) marks his debut in the public performance of any contemporary music for solo piano. He is obviously a musician who believes in jumping in at the deep end — in a work which requires not only a virtuoso technique but also a creative mind able to participate in the actual structuring of the piece. This sonata, composed in 1957, is one of the few works in which Boulez employs chance procedures to a limited degree, and is acknowledged as one of the major works of the last 25 years.

Another French piano sonata of the fifties held by many to be a masterpiece is that by Jean Barraqué, composed in 1952. The merits of this huge work — it



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spoken of as enigmatic, difficult, a quiet genius who is so self-critical that only a handful of his works have ever seen the light of public performance. If Woodward's performance does not dispel any aspects of that image, it will at least give us another chance to re-assess the Barraqué Sonata in the context of a live performance. It is being played on the same day as *Stimmung* (October 22).

Three other composers have programmes to themselves: Bussotti, Takemitsu and the Cuban guitarist-composer, Leo Brouwer.

On December 10 Woodward will play what he considers to be yet another major piano work of the last two decades — Busotti's *Pour clavier* (1960-1) — together with *Five Pieces for David Tudor* (1959). He will be joined by Richard Bernas and Richard Toop in a performance of *Per tre* for three players on one piano. All these works are receiving their first performances in this country.

The Takemitsu programme on May 6 will be preceded by a film of Japanese ghost stories called *Kwaidan*, for which Takemitsu wrote the music. The programme has not been finalised yet, but will include several first performances in this country: a theatre piece called *Blue Aurora* for Toshi Ichihyanagi, and *Corona*, played simultaneously with *Munari* by *Munari* for solo percussion. Stomu Yamashita and the Holligers are among the artists taking part, and Woodward will give the first performance of *Between*, a work written specially for him.

The work of Leo Brouwer is almost totally unknown in this country, although there are two records of his music avail-

Roman'uk, Woodward and Stockhausen—
three major participants in the London
Music Digest

ward, Romaniuk and the composer — will play *Commutaciones* for three percussion groups. Also his *Sonata pian' e forte* will be played in a new version in this concert (March 11).

In marked contrast to the other programmes, that on the afternoon of July 8 will be of Tibetan religious music — which has never been heard in this country before. This, together with *Mantra* which follows in the evening, exemplifies the aims of Slotover and Woodward: to present standard contemporary works from the West, to introduce us to new music of both hemispheres, and to show some of the ways in which each acts upon the other. Even if there will never be total comprehension of the one by the other or a true fusion, the experience of other cultures may, nevertheless, be a salutary one.

All evening concerts start at 8 pm and the afternoon programmes at 4 pm. At least two programmes will be broadcast by the BBC, and there will also be some record releases of music played during the season. KP

R Woodward²

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