

# Tempo

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The differences of opinion between the authors of the two articles on Xenakis in this issue add point to G. W. Hopkins's rejoinder (p. 32) to Hans Keller's criticism of a fellow-critic in *Tempo* 84. If nothing but proven truth were printed, or even nothing but what editors believed to be demonstrable truth, music journals would be thin indeed. Is Christopher Butcher's (and Xenakis's) view of integral serialism the correct one, or is Tim Souster's? "We must have a common tongue", writes Mr. Butcher at the conclusion of his article. It is an old cry, which has often been heard in the last half century, and the idea is a plausible one that makes a ready appeal to the rationalising part of us. But does musical history offer much support for it? "We cannot go on", he argues, "with people like Stockhausen producing admittedly great music from their own private empirical or arbitrary axioms". The facts suggest otherwise: the public is taking to Stockhausen with enthusiasm and little difficulty, and seems well on the way to becoming equally interested in and appreciative of Xenakis too. And is Stockhausen's language, compared with Debussy's, say, any more 'private' than Chopin's compared with Haydn's, for instance—let alone Monteverdi's compared with Palestrina's.

Similarly some might question Tim Souster's suggestion that the theoretical foundation of Xenakis's aesthetic is 'shaky'—while not necessarily questioning the accuracy of his account of what gave rise to them; for even if their motivation lies in a purely personal and possibly 'faulty' aural response to integral serialism, this need not invalidate the theories themselves, which seem to be founded on accepted mathematical laws that might or might not prove generally applicable to musical composition.

These possible objections to the two authors's arguments (and other objections may suggest themselves to other readers) do not, however, cancel out the value of their articles, which not only contain information that will be new and interesting to many readers, but also, by putting forward these disputable propositions, stimulate and help us to channel our own thinking about Xenakis. No writing about music, theoretical or critical, by composers or commentators, can ever bring us very near the essence of what is to be understood in it—understood in an artistic sense, which is not a rational sense. That can be discovered only in the music itself, and it is as unmistakable as it is indefinable and unprovable. Once we have discovered it we have little need or use for any kind of writing about the music, and can know all there is worth knowing from the direct communication of the work itself. But until we reach that point of understanding, much writing that may later prove to have been hot air can contribute something to sharpening our response to the music and to leading us, however deviously, and with however many false clues, towards the moment of revelation.