

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

from BERNARD BENOLIEL

I take strong exception to Roger Nichols's condemnation of Charles Koechlin's supposed egotism in TEMPO No. 143. It is hard to believe that a man such as Mr. Nichols, who has written biographies of more famous French composers from the same period, should be so insensitive to the obvious accumulation of pain and bitterness Koechlin suffered as a result of his extreme neglect. The unpublished autobiographical essay was a self-defence, not an attack. Koechlin is particularly noted for his selfless promotion of other French composers, especially those younger than himself. In fact if his modesty had not been quite so pronounced he would not have found himself so vulnerable as an old man.

In the final sentence of his review, Mr. Nichols states that if we do not get first-class performances of his music nowadays, 'Koechlin's own cussedness and intransigence must bear part of the blame'. Now that Koechlin has been dead for over 30 years this statement borders on the lunatic! Considering the vast egos of greater and lesser composers who are played every day, it is irrelevant, false, and harmful.

On the basis of Koechlin's magnificent *Jungle Book* cycle and his marked influence on Messiaen—of which the general public is unaware—the total absence of performances and lack of interest in his large oeuvre resembles all too closely the attitude of the French towards the Berlioz. Nothing changes!

London S.W.5.

from MARTIN J ANDERSON

Robert Simpson writes in 'More Reflections' (TEMPO 144): 'As an enthusiastic opponent of capitalism, I must take it hard if a vigorous allegro of mine were described as symptomatic of the acquisitive thrust of capitalist bosses'. Symptomatic perhaps not, but analogous certainly; and as an equally vigorous proponent of capitalism and Dr. Simpson's music I hope he won't take too hard the source of the analogy.

Dr. Simpson explains how inescapable laws govern our relationships with other phenomena, be they more or less concrete, objects or sounds. The development and refinement of human thought and action has proceeded apace in awareness of these truths. Dr. Simpson's music derives its own vigour, its dynamism from open acknowledgement of tonality in all its myriad applications, known and undiscovered, all based on the realization that the human brain inevitably responds more to certain aural stimuli than to others. Without neurosurgery we are unlikely to find all musics equally rewarding.

And without a fundamental change in human nature (an illusory premise of most socialist thought), we are stuck with capitalism, which, warts and all, has brought about more dramatic rises in living standards where it is applied than where denied. There is more to capitalism than the multi-nationals, however attractive they are as bogeymen: it involves entrepreneurs producing goods in the hope of profit from pleasing the consumer; the result, usually if not always, is a net increase in human satisfaction.

Composers, too, if as obeisant to the nature of sound as producers should be to consumers, develop the human ability to organize sound to the greater satisfaction of all who hear it. Those who attempt to deny both human nature and the nature of sound should not be surprised if we seem disinclined to follow the paths they are beating into the desert. Music and economics are both the disciplines of systems of organization, and tonality and capitalism the most satisfying system within each. We should be grateful for Dr. Simpson, Henry Ford and their ilk.

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