

# Music Programme Notes

Society for Music Analysis  
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Department of Music, University of Sussex



in association with



## ABSTRACTS

### KEYNOTE

Ian Pace. Cardiff University

#### **The Marxist Programme Note: The logic of the supplement in the textual accompaniment**

Composers of the radical left have frequently sought to be true to their political ideals in the music they write, even abstract instrumental music. This paper considers how, in view of the abstraction and ambiguity of the music, such composers have sought to reduce some level of semantic unspecificity through the use of programme notes, and examines how they relate to the music itself and likely perceptions. Examples will be taken from the work of Cornelius Cardew, Frederic Rzewski, Luigi Nono, Nicolaus A. Huber and Richard Barrett. Presenting the notion of music + programme note as a type of 'multi-media' work (and suggesting that perhaps all music should be viewed in such a way), the paper will attempt a dialectical mediation between the view that accompanying text serves a positive function in challenging ideological assumptions that accompany classical concert-going on one hand, and a type of neo-Adornian view of the progressive political value of attempts to strive for a degree of artistic 'autonomy' on the other. It will also contain some critical perspectives, from a Marxist position distinct from Barrett's own, on the note for 'No'.

## **PROGRAMME NOTES FOR CONTEMPORARY MUSIC**

**Gordon Downie, University of the West of England**

### **Cultural Production as Self-surveillance: making the right impression.**

Employing analytical perspectives drawn from conformity theory, impression management, and Marxist critical-theoretic psychology and anthropology, the content of programme notes written by active composers will be analysed with a view to identifying the extent to which such documents, in collaboration with the product they seek to explicate, function to signal the subject's behavioural and attitudinal submission to the prevailing orthodoxy of commodity form. Whilst recognising the merely epiphenomenal nature of such texts, the discursive prose style and content of such materials will be examined, in order to illustrate their ideological identity with processes of cultural commodification that have become the dominant determinant of aesthetic content in British new music in recent years. Such texts, written and aural, are thus best understood in terms of their role within aesthetic self-marketing, whether as forms of *self-enhancement*, in order to project the composer's non-deviant, affirmatory self-image, or as *other-enhancement*, in order to generate and establish reader and listener self-security and self-confidence. Though marketed and defended as a process of benign trust-building, the outcome is the further internalisation and introjection of those behavioural signifiers that maintain the subject's recognition of, and conformance to, market priorities. By such means, cultural production is managed through self-surveillance, and takes its place as one other element in that process of total administration that ensures the maintenance of the totalising structures of capital and exchange.

**Sam Hayden (University of Sussex)**

### **How a Composition "was not helped by a programme note": a composer's view.**

In 2004, a *Guardian* review of the premiere of my London Sinfonietta commission *Relative Autonomy* criticized apparent contradictions in my programme note while saying little about the music – other than the fact that it “was not helped by a programme note”. This statement raises the question of how programme notes can or should “help” in the reception of contemporary music. The incident led me to reconsider the meaning, value and function of (my) programme notes. I question the assumption that it is primarily the composer's role and responsibility to provide contemporary music audiences (and critics) with quasi-authoritative tools for interpreting their music. I also ask what kinds of statement are considered culturally “appropriate” for such a purpose. Certainly there exists a marketing imperative for composers to speak and write about their music and themselves in self-promotional terms, and programme notes have a role in such self-representations. But while the composer's verbalizations *can* be a starting point for interpretation of the composition, the relationship between words and music is not straightforward. Moreover, controversial statements in programme notes risk provoking a

negative response in those who disagree, and the conflation of such a response with the subjective aesthetic experience of the work is problematic.

## **PROGRAMME NOTES FOR CONCERTS AND RECORDINGS**

**Bethany Lowe. University of Newcastle**

### **Opposition, Correlation, and Collaboration: rhetorical strategies and the web of relationships in the programme notes from recordings of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony**

Many record, cassette, and CD recordings of western art music carry a programme note intended to introduce the listener to the work (and in some cases, the performance), guide them through it, and impose on them a culturally 'correct' way of perceiving the music. The relationship between the writings on the cover and the sonic contents, however, are still open to question. Is there any correlation between the stylistic or structural choices made by the performer and those conjured up by the writer? Do successive programme notes for the same work have a diachronic connection with each other? And what ideological work are the writers of programme notes trying to accomplish?

Such questions (spurred on by recent considerations of the topic by Christina Bashford, Colin Symes, and others) provoked a detailed case study of the written materials which accompany over 40 recordings of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony. This piece presents various constructional and interpretative ambiguities, and hence is ideal for tracing patterns of connection and disconnection between performances, sleeve notes, academic writings, and record reviews. Close examination reveals various such relationships, some of which appear problematic or paradoxical in their implications. The ways in which sleeve notes participate in the web of culture around a piece shows how they call into question the conventional divisions between performed and written discourses and between scholarly monographs and the exoteric functionality of packaging.

**Elina Prepula. University Jyväskylä, Finland**

### **Programme Notes as a Discourse Practice: audience responses to concert programme notes in Finland**

Programme notes are an important part of concert practice, which includes many ritualized aspects. According to the discourse analytic theory of Norman Fairclough (1997), texts contribute towards the constitution of sociocultural conventions.

In the first stage of the study a group of Finnish programme notes were analyzed. The most favoured topics were characterizations of compositions, descriptions of musical events and biographical information about a composer. The structure of the texts was schematic and regularities within textual representations of music were found.

In the second stage of the study a questionnaire for the members of a Finnish concert audience was made and opinions on the contents of programme notes and on different types of texts were sought. According to the respondents, programme notes should contain descriptions of musical events. They preferred programme notes written in a comprehensible style. However they seemed to approve the use of difficult terminology. They approved also extremely positive descriptions of music.

The results suggest that the structure of the texts is fairly consistent. The texts may represent Fairclough's conventional discourse practice, which maintains socio-cultural practices, such as concert practice. It can be discussed if the approving attitude of the audience is a sign of an unwillingness to question concert ritual.

**Georgina Boyes. University of Sheffield.**

### **Audience Expectations: programme and album notes and the English Folk Revival**

Although recordings - and therefore album notes- are a relatively recent development in the English Folk Revival, their form and content are shaped by clear but implicit expectations on the part of the audience. This paper will examine the historical forms and aesthetics which have shaped these expectations and highlight the growing role of new technology in their creating content.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

*Georgina Boyes is a Folklorist who has published and researched extensively on performance in song, dance, custom and narrative. She has lectured in Britain, Europe and North America on aspects of English tradition and this has also been the main area of her writing for radio and television. A member of No Masters, the northern-based writing and recording co-operative, she has contributed album and programme notes for a wide range of performances and CDs. Her book, *The Imagined Village*, was the first full-length study of the English Folk Revival and won the Katharine Briggs Folklore Award in 1993. It will shortly be republished in a new edition.*

**Andrew Burn.** After reading music at the University of East Anglia, Andrew Burn has pursued a career in arts administration working for English National Opera, the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society, and since 1993 the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, where he holds a senior management position of Head of Education and Ensembles, which includes responsibility for the orchestra's contemporary music ensemble Kokoro. Also in 1993 he became Artistic Director of the Chester Summer Music Festival where he has programmed residencies with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Nicholas Maw and James Macmillan. He was been a member of the Arts Council's music panel and chair of its Contemporary Music Network Committee. He is a trustee of the Bliss and Finzi Trusts.

His specialist field is British music of the last and present centuries. As a writer, broadcaster and lecturer he has had articles published in *The Musical Times* and *Tempo*, broadcast on BBC Radio 3, written liner notes for over 100 CDs for companies including EMI, Naxos, Hyperion, Chandos and Decca, and lectured at festivals like *Three Choirs*, at the South Bank, at universities, as well as in the USA. He contributed several entries to the second edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (for instance on Nicholas Maw, Dominic Muldowney and Anthony Powers), wrote the entry on Bliss for the *New Dictionary of National Biography* and the entries on Maw and Muldowney for *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

**Gordon Downie** studied music at York and Durham Universities and completed his PhD in computer science at Cardiff University. The majority of his music has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, a full profile of his work having been featured on *Hear and Now* in 2001. His work has also been featured in festivals in continental Europe and in 1994 he was an invited composer at the Darmstadt Summer School. He has recently completed his BBC orchestral commission, *forms 6: event aggregates*, which will be premiered by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in 2007. Downie is artistic director of the Contemporary Music Ensemble of Wales, which regularly records for BBC Radio 3, and his critical writings have been published in several sources including *Perspectives of New Music*. Downie is senior lecturer in computer science in the Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Mathematical Sciences at the University of the West of England, Bristol, where he leads programmes in artificial intelligence, programming, and object orientation and where he pursues research into the algorithmic formalisation of music composition.

**Sam Hayden** completed his DPhil in composition at the University of Sussex in 1998, and completed an AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts in 2005. Recent commissions include works for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, *Ictus*, London Sinfonietta and Oslo Sinfonietta. He has been the recipient of numerous prizes and awards, including the 1995 Benjamin Britten International Competition for Composers ('mv' for orchestra) and the 2002 Christoph Delz Foundation Competition ('Sunk Losses' for orchestra). 'Collateral Damage' (1999) was commissioned for the Faber Music Millennium Series. His works have been performed at numerous festivals, including

Huddersfield, MaerzMusik and Ultima; broadcast on radio stations including NRK Radio, Saarland Radio and BBC Radio 3 ('Hear and Now'); and recorded on the Divine Art, GROB, NMC, Oboe Classics and UTS labels. Sam is co-director of ensemble [rout].

**Bethany Lowe** is a Lecturer in Music at the University of Newcastle, and has published articles 'On the Relationship between Analysis and Performance' (2003) and 'Analysing Performances of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony' (forthcoming) which along with today's paper are drawn from her PhD. As a state school student, sleeve notes, concert programme notes, and Radio Three introductions were inevitably staples of her musical education, giving her a lasting fascination with such musicological ephemera<sup>^</sup>. She is an experienced conductor of orchestral, choral, and stage repertoire, and likes to write her own programme notes."

**Mark Pappenheim.** A freelance writer/editor specialising in classical music and opera, Mark Pappenheim worked as an administrator for a number of UK arts organisations (including WNO, the Royal Opera, Opera North and the Buxton and Vale of Glamorgan Festivals) before spending eight years as a journalist on *The Independent* (the middle four as Classical Music Editor, the last two as Arts Editor). Editor of the BBC Proms programme books and annual BBC Proms Guide since 1998, he took up a new role this year as editor of the digital TV surtitle notes for BBC Proms Interactive. He currently also works as a CD/DVD booklet editor for Decca, Philips and Warner Classics.

**Elina Prepula** graduated as an MA in musicology from Jyväskylä University in 2004. She has also studied at Jyväskylä Conservatoire and Warsaw University. Prepula has been working at various offices organizing concerts, e.g. Mikkeli Music Festival. She has also worked as a secretary of many local music associations. At the moment Prepula is undertaking postgraduate studies at Jyväskylä University. Her main job is however to teach piano playing.

**Arnold Whittall** is Professor Emeritus of Music Theory and Analysis at King's College London. Apart from a wide range of book and articles focusing primarily on music since 1900, he has been active as concert presenter and programme annotator for the BBC as well as many concert organisations and festivals - most recently, Salzburg and Aldeburgh. In 2007 he will be introducing modern-music programmes at the Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall and lecturing in the United States and Canada.. His Cambridge Introduction to Serialism should be published in 2008.