
Editorial

Why do we celebrate an anniversary? Is it a thanksgiving for a single occurrence; for the life and work of someone great and glorious? Or is it – for oneself – a sigh of relief at having made it, in spite of the hazards, to the twenty-first year – or to the fiftieth, sixtieth, or whatever? Or yet again, is it a recognition of the importance of accumulated experience; an acknowledgement that, in spite of dull routine, we are most assuredly living and achieving? Are anniversaries akin to those stone lanterns in Japanese gardens which (as John Cage suggests) are there ‘so that we shall notice the spaces in between’?

While 1985 has marked the three-hundredth anniversary for Bach, Handel and Domenico Scarlatti – and, in consequence, we have been able to hear many notable performances of music by these composers – the celebration has also served to highlight the spaces (the years) in between; to call attention to the changing and stimulating diversity of musical output in Europe and the ways in which, especially in our own time, Europe has learned so much from other cultures.

This issue of *BjME* is a modest contribution to these celebrations of living music. Each contributor, in his or her own way, reminds us that music is nothing if it is not first and foremost an experience of ‘live’ sound – a conviction which is endorsed by the varied examples on the accompanying cassette tape. It is the continuity of that first-hand experience of music which is of such importance in education; and whatever else European Music Year may have achieved it has undoubtedly given us substantial opportunities to reaffirm our belief in music as an essential part of the educational curriculum at all levels.

Noteworthy among those opportunities has been the conference, *Contemporary Music – Creation, Education, Communication*, organised by the Council of Europe and held in Strasbourg, 18–20 September. Delegates heard papers from prominent sociologists, music educators, public-service broadcasters, and composers, of which none was more important than the opening address by the President of Honour, Iannis Xenakis. He envisaged drawing together, in a ‘University of Music’, all the lively interests current in European music. The Belgian composer, Henri Pousseur, although unable to attend the conference in person, also presented a visionary and inspiring paper in which he spoke of the composer as ‘the helmsman of collective innovation’, having ‘a major educational function’ because all music is, by its nature, essentially an *educational* medium: ‘... it cultivates sensitivity, imagination, intelligence and emotion, educates mind and body, trains both individuals and the com-

munities to which they belong, raises consciousness and contributes to the “languages” through which that consciousness is communicated’.

Nevertheless, for many of those who attended, this conference was something of a wasted opportunity. Neither the vision of Xenakis nor the inspiration of Pousseur seemed sufficient to produce from the assembly the kind of final report most likely to stimulate significant action. The reasons for this are complex and may have to do with the ways in which we promote ‘official’ interchange of ideas in the arts and in education. In a future issue of *BJME* we hope to publish a detailed account of the proceedings, together with a more general discussion of the value of such gatherings.

Yet, if the recommendations adopted at Strasbourg in September 1985 were a disappointment for some, the conference *as an event* did fulfil the ‘spaces in between’ criteria for anniversaries. The plenary discussions brought, from one delegate after another, encouraging statements of what, most assuredly, has been achieved; reminders that ‘In several European countries already the sounds and processes of contemporary music have been playing a significant part in the education of children, to enable them, through creative activity, to become aware of, and sensitive to, sounds of all kinds . . . and to nurture their emotional, aesthetic and imaginative development.’

Perhaps we needed an anniversary year to show us what truly *is* happening. As music educators we cannot afford to be complacent, but at the same time there is much of which we may be proud, and very considerable achievement upon which to build.