

THE world première of Robin Holloway's Second Concerto for Orchestra on 22 September will be the closing event in the 1979 *Musica Nova* week in Glasgow—a week jointly sponsored by the Scottish National Orchestra and Glasgow University, and planned by David Richardson and Frederick Rimmer with their customary expertise and enterprise. Earlier in the week (which also gives special prominence to the music of Brian Ferneyhough and Tona Scherchen-Hsiao) there will be chances of hearing the orchestral work which made Holloway's name in 1970—*Scenes from Schumann*—and the large-scale ensemble work commissioned soon after that success—*Fantasy-Pieces op.16*. The frame seems eminently suited to the première itself; for as Bayan Northcott remarks elsewhere in these pages, the Second Concerto has a critical bearing on Holloway's works of the past decade, and as such marks a point of culmination as well as of new departure.

Seventeen years have passed since Holloway completed *Garden Music*, the earliest of the works he still acknowledges. Of the 41 works in his opus list today, none can safely be discounted, since the list dates from as late as 1977 and excludes as mere apprentice work a vast quantity of pieces prior to *Garden Music*. The survey attempted in the present issue of *TEMPO* cannot therefore pretend to be comprehensive. But it should at least indicate something of the ground which already needs to be covered if Holloway's reputation is to acquire a firm basis.

Since the mid-70's, that reputation has tended to float uncertainly between two extreme views, both of which owe something to the publicity attending the première in 1974 of Holloway's mammoth orchestral work *Domination of Black*. The controversies of that time, and especially his own comments on certain aspects of recent music which he found disagreeable, caused him to be identified as a proponent of 'the new expressivity', and hence with various contemporary returns to Romanticism. Mentioned in the honours lists for unspecified services to the common chord and simultaneously indicted by the revolutionary tribunals as an arch-reactionary, he has nevertheless managed to elude the grasp of both sides and remain resolutely himself. Whatever the unevennesses of his work, he is surely one of the most generously gifted composers of his generation, and sooner or later will be recognized as such.

This is not to suggest that he is by any means a neglected nor even a seriously misunderstood composer. He has never lacked eloquent champions, nor adequate support from the appropriate musical institutions. Between 1964 and 1969, when he was still in his early twenties, performances of *Garden Music*, the cantata *In Chymick Art*, the *Organ Concerto*, and the first two *Concertinos* made his name known in New Music circles and were favourably noticed in the national press. Then came the success of *Scenes from Schumann* at the 1970 Cheltenham Festival. Hailed as evidence of a 'bold and original imagination', and certainly representing a decisive break-through, both musically and professionally, it led at once to the first of a series of commissions which has continued uninterrupted until the present day. Since 1970 there has been at least one important and widely noticed première every year (apart from 1976). To list only the salient events: 1971 brought the first two movements of the massive *First Concerto for Orchestra*; '72, the complete *Concerto*, and the *Fantasy-Pieces*; '73, *Evening with Angels*; '74, *Domination of Black*; '75, *Sea Surface full of Clouds*; '77, *Concertino no.3* and *The Rivers of Hell*; '78, *Hymn for Voices and Romanza*; and '79, the *Serenade in C* (not to mention the still-to-be-heard *Second Concerto for Orchestra*).

So quickly are memories allowed to fade that considerable research is required to unearth the fact that every one of these premières apart from *Domination of Black* was successful, and in several cases extremely so. That *Domination of Black* has not been given a second chance may be regrettable, but is scarcely surprising, given the number of other works which have so far shared the same fate. Even *Scenes from Schumann*, a score as undemanding as it is attractive, has had to wait nine years for its second British performance.

It is a familiar story, and one which goes far beyond individual cases or incidental defects in the concert system. The notion that contemporary composers are, as a race, contemptuous of public and performers alike derives further credibility from the fact that some of the composers most able to disprove it on a high musical level are as seldom performed as most of those who seem to be its very embodiment. Fundamental changes in music and society since the Second World War have eliminated the old and relatively natural connexions between success, reputation, and performance. Even in Britain—for all its notorious insularity—nothing remains of that nexus of common interests and shared conventions which enabled the adventurous young of the interwar period—from Bliss and Walton, to Britten and Tippett—to establish their reputations with the general public. Composers able to ignore what has been going on in music since 1950—which Holloway emphatically is not—may, if they are also talented, succeed in playing a trick or two on history. But the rest must somehow learn to weather the effects of an isolation which is not necessarily of their choosing—until the best of them succeed in building some new bridges.