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Modern Saxophone

Author(s): Niall O'Loughlin

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art of song has a living exponent in East Germany who can handle an enormous variety of material and function, from marching songs in the Eisler mould and wistful cabaret lyrics to essays in modernism, and from Elizabethan verse (set in English) to Brecht and Fürnberg, his contemporary. There is a vitality about his approach that can make ours in the West seem effete or grotesque. STEPHEN BANFIELD

Modern cello

For young cellists wanting a whiff of contemporary music, Collection Panorama provides an answer. Three volumes of five pieces each (Billaudot/Universal, £5.55, £5, £8.20) are graded as 'très facile', 'facile' and 'moyenne difficulté'. The composers range age-wise from Marcel Mihalic, born last century, to Jean-Michel Groscurin, who is not yet 30. A good few lessons would be needed before any of the cello parts could be decently tackled, but most of the initial difficulties are reserved for the pianist. In Book 1, for instance, Alain Abbott has written a virtuoso keyboard part, way beyond most teachers' abilities, to say nothing of brothers and sisters. Pascal Duc's 'A la manière de . . .' in Book 3 is as enigmatic in notation as in title; both instruments have a full score to help solve their problems.

A sonata by Victor Bruns is an op.35 from 1958 (Breitkopf, £7.50). Its three movements have clean lines, exploring both instruments with resource but making no outlandish demands. An obstinate bass underscores much of the first movement, which leans also on Prokofiev's wrong-note lyricism. The economical slow movement has a central section rising to considerable heights of eloquence, and the 7/8 main tune of the finale has a pleasant dry wit. *Six climats* by Jacqueline Fontyn (G. Schirmer, £10.20) are brief impressions, capricious in manner, lasting mostly two pages each. Cello and piano have a complete score, and in nos.5 and 6 this gives the cellist page-turning problems. Within their demanding idiom, the pieces have a nice range and scope. Whatever the climate, the weather is variable. Jacques Lenot has based his *Lied 2* (Salabert/United, £4.60) on echoes from Szymanowski's 'Dryades et Pan', a very evocative piece for violin and piano from the op.30 *Myths*. From Szymanowski come some ideas for the atmospheric keyboard writing and the cello's melodic line hints now and again at the source material. But Lenot's piece is strong enough to make its own impression. Both parts are technically demanding.

Evocation no.2 by Ralph Shapey (Presser/Universal, £21.60) is scored for cello, piano and percussion. There are only three players in all, but the percussion array is formidable, including six timpani, glockenspiel, xylophone, woodblocks, cowbells, cymbals, toms, bass drum, gong. In spite of a quiet ending, the music keeps the players going hell for

leather much of the time. The percussionist is peripatetic (placing is outlined in the performance notes) and the cellist has his lowest string down a minor 3rd for the outer movements. The central *Spiritoso* has the cello striding ahead with angular narration while the others repeat obsessive comments again and again. Two scores come for the price; percussion parts need a special order. Richard Wernick's sonata is called 'Portraits of Antiquity' (Presser/Universal, £x.xx). The opening 'Incantation' builds up considerable tension from repetition of a limited number of intervals. Apart from a sudden *p* and a 'sneak-in' entry for the cello, there is no let-up. The 'Canticum sacrum' of no.2 has an impassioned central section, while the music of the framing parts is punctuated with long silences, throughout the last of which the players are directed to 'Freeze; maintain attitude through the pause'. The final 'Celebration and Ritual' has semiquavers in which to celebrate and ritualistic minims; the other two movements also leave their mark on a peroration that nicely sums up the work. ROBERT ANDERSON

Modern saxophone

The wonderfully free floating counterpoint of some of Charles Koechlin's music is ideally suited to the saxophone. His 24 Duos for saxophones op.186 (Billaudot/Universal, 2 vols. £5.80, £7.45) represent something of a find for accomplished players of the smaller instruments. In spite of their didactic sub-title 'leçons de solfège', some of them could make attractive concert items. The pieces are predominantly diatonic with a modal feel while the counterpoint has some strange harmonic progressions and clashes, the inevitability of which grows with familiarity. Parts are provided for combinations of B flat and E flat saxophones, with soprano and alto the preferred instruments. A good command of the high notes and a faultless legato are essential technical requirements. Lucie Robert's *Rythmes lyriques* for soprano and tenor saxophones (Billaudot/Universal, parts £3.70) form a carefully built single movement of ten minutes' duration, much of it florid elaboration by one part against a held note or gently articulated single pitch in the other.

Four pieces for alto saxophone are worth investigation. Jacques Wildberger's *Portrait* (Universal, £3.25) exploits new techniques well known on the main orchestral wind instruments (e.g. microtones and multiple sounds). There is enormous rhythmic variety, though surprisingly the whole work is written out in measured bars – admittedly irregular ones. The plan of four alternating slow and quick sections produces considerable tension in the fast ones. The *Prélude et scherzo* by Serge Lancel (Billaudot/Universal, £4.60) for alto with piano is an attractive piece of neo-classical rhythms and freely extended tonality. For the same combination, *Poèmes* by Otto Strobl (Doblinger/Universal, £5.85) has similarities in general approach but is more

soberly earthbound than the sometimes romantic outpourings of Lancel's work. A Concerto for alto saxophone, trumpet, wind (flute, six clarinets, two bassoons and baritone saxophone) and two double basses by Jean Rivier (Billaudot/Universal, £10.65) has by turns an engaging vulgarity, a brash coarseness and a sentimental sweetness. Yet somehow these attributes are positive with no sense of pastiche. Malcolm Arnold's music comes to mind. The solo parts are well written, effective and demanding but with no gratuitous virtuosity.

The combination of four different saxophones continues to attract composers, especially in France, where four noteworthy new scores are published (Billaudot/Universal). *Cinq séquences* by Graciane Finzi (score and parts £10.20) is a group of difficult exercises in the interaction of ostinato figures in various rhythmic configurations. *Métamorphoses* by Pierre Max Dubois (score and parts, £10.60) is a four-movement 25-minute 'symphonie' of considerable difficulty. The fast sections are full of awkward runs and strident harmonies in a free tonality not untouched by vulgarity. The soprano player doubles soprano saxophone. The mysterious title *Les pêcheurs d'ombres* for a quartet by Michel Deom (score and parts, £6.95) gives some indication of the music's spectral quality. The erratically changing tempos and textures present problems of coherence for players and listeners. A lively collection of pieces is *Vingt Flash-Jazz* by Gilles Senon (second part, nos.11–20, score £3.30, parts £4.10). They are for the normal quartet but with alternative alto parts for the soprano and tenor instruments. The music can also be played by a trio (omitting the tenor part) or a duo (top two parts only) but infinitely less effectively. NIAL O'LOUGHLIN

Guitar plus

An enormous amount of music for flute or violin and guitar was published during the last century and among the minor pieces revived today I liked Vincenzo Colla's Duo for flute and guitar (Tecla, £3.50) for its harmonic interest. The *Serenade* for guitar and violin or flute op.5 by Wenceslas Cerruti (Tecla, £3.50), with an informative preface by Mario Dell'Ara and Brian Jeffery, has some pleasant interplay between the two instruments. Volume xxxv of the complete Giuliani in facsimile (Tecla, £36.95) is a boxed set of ten individually stapled works for this combination, opp.19, 24a, 25, 52, 53, 63, 74–7, all highly legible, though the first three, from an earlier period, are rather cramped, especially the hemi-demi-semiquaver passages in op.24a. Op.19 is in fact for violin, cello and guitar. Not all the works are virtuoso: op.74 is *Pièces faciles et agréables* – which indeed they are.

The Czech composer Štěpán Rak has written his *Čtyři kusy* for flute or oboe or even clarinet and guitar (Panton/Universal, £1.05). The first of this set of four pieces is strongly