

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

from BERNARD BENOLIEL

OLIVER Knussen and Colin Matthews (TEMPO 121, Letters) find my review of Mike Oldfield (TEMPO 120) so disturbing it's robbed them of their ability to read the English language. They wilfully misunderstand my opinion of Messiaen and Dallapiccola: the other five composers on my list specialized in the symphony or chamber music in their later years while the finest works of these two masters are found in several genres. There is no implication in my review that they are of less stature than the other five.

The compositions in Mr. Knussen's list, however, all in my opinion suffer from the shortcomings I criticize in most contemporary music, and in answer to his statement that 'Mike Oldfield must really be something else' I say: Why yes! Oldfield achieves what he set out to do. Intent and achievement are in balance. On a higher level the same is true of the composers in my original list, they keep alive and expand the most exalted traditions of western music. Their work has the power profoundly to affect, even change the spiritual consciousness of those who respond to them. Mr. Knussen and Mr. Matthews may think them 'dour' and 'sober' 'misfits', but exactly the same criticisms were once made of some of the greatest masters. They seem to believe in the oppressive notion that there is an orthodox critical consensus which everyone concerned with the art of music must hold onto. But even more dangerous is the explicit suggestion that it is TEMPO's function to promote and uphold this dogma, and to defend it in print whenever a divergent opinion appears. Such sham democracy has no place in art. There is no evidence of TEMPO ever being party to such falsity—nor was I asked to write to any editorial brief!

Then why the violence of their response? Mr. Knussen and Mr. Matthews certainly imply that many more readers of TEMPO share their opinions than mine, so why do my 'pointless and ill-judged formulations' (as Mr. Matthews kindly described them) make them feel so insecure? So insecure that Mr. Matthews stoops so low in the opening sentence of his letter as to question my critical sincerity.

*Jackson Heights
New York, U.S.A.*

from JULIAN BUDDEN

In his article on Frank Bridge (TEMPO 121) Hugh Wood describes 'Das Land ohne Musik' as a 'slogan invented circa 1917 by a German professor as a piece of war-time propaganda'. In fact it was the title of a book, by no means hostile to Britain, written by Oscar A. H. Schmitz and first published in 1913. An English translation appeared in 1926.

*External Services Music Organizer,
B.B.C.,
Yalding House, 156 Great Portland St.,
London W. 1*