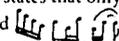
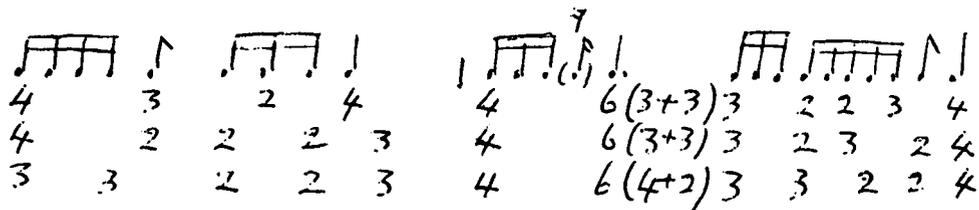


LETTER TO THE EDITOR

 from PROFESSOR FREDERICK RIMMER

NO MUSICIAN, OF WHATEVER PERSUASION, on reading Peter Hill's acutely sensible article 'Authenticity in Contemporary Music' (TEMPO 159) can fail to be stimulated to further thought about the issues he raises. I venture to pose one or two points of particular interest which arise for me in those parts of the discussion supported by two of the musical examples.

Ex. 3 is from Messiaen's *Cantéyodjaya*, rightly described as a work of exuberant rhythmic vitality. Hill states that only at the start of the second of the given bars do we realise that we have been tricked; that we have not heard . He comments 'if one clarifies matters by accenting the *o*, not only does this spoil the joke (which is the rhythmic ambiguity), it robs the beginning of the next bar of its élan'. But if one has in mind an earlier comment (on 20th-century 'objectivity') that 'the former unequivocal role of performances—the rigorous presentation of ideas and perceptions—has tended to give way to a secondary ideal, that of flawless surface detail', and if by 'flawless surface detail' we mean here the most humanly exact *forte* for every note, then it follows that rhythmic ambiguity is even more pronounced. The vitality given to this passage will be determined by the player's mental appreciation of the response to the grouping of semiquaver pulses or reiterations, and in this he must decide which of more than one possibility should be pursued. In arriving at the following groupings I develop further the contention that aural responses are influenced by the 'play' of intervals in the approach to high and low pitches (Peter Hill dealt only with the first bar).



4	3	2	4	4	6(3+3)	3	2	2	3	4	
4	2	2	2	3	4	6(3+3)	3	2	3	2	4
3	3	2	2	3	4	6(4+2)	3	3	2	2	4

The possibilities indicated are arguable, given an aural experience divorced from visual stimulus, and from the pianist an even-handed *forte* throughout. It would be of interest to give the passage in dictation to practised listeners, and I would expect a variety of groups, such as I have suggested, to result. I should add that if the passage were to be played on an organ keyboard with, inherently, no possibility of dynamic variation, there arises the intriguing issue of subtle rhythmic stress in mental commitment to the chosen groups of semiquaver pulses. This aspect of performance would also surely be inevitable on the part of the pianist.

Ex. 2: Most quartets, it is said, play this progression (first four bars from the slow movement of Beethoven's Quartet op. 127) with a strong crescendo followed by a hushed *subito piano: pp cresc p*. But why should this be the case? Such a return to a lesser dynamic would never be entertained with *f cresc ff*. Wherein lies the different?

These few thoughts will at best encourage further consideration of those intangible matters in performance so perceptively argued by Peter Hill.

Manor Farm House
6 Mill Way
Grantchester
Cambridge CB3 9NB

 The June 1987 issue of TEMPO

will be a double number (TEMPO 161/162), partly devoted to a survey of post-war and contemporary music in Austria. It will be approximately twice the size of a single issue, will retail at twice the cover-price, and for subscription purposes will count as two issues. There will be no September 1987 issue; TEMPO 163 will appear on schedule in December.