

NEWS SECTION

This News Section is largely devoted to commissions and first performances of works by living performers. Contributions of news and information for future issues will be most welcome.

HOWARD SKEMPTON

I.S.C.M.—Bonn World Music Days 1977

Of the seven works recommended by the London jury—Peter Evans (Chairman), Hugh Davies, Brian Dennis, Oliver Knussen and Keith Potter—one has been selected for performance: *The Sinking of the Titanic* by Gavin Bryars.

This piece describes the circumstances of the actual sinking, with particular reference to the musical events that preceded and accompanied it. In performance, the small string ensemble which play the music that the band played on 14-15 April 1912 is supported by visual elements: slides of specific portions of the ship, plans, maps, and so on; a short film made by Bryars from the deck plans of the ship; tapes of processed sounds and anecdotes by survivors as well as 'live' visual elements. A version of the piece has been recorded on *Obscure 1* (Island Records).

Robert Saxton's *Reflections of Narziss and Goldmund* (1975) was selected by the Bonn panel for the 'under 25' category. Robert Saxton was born in London in 1953, and has studied with Elisabeth Lutyens, Robin Holloway, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, and Luciano Berio. He was awarded 1st prize at the 1975 International Gaudéamus Music Week for *What does the Song hope for?*

Reflections of Narziss and Goldmund will receive its first performance at the Royan Festival in April 1977. The composer has provided the following note:

'This piece "reflects" certain structural ideas in Hermann Hesse's novel "Narziss und Goldmund". In no sense is it a tone-poem, but follows the novel's pattern of a series of episodes which seem never to reach a climactic point; when they do, the climax is unreal and one is left with a question-mark which refers to what has gone before. The scoring is for two chamber ensembles separated by harp and piano/celesta; the musical argument moves kaleidoscopically between these groups until only harp and celesta remain, the two ensembles having been silenced.'

Two British composers featured in special categories are Hugh Davies and Tim Souster. Hugh Davies has designed a project, 'Music for Children', the results of which will be presented during the World Music Days:

'My proposal involves three stages of working with two groups of 15-20 children each, preferably without any musical knowledge or training, aged 10-12 years. To start with I will help them to build simple bamboo instruments (xylophones, bird-calls, gueros, pan-pipes, chimes, rattles, possibly raft or tube zithers, transverse or notch flutes, recorders) based on models that I will provide; for some of them this may be their first experience with carpentry tools.

'The second stage will be to encourage them to invent an instrument from whatever materials are available at home, at school or in the workshop. Finally we will make up an ensemble (probably a mixture of their inventions and the bamboo instruments); between us we will devise various musical structures—derived from the limited capabilities of the instruments—which I can shape into a collective composition, using visual symbols and hand gestures as a coordinator/conductor. I have also suggested that we give performances in local schools, and for physically and mentally handicapped children, who could try out the instruments.'

Souster describes his *Triple Music IV* as an 'environment', and continues:

'The subtitle is "natural sounds for concert intervals" which refers to the fact that the sounds on tape are all "concrete", or environmental. The music is deployed on three tracks throughout the foyer, the first section played before the concert starts (while the audience is arriving), the second during the interval, and the third as the audience leaves. The sounds are deployed to suggest arrival, confrontation and departure, but the effect of the piece is almost subliminal. It is not intended to be directly "listened to".'

In composing this work, Souster has assembled radio call-signals from all over Europe.