Constance Shacklock, a leading mezzo-soprano who was popular in a wide variety of roles at Covent Garden in the 1950s; and Nell Moody, soprano, translator and teacher, who was a notable figure in British operatic life over a period of more than 50 years.

ii. MUSIC

THE year 1999 was for classical music globally one of much varied, occasionally brilliant, activity. It took place, however, against a background of a contracting market, with attendant financial and artistic implications, an ever-encroaching trend towards the mindless vacuity of pop music, and a lack of aesthetic certainty about what constituted excellence in the musical art.

The established repertoire made up the greater part of performances. One of the leading magazines of the record industry, *Gramophone*, nailed its colours firmly to the traditional mast in a succinct summary of 20th century popular taste, by listing the ten 'best recordings ever', that is to say those so voted by its readers. Some dated back to the 1950s: Wagner, *The Ring* (VPO/Solti); Elgar, *Cello Concerto* (Jacqueline du Pré); Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5* (VPO/Kleiber); Puccini, *Tosca* (Maria Callas); Bach, *Goldberg Variations* (Glen Gould); Mahler, *Das Lied von der Erde* (Ferrier, Patzak, VPO/Walter); Beethoven, *Choral Symphony* (Bayreuth Festival Orchestra/Fürtwängler); Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (Philharmonia/Fürtwängler); Schubert, *Lieder* (Fischer-Dieskau/Moore); R. Strauss, *Four Last Songs* (Schwarzkopf, Berlin RSO/Szell).

A musical tradition begins nationally, even locally. It lives, grows, and is judged according to the place it affords to its living composers. On such a basis of established and familiar classics, performances of new music provided the leaven; and there were some notable recordings in 1999, including two of major works by Elliott Carter: *Symphonia: Sum Fluxae Pretium Spei* (BBC SO/Oliver Knussen) (see AR 1998, p. 513), and the earlier (1946) *Piano Sonata*, brilliantly played by Charles Rosen. Examples of performance of music from the previous generation were Roberto Gerhard's neo-classic *Harpsichord Concerto* and *Piano Concerto* (Barcelona SO/Lawrence Foster), and, from today's *avant-garde*, Simon Bainbridge's four orchestral songs *Ad ora incerta* (BBC SO/ Martyn Brabbins), and Louis Andriessen's *Trilogy of the Last Day* (Schoenberg Ensemble/ Reinherdt de Leeuw) .

The year also saw an event of the greatest potential importance for British music: the release of the first ten discs in the 'British Musical Heritage' series, focusing on chamber music groups and solo performers, and including composers from 1800 to the present day. The reissue of long-held recordings proved an inexhaustible asset to record companies, who catered for the discriminating collector in series: great pianists, great conductors, great orchestras. Twentieth-century opera fared particularly well under this system: Berg, *Wozzeck*

(Hamburg State Opera/Metzmacher); Busoni, *Doktor Faust* (Opéra National de Lyon/Nagano); Messiaen, *St François d'Assise* (Arnold Schoenberg Choir, Halle Orchestra/Nagano); R. Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Schwarzkopf, Seefried, Streich, Philharmonia/Karajan); Emmerich Kalman, *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (Berlin Radio Choir, SO/Bonynge) .

Concert performances too were preponderantly weighted in favour of the established repertoire. Orchestras performed globally, and the same music was heard internationally. The Kirov Ballet, and the Kirov Opera, on their annual visit to London, in 1999 performed Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Barbican. Also at the same venue, in June, one of the most exciting performances of the year was given, by the St Petersburg Philharmonic, under Yuri Temirkanov, of Shostakovich's searing *Leningrad Symphony*. As an encore, and as a gesture to their hosts, they played *Nimrod* from Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. This was no chance. Elgar was getting better known internationally, and his music had a surge in popularity throughout Europe in 1999. The *Cello Concerto* was played in eight cities on various occasions, with a different soloist each time.

Other performances were promoted because of the composer's date of birth. It helped if the anniversary was divisible by five. The fiftieth anniversary of Richard Strauss's death fell in 1999, and was accordingly celebrated with operatic highlights, chiefly in Germany (Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Salzburg, Vienna), but also in New York and Garsington. A new edition of his works was brought out, and three books in English, which dealt largely with Strauss's relations with the Nazis before 1945. Charles Ives was another such composer with a doubly fortunate anniversary—the 125th of his birth, the 45th of his death. This was duly marked with concerts in Tuscson, Arizona (*Symphony No. 3*) , London (*Emerson Concerto*, in a reconstruction by David G. Porter), and Edinburgh (*Symphony No. 4*).

There were two centenaries in 1999. The first, at the lighter end of the stylistic spectrum, was that of the birth of the French composer Francis Poulenc. His *L'Histoire du Babar* was toured in Europe-Stavanger Festival, Geneva, Bonn, Wüppertal—while his opera *Dialogue of the Carmelites* was performed by both the Welsh National Opera, and the English National Opera at the Coliseum. The second, and most colourful anniversary, was that of the legendary jazz musician Duke Ellington—the 100th of his birth, the 25th of his death. He would have been mightily surprised at such attention from so many classical Big Bands. Concerts of his music were mainly in the USA, in Chicago (*Grand Slam Jam*), in Denver (*Harlem*), in Philadelphia (*Three Black Kings*), in Erie (*Black, Brown and Beige*), and in Los Angeles (*Night Creatures*); but it was also featured in London, at a South Bank jazz festival in November; and in April at, a concert in Amsterdam, Louis Andriessen contributed his own jazz interpretation to the festivities, *Passagiata in tram in America e ritorno*. In short, the Duke was accorded cult status.

Apart from Ellington, 1999 was a positive year for many other American composers. Charles Ives and Leonard Bernstein had by now become familiar

beyond the point when their work called for explanation. Among the other most frequently performed composers were John Adams, Samuel Barber, John Corigliano, Philip Glass, John Harbison, Joan Tower. Each had many important performances in 1999. The most successful and prestigious was the world premiere in December, at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, of John Harbison's opera *The Great Gatsby*, for which the composer wrote his own libretto to F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic. The music was a fusion of the 'jazz age' of the 1920s, the age of 'flappers' and champagne, and the style of contemporary classicism. Thus America celebrated both the American 20th century opera tradition, and the 25th year at the Met of the distinguished conductor and artistic director James Levine.

Viewing the 20th century as a whole, and the musical trends working through it, the opening years witnessed a mood of radical idealism in the musical art, whose common language was not yet divided. The close of the century was therefore a time for reflection on some of the developments, fresh endeavours, artistic dead ends, that had marked the intervening years. In the early years of the 20th century there were two prime creative forces in music: jazz, which originated in America, and serialism, which originated in Vienna. As a cultural force jazz quickly spread, until it permeated the classical art-forms worldwide, through the work of leading composers such as Stravinsky, Copland, Weill, Tippett. By the end of the century it could be seen as part of the American tradition. Serialism on the other hand was a philosophical/intellectual movement, originating in Vienna in the 1920s, which gradually spread through Europe and America in the mid-century years, until by the 1950s the tide was running at the flood in the work and electronic research of Boulez and Stockhausen. Its features gradually became apparent. It led to a self-perpetuating complexity of the musical language, and a denial of creativity; and these factors made its decline inevitable. By the 1980s the tide had ebbed; by the 1990s total serialism was outplayed as a creative force.

To offset the gloom and complexities of serialism, several compensating trends developed: in America, minimalism; in Europe, particularly Britain, the early music movement, with the use of 'authentic or 'period' instruments; beyond Europe, folk music. The later years of the 20th century were characterized by pluralism in music; and just as the musical language itself became fragmented and diversified, so did its aesthetic standards. In Britain the divisions within the musical culture became more evident than elsewhere. The proportion of performance-time allotted to the living British composer reduced from about 8-9 per cent in the 1970s to about 3-4 per cent in the 1990s. As the century neared its close there was markedly less curiosity and interest among audiences about new British music than there had been 30 years earlier. The long-term effect of this lack of interest, as each generation added its quota to the list of unheard composers, was that the British musical tradition became like an immense iceberg, with only a tiny part visible, or audible.

Paradoxically, this trend seemed to affect in no way at all the surge of musical activity in Britain, particularly in London, and in the number of composers

of every stylistic allegiance actively working and resident. In 1999 they totalled some 500. It would be possible to mount ten festivals of British music, not one of which would overlap with the other nine. Yet there seemed to be some inbuilt reluctance in the British musical culture to exploit the talent of its composers. Whereas the Americans greeted the new millennium with a new American opera at the Met, the British greeted it with pop music at the Greenwich Millennium Dome. An opportunity was spectacularly missed, particularly since the potential was so rich.

Among those who died in 1999 were the composers Einar Englund, Howard Ferguson and Gérard Grisey; the conductors Harry Blech, Paul Sacher, Robert Shaw and Georg Tintner; the violinists Viktor Liberman, Yehudi Menuhin and Eli Goren, founder of the Allegri String Quartet; the opera intendant Rolf Liebermann; the pianist and teacher György Sebök; the singer Ilse Wolf; and the percussionist James Blades. (For Blades and Menuhin, see XVIII: Obituary).

BOOKS OF THE YEAR. *Richard Strauss*, by Tim Ashley; *The Life of Webern*, by Kathryn Bailey; *Richard Strauss*, by Matthew Boyden; *Berlioz 1803-1832: The Making of an Artist*, by David Cairns; *The Life of Mussorgsky*, by Caryl Emerson; *The Life of Charles Ives*, by Stewart Fedar; *The Atonal Music of Anton Webern*, by Allen Forte; *Richard Strauss: Man, Music, Enigma*, by Michael Kennedy; *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer*, by John McCabe; *The Life of Debussy*, by Roger Nichols; *Beethoven's Concertos: history, style, performance*, by Leon Plantinga.

iii. BALLET & DANCE

In 1999 London could, at last, claim to be attracting major international dance companies. The rebuilt Sadler's Wells, with its large stage, provided the opportunity for classical ballet and larger contemporary companies to be seen, complementing the work seen on smaller stages such as the Place. It was not the very largest companies that were attracted to Sadler's Wells-those like the Bolshoi needed and were indeed seen at the Coliseum—but the range of important companies including Pina Bausch in *Viktor*, Mark Morris's Company, and Cloud Gate from Taiwan could be enjoyed. The productions they brought were well established but for London audiences the backlog of works that remained unseen was substantial. At the same time Edinburgh Festival, which had served as Britain's major showcase for dance, was less interesting than in recent years. The festival's programme included the Cullberg Ballet performing choreography by Mats Ek, Dutch National Ballet, and American choreographer Susan Marshall.

Londoners had opportunities to gauge the strength of the dance scene in the USA with visits from Pacific Northwest and San Francisco Ballets at Sadler's Wells, and Stars of New York Ballet and Atlanta Ballet at the Royal Festival Hall. Pacific Northwest presented their superb staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments* (mounted by Francia Russell in an earlier staging than was generally seen) which riveted the audience although, it must be said, their other productions were less inspiring. San