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I was disappointed by this report for it seemed to be received, and probably in the future, and I had not expected it. I was, however, not disappointed, the impression was indeed very good. I had thought that an attempt to give a word of appreciation and encouragement, but that was really all that was needed. I had thought that the group would be able to play the music and that the concert would be a success. I had thought that the group would be able to play the music and that the concert would be a success. I had thought that the group would be able to play the music and that the concert would be a success.

January 4th: Purcell Room, London

Concert of contemporary works by
Mouth of Hermes

As their publicity material says, "Mouth of Hermes is a group of musicians whose common purpose is to play contemporary music." The group is large enough, flexible enough and technically competent enough to present a large variety of different sorts of new music.

In this concert, Stravinsky's Septet was balanced by two works receiving their first London performances, an improvisation, and a work by a member of the group, several of whom are composers.

The Septet was neatly played with some style, but suffered from an imbalance in the parts - the horn and bassoon were often almost inaudible, even in solo passages.

Music for Seven by Jenny McLeod, a New Zealand composer, has been performed several times in Europe. It is a difficult and intricate score for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano and vibraphone and marimba. There are thirteen sections in an order which can be played completely reversed; the organisation is of five short movements and their 'reflections' flanking three longer middle movements which contain in fuller form the ideas presented in the shorter sections. One hearing was not enough to grasp the musical working-out of this formal balance, but the impression left was certainly one of coherence, and of a piece of music, which, while long and densely-textured, was always interesting and often exciting. The composer explored the textures of various combinations of the eight instruments in solos, duets, and ensemble work, and while allowing the players at times some freedom to improvise their parts rhythmically or melodically, never allowed them to stray far from the piece's organisation.

Songs for Instruments by Geoffrey Grey, the group's violinist, is written for another interesting combination of instruments - piano, cello, horn, flute and piccolo, trumpet and harpsichord. As the title suggests, the piece exists mainly to provide the players with 'songs' to play, and was organised in sections with accompanied solo lyrical passages alternating with faster tutti passages. Possibly Geoffrey Grey wrote the piece with the Hermes group in mind - Christopher Taylor's beautiful flute solos in particular seemed just right for him. Perhaps to emphasise that this was particularly a piece for enjoyment, the fast passages were written in a jerky, dissonantly-diatonic manner recalling Stravinsky's neo-classic period - a difficult style to use successfully, and which aroused associations which rather unfortunately often dispelled the musical interest of the lyrical sections.

After an improvisation for flutes by Christopher Taylor and Stan Sulzman, which displayed their ability on their instrument, but settled around middle C too often, the concert ended with Enriques Raxach's Scatter Time written for Mouth of Hermes' recent tour of Holland. This was for piano, organ, violin and lute, flute, clarinets and bells. The composition, which, like the McLeod, needed another hearing, seemed to use more free improvisation by the group, and relied rather a lot on the organ which permeated the texture throughout, sometimes disturbingly, sometimes interestingly, and controlled the climaxes, the largest of which ended with sudden shouts and the dropping of an instrument on the floor. Most instruments had solo passages, and there was more exploration of less conventional uses of each than in the other works heard on the night.

The final impression of the concert was one of interest from beginning to end. The group not only played the works well, but worked together well, and showed their own enjoyment of them, which is always pleasant to see.

HILARY BRACEFIELD.