

Putting Music Criticism to Positive Purpose: William Glock's Promotion of Three Composers

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Preliminaries

If any one person was responsible for transforming our musical life from the insular conservatism of the 1960s to a culture that cared about what was happening in the wider world, it was [William] Glock.¹

William Glock (1908–2000) began his musical career as a newspaper music critic. Was it a promising start or was it insignificant? The Austrian-born musical commentator and broadcaster, Hans Keller, described music criticism as a phoney profession.² In a sense he was suggesting that those who made a life of criticising music were frauds, perpetuating a position in which they could pass judgement on the value of any music. In another sense he was making the point that really the critic should be musician first and critic second. Criticism of music, however, is something that happens all the time. It is necessary, however, for another process to precede it: that of listening. Similarly for a music critic these two processes must be present. In another of his polemics, Keller prefaced his discussion of Stravinsky's *Agon* with the following words:

There is criticism and there is reporting, or at any rate there ought to be. I do not mean the kind of thing we read in the newspapers, where writers criticize things they have heard, and report things they haven't in or-

1 Andrew Clements, "A Night to Remember," *The Guardian*, August 9, 1994, London, A6.

2 Hans Keller, *Criticism* (London: Faber, 1987), 20–36.

der to conceal the fact. Thus, as criticism and reportage are understood today, the former is the more responsible task, but it should really be the other way round whenever the facts are more important than the critic's opinions, which is not seldom. At the same time, opinions do enjoy greater popularity with both the reader and the critic himself: they are easier to get for either. The unpopular truth is that while any fool can opine and indeed perchance opine rightly, only a qualified observer can report, and only a qualified reader is interested in facts, plenty of them and nothing but them.³

This locates the position of the music critic, to report or to criticise. What the critic *reports* will depend on the knowledge of the audience. For example, does the critic inform the audience of the facts about a new piece of music before making any critical remarks? One would think that this is almost self-evident. The more that the critic has to report, the less scope there will then be to make criticisms. There is, on the other hand, the situation where the audience is fully informed of the facts and simply 'needs' to be given the criticism of the music itself, or more likely, the distinctive qualities of the performance. Perhaps we should now consider the critic's position in this. No matter how much the critic has *reported* about the work/performance in question, there is assumed to be an entitlement to make criticisms. Some of these will be fair, as Keller suggested, but others will be foolish and ultimately invalid. All this depends on the character, experience, and qualifications (in the broadest sense) of the critic in question.

This leads us to the example of the English musician, William Glock, who was propelled by circumstances into the complex and unpredictable world of newspaper criticism of music, in which listening is the first prerequisite of the critic. He was widely knowledgeable about music of many periods. He was also very much aware of the restricted repertory current at the time in England and the very limited viewpoints of many English musicians. Above all, he was especially interested in contemporary music and by various means sought to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of its nature, especially the music of what he saw as the most important composers.

Newspaper Music Critic

After showing considerable talent as a pianist at school, Glock then studied at the University of Cambridge, absorbing the lively Cambridge musical environment and attending concerts in London. First of all he completed

3 Hans Keller, "Stravinsky's Performance of 'Agon': A Report," *Tempo* 100 (1972): 19–22.

a degree in History and started a Music degree which he did not complete. His musical experience was enormous, however, especially as an organ scholar and regular performer. He was able to continue his piano playing, including a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C minor under Boris Ord, the Director of Music at King's College. Having heard Artur Schnabel play in Cambridge, he determined to study piano with him. Despite narrow-minded discouragement from the composers Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, but with help from Professor Edward Dent and valuable financial support, he was able to study with Schnabel in Berlin for nearly three years, before returning to London in 1933 when conditions became difficult. With few prospects at the time of advancing his career on the piano, he accepted a job as Music Critic for the London newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, moving a year later to a similar position at the weekly Sunday newspaper *The Observer* until 1946. This provided the firm foundation for his future activities which changed the musical life of Britain for ever. His columns make very interesting reading today, focussing on a very wide and interesting range of topics, but notably considering the merits of much contemporary music, then widely disparaged by influential senior British musicians.

Glock's first experience of writing criticism for a newspaper gave him little time for reflection. Reports for *The Daily Telegraph* had to be submitted for publication the next day, usually consisting of simple descriptions and occasional critical remarks. Those for the weekly Sunday newspaper *The Observer* gave scope for thoughtful criticism in addition to factual reporting of events. A selection of reviews will give some idea of the scope of his writings. For example, in the pre-World War Two years Glock was given the opportunity to report somewhat controversially from the Salzburg Festival in August 1936⁴ in which the performances of Verdi's *Falstaff*, directed by Toscanini, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* under Bruno Walter and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* under Weingartner are reported and assessed critically. Glock was particularly impressive in his analysis of the performances of the most important singers as well as the contributions of the conductors. A report from concerts in Linz in 1936⁵ highlighted the symphonies of Bruckner, then almost unknown in England, and for which he gave very sympathetic accounts of their features. During the war Glock was able to carry on his reports to *The Observer* with some considerable difficulty while working

4 William Glock, "The Salzburg Festival," *The Observer*, August 9, 1936, 13.

5 William Glock, "The Festival at Linz," *The Observer*, July 26, 1936, 13.

in the Royal Air Force. He was stationed in the East Midlands in England from where he was able to report on the local musical events, particularly in Leicester (January 1944)⁶ and Nottingham (May 1945)⁷. His reports on the truncated 1939 and 1940 seasons of the Proms make somewhat depressing reading, but at the same time also give a clue to the motivation which powered his later activities in rejuvenating BBC music broadcasts and the London Proms season. He also reported enthusiastically on contemporary music, especially that of Michael Tippett (1943)⁸ and Bartók on 30 September 1945⁹. The unapproved obituary that he wrote on Bartók, a feared figure in the British musical establishment, led amazingly to his dismissal from the post on *The Observer*.

Developments

After leaving *The Observer*, he embarked on a varied programme of musical activities arising directly from his critical work with the newspapers. For the first significant activity, for the newly established BBC Third Programme, he was invited to undertake a wide-ranging survey of new developments in broadcast music in a number of important musical centres in mainland Europe which included Munich, Prague, Vienna and Berlin. It became quickly obvious to Glock, with his critical attention, that much of the more advanced music performed in Europe was almost completely unknown in England or indeed in any of the United Kingdom. Moreover, there was no desire in the British musical establishment to become familiar with contemporary developments. This encouraged him to think of ways that he could change this situation.

One way that this could be effective was to undertake something similar to the specialist continental summer 'schools' which combined performance of a very high quality with support from an education programme which enlightened the performance. There were a number of centres which specialised in contemporary music, such as Darmstadt, which attracted both composers and performers. This idea was to bear fruit in the Summer Schools which Glock was invited to operate. The first, in 1947, at Bryanston in Dorset, attracted a number of composers and performers to perform and to give lectures on music. Among the visiting musicians were Hindemith, Bo-

6 William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, January 16, 1944, 2.

7 William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, May 27, 1945, 2.

8 William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, April 25, 1943, 2.

9 William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, September 30, 1945, 2.

ris Blacher, Enesco and Nadia Boulanger. It operated for five years before being transferred in 1952 to Dartington Hall in Devon (also in the South of England) where it really gained in importance, with many leading composers such as Berio, Nono, Maderna, Stravinsky and many others taking a prominent part.

Supplementing this was the invitation to Glock to become the editor of a new periodical called *The Score and IMA Magazine* which ran for 28 issues between 1949 and 1961. By all accounts it was a publication that was eagerly read by composers and performers alike, not just in the United Kingdom, but also in Europe and most importantly in the United States. Numerous articles were contributed by composers such as Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt, John Cage, Stravinsky, Luigi Nono, Roman Vlad, Luciano Berio and even more significantly, Roberto Gerhard, Elliott Carter and Pierre Boulez. Informed and informative articles appeared that presented composers who were very little known at the time in the United Kingdom, such as Hans Werner Henze, Goffredo Petrassi and Edgard Varèse. Special issues were devoted to Stravinsky, who of course was well known, mainly from his early Russian ballets, but also the then little known Olivier Messiaen as the centre of attention in three extensive and well informed articles by the brilliant young David Drew¹⁰. One whole issue was devoted to the detailed study of the music of the virtually unknown Roberto Gerhard, who then had only four published works and whose music was rarely performed in the country of his escape from Spain. Boulez's notorious article "Schoenberg is dead"¹¹ was an early contribution, as was the famous essay by Theodor W. Adorno entitled "Modern Music is Growing Old".¹²

BBC Controller of Music

In 1959 Glock was appointed Controller of Music at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a position of considerable influence. He completely overhauled the content of the BBC's Third Programme and the Proms. He introduced into the broadcasts and the concerts much more adventurous music, especially the contemporary music now being performed on the continent, notably works by Stravinsky, Webern, Schoenberg, Boulez

10 David Drew, "Messiaen—a provisional study," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 10 (December 1954): 33–49; 13 (September 1955): 59–73; 14 (December 1955): 41–61.

11 Pierre Boulez, "Schoenberg is Dead," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 6 (May 1952): 16–22.

12 Theodor W. Adorno, "Modern Music is Growing Old," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 18 (December 1956): 27–34.

and Stockhausen. Glock initiated a stream of BBC commissions that helped a number of composers. Now, not without controversy, he had the British musical public at his command. The public concerts, mostly with BBC Symphony Orchestra, presented programmes containing challenging contemporary works. The programmes for the Proms included large numbers of 20th century classics and a wide range of BBC commissions. He left the BBC in 1973, but the legacy of his programmes continued with his successors. The BBC Symphony Orchestra often conducted by Antal Dorati, Colin Davis and later Pierre Boulez, took adventurous contemporary music programmes abroad, notably to the United States, to widespread acclaim.

General Editor of Eulenburg Books

Glock's practical application of his mission to improve the standing and dissemination, mostly of contemporary music, but also of earlier music as well, was considerably enabled by his position in the 1970s and early 1980s as the general editor of a new enterprise by Schott Music entitled Eulenburg Books. While among the published books, there appeared excellent volumes on Debussy¹³ and Fauré¹⁴ and Ian Kemp's masterly study of the English composer Michael Tippett,¹⁵ what stand out are the two books on Boulez, *Conversations with Célestin Deliege*¹⁶, and the wide ranging *Pierre Boulez A Symposium*,¹⁷ as well as the first comprehensive and penetrating study of the music of the American composer Elliott Carter.¹⁸

Three Composers

Using all these activities, Glock singled out for special treatment three composers who had not yet established themselves among British audiences: the Catalan Roberto Gerhard, the American Elliott Carter and the Frenchman Pierre Boulez. All three composers were also prolific writers of essays, Gerhard in Spanish and English, Carter mostly in English and Boulez in French and sometimes English. All three were often outspoken and con-

13 Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* (London: Eulenburg, 1976) and Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: Eulenburg, 1979).

14 Robert Orledge, *Gabriel Fauré* (London: Eulenburg, 1979).

15 Ian Kemp, *Tippett, the composer and his music* (London: Eulenburg, 1984).

16 Pierre Boulez, *Conversations with Célestin Deliege* (London: Eulenburg, 1976).

17 William Glock, ed., *Pierre Boulez, a Symposium* (London: Eulenburg, 1986).

18 David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 1st edition (London: Eulenburg, 1983).

troversial, defining techniques and philosophies of contemporary thought, not just music. Very early on in the early 1950s, Glock recognised their very distinctive and important characters, both in their compositions and in their writings. He visited continental meetings, notably the ISCM festival in Baden-Baden in 1955, which was the location for the first performances of Gerhard's Symphony No. 1 and Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître*, both conducted by Hans Rosbaud, and Elliott Carter's Sonata for cello and piano.

Roberto Gerhard

Gerhard had fled from Franco's Spain to England in 1939 and made his home in Cambridge with a composition fellowship at King's College.¹⁹ His works in the first decade of his life in England were relatively modest, deriving from his Catalan and Spanish background. He then returned to the twelve-note technique which he had derived from his study with Schoenberg with a short serial work, *Capriccio* for flute of 1949, the foundation for most of the music he was now going to write. In the early 1950s with only four published works, Glock published his important article "Tonality in Twelve-Tone music" in *The Score* in 1952 and a second article "The Contemporary Musical Situation" in June 1956.²⁰ His reputation spread steadily, notably with the premiere of his outstanding Symphony No. 1, at the ISCM Festival in Baden-Baden on 21 June 1955, which Glock attended with great enthusiasm and which proved to be a landmark in Gerhard's development. It extended Schoenberg's twelve-note technique in a unique way, creating a dramatic work whose secrets lay in the history of the Spanish civil war. Glock then presented Gerhard with a career-changing edition of *The Score* which featured in-depth studies of his music.²¹ In 1957 he invited Gerhard to give a course at the Dartington Summer School joining a very distinguished list of composers. With Glock's appointment as Controller of Music of the BBC, Gerhard's position was very strong. A combination of prominent performances, and commissions followed from Glock's BBC Music

- 19 Niall O'Loughlin, "Escape from Catalonia: The Composing Experience of Roberto Gerhard," in *Glasbene migracije: stičišče evropske raznolikosti – Musical Migrations: Crossroads of European musical diversity*, ed. Jernej Weiss (Koper, Ljubljana: Univerza na Primorskem, Festival Ljubljana, 2017), 381–400, <https://zalozba.upr.si/ISBN/978-961-6984-94-2.pdf>.
- 20 Roberto Gerhard, "Tonality in Twelve-Tone music," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 6 (May 1952): 23–35; Roberto Gerhard, "The Contemporary Musical Situation," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 16 (June 1956): 7–18.
- 21 William Glock, ed., *The Score and IMA Magazine* 17 [Special Roberto Gerhard issue] (September 1956) including "Comment," 7.

Division. The First Symphony was performed in the UK for the first time by the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 14 February 1962 conducted by Rudolf Schwarz²² and at the Proms on 7 September 1962 conducted by Norman Del Mar. The second part of the Proms performance comprised the Symphony, while the first half consisted of works by Beethoven (Piano Concerto No. 5 and Symphony No. 4) directed by the principal Proms conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent, who was not in sympathy with many modern works. This was typical of Glock's programming. A BBC commission was soon awarded for the Symphony No. 2, first performed in London on 28 October 1959 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Schwarz. The Symphony No. 3 ('Collages'), a Koussevitzky Foundation commission, was first performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 8 February 1961 also conducted by Schwarz and later recorded by the same orchestra under Frederik Prausnitz. The first major recording of Gerhard's music was published in 1965²³ including the First Symphony conducted by Antal Dorati, recorded under the auspices of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Further commissions followed including the brilliant Concerto for Orchestra and the large-scale vocal and orchestral setting of *The Plague*, derived from the novel by Albert Camus (a BBC commission). The Symphony No. 4 was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, but it was performed extensively in Europe by the BBC Symphony Orchestra who also recorded the work.²⁴ None of this would have happened if it had not been for the actions of William Glock.

Elliott Carter

Carter's music was actively promoted by Glock. The first recognition came with the publication in 1955 in volume 12 of *The Score* of Glock's "A Note on Elliott Carter" and Carter's article "The Rhythmic Basis of American Mu-

22 Colin Mason, "Roberto Gerhard's First Symphony," *The Musical Times* (February 1962): 99–100.

23 Roberto Gerhard, *Symphony No. 1/Dances from Don Quixote*, sound recording on ASD 613 and ALP 2063 (London: EMI, 1965). The accompanying notes were written by Colin Mason and Joaquim Homs, though it is suspected by Julian White that Gerhard himself produced the detailed analytical presentation. The editor of the notes was David Drew, a friend of Glock's, and a firm advocate of Gerhard's music.

24 Roberto Gerhard, *Symphony No. 4 and Violin Concerto*, BBC SO, conducted by Colin Davis, sound recording on ZRG 701 (London: Decca/Argo, 1972); reissued on SRCD 274 (Burnham, Bucks, UK: Lyrita, 2008).

sic".²⁵ Glock had known and played Carter's Piano Sonata of 1945–46, the first of "*three seminal works*" that James Wierzbicki identified in his study of the composer.²⁶ The other two pieces from this list, the Cello Sonata of 1948 and the String Quartet No. 1 of 1952 quickly became familiar to Glock. Carter took part in Glock's Summer School at Dartington in 1957. From 1959 his music began to feature in the BBC's Proms programmes, eventually a total of 27 works. Unlike for Roberto Gerhard, however, Glock was much more sparing of performances with early performances when he was at the BBC. There are only three: Variations for orchestra (24 August 1966), Double Concerto (30 July 1970) and the Concerto for orchestra (10 August 1972), but these three works were at the time of the performances major ones in Carter's numerically modest output. An early performance of the Double Concerto on Thursday 30 July 1970, appeared in a programme surprisingly featuring anonymous Medieval dances, and music by J. S. Bach and Francesco Landini. It was in a move like this that Glock was able to draw attention to new and apparently unknown works. The Concerto for Orchestra was performed twice in the Proms in the 1970s in two completely different contexts: the first in a 20th-century programme including works by Cage, Messiaen and Stravinsky with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Boulez. In a second Proms performance on 30 August 1975 (after Glock had left the BBC), Boulez conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert which paired the Carter Concerto with Mahler's Ninth Symphony.

Clearly the two dozen performances at the BBC Proms of Carter's music after the end of Glock's tenure of the post of Controller of the BBC's Music Division indicates that his successors carried on his support for Elliott Carter. Meanwhile Glock's position as Editor of Eulenburg Books put him in a position to promote his cause in a different way. The first comprehensive and outstanding analytical study of Carter's music by David Schiff was published by Eulenburg in 1983, under Glock's editorship, transforming at a stroke the reception of his music, especially in Europe.²⁷ Although Carter's music was firmly established in the United States, and to some extent in the United Kingdom, it had made only some headway in Europe. With-

25 William Glock, "A Note on *Elliott Carter*," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 12 (June 1955): 47–52. Elliott Carter, "The Rhythmic Basis of American Music," *The Score and IMA Magazine* 12 (June 1955): 27–32.

26 James Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter* (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois, 2011), 32–49.

27 Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 1st edition.

out the appearance of Schiff's study, the European position of Carter's music would have been a great deal more difficult.

Pierre Boulez

The position of Pierre Boulez was different for a number reasons. The most obvious difference from Gerhard and Carter was that Boulez was a supremely gifted orchestral conductor, especially of difficult contemporary music. Glock encouraged and cajoled him into undertaking the enormously important task of presenting the most important advanced music of the time. Boulez did not conduct all the new works at the proms or the public symphony concerts, because in addition Glock did have the services of talented English conductors like Norman Del Mar and John Carewe, and of the then chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Rudolf Schwarz. This was especially important for the works in the concerts that were not to the taste of the principal Proms conductor in the 1960s, Sir Malcolm Sargent.

The other important factor was that Boulez was a fastidious composer, taking a long time to compose his works to his satisfaction as well as constantly revising his music. Consequently, unlike Gerhard but like Carter, he had relatively few acknowledged works to his name. The most famous of his early works, *Le marteau sans maître*, provided Glock with a opportunity to draw the public's attention to the composer. It had had various performances in England in the few years after the premiere in Baden-Baden. It was, moreover, one key to Glock's promotion of the composer's reputation, in one of the most notorious examples of his programming. The first in a series of Thursday Invitation Concerts initiated by Glock took place in the BBC Studios in Maida Vale, North London on 7 January 1960 with a performance of Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* played by the New Music Ensemble directed by the brilliant young conductor John Carewe and outrageously sandwiched between two late String Quintets of Mozart (in E flat, K614 before *Le marteau sans maître* and in C, K515 after the interval), played by the distinguished Amadeus String Quartet and Cecil Aronowitz.²⁸ The delightful opening of the E flat Quintet set the tone for the frenetic motivic activity of the Boulez, while the beautiful melodic and motivic activity of the C major Quintet brought stark relief to the audience. The shock resonated among the audience at the concert,²⁹ who would never

28 Personal notes from the concert.

29 Personal recollection.

forget *Le marteau sans maître*. The Boulez work was soon reported in detail, from a repeat performance, by Harold Rutland in *The Musical Times*.³⁰ *Le marteau sans maître* was performed four times (one incomplete) at the Proms, but was joined by numerous other works championed by Glock. One such was the large-scale *Pli selon pli* of which one movement only was performed in 1961 before the complete work was played in 1969. Once established at the BBC Proms, Boulez's works never left the event.³¹ Even long after Glock's retirement and death, there was a very important series in 2012 at the Proms of all the Beethoven symphonies in which Daniel Barenboim conducted the East-West Divan Orchestra. Interspersed between the symphonies were numerous works by Pierre Boulez, contrasting the old and the new in a brilliant juxtaposition that William Glock himself would have approved.³²

Boulez's music also benefitted enormously from two books published under the editorship of Glock. The conversations with the Belgian musicologist Célestin Deliège, translated from the French, gave a very detailed but sympathetic overview of Boulez's music up to 1975.³³ Glock had an even more important role in the symposium that he edited and was published in 1986.³⁴ Included were important essays on Boulez's work by the music critic Peter Heyworth, formerly of *The Observer* and *The New Yorker* (the first 50 years), Susan Bradshaw (the instrumental and vocal music), the American pianist Charles Rosen (the piano music), Célestin Deliège (the poetic connections) and, Glock himself in a remarkable exposition of the composer's work with him at the BBC.

30 Harold Rutland, "Notes and Comments," *The Musical Times*, April 1960, 233–4. See also the wide-ranging and very perceptive analytical chapter by Paul Griffiths in *Boulez* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 28–38. For detailed investigation of the serial construction see Pascal Decroupet's "Serial Organisation and Beyond: Cross-Relations of Determinants in *Le Marteau sans maître* and the Dynamic Pitch-Algorithm of 'Constellation'," in: Edward Campbell and Peter O'Hagan, *Pierre Boulez Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 108–38.

31 For details of Boulez's work with Glock in the years in London see: Peter O'Hagan, "Pierre Boulez in London: the William Glock Years," in: Edward Campbell and Peter O'Hagan, *Pierre Boulez Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 303–26.

32 The works were *Derive 2* (20 July), *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (21 July), *Mémoriale* and *Messagesquisses* (23 July) and *Anthèmes 2* (24 July). Video recordings of all the Beethoven performances were issued on DVD (London: Decca 074 3817, 2012), but without the Boulez works.

33 Boulez, *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*.

34 Glock, *Pierre Boulez: a Symposium*.

Glock's Achievement

It would be difficult to overestimate Glock's influence on the development of these three composers. Commissions, performances and articles always seemed to follow Glock's initial interest. All this was achieved by a musician who had spent his formative working years as a music critic, reporting on concerts, broadcasts, writing obituaries and making critical assessments of the work of composers and performing musicians. It was this experience which reinforced his feeling that British audiences were unresponsive to new music and especially the reputations of a small number of selected composers. It was as if he made it his mission at all costs to promote and publicise this small group of contemporary composers. At the same time using his numerous opportunities, he was able to transform the response of the listening public on the radio and that of the audiences at the BBC Symphony Orchestra's public concerts, mostly at the Royal Festival Hall in London and at the BBC London Proms, as well as many other locations in the United Kingdom, and later on in many places worldwide.

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