

Daily Telegraph Letters

Arnold at the Proms

10 October 2004

SIR – I wish I could play the cello as elegantly as Julian Lloyd Webber writes (Arts, Mar 6). But it is misleading for him to keep complaining about the “close-ranked, claustrophobic musical establishment of the 1950s and 1960s” who supported avant-garde composers “while dismissing melody and harmony”.

The fact is that Sir William Glock at the BBC was an adventurous and generous patron of the widest possible range of music from Machaut, through Monteverdi and Mozart, to Maxwell Davies and countless living composers. He supported the work of Malcolm Arnold and commissioned works from him for the Proms. Lloyd Webber's artful sentence about Arnold's music at the Proms seems to try to conceal the fact that it was actually performed in 1996 and 1999, as well as last season: some 24 performances have been heard over the years.

Nicholas Kenyon

Director, BBC Proms
London W1

Glock against the clock

11 October 2004

Sir – I feel that William Walton would agree with Lloyd Webber that Malcolm Arnold deserves a celebration (Arts, Mar 6). Laurence Olivier, a very close friend, used to console William by saying: “Just as in the theatre you are seven years in and seven years out; if you live long enough, you will again hear your music played.”

I am glad to say that William lived longer than Sir William Glock.

Lady Walton

Isola d'Ischia, Italy

Frets the troubled soul

Sir – I was chairman of the avant garde, Arts Council-funded New Macnaghtan concerts in 1976 to 1979: Nicholas Kenyon was on the committee (Arts, Mar 6; Letters Mar 10, 11). There was no place whatever for middle-ground composers such as Walton and Arnold in this period.

I attempted to bridge the gap between popular and avant garde music and partially succeeded. For example, Tony Coe, jazz saxophonist and composer, was given a commission which he performed with the Delme String Quartet.

Sir William Glock, father figure and patron, with public funds, of the British avant garde, was also an excellent pianist. But for his own pleasure and in public he preferred to play Haydn and other classical compositions. This is the equivalent of a modern architect choosing to live in a Georgian house.

In fact, the idea of playing avant garde music for pleasure is laughable. When patronage is corporate, sponsors don't have to put their personal funds, trust and reputation where their real preferences are.

There were, and still are, as Lady Walton and Julian Lloyd Webber observe, many other non-avant garde who deserve celebration; after all, avant gardeism is now old hat.

David Hellewell

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