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Encounters with British Composers

Andrew Palmer

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This book features interviews with leading and upcoming British composers who use the same raw materials but produce classical music that takes very different forms. Uniquely, Andrew Palmer approaches the sometimes baffling worldof contemporary music from the point of view of the inquisitive, music-loving amateur rather than the professional critic or musicologist. Readers can eavesdrop on conversations in which composers are asked a number of questionsabout their professional lives and practices, with the emphasis on the aesthetic sensibilities and psychological processes behind composing rather than technique. Throughout, the book seeks to explore why composers write the kindof music they write, and what they want their music to do. Along the way, readers are confronted with an unspoken but equally important question: if some composers are writing music that the public doesn't want to engage with, who's to blame for that? Are composers out of touch with their public, or are we too lazy to give their music the attention it deserves? Interviewees include: Julian Anderson, Simon Bainbridge, Sally Beamish, George Benjamin, Michael Berkeley, Judith Bingham, Harrison Birtwistle, Howard Blake, Gavin Bryars, Diana Burrell, Tom Coult, Gordon Crosse, Jonathan Dove, David Dubery, Michael Finnissy, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Alexander Goehr, Howard Goodall, Christopher Gunning, Morgan Hayes, Robin Holloway, Oliver Knussen, James MacMillan, Colin Matthews, David Matthews, Peter Maxwell Davies, John McCabe, Thea Musgrave, Roxanna Panufnik, Anthony Payne, Elis Pehkonen, Joseph Phibbs, Gabriel Prokofiev, John Rutter, Robert Saxton, John Tavener, Judith Weir, Debbie Wiseman, Christopher Wright

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