

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

ings, etc., it covers all music, Eastern or Western, past or present, including the music of our new electronic medium. Although this new music is being gradually accepted, there are still people who, while admitting that it is "interesting," say, "but is it music?" It is a question I am only too familiar with. Until quite recently I used to hear it so often in regard to my own works, that, as far back as the twenties, I decided to call my music "organized sound" and myself, not a musician, but "a worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities." Indeed, to stubbornly conditioned ears, anything new in music has always been called noise. But after all what is music but organized noises? And a composer, like all artists, is an organizer of disparate elements. Subjectively, *noise* is any sound one doesn't like.

Our new medium has brought to composers almost endless possibilities of expression, and opened up for them the whole mysterious world of sound. For instance, I have always felt the need of a kind of continuous flowing curve that instruments could not give me. That is why I used sirens in several of my works. Today such effects are easily obtainable by electronic means. In this connection it is curious to note that it is this lack of flow that seems to disturb Eastern musicians in our Western music. To their ears it does not glide, sounds jerky, composed of edges of intervals and holes and, as an Indian pupil of mine expressed it, "jumping like a bird from branch to branch." To them apparently our Western music seems to sound much as it sounds to us when a record is played backward. But playing a Hindu record of a melodic vocalization backward, I found that it had the same smooth flow as when played normally, scarcely altered at all.

The electronic medium is also adding an unbelievable variety of new timbres to our musical store, but most important of all, it has freed music from the tempered system, which has prevented music from keeping pace with the other arts and with science. Composers are now able, as never before, to satisfy the dictates of that inner ear of the imagination. They are also lucky so far in not being hampered by esthetic codification—at least not yet! But I am afraid it will not be long before some musical mortician begins embalming electronic music in rules.

We should also remember that no machine is a wizard, as we are beginning to think, and we must not expect our electronic devices to compose for us. Good music and bad music will be composed by electronic means, just as good and bad music have been composed for instruments. The computing machine is a marvelous invention and seems almost superhuman. But, in reality, it is as limited as the mind of the individual who feeds it material. Like the computer, the ma-