



columns

schizophrenia during the 1960s. He was eventually helped to recover, and subsequently became a psychotherapist himself. His young therapist, Barbro Sandin, became an internationally famous researcher into psychotherapeutic aspects of the treatment of schizophrenia. She developed the Säter Model at the Säter Mental Hospital; was awarded an International Prize of Honour by ISPS (the International Symposium for Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia) in London, 1997, and in 1998 she instituted in Ludvika a Nursing Home Foundation for young people suffering from schizophrenia.

Carl Unander-Scharin is a largely self-taught Swedish composer, a professional singer who has been composing for some 20 years – on his showing, one whose name should become known outside his own country. *The King of Fools* (1995–1996) is his first stage opera, composed for the voices of the singers in its successful premiere and this 1998 recording.

The small instrumental ensemble has a quartet of solo strings, six winds and

percussion, with recorder, synthesizer and 'radio-organist', all used with economy, precision and inventiveness throughout. The singers double in different roles, sometimes as both patients and hospital staff. The psychotic protagonist is accompanied by high strings in his interaction with the outer world, with the synthesizer for his hallucinations. In the first act he loses his grip on reality and descends into total detachment. In the second act human contact from an empathic social worker leads to therapeutic help and a tenuous recovery.

This is a multi-layered and subtle work. Its brilliantly conceived libretto sharply characterises the world of mental patients in Sweden at the time, with an emphasis on mechanistic physical treatments with drugs and electroconvulsive therapy, ignoring the content and pain of the patients' inner worlds. Elgard Johnsson, writing in 1985, acknowledges changes in standard treatment methods by that time.

Pathos and poetic imagery coexist with cruel caricature. The ward doctor, Napoleon, operates according to the

'medical model' Bible of the medical director, God the Father, and the social worker trainee, who wants to try something different, is God the Mother. There is a drug aria, a neuroleptic chorus, an aria about 'psychotic states of mind caused by biochemical changes in the brain...', occupational therapy 'all evil will be cured by hard work...' and much else that will be familiar to all who have worked in the not-so-old mental hospitals.

The performances and recording are exemplary and the instrumental music, both original and accessible, never overwhelms the singers – music theatre, perhaps, without the elaboration and complexity of most contemporary operas. The lavishly illustrated 100 page booklet has a useful English summary of the Swedish text.

This is an unusual serious theatre work, marvellously realised for CD, absorbing throughout and moving too – once heard, never forgotten. It merits UK production and the attention of psychiatrists.

**P. Grahame Woolf**

## miscellany

### Institute of Psychotherapy and Disability call for members

The newly-formed and provisionally-named Institute of Psychotherapy and Disability (IPD) is now inviting applications for membership from psychiatrists and other mental health professionals working in learning disability. Further information, criteria for membership and application forms are available from Nicola Chadd, IPD Membership Secretary, Specialist Psychotherapy Service, Woodlands Road Clinic, Middlesbrough TS1 3BL (e-mail: nicola@chadds.freeseerve.co.uk).

### The year 2000 laureate of the Geneva Prize for Human Rights in Psychiatry

The Geneva Prize for Human Rights in Psychiatry was created in 1998 in Geneva

to award individuals or organisations having distinguished themselves through their work in the defence of fairness, humanistic values and human rights in the field of psychiatric care. The first award was given in September 2000 to an association named Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry. Dr Jim Birley (Chairman 1995–2000) accepted the prize. The prizewinner was selected from among a number of candidates from developing and developed countries by an international jury presided over by M. Robert Badinter, former French Minister of Justice. For more information on the prize please contact Fondation Prix de Genève pour les Droits de l'Homme en Psychiatrie, C/O Me Pierre Martin-Achard, Rue du Rhône 100, 1211 Genève 3, Switzerland; tel: +41 76 587 3631; e-mail: contact@geneva-prize.ch; http://www.geneva-prize.ch.

### Doctor's Support Network

The Doctor's Support Network (DSN) is a

warm, friendly self-help group for doctors with mental health problems. The group started about 4 years ago with one doctor's awareness of the isolation that can be felt when a doctor is ill, especially with mental health problems. The group believes that contact with and support from other doctors can help recovery and that appropriate support offered before a crisis develops helps defuse the situation.

The group is not group therapy, nor does it have other therapeutic aims, rather it seeks to reduce the isolation and stigma of mental health problems. There are London and Scottish branches of the DSN. The London branch meets once a month and there is a monthly newsletter sent to all members.

The group is hoping to start having occasional meetings in the Bristol area. Those interested should contact the DSN; tel: 07071 223 372; e-mail: janetp@uk.packardbell.org (Dr Janet Prentice).

## forthcoming events

Mole Conferences are the organisers of a series of four different afternoon seminars being held in London on aspects of cognitive-behavioural therapy: **An Introduction to Using Cognitive-Behavioural Imagery in Trauma Counselling** will take place on

28 March 2001 and **An Introduction to Case Conceptualisation from a Cognitive-Behavioural Perspective in Trauma Counselling** will take place on 16 May 2001; these will be followed by **An Introduction to a Cognitive-Behavioural Framework for Dealing**

**with Anxiety and Panic Attacks in Trauma Counselling** on 11 June 2001 and **An Introduction to a Cognitive-Behavioural Framework for Dealing with Flashbacks and Intrusive Thoughts and Images** on 28 June 2001. Mole Conferences would also like to