

## A BOB GILMORE FESTSCHRIFT: INTRODUCTION

Patrick Ozzard-Low

In this section of the journal we present five short papers in celebration of our friend and colleague Bob Gilmore (1961–2015), author, musicologist, performer, former editor of *TEMPO*, and inspirational teacher (Dartington College of Arts, Brunel University and Orpheus Research Centre in Music, Ghent). The papers were originally given during *The world according to Bob* – a ‘BobFest’ comprising two days of interwoven concerts and talks held at City University London and Cafe OTO on 1 and 2 March 2016. The events were motivated by the belief that Bob’s work and the nature of his presence – a characteristic mix of energy, openness, critical rigour, insight, gentleness, charm and ready humour – deserves particular recognition, and indeed contemplation.

In his authoritative biographies of Harry Partch and Claude Vivier, and his copious other writings, Bob was both consummate biographer/musicologist and stirring advocate for a range of radically new and highly individual music. To a degree his attitudes and tastes have been influential, perhaps prophetic. His special ability to form durable friendships with composers, and to write objectively about their music from a position of friendly confidence, helped to give his work an immediacy and an absence of pretension that blew fresh air into new music. For numerous composers fortunate enough to be graced by Bob’s encouragement and sparkle – I know because I was one of them – he was a kind of ‘composer’s angel’.

Even with the luxury of two full days it was always going to be impossible to do justice to Bob’s encyclopaedic interests, idiosyncratic tastes, or intellectual range. However, within the space of nine concerts *The world according to Bob* encompassed nine all-too-rare performances of pieces by Partch (where possible employing exact copies of Partch’s instruments – two Adapted Violas, Adapted Guitar and Kithara), three works each by Vivier and Horațiu Rădulescu (also a key figure in Bob’s Pantheon), and performances of pieces by a further 27 composers, all in some way connected to Bob: over 30 premieres altogether. This was made possible particularly by the presence of Scordatura – formerly Trio Scordatura, the group founded by Bob in 2006 with violist Elisabeth Smalt (Bob’s partner) and mezzo soprano Alfrun Schmid – together with many distinguished performer colleagues, from the UK, USA, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Ireland.

While all the talks gave tribute to Bob’s questioning spirit, most did not focus specifically on Bob’s work but rather reflected a continuation of concerns and conversations begun with him. Thus Frank Denyer considers the ‘troubled state’ of new music, and Paul Griffiths considers Frank Denyer; Sam Richards writes on

countercultural threads linking Harry Partch and the folk revival of the 30s and 40s; Marc Sabat presents his recent microtonal researches, and Kevin Volans reflects on 'non-conceptual composition'. Amongst the contributions not printed here, Christopher Fox's was notable for its consideration of Bob's legacy and the subtle distinctions between Bob's practice as scholar and performer/arranger; John Schneider reflected on the problems of recreating Partch's instrumentarium, and John Croft essayed some persuasive ideas on 'Spectral Music and the Taming of Sonority'; Jennifer Walshe, Linda Buckley and Scott Mc Laughlin talked about Bob's generous support of their work and that of many other younger Irish composers.

On 3 September 2016 BBC Radio 3 *Hear and Now* broadcast a selection of pieces from the concerts. Filmmaker Bruno Mathez videoed all the events and in future we hope to make some of this material available. Meanwhile, the BobFest programme brochure, which also contains tributes from friends and colleagues, can be downloaded from [www.bobgilmore.co.uk](http://www.bobgilmore.co.uk).

Bob's tolerant and exuberant spirit is very much missed.