

# Significant sound of silence

By IFAN PAYNE

## REVIEWS

TORU Takemitsu is a significant international figure who has made his mark with compositions which vary in scale from his larger *Far Calls*, calling for violin and orchestra to a variety of beautifully constructed miniatures for smaller orchestral forces.

*Rain Coming* and *Rain Spell* are recent examples of this composer's shorter pieces and they were performed by The London Sinfonietta as part of their concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff, last night.

Whatever the scale, Takemitsu's music has a thorough consistency of style. His pastel-shaded music — which reflects in sound the delicately and sparsely woven appearance of his scores — consists of brief melodic strands flitting amongst harmonic wisps.

For Takemitsu is a composer who marries the impressionistic style of the West with the calm introspection of his Japanese heritage. His music brings to mind, and requires the same deep concentration as, the ordered, simple, yet spiritually moving Japanese stone gardens.

For all the instrumental delicacy of *Rain Coming* and *Rain Spell*, both beautifully performed by the London Sinfonietta various with and without the conductor Diego Masson, the music has weight, strength and a deeply satisfying resolution amongst the stasis. To borrow a notion of Lao Tzu, it is the silence

between the notes that makes the most significant sound.

A misprint in the programme got *Rain Spell* confused with another Takemitsu work, *Waterways*.

Where Takemitsu's music is all refinement, that of Harrison Birtwhistle is all noise and bustle. His *Secret Theatre* for soloists within the orchestra, manages to stir reminiscences of Thea Musgrave's *Clarinet Concerto* through its similar concern for the spatial location of the soloist; Charles Ives in the sudden melodic order arising out of the seeming chaos; and in juxtaposition of old and new, George Rochberg's *Music for Magic Theatre*.

Theatrically, the music contained jocularity amongst the angst, the occasional rhythmic order amongst the skittering notes and, most effective of all, the striking ending with a lonely viola pleading its two-note phrase against the dying drone of the double base.

The concert concluded with Kurt Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*. It is not surprising that this ensemble, which produced its own fine collection of Weill recordings a few years ago, should produce the authenticity of sound that can be heard on the pre-war German Telefunken records.

Only Diego Masson's tendency towards brisk tempi kept the ensemble teetering towards the occasional raggedness.