DURRANT'S

DURRANT HOUSE
HERBAL HILL
LONDON E.C.1
01-278 1733

THE FINANCIAL TIMES
10, CANNON STREET,
LONDON, E.C.4

ISSUE DATED 12 DEC 1972

Round House

Bussotti

by MAX LOPPERT

Each Music Digest concert is putting Londoners further in its debt: for filling those vast gaps of unknown contemporary music. Sunday night's was devoted to Sylvano Bussotti, for many years now Italy's "bad boy" of the avant-garde.

There is a common denominator to the three pieces given (however else they differ)—an image of the piano as sex-object, passive partner in three ritualised homo-erotic tableaux wherein the player stimulates the body of the piano—keys, interior, framework—with a series of increasingly dramatic gestures, musical and physical, until a climax of sustained and sadistic violence is achieved. In *Pour Clavier*, this image is attempted in purely musical terms, bound to the limits of piano and pianist rather than given overtly theatrical expression. Bussotti has in fact placed himself at the very end of the virtuoso pianist-composer tradition, when for the audience swooning cries of passion were coaxed from the instrument with lover-like devotion. Now, with the tradition dead, the Romantic spirit exhausted, the ritual becomes a wholly private one, enacted within the nerve-ends of the composer himself, the audience placed intentionally at the keyhole.

Pour Clavier was, in a performance of herioc proportions and remarkable virtuosity by Roger Woodward, a disturbing and sometimes beautiful experience, the softness of its caresses, its delicate nail-scratches on key and wood perhaps more disturbing for the voyeur-listener than the expected violent assaults and the grinding climax. A pity the work was repeated: something so dependent on shock-reaction is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Even a second time, nevertheless, a melancholy poetry, of sated senses, pervaded the building.

After the interval we heard *Per Tre*, a brief, empty piece of further piano titillation for three players; and then *5 pieces for David Tudor*, scored in graphic notation and thus, one assumes, "orchestrated" by Mr. Woodward. So generally assiduous an interpreter of composers' intentions must not be blamed for much of the nonsense that followed—monks in cassocks, a blonde flautist virginally surrounded with lilies, erotic murmurings on tape, and finally Mr. Woodward in fencing mask, assaulting the piano with chains and mallet. In tune with Bussotti's revealed proclivities, yes; but a banal, risible act of impotence by the side of *Pour Clavier*.