

ALAN HACKER, OBE



Alan Hacker, who left the University last September, received the OBE in the New Year Honours list. David Blake, of the Department of music, writes:

Some years ago, I was reading through a score by a young composer and found in the clarinet part the direction "hackerissimo". Few people with interest in new music during the last twenty-five years would have much doubt what was meant. As a founder member of the Pierrot Players and Fires of London, Alan Hacker brought an instrumental technique and musical imagination to the musical score which had the profoundest effect on composers not only of the so-called Manchester School. A list of the works commissioned by or specially composed for him would constitute virtually a history of British music over more than two decades - I would certainly recommend it to any researcher as a valuable way of approaching such a study. The passage mentioned above was extremely high and loud but the "new expressionism", like the old,

explored both ends of the decibel range and no-one who has heard Alan Hacker produce a sound from nothing to the edge of audibility and on up to as loud as pianissimo will ever forget it. Nor are they likely ever to forget his unique performances of the Mozart Concerto and Quintet - unique not only because of the use of his own re-creation, the basset clarinet, allowing the notes of the concerto as it was written to be played, but also because of that other re-creation, the sound-world of Mozart's instrument. Alan's research into and advocacy of the playing of simple-keyed clarinets, with all their problems of tuning, can be seen as a prime force behind present-day attitudes towards performance of baroque and classical music. This writer would maintain that his recording of the Weber Grand Duo on a boxwood instrument will come to be considered as of historic significance.

To have had a musician of such quality as a colleague in the Music Department for so many years has been a privilege and feelings about his departure must be a mixture of gratitude, regret and anticipation. Alan has always been one for fresh starts and the development of his career as a conductor has long been important to him. As he now devotes himself fully to it, we can look forward, in the fields of opera and symphony, to the sort of inspired music-making we have come to expect from him as a soloist. He can be safe in the knowledge that York will not forget him and his friends and admirers await with impatience his next concert here.