

music will necessarily lay overwhelmingly greater stress on the practical exercise of his pupil than on the theory which he may adduce in order to illuminate and guide this practice. The real work of the composer lies in the unconscious or, let us say, super-conscious activity of his musical impulse; the meager part that calculation plays is entirely subordinate in remaining either purely instrumental—in the process of orientation towards concrete problems—or critical and *ex post facto*. If we are to have theory, however, it must at least furnish a reasonably complete picture of the musical language and the elements of which it is composed. And while in a musical culture of strong and self-confident tradition, like that of Germany and to a lesser extent the rest of Europe, much may be left to the already formed instinct of the gifted student—the background shaping this instinct is, for good or ill, far more powerful than any musical theory can be,—in one like our own, which is still in process of formation and where all but a few exceptionally gifted individuals are still in a phase of groping and uncertainty, it is infinitely more important that the basic realities of music, technically as well as otherwise, be presented in as clear and flawless a manner as possible.

Roger Sessions

HITHER AND YON IN THE 20TH CENTURY

IN spite of a none too cultivated literary style and some occasional crudities of expression, David Ewen has gathered entertaining material concerning the lives and personalities of those whom he has chosen to present in his latest volume, *Twentieth Century Composers*, (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York.)

The material obviously entailed research in existing biographies and magazine articles, and by means of personal interviews; the result is a book which the layman can read with interest—informative, not too technical. Its value is anecdotal rather than critical.

One might question the choice of composers: Stravinsky, Strauss, Elgar, Sibelius, Ravel, Prokofieff, Falla, Loeffler, Bartok, Bloch, Delius, Hindemith, Schönberg, Malipiero, Roy

Harris, Vaughan Williams, and Gershwin. Both inclusions and omissions challenge criticism. Modern France is curiously overlooked; one or two Englishmen appear whose work belongs to the nineteenth rather than the twentieth century, while the younger men are neglected; Russians who have remained at home are non-existent, and the United States is represented by foreign-born composers and by Roy Harris and the late George Gershwin. The latter certainly deserves his place. Mr. Ewen says "Gershwin's importance as a musical influence cannot be overestimated . . . whatever his musical shortcomings as a composer may be—and they are many. . . . Largely through Gershwin's taste and ingenuity, his foresight in applying jazz to larger symphonic forms and his ability to make it speak a more poignant message, he has made it an important musical idiom—important enough for composers like Maurice Ravel, Ernst Krenek, Kurt Weill, Igor Stravinsky, and others to adopt."

Isn't there some mistake here? Gershwin is obviously the product of his own earlier jazz, acquired in Tin Pan Alley when he was a song plugger. As for the Europeans, they were influenced by jazz before they knew the later Gershwin.

The section on Stravinsky also contains an error—or at least a confused statement. On one page he says, "*Apollon* was the first work of Stravinsky to be given its world première in America" and on the next, of *Jeu de cartes*, "This was the first time when a Stravinsky ballet had its world première in America." It is, after all, a matter of record that *Apollon Musagète* was given in ballet form at Washington, D. C., in 1928.

A "model" plan has been devised for these sketches. Section one sets the stage as it were, often entertainingly. Section two starts uncompromisingly with the fact that the composer under discussion was born—when and where. An analysis of influences, musical studies, and achievements follows, broken here and there with hitherto untold incidents that help to make the pages readable. The final section is devoted to personalities, including comment on appearance. Thus Stravinsky is small and thin; Strauss is tall and lean; Sibelius gives the impression of a professional wrestler; Ravel is short and slim; Prokofieff is of medium height and solid in build; Falla is small; Loeffler was tall,

well-built and erect; Bartok is little and lithe, etc., etc. The plan is followed out with a regularity which becomes monotonous; no artistic device conceals the technic of construction.

There are, however, many sympathetic touches, new biographical angles, and colorful bits such as Mr. Ewen's account of his meeting with Sibelius; his description of Falla's surroundings; his analysis of Bloch's Hebraic quality; his revelations of Delius' early private life and his account of Hindemith and the Nazis.

Marion Bauer

MEMORIAL TO BERG

THERE are two approaches to the writing of artists' biographies: one of belles-lettres, the other of analysis. The first way is good for dealing with the private life, it may serve in some respects to improve on reality. The extreme example of such easy biographical fiction is Franz Werfel's *Verdi* which is openly called a novel. One need not be blind to its poetic qualities to point out that it has projected a slightly incorrect conception both of Verdi and of Wagner.

Pure analysis of artistic phenomena frequently suffers from too great concentration. Hardly any one is capable of closely following the excellent interpretation of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* made by Heinrich Schenker. Here is an objectivity that bars every approach to the artist by the layman.

The most popular compromise between fiction and analysis is the form of objective biography, interspersed with simple and intelligible descriptions of the works. Literature of this type on Beethoven and Wagner is abundantly supplied. Its intentional appeal is to the demands of the average reader and book-purchaser.

Dr. Willi Reich, well known to readers of MODERN MUSIC, has published a book on Alban Berg (Herbert Reichner Verlag, Vienna) which achieves the same end by reversing this process. He puts analysis into the foreground but includes all kinds of references to time, environment and cultural sociology. As fellow contributors to this volume he has Ernst Krenek and Dr. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno.

Wiesengrund-Adorno has made the majority of the analyses,