

# MODERN MUSIC

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## WAR, NATIONALISM, TOLERANCE

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THERE is a pious legend that the creative spirit pursues an unerring and unhindered path, no matter if the uncertain course of world events should mount to frenzy, or the uncertain order of things dissolve in chaos. But the spirit flows from the head; it can no longer be produced when heads roll. The expulsion of the Medici by the Florentines brought to an end the flowering of the arts in Florence, at least for a long time. The Thirty Years War left sad ravages on art and literature in Germany; so had the invasions that poured into Europe a few hundred years before. The catastrophe wrought by such events on the creative spirit, not too frequently experienced in the past and then much slower to take effect, is produced in this most modern age with infallible sureness and rapidity, thanks to universal military service, thanks to the great advances in technology which have perfected the instruments of destruction – submarines, flying machines, tanks, poison gas; and thanks to the development of communication which has shrunk the world to a tiny globe. When the rights of the innocent are trampled on anywhere, or a sudden shot is fired, the reverberations are felt even in the Antipodes, and the gesture of Pontius Pilate is not more justified, even though he wash his hands of guilt in the remotest corners of the globe. If in any spot, freedom of spirit, independence of thought, truth in art are suppressed, the freedom, the independence, the truth of the whole world suffer.

### NATIONALISM

The greatest foe of freedom, independence and truth in art – and in science – is Nationalism. Nationalism is not patriotism, although even of patriotism, the German philosopher, Schopenhauer, said in his *New*

*Paralipomena*: "I really do not know why the thought has just struck me that patriotism, when it invades the field of science is a filthy fellow, to be grabbed by the collar and flung out." What is true of science is true of art. What is true of art in general, is particularly true of music. I do not intend to re-hash the old question, "What is national music? What is international music?" Monteverdi never worried about writing Italian music, Bach about good German music, or Rameau about expressing the "French character." It is undeniable of course that what one calls nationalism in music did introduce a whole world of color, charm and fresh character to nineteenth century art, the Polish, Spanish, Russian, Czech, Hungarian, northern dialects of the world speech of music. And I do not mean to under-estimate the feeling for a more intimate musical home, the pride in an old, established musical past – what we understand in the term "folklore." But let us come closer to our question. Did Poland, after all make a "Polish" composer of Chopin? Is it not rather Chopin who created a national music for Poland? And is that not also the case with Smetana, Dvorak, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Sibelius, Bartok? Bartok is both folklorist and composer, but what has the importance of Bartok as composer to do with Bartok the folklorist? Not Thuringia, or Saxony or Esterhaz or Vienna shaped the "German" music of Bach, Haydn or Beethoven but on the contrary Bach, Haydn and Mozart created the concept of German music, and fortunately not alone of German music. Italy did not make Italian composers of Pergolesi, Rossini, Verdi. On the contrary Pergolesi, Rossini, Verdi themselves developed the "racial" characteristics of Italian music. These characteristics, it is worth recalling, are not to be found in the earlier Italian music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Blood and soil do not form the creative spirit; it is rather the spirit – provided it remains attached to a head – that makes blood and soil. The whole future of America's music will stand or fall by this truth. I really do not know if there is as yet an American music; if there is, I should be grateful to have its identifying characteristics defined. What I do know is that once a few great musicians in America have composed great music, without worrying about their American traits, there will be an American music. An analogy could be made with Swiss music. There are musicians who are German Swiss, French Swiss, Swiss from Ticino and Grison. But as yet there is no Swiss music; it would be hard to put Othmar Schoeck and Arthur Honegger into one group. There will be a Swiss music, as there

is a Swiss literature, once Switzerland has produced musicians as important as her writers – Pestalozzi, Jeremias Gotthelf, Gottfried Keller – and Jean-Jacques Rousseau; perhaps also Ramuz.

#### SAN MARINO

Patriotism is lovely when it results in bringing the state to which one belongs to the greatest degree of development in competition with other states. Even in art patriotism is lovely. But where draw the line? We have England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland – but also a dozen regions, each with individualities of speech, dialect, mode of life, thought processes. In Italy we find Milanese, Venetians, Bolognese, Florentines, Neapolitans and Sicilians. Germany has Saxons, Swabians, Franconians, Frisians (not to mention Prussians). Should there be, together with English, Italian, German music, also a Shropshire, Suffolk or Hertfordshire art? Milanese and Bolognese? Swabian, Frank or Silesian? Every province has folksongs, and there are some composers who can form their music only on the foundation of a provincial musical dialect. The German study of the history of literature has long since, thanks to a certain Josef Nadler, treated the solemn consideration of the history of poetry as genealogical research; thus Wolfgang Goethe has been made a Frank, Schiller a Swabian, and Heine a "rootless" Jew – not a German poet at all. The history of art becomes a stud book, and Parnassus a stable. The study of the history of music in the Third Reich has enthusiastically followed this pattern. Beethoven's mother deserves the highest honor because, unlike his paternal ancestors, she did not descend from Flemings; a ponderous tome on Haydn's forefathers proves that no Croat, Slovak or Turk profaned the nuptial couch of his grandmother and great-grandmother. And even Liszt, the internationalist, the Parisian composer, was not only unfortunate enough to be the subject of a biography by the chairman of the Reichsmusikkammer but to have his original German descent documented. He is no Hungarian, despite his Hungarian sword of honor, despite the Hungarian rhapsodies.

To repeat, how far shall the localization of art go, in its narrowing to some particular spot? I have sometimes played with the speculation – what would happen if the citizens of San Marino decided to have their own "culture," their own music, literature, philosophy, a San Marino culture? Why shouldn't they? San Marino may be the smallest republic in Europe but it has always had nominal independence. It has an area of about thirty-three square miles, a population of about ten thousand, and its principal city, with approximately three thousand residents,

has a Town Hall, five churches, a palace of justice, a theatre, a museum, a library, a foreign – that is, an Italian – consulate, and above all a postoffice which issues new stamps when the state treasury becomes empty. Why only stamps; why not its own poetry, philosophy, painting, music? There really is an opportunity for the citizens of San Marino to produce all this as they produce china and wine (although I fear these originate in the neighboring Romagna). Long live the native culture of San Marino! Long live the music of San Marino, so definitely different from the music of Romagna, Naples, Lombardy and Tuscany!

#### PREJUDICES

The war of 1914-1918 raised some barriers between nations which have never been entirely removed. Will the war which began in 1939 raise new ones? I think not. Something has been learned. Profiteering, for example, is not so easy to practise today as it once was. The few nationalistic restrictions which have already cropped up in this war have been quickly checked. Between May 1915 and November 1918, when there was no "Axis" and macaroni was still "traitor's noodles" no Verdi opera was allowed on any German stage, but since it was just as impossible to get along without *Trovatore* as it was without *Carmen*, the boycott was finally confined to living composers, like Puccini, and audiences were made to hold out without *Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Butterfly*. Tears of emotion and joy flowed when the three operas re-appeared in 1919. Now someone in England or France has proposed banning Wagner, who is the favorite composer of the Führer. That nonsense has already been buried under ridicule. What has Wagner to do with Hitler's fathering him? The Wagner of *Tristan*, is not the Wagner Herr Hitler sponsors. It most decidedly is not the Wagner who wrote in 1863 to Mathilde Wesendonck: "My return to Germany has dealt me a deathblow. It is an ailing country." It is not the Wagner who on March 4, 1880, three years before his death wrote to the Burgomaster of Bayreuth: "... I am seriously thinking of taking myself, my family, my ideas and my works off to America to settle there. If I regret that long ago I did not choose a fresher and stronger soil for the future of my works and my family, then being firmly convinced of the decay of European culture, I am now all the more determined to seek this way out."

#### WAR'S AFTERMATH

The years, 1914-1918, were marked not only by a military blockade of Germany. There was an artistic blockade, too, a musical one. The

natural development was interrupted; one knew only in a general way what was being created in the outside world, and therefore the reaction in Germany (including Austria) was all the more powerful. Nowhere else was such radical, such "unpreconceived," such abstract, such hanging-in-the-air music written. Nowhere else was it so difficult to go from the path of experiment to life. But it was precisely these difficulties that gave the period between 1918 and 1933 its intensity. Anyone who remembers the first meetings of the International Society for Contemporary Music will also recall what a joy it was to begin to know each other again; with what good will the attempt was made to find once more a European interrelationship. The fruits of this good will were not the so-called abstract, international style, which has been denounced as the "type" of modern music, but, rather, clearer national differentiations, related by one common trait — the effort to abandon romanticism, false values and stagnation. Much remained experiment. In those years, how many seeds were planted that have matured, or could have matured! When the history of music between 1918 and 1933 is finally written, the page will not be blank; the names it bears will belong not to the men of the previous generation but to those musicians who breathed life again into music which had grown old, who looked not to the past but tried to gaze into the future. In the Donaueschingen music festivals too, the living experience of art was once more realized. These were not merely occasions for presenting a few pieces that a harassed jury had chosen from the three hundred submitted; but tasks were set, commissions apportioned, an attempt made to solve the burning questions of musical life — above all the problem of bringing the music of the day closer to the people of the day, and putting an end to the meaningless activity of concert-hall composition, of senseless operatic production.

It was a failure, but a glorious one. The failure was due to war's after-effects, to the four-year isolation which had interfered with peaceful, organic development. Everything came too fast, was too revolutionary. Nowhere were these new impulses and their sponsors attacked with such personal animosity and bitter spite as in Germany. Even in the Germany of the republic, which was no republic. It is interesting to recall the names of the honorary chairmen and the first honorary committees of Donaueschingen. There were Richard Strauss, Busoni, Hausegger, Nikisch, Pauer, Pfitzner, Schreker. Just as the mock-republic permitted its bitterest foes to work for its destruction, so youth welcomed its bitterest enemies and, together with a few supporters, accepted them as leaders. When, on Janu-



ary 30, 1933, Germany completely "awoke," it re-assumed the isolation of 1914. But this time *all* the seeds which had been planted were destroyed by the ukase declaring them a Kultur-Bolshevistic sowing.

I find that the outside world has never quite realized the essential character of this change. First of all, there was the renaissance of opera. Between 1927 and 1933 Germany was definitely on the road toward the creation of a new form of opera; opera in exact opposition to the romantic, with a plot which presented a contemporary problem for solution, and a music that was universally understandable, despite its apparent or real difficulties. In those years such attempts were possible only in Germany; they were participated in by Darius Milhaud, whose *Columbus* could be performed only in Berlin, and by Malipiero, not all of whose works conform to the fundamental requirements of fascism. But the composers of such operas were "Kultur-Bolshevists," whether they were Aryans or not. And so these first attempts have been destroyed, although the ideal or the phantom of "folk-opera" has not come to life in any other form on the Nazi stage. Since 1933, the Third Reich has been living, as in the war, in a condition of isolation. This time it is self-imposed, an isolation from spiritual experiences, humanitarian feelings. I do not know whether there has been an advance under the banner of "Blood and Soil" in the fields of painting or dramatic and epic poetry; I have not followed them. In the field of music, however, all has been destroyed, nothing gained. Not even the "posthumous" operas of Richard Strauss have been successful or exportable. Great art apparently is not produced by edict.

#### TOLERANCE

The fear of internationalism, from which earlier, more enlightened centuries were free, is a definite sign of weakness in individuals and nations. The courage to accept a foreign influence has always rewarded strong creators and peoples. What would Johann Sebastian Bach, the composer of the suites and concerti, have been without Couperin and Vivaldi? What would the composer of *Orfeo* and *Iphigénie en Tauride* have been without Italy and France? How could a German opera like *Fidelio* develop without French opéra-comique? What would the Russian Stravinsky have been without France, and where would the German Hindemith have been without Stravinsky? Originality is a trait that one can lose as readily as acquire. And originality is not worth much if it is only, to borrow Goethe's expression, *Narrheit auf eigne Hand*. Originality which has been developed cannot be lost, it is called personality. To develop originality, in other

words to find one's self, one must grow out of others as well as out of himself. But courage is needed to look beyond the boundaries.

All countries that still preserve and honor the conceptions of freedom, humanity and civilization, should and will, despite the war, also preserve and honor the idea of freedom and tolerance in art. Let the Third Reich have its boycott of Hindemith and Krenek, let Fascism (which is as distinct from Italy as the Third Reich is from Germany) pursue the boycott of "Jewish" music. But if there should be one musician of the Third Reich (unfortunately I know none) who is the equal of Hindemith and Krenek, let him be performed. This war, which has already damaged art so badly, will if it is not soon ended, damage it still more. But at least let the damage not be enlarged by nationalistic psychosis.

America's position is at once fortunate and difficult. It is the only country really on the sidelines. The hospitality which it has offered so many musicians from old Europe, has its complications, the invasion must be "digested." But America has already digested many invasions, and it will soon find out which of the new arrivals it can utilize and which not. Be that as it may, as long as the war, continues, America will be a refuge, the only refuge, for this freedom. The last festival of the I. S. C. M. was held in Warsaw when it was already overshadowed by the gathering clouds of coming events. The next one is scheduled for Budapest, and it is not certain if it can really be held there, or if Budapest is the right place for Kultur-Bolshevistic works, even though such works may stem from Bela Bartok. America has an opportunity, a splendid duty, not only to produce good music, but to foster good music no matter where it may originate. It has the opportunity and duty of tolerance. And tolerance in matters of art has always borne lasting fruit.