

# FORECAST REVIEW

## ITALIAN NOTES

THE interest of the Italian public which follows local developments in music, was centered during the past season on the *Nerone* of Arrigo Boito, and the *Pierrot Lunaire* of Arnold Schoenberg. The first was given at the Scala, in Milan, under the impassioned leadership of Toscanini. The second was carried on tour through several Italian cities, under the auspices of the *Corporazione delle Nuove Musiche*—which is to say, of Casella and his Roman friends.

The receptions given these two events naturally varied. In general, the work of the Austrian composer evoked hostility, polite in some cities, in others more frankly disapproving. The Italian's composition had a success so extravagant as to merit study. How much this enthusiasm represented purely aesthetic reaction, and how much it was due to a psychological effect easy to create in the special public that attended the performances at the Scala, can best be determined at the revivals of the work, which will occur this fall in Milan, Bologna, and at Turin in the coming spring.

However, what is apparent now, is that the posthumous work of Boito and the "twenty-one melodramas" of Schoenberg have been presented in Italy at a moment in its musical development that makes them both seem behind the times. Undoubtedly they are contributions to musical culture, and products of spirits restlessly and tenaciously pursuing exalted ideals of art, but they are, nevertheless, creations that do not awaken echoes and resonances, that do not illumine even fugitively the crisis of spirit and form with which our modern musical life is in travail. Neither in themselves do they perform this service, nor in their spirit of unrest,

an unrest that does not express itself in action, that has not the aspect of dramatic conflict from which can arise the solution of our aesthetic problems, or even their clear and unequivocal expression.

There is greater interest in the consideration of two pieces of chamber music that were also presented for the first time in Italy during the past season: the *Concerto for Two Violins, Viola, and Violoncello* of Alfredo Casella, and the *Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte* of Franco Alfano. Superficially, no greater contrast seems possible to conjure than between these two artists in the realization of their aesthetic ideals. Casella and Alfano, even in their social background, represent almost two different races; and their temperaments manifest themselves in antagonistic forms.

Casella, man of the North, is the precise calculator of every element of construction, always master of his impulses, and intent above all on that which painters call the composition of the picture, the interdependence of planes, volumes, masses.

Alfano, son of the unappeased South, acting almost always on impulse, often confused by a storm of fiery and incontinent musical conflict, is consumed with the desire to reveal all that he feels burning within him, and although his eye is trained to the structure of the whole, he is ever the slave of emotion for its color and movement.



Yet, to penetrate to the root of things, there is a plane on which the two musicians meet. And it is this: both Casella and Alfano are far removed, albeit in different directions, not only from impressionism (which is the almost universal tendency of the hour) but even from the concept that "music is language", (lyric language in the sense of Benedetto Croce), substantially not dissimilar from that of poetry and painting, of which the leading exponent in Italy is, no doubt, Ildebrando Pizzetti. The so-called "rights" of music conceived as aesthetic representation in itself, affirmed by Casella in his critiques and in his compositions, find a defender,

probably instinctive, in Franco Alfano. His *Sonata*, which in its general aspect differs no whit from the classical formula, unfolds itself verily in an atmosphere born only of music. Its exuberance, although at times disproportionate and bombastic, must be taken as its own standard, since one cannot imagine it submitted to any premise or, rather, plan of emotional development. I mean that, having sprung from healthy, robust emotion, it does not attempt to express save by sublimation into music. Here we have an art essentially lyric, as opposed to that of Pizzetti, which is essentially dramatic.

Similarly, though after his own fashion, Casella aims at an objective and anti-impressionistic art in his *Concerto*. He attempts to oppose the tyranny of feeling and tends, as has just been said, to compose his sound-picture in planes and volumes, following in this the most recent tendencies of Italian painting—Casorati, De Chirico, and others. His revolt sums up the whole of the Italian *ottocento*, while his sympathies go to the century of the “gallant style” and, further back still, to the works of Monteverdi and the instrumental concerto of the latter half of the *seicento*.

It is in this wise that Casella seeks to differentiate himself from non-Italian composers who also take a decisive stand against any reminiscence of romanticism—Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith, Milhaud, etc. And surely it is note-worthy, this resolve to bind himself to the *formal* Italian tradition, (though the spirit does not renew itself in artificial contacts), and to create, as he would, a new, modern Italian style. The *Concerto* is an experiment only partly successful. Even from the stylistic point of view, the author has not understood how to lay a satisfactory foundation. It is evident how much effort has been exerted to re-create a style not intimately lived. The first movement, *Sinfonia*, seems the most significant and the most meaty. The *Siciliana* which follows is a graceful page, a morsel *à la russe*, much enjoyed by the public at every performance, but which seemed, frankly, hardly pertinent to the rest of the work.

Yet, since this latest product of the Italian pianist-composer constitutes an advance over its predecessors (the *Five Pieces for String Quartet*, and the *Eleven Juvenile Pieces for Pianoforte*), one may hope that Casella is at last arriving, if not at the revela-

tion of a new Italian style, a fallacious and misleading task, beyond his powers and those of the others, then at least at the statement of a style decidedly his own. And I think that such an aim should completely appease his every ambition.

*By Guido Gatti*

## AFTER THE FESTIVALS

**T**WICE this year have our brave internationals come together, at Prague and at Salzburg. Twice have the captains and the kings departed. Prague was a new venture, which proved so successful that it is to be repeated next year. Salzburg was more satisfactory than ever before, not so much because of the inclusion of epoch-making masterpieces, as because of the more vigorous exclusion of works having no claim or title to be performed there.

It is in fact to be expected that, as the International Society advances in years, the outstanding works performed annually will tend to become fewer. At the outset it had arrears to catch up. Presently the meaning of the word "contemporary", which was in August limited to five years, will need to be further restricted until the festival becomes what it should be: a record of the best work of the preceding twelve months.

Of many "impressions that remain", the strongest in my mind is of a broadening of the cleavage between the music of Central Europe and that of the rest of the world.

Writing of "North and South" I have attributed to geography the tendency of the musician of the climatically more favored regions, when he has an idea, to carol it lustily to heaven, whereas the denizen of a bleaker clime takes it home and worries it. In modern German music and even more in modern German criticism I find the latter tendency gathering strength. There is much preoccupation with the esoteric philosophy of music, until in extreme cases the fact that a composition requires preliminary elucidation and exegesis is accepted as in itself evidence of its artistic worth, whilst music that conveys its message clearly is regarded as inferior, because it is too easily understood. The nemesis of this is a flood of paper-music, that is to say music that should be seen and not