

FORECAST AND REVIEW

ITALY'S NEWEST RECRUITS

THE second national festival of contemporary music, held in Rome late last season, at least demonstrated the wisdom of the government in disregarding the outraged partisans of artistic nationalism. It permitted all forms of musical expression to be brought together in Italy, to edify, and, in a way, to reprove our young composers. This attitude has enabled all the beginners to know and criticize works from every part of the world, the most conservative as well as the most radical. We owe thanks to our "importers," especially to Alfredo Casella, who was the first, back in 1915, to understand the situation and seek the best solution. Thus Italy today can line up an array of fresh recruits on the European musical battlefield, unexpectedly arrived to reinforce the lines already so valiantly defended by Casella, Pizzetti, Malipiero, Alfano, Respighi, Tommasini and others who have reached the fifty-year mark.

The group composed principally of musicians in their thirties and forties, like Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Mortari, Veretti, Rieti, Pilati, Labroca etc., has already been discussed in these pages; our attention is now turned toward the latest "conscription," to those of "less than thirty years" who have so far managed to avoid pitfalls and are ready to be considered the hope of the future. That none has yet revealed genius does not concern us here. Genius may pop up at any unexpected moment, as is its nature. What interests us primarily is the birth of a group of artists of high quality who will set the pace of the nation's life. (The situation is like that of French literature, where first rank

position is maintained less through the genius of one or two "generals" than by the talent of a numerous and well-organized "staff.")

That such a condition prevails in Italian music or is developing, was indicated by the Rome festival. Works by about fifty men were presented and showed that the readiness of the young Italian composers is such as to inspire the greatest hopes for tomorrow. The tools of the trade are being ably used. There is a fresh knowledge of instrumental music which is based not on any particular theories but on the errors and the tribulations of the entire younger generation.



Two young composers stood out at the festival. Luigi Dallapiccola (represented by an unimportant work) and Goffredo Petrassi. Brought up in different atmospheres, they reveal different characteristics. Dallapiccola was born at Pisino, Istria, in 1904. During the war, he and his family were imprisoned by the Austrians, and then he was confined to Graz. Going to Florence, he studied piano with Ernesto Consolo and composition with Vitto Frazzi of the Conservatory. Florence has always been a favorable spot for quiet and fruitful study, and it would seem that Dallapiccola's noble esthetic, ample inspiration, and tendency to great, "airy" construction are due to his contact with Florentine art and atmosphere.

The four songs, *Dalla Mia Terra* (1928), for soli, chorus and orchestra, already show his predilections: a simple and rather popular style, love of expressing the emotions of joy and sorrow, and severe orchestral lines which make the song stand out. In the *Due Laude di Jacopone da Todi* for solo and orchestra (1929), the rugged poetry is appropriately set in angular music, markedly rhythmic and linear, of a studied poverty of ornament, almost Franciscan. The inspiration of the musician here, as almost always in his later work, arises in a rhythmic idea which plays an essential and effective part in the first of the two *Laude*. Rhythmic also is the nucleus of the *Canzone del Quarnaro* (1930), his setting of Gabriele D'Annunzio's poem, for tenor, chorus and orchestra. The idea of the first phrase in 5:4 time gives birth to all the vast fresco, and returns later as a leitmotif. The *Partita*

(1931-32) is Dallapiccola's only composition which can be called principally orchestral in conception, in spite of the soprano voice which adds to the "sweet-and-low" finale. This work reveals the composer as already mature in technic and spiritual resources. The piece consists of a slow and solemn Passacaglia, a lively and crackling Burlesca (the least personal part of the work), and a short Recitativo e Fanfara which introduces the *Naenia Beatae Virginiae Mariae*, a lovely musical setting of a simple, chaste song in medieval Latin. The title of *Partita* is badly chosen. Nothing recalls the classic suite of dances, even less the recent neo-classic revivals. The entire composition is rich in pathos and a deep human feeling pervades it from beginning to end. The other works of Dallapiccola are choral: *Due Liriche del Kalevala* (1930); a "naturalistic" chorus, *Estate* (1932), and the recent *Due Cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovine* (1933), full of Tuscan merriment and popular verve.

On the other hand, Petrassi, who was born at Zagarolo, Rome, also in 1904, has more of a leaning toward the orchestra. The music of the past decade of other countries has influenced him more than it has Dallapiccola. The composer obviously is fond of Hindemith and Casella (if you prefer, of Hindemith by way of Casella), but gives no impression of imitativeness. Petrassi's temperament is of the type which chooses expression through rhythmic vivacity and rigorously contrapuntal dialect rather than through song and lyrical feeling. But it is a vigorous, healthy temperament of good Italian stock, which, departing from the typical Casella manner (as in the *Tre Pezzi* for string quartet, 1929, where one nevertheless finds the familiar Siciliana so dear to Casella's heart), rapidly matures, as is apparent in the *Introduzione e Allegro* for violin and eleven instruments and in the *Preludio, Aria e Finale* for cello and piano, both composed in 1933. It seems that in the last two works the "return to Bach" has been felt not as a formula (indeed, in this case it would be more accurate to speak of a "return to Vivaldi" and to the other Italian Holy Fathers of the violin), but as a necessity of expression. It is probable that Petrassi will soon abandon titles reminiscent in form and spirit of other times,

since his music is very much alive and modern, and steeped, to a degree which few others have achieved, in the new spiritual atmosphere of Italy. Possessing a severe dialectic, as has been noted, Petrassi's natural language is that of the instruments. His decisiveness and impetus are more at home in the rhythms and accents of the orchestra, which he manages with a boldness that convinces one he is a colorist of the first water. In some of his works, vocal polyphony plays a part, as in *Tre Cori* with orchestra (1932-33). I prefer the *Vocalizzo* where, as the reader may imagine, the function of the voice tends to assume that of an instrument, or the *Ciclone in Toscana*, where the tendency is toward the spoken word onomatopoeically used.

It seems to me that there is also a link with Casella in the music of another young Roman composer, Giuseppe Rosati, born in 1903, a pupil with Petrassi of A. Bustini at the Conservatory of St. Cecilia. He has written a dynamic and diverting *Symphony*. Giovanni Salviucci has adopted a more severe and classical manner. Salviucci was born in Rome in 1907 and was a pupil of the organist Boezi and of Ottorino Respighi.



At the festival and at other musical events, several other young composers, all more or less gifted, all well-equipped with technical knowledge and seriousness, were presented. The very young Ennio Porrino (born at Cagliari in 1910), a pupil at St. Cecilia of G. Mulè, won the contest organized by the Augusteo on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary, with a Respighian tone-poem, *Tartarin de Tarascon*. Renzo Rossellini (born in Rome in 1908) is the author, among other things, of a much-applauded symphonic suite, *Hoggar*, ingeniously and pleasingly wrought. The *Parabola della Smarrita* by Stefano Gibilaro (born at Palermo in 1906) was much enjoyed. Going toward the North of Italy, we have Gianandrea Gavazzeni (born in Bergamo in 1906), a sensitive musician and writer on musical subjects; Giulio Cesare Sonzogno (born in Milan in 1906) who has written various symphonic poems and a graceful ballet, *Leggenda Scandinava*; the Veronese, Gabriele Bianchi, and finally Alessandro Cicognini (born in Pescara in 1907, but Milanese by schooling and adoption), whose dramatic legend in

three acts, *Donna Lombarda*, which won a recent contest, revealed a unique theatrical temperament among the composers, one may say the only one which has appeared in postwar Italy.

Guido Gatti

MID-SEASON IN NEW YORK

Ottorino Respighi, *Church Windows*, Walter, (Philharmonic Symphony, December 1).

More plundering from the Rimsky orchestra; bland regurgitation, degradation of the medium as well. The pupil follows the master explicitly, but only the letter; Rimsky had taste, verve, grace. In this work color is laid on with a trowel. The brassy climaxes, sobbing English horn, mechanically recurring sumptuousness — all of it gaudy shell — when peeled off reveal precisely no music. The last movement is dedicated to San Gregorio Magno, a really apt recipient: recent research proves this to be the Gregory who invented no modes, compiled no Antiphonarium, founded no singing-school for priests. If anything, he had an actual distaste for music. He complained of the "reprehensible custom" of the choristers who spent their time in "cultivation of their voices, neglecting their office of preaching and of the distribution of alms." The logical patron-saint of Respighi's music.

Arnold Bax, *Summer Music* and *Overture to a Picaresque Comedy* (Philharmonic, November 24).

The *Overture* is the less interesting of the two works: comic in the Eulenspiegelish tradition, a reach of sorts for the generally somber Bax. But the *Summer Music* is something else. Here is one of the solidest, most unshakable of the Post-Romantics — in a state of change. Gone is the Grieg-Strauss substance. We are about to find out what Post-Romanticism really means, what reason it has for having persisted into our day, what unique content it has been nurturing all along, waiting to give it birth in its own good time, and against all fad, fashion, vogue. Horrors! We hear Debussy, the Faun, whole-tone scales, harp *glissandi* all over again!.. This is an object lesson. The Post-Romantics of 1933 advance to the same Impressionism the Post-