

gallery-funny pieces of Henry Brant's *Marx Brothers* or Morton Gould's *Sonatina*, or *Child Prodigy* or such gallery-serious cantatas as Kleinsinger's *I Hear America Singing* or Earl Robinson's fresher *Ballad for Americans* begin to sound thin and the attitude of the composers condescending. Their apparent assumption is that the masses don't know anything about music and never will. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if works like the *Sessions Quartet* or the *Harris Symphony* were to become more popular than these self-conscious and restricted compositions ever will be.

Elliott Carter

A STRENUOUS ITALIAN SEASON

Turin, December 30th

THE 1939-40 musical season in Italy seems likely to compare favorably with those of the recent past. Just as many events are announced. There are the same singers, the same performers and conductors we saw advertised on the placards last year and the year before that. There is, however, a notable tendency to bring younger elements into the picture, to give greater prominence to talents that have been growing during the last few years (I am thinking, among others, of the new conductors Franco Ferrara and Nino Sanzogno, not yet thirty years old, but rich in experience and facing secure futures). This shift in the picture is due to the present international situation, with the difficulties of interchange it involves. In view of that fact, one is tempted to say that it is an ill wind that blows no one good. . . . I should add, however, that numbers of foreign artists of all nationalities will also be in Italy during the winter and spring, such men as Giesecking, Cortot, Paul Paray, Mitropoulos, Jochum, Georgesco, Honegger, Poulenc, Bartok and Strauss.

Strenuous preparations are being made for the Florence and Venice festivals, the former to take place in April and May, the latter in September. A plan is under consideration for a similar modern festival to be held in Rome in the spring. In the meanwhile, the first important operatic presentations have been given. At the beginning of December, the Rome and Milan seasons were inaugurated with the customary pomp and success and the first novelty is scheduled in Rome within a few days: Ludovico Rocca's three-act *Monte Ivnor*, libretto by Cesare Meano. Those who already know something about this opera say that it is intensely dramatic and that the chorus has as important a role as in the same composer's *Dibuk*. No new operas of particular note have been presented in Milan.

At the Carlo Felice Theater in Genoa, Guido Pannain, one of Italy's most acute music critics and musicologists, is to appear for the first time in the role of composer. His one-act opera *L'Intrusa* (after Maeterlinck) was composed about twenty years ago, but during these years of voluntary waiting he has largely reworked it. One can be certain in advance that this will be no commonplace event of ordinary theatrical routine.

In January, Venice will see the first Italian mounting of Busoni's *Arlecchino*. We hope that this genial "theatrical caprice" will lead to a revaluation of Busoni's creations. The process will be aided by the presentation in Florence, during the coming May festival, of his *Turandot* and by the publication of his works. Soon it will be the turn of *Doktor Faustus* and of Busoni's other major symphonic and piano compositions. At last Italians will be able to take notice of the important part (clearer every day) which his work has played in the development of contemporary Italian musical history.

Other new operas will be presented at Trieste, Naples, and Bologna, where two weeks ago F. Balilla Pratella gave his own "sacred mystery" on the life of St. Alessio. Finally, May will see, in Florence, the first performance of *Volo di Notte*, Luigi Dallapiccola's one-act opera based on Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *Night Flight*. Any one who has read the French writer-aviator's beautiful book will at once envisage the novelty and originality this theatrical spectacle will have. Moreover Dallapiccola's other music (he is now one of the most highly esteemed younger Italian composers) is a further assurance that this new work will not provide an entirely calm evening. It will almost certainly produce a good fight. This is exactly what Dallapiccola likes, not because he enjoys creating adversaries, but because he realizes that nothing new can establish itself in art without struggle and discussion.

An audience at the Augusteo (Adriano Theater) in Rome recently heard a new *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* by Goffredo Petrassi, another young composer who, like Dallapiccola, belongs in the so-called advance guard. It was performed with mastery and scrupulous care by Giesecking. After a period of inactivity, Petrassi has again become active as a composer. He is now working on a *Magnificat* of which everyone expects much in view of the success of *Salmo IX*, a success emphasized recently when it was performed at the Turin Theater to inaugurate the annual series of symphonic-choral concerts of the E.I.A.R., the Italian government radio system.

No new works by older Italian composers are scheduled. Malipiero has just completed his musical tragedy *Ecuba* (after Euripides). Casella is constantly working at (or thinking about) his *Coriolano*. Pizzetti has finished the first act of his new opera with a modern setting, *L'Oro*. Alfano is working on a revision of *L'Ombra di Don Giovanni*, which he says will have to be thought of as an entirely new opera.

Even though its relation to modern music may not be apparent, it will not be out of place for me to speak of continued activity in the field of musical studies. At Siena, in September, an enormously successful "week" was dedicated to Antonio Vivaldi, when completely unknown compositions were given. This "week" will be repeated during 1940, when the whole series of concerts will be devoted to the four Scarlattis – Alessandro, Domenico, Giuseppe, and Pietro. There has also been intensified publishing of older Italian music. The complete works of Palestrina are appearing in a remarkable edition under the editorship of Monsignor Raffaele Casimiri. Similar editions of P. Nenna, Gesualdo, Marenzio, and other secular polyphonists of the sixteenth century have been announced under the auspices of the Italian Institute of Musical History, a recent addition to the Ministry of National Education.

Having jumped back into the past, I can remark on other interesting performances to take place in Florence in May. They include Rossini's *Semiramide* (which has not been staged in Italy from time immemorial, and which the majority of us have probably never seen at all), Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunow* in the original version, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The last will be the first performance of the great English composer's opera in Italy, and for many reasons I consider the event worthy of particular mention.

Guido M. Gatti

FROM SPIRITUALS TO SWING

“FROM Spirituals to Swing” is the name given to an enterprise which after two concerts (December 1938, December 1939) promises to become the institution for the presentation of American Folk Music to New Yorkers. The second annual affair – should one call it a festival? – took place Christmas Eve in a packed Carnegie Hall, under the aegis of the Theatre Arts Committee. The reaction of the audience left no doubt as to its success.