

Illinois, is also a Guggenheim Fellow and is now living and working in Vienna. His *Suite for Orchestra, Piano-Burlesque* for piano and instrumental ensemble and *Symphony-Concertante* for orchestra with horn and piano obligato, were given during the past seasons by the Vienna and Budapest Philharmonic and here under Damrosch, Hanson and Stock. Mark Wessel's piano pieces, very youthful, discreetly ardent and somewhat romantic in their swing possess a gratifying formal and expressive equilibrium and a very definite personal note.

*Lazare Saminsky*

### STANDSTILL AT BREMEN

**I**N the development of post-war music, the festivals of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein have come to stand more and more for the traditional. Experiments and efforts to abandon academic models were left to the International Society for Contemporary Music or to the Donaueschingen meetings. The contrast was once very marked; it is so no longer. This is not because the flag of revolution has been raised by the ADMV, but, rather, because the other camp has lost much of its former enthusiasm. The present tenor of German music is like the conservative tendency of the ADMV, founded by Liszt: an attitude of conciliation, innocuousness, not to say, timidity. The opposing poles of modern music have come suspiciously close; most of the productions given by the ISCM this year in Oxford might have been rendered in Bremen, and vice versa.

The ADMV has now rounded out its seventieth year, and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect so ancient an assembly to do justice to changed cultural and sociologic conditions. Consequently we shall not comment on the crisis in concert music, the dying out of concert life, and the question whether there is any point in continuing to compose symphonies and quartets when no one wants to hear them. In the ADMV this is not discussed—one simply composes. The results are not precisely enrapturing.

In Bremen there was an inexhaustible supply of choral, orchestral and chamber music. Despite the weariness induced by

this abundance, attention revived with the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* by Hermann Reutter, the best piece of the entire festival, and a valuable contribution to the new instrumental concerto music. Reutter, whose severe yet impressive style aroused attention with his apprentice work, *Job*, has undoubtedly learned from Stravinsky and Bartok; but he has not been misled into unproductive imitation. His piano concerto is distinguished by a convincing logic of form: it groups two rapid phrases around a central adagio to provide a clear five-movement production.

Rich possibilities for present day creation lie in the field between the two fronts of symphonic-dramatic and concerto-suite music, although it must not be forgotten that the dramatic symphony is merely a hang-over from the post-romantic epoch. None of the other Bremen composers showed himself as consistent as Reutter in his attitude toward the concerto. Conglomerate medleys were not unusual, as, for example, a *Symphony Concerto* by Hans Brehme, who made the inherently illogical attempt to extend the concerto grosso symphonically. A well worked out score by Kurt von Wolfurt revealed much more successfully the possibilities of a new concept for the concerto grosso. Carl Höller, who is very young and was hitherto unknown, stimulated the fancy by a naive delight in creative work and a certain impetus of talent.

The heavy pretentious symphony is still to be found. The able master, Sekles, despite a vigorous counterpoint, has his face turned toward the past and gives no indication that he was once the teacher of Hindemith. Pretentious also was a pompous choral composition of the prematurely successful Kurt Thomas, not to mention the product of Rudolf Siegel, who thundered forth a military theme with noisy bombast, or of August Reuss, who, with effects that have been used a thousand times, revived the titanic piano concerto of the Brahms period.

A characteristic of the entire Bremen festival was the thoroughly respectable level of the craftsmanship. But is not an even moderately original talent preferable to the most impeccable handicraft? This question presented itself in the case of a somewhat thin, but quite pleasing *Concerto* for wind instruments by

Julius Weismann; a rather noisy comedy suite by H. Wunsch, and in the quartets for stringed instruments by Spanich and Geierhaas, which were forgotten with the fading of the last note. Paul Feldhahn gave us an unusual demonstration with a flute sonata written in three voices. The Russian Berezowsky contributed a dexterous violin concerto, which, however, was not fundamentally different from previous examples of Slavic violin concertos. Another Russian, Lew Knipper, gave us a mild, lyric-like suite, midway between Schreker and Schönberg.

Two musicians came to the rescue of the song solo: Leon Kauffmann again tried his hand with a cycle for contralto and orchestra along expressionistic, distorted lines. In five baroque songs Wolfgang Jacobi may, perhaps, have reconciled old forms with the new principles of melody, but he failed to catch the spirit of his fantastically ornate poems.

There were also samples of unaccompanied choral music, one of the most richly cultivated domains of the new music. Pepping is talented, but inclines to a certain dogmatic aridity, as shown by his choral mass. A chorus by the Swiss, A. Moeschinger, based on a poem by Stefan George, vacillates strangely between boldness and dilettantism, and furthermore quite misses the spirit of the poem. Felix Petyrek, on the other hand, made a happy choice of Oriental verses for his *Bedouin Divan*. Moreover as musician his fancies rise beyond the customary conceptions of the exotic. These little, mobile, characteristically shaded choral pieces were among the best things heard at the festival.

Two operas served as a framework for the Bremen music week, one of which, Mozart's *Idomeneo*, in Richard Strauss's setting, quite unimpeachable, it seems to me, need not detain us here. The second opera, *Soldaten*, by Manfred Gurlitt, for the book of which a celebrated old drama by Lenz had been selected, was not uninteresting. Gurlitt abstains not only from the solution, but even from the formulation of problems; he holds fast to the technic of short scenes, which he employed also in his earlier opera, *Wozzeck*. (This latter work has been quite overshadowed by Alban Berg's opera of the same name). With *Soldaten*, Gurlitt is likely to have better luck, for although this new opera becomes quite banal and conventional toward the end, it

has several delightful passages. Gurlitt manipulates the orchestra in many respects in the manner of chamber music, and seeks to render the words of the text comprehensible by making the vocal parts thoroughly singable, an effort deserving endorsement.

*Hans Gutman*

### THE BACCHANTES OF WELLESZ

**T**HOUGH a recognized composer for the stage, Egon Wellesz, the Viennese musician, had never had a dramatic performance in his own city. It was therefore, a point of honor for the Vienna Staatsoper to put on the world premiere of his new work, the two-act classical drama *Die Bakchantinnen* and to open the theatres of that city to a composer who had been much more frequently presented in Germany.

*Die Bakchantinnen* is based on the familiar drama of Euripides, the composer having prepared his own book. The story of the Theban king Pentheus, who becomes the sacrifice of the wild Mænads of Dionysius, is part of Greek mythology. However it is not generally understood today why Pentheus raged in unquenchable hate against the new god, and finally met death through his own mother, Agave. The chief motivating forces are not entanglement and guilt, although these are constantly potent, but the rivalry between Agave and her sister, Semele, who had recently borne Dionysius, and whom Agave had caused to be burnt to death—a sin for which she must now tragically atone. These sources also inspire the hate and jealousy of the power-craving king. Wellesz himself added the scene on Mount Cithæron, where Pentheus dies in a nocturnal orgy and the blind seer, Tiresias, reveals Agave's delusion.

This opera, as might be expected, is built on choral effects which demonstrate the composer's feeling for the theatre and his sensitiveness to the ritual and spirit of the classics. Through long research and intimate knowledge of Byzantine music, Wellesz has been able to lend something of the archaic to his melodic line. The invention and the rhythm of the melodies reveal Wellesz as research student, but the harmony is completely modern,