

tal, it is true, more controlled, more self-conscious and subjected to the laws of taste. Its success, unfortunately cast into the shade a very talented young Russian, Vladimir Dukelsky, a youth of twenty-one, whose pseudo-hellenic *Zéphire et Flore* was produced by the Russian ballet at the same time as Auric's work. Through no fault of his own Dukelsky became a pawn in the battle that was waged about Auric. While the latter's enemies praised Dukelsky beyond reason, his friends snubbed *Zéphire et Flore*.

There was considerable interest in the lectures on *Young Russia and Young America* presented by Lazare Saminsky both at the University of Lyons and at Paris, which were given with a very judicious choice of programs.

The gains realized by French music this year are distinctly offset by its losses. Besides that of Fauré there are the deaths of André Caplet and Eric Satie. Caplet had not yet fulfilled his promise, his labors as conductor interrupting his work as composer. His most recent pieces of large scope, such as *Le Miroir de Jésus*, gave us some hope for a revival of the religious style which does not find much favor in France today.

Satie, however, accomplished his mission. His last works, the ballets *Mercur*e and *Relâche*, far from equaled the achievements of his past which was the record of a pathfinder. Fifteen years before Debussy he created impressionism. A little later it was he who relinquished impressionism in favor of "art stripped to the bone." He was never very well understood, but then he did his best not to be. He was taken for a humorist but there was a poet in him (Paul Rosenfeld sensed it very finely). He was especially an awakener, an instigator, who has left to others, younger and more able, the advantage of his discoveries and suggestions.

By André Coeuroy

TWO NOTABLE BOOKS

PROFESSOR WEISSMANN begins *The Problems of Modern Music* (translated by M. M. Bozman—E. P. Dutton), by observing that "the modern man is the battleground of new forces, new impulses, which are striving for a part in his psychic life to the

detriment of his strength and purposefulness. In music, these attributes of the will are represented by rhythm; and rhythm has weakened and declined as the super-acute sensibilities of the modern temperament have sought musical expression. There has been a corresponding decline in the constructive idea in music, which is closely connected with rhythm, for a hesitant and over-refined type of humanity demands art of a like quality. For the present, the great battle between form and content stands at a deadlock."

This is the view of the relation between music and life which more familiarly considers jazz an expression of American temperament or tempo, and which, despite its pontifical auspices and accidental appearance of truth, I find quite untenable. The development of music, aside from its dependence upon the invention and perfection of instruments, seems to have been self-determined and inevitable, so that the entire sequence might be shifted backward or forward parallel to the fixed series of non-musical events without requiring change, which means that present correlations are only apparent. Thus the infiltration of literary ideas, e.g. in Schumann and Berlioz, followed and was made possible by the spontaneous occurrence in music of the so-called romantic elements, chromatic harmony and tone-color, e.g. in Chopin. Literature provided no more than a topic, as the piano had provided no more than a medium.

I give this first because of the importance it has for Professor Weissmann, despite which it is quite irrelevant to his purpose. The problems of the title reduce themselves to one, the conflict between rhythm, i.e. form, on the one hand, and harmony and tone-color, i.e. emotional expression, on the other; the development he traces is the undermining of one by the other; and the present tendency he sees as a reaction, illustrated by the return to the formalism and clarity of chamber-music. In all this, obviously, it does not matter that rhythm is for Professor Weissmann the expression of purpose, and harmony of emotional excitement, and "the great battle of form and content" therefore one between temperaments.

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grasp which strike me as remarkable. It must be remembered, however, that his estimates are made with reference to his scheme of things, so that while they are necessarily correct on purely logical grounds (since they fit into the scheme), they may nevertheless be incorrect on grounds of fact. Thus it is consistent with the conception of Brahms as a return to severe formalism that "austerity and gloom were natural to him and his gaiety is always forced," but it is incorrect.



Whatever remains at this date to be said of Negro Spirituals is said by Mr. James Weldon Johnson in his introduction to *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* by Rosamond Johnson and Lawrence Brown (Viking Press).

For Mr. Johnson the Spirituals are the African chants, of which they retain the technical characteristics, metamorphosed by the spiritual forces of Christian religion. There is, then, for him no question that they are entirely the creation of the Negro, and to the charge of plagiarism his answer, in its essentials, is: plagiarism of what? "The white people among whom the slaves lived did not originate anything comparable even to the mere titles of the Spirituals."

Are the Spirituals the spontaneous outburst and expression of a group or chiefly the work of individual talented makers? They are, answers Mr. Johnson, true folk-songs and originally intended only for group singing. He quotes Mr. Carl Van Vechten to the effect that "Negro folk-songs differ from the folk-songs of most other races through the fact that they are sung in harmony," and goes on to say, "Some of them may be the spontaneous creation of the group, but my opinion is that the far greater part of them is the work of talented individuals influenced by the pressure and reaction of the group. The responses, however, may be more largely the work of the group in action; it is likely that they simply burst forth. It is also true that many of these songs have been modified and varied as they have been sung by different groups in different localities." The harmonies are, as a result, necessarily improvised by each group of singers and in the present arrangements the harmony, given to the piano, is a synthesis of the idioms of the impromptu versions.

By B. H. Haggin