

radical Society for Contemporary Music, and a New Music Fellowship which has even taken a concert hall, the Streichersaal, where Beethoven was once given but which had long been closed. The International Society gave a special performance devoted to Frederick Jacobi, who was present and gained a great success. This group also sponsored the first Vienna concert of the Pan-American Association of Composers on February 21. Anton Webern was the conductor and the works presented were Ruggles' *Portals*; songs by Ives, Copland and Garcia Caturla; a movement from Henry Cowell's *Sinfonietta*; *Three Canons* by Wallingford Riegger; Carlos Chavez' *Sonatine* and a movement from the *Chamber Symphony* of Adolph Weiss.

Over the radio this season, the musical director, Oswald Kabasta, presented Honegger's new *Symphony*, Hindemith's Coolidge work for piano and brasses, and new piano concertos by Ernst Toch and Karl Weigl. In Austria and Germany, the radio is becoming increasingly more important for the dissemination of modern music.

Paul Stefan

THE "ORGANIC" APPROACH TO MUSIC

SIBELIUS was born in 1865, Koussevitsky in 1874, and both men are typical—although entirely antithetically—of their period. The chief impression one gets from reading Arthur Lourié's *Serge Koussevitzky and His Epoch** and Cecil Gray's *Sibelius*†, is a sense of fundamental vitality and abounding variety, which is sadly lacking in these sophisticated, disillusioned and consciously experimental days. The range of Koussevitsky's sympathies, experiences and activities is astonishing. He is, as everybody knows, a virtuoso on the double bass, and has composed a concerto for double bass and orchestra; he is the founder and editor-in-chief of the Russian Music Publishing House in Berlin; his conducting experience was obtained from direct contact and independent study of the methods of Nikisch, Wein-

**Serge Koussevitzky and His Epoch*. By Arthur Lourié. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1931.

†*Sibelius*. By Cecil Gray. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

gartner, Mottl and Mahler; he was the first conductor of the State Symphony Orchestra under the early Soviet regime. He has conducted in Moscow, St. Petersburg, London, Edinburgh, Paris, Barcelona, Lisbon, Berlin, Warsaw, and now finally in Boston and the United States in general; he has been directly associated with a long list of composers beginning with Reger, Bruckner, Mahler, Strauss and Taneiev, and ranging through Scriabin, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky and Schönberg to Hindemith, Prokofieff, Miascowsky, Honegger and, among other Americans, Aaron Copland. In almost every case, whether it be town or composer, his connection has usually been a personal as well as a professional one.

Similarly with Sibelius, probably the two most important things which evolve in Mr. Gray's study are, firstly, his extraordinary range and variety (this in spite of a common predilection to the contrary, most people thinking of him as an awkward, even primitive nationalist whose material is derived almost exclusively from Finnish folk song sources and whose expression is invariably either grim, gloomy or austere), and secondly, his immense fecundity. Mr. Gray is possibly correct when he says that Sibelius' output is greater, perhaps, than that of any other living composer; this, to date, consists of eight symphonies, about thirty large choral and orchestral works and the same number of smaller ones, about a hundred songs and as many piano pieces, incidental music to a dozen plays, miscellaneous compositions of every sort and description, as well as a large amount of music lost or destroyed, and some fifty works in manuscript.

Technically, his most remarkable achievement is his orchestration, which is personal and individual in a sense that can scarcely be applied to any other composer living today. He has a definite 'flair' for unusual and unthought-of combinations which derive directly from the music itself, and are never—as is usually the case—merely the expression of a sophisticated orchestral experience. Undoubtedly, Sibelius "thinks orchestrally" to an extent that is paralleled in musical history probably by Berlioz alone. In particular, he has thoroughly explored the potentialities of what Mr. Gray calls "the lower end of the tonal spectrum," for the first time in the history of music.

But what is still more remarkable is Mr. Gray's considered opinion (arrived at "almost against his will"), that the composer Sibelius is "not only the greatest of his generation, but one of the major figures in the history of music;" in particular, he maintains that his symphonies represent "the highest point attained in this form since the death of Beethoven."

This, coming from a comparatively young man who is certainly alive to the more specifically modern tendencies in music, is at least significant. To what extent these opinions may or may not be true cannot be discussed here, but they are certainly in line with a more general feeling (reactionary, if you will) which has begun to show itself quite definitely in certain sections of contemporary opinion.

What has brought about this potentially new situation can only be suggested here, but both Mr. Lourié in his personal enthusiasm for Koussevitsky and Mr. Gray in his worship of Sibelius, are essentially in agreement as to the real cause. Koussevitsky, to Mr. Lourié, is an "organic" musician who is absorbed in music itself and who is interested in technic only in a secondary sense. (Thus he is "enamored of music," and only concerns himself even with his conductor's technic to achieve the maximum amount of expression.) It has similarly become apparent to Mr. Gray that the post-war generation of composers as exemplified by Stravinsky (in so far as he can be considered as such), the Prokofieffs, Honeggers and Hindemiths, are preoccupied with technic and the means to expression to the exclusion of whatever potential organic musical sense may be in them. For him, they write primarily for a limited musically cultured public which is psychologically with them all the way. Mr. Lourié caps this by saying outright that this musical intelligentsia is definitely anti-musical—more particularly in his special Koussevitsky sense—and is often frankly hostile to the purely musical element, since its intrusion always disturbs their calculations and constructions.

The result is, that whereas Sibelius slowly but naturally matures to the increasing intellectual complexity of his symphonies, Stravinsky—at a comparatively early period in his career—is already, and indeed has been for some years, in the toils of a pro-

tracted series of involutions with reference to the extraordinary technic he has previously acquired. Whatever may be the opinion on Stravinsky's later work, it seems fairly obvious that, in spite of the impersonality of his will and his intense and serious preoccupation with the problems of composition, he is at present inhibited from progress in any fundamental sense, and can only continue to cast round for another way to turn. It seems equally certain that Sibelius, even at the age of sixty-seven, will continue to develop, and that his (now completed) eighth symphony will be an advance of some sort on the remarkable seventh.

And whereas, as Mr. Lourié shows, Koussevitsky's genuine enthusiasms first made him an ardent supporter of "Western" music in Russia (in direct opposition to the more rabid Russian nationalists), later on, when living and working in different parts of Europe, he devoted himself to the propagation of Russian music. Now, in America, he is an internationalist both by conviction and experience. In contradistinction to this, the modern musician of today is almost afraid of his inherited predilections, and is international in his tastes chiefly by virtue of a preliminary desire and decision to be so.

And whereas the composers of the intelligentsia are most finicky and careful about their production, the creative activity of Sibelius is free and unrestrained. So that while these composers use up a large part of their subtle and refined intelligence in a tense and hectic effort to avoid the commonplace, Sibelius is not afraid to achieve it—indeed, there is a good deal of the banal in some of his work, and there are streaks of it even in his best compositions. But the same can be said of Schubert and Beethoven—to name only two others!

Whereas, in fact, the composers of the first order use a system of birth control with the rarefied intelligences of their coterie as their eugenic advisers, Sibelius, on the other hand, is an unconscious advocate of unrestricted proliferation. And if a few of his children were born rather dumb—and even if some of the more attractive ones are snub-nosed, or what you will—it is nevertheless a fact that he has probably contributed more valuable qualities to the common blood stock of music than any other composer now living.

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