

that not always consistently. There is never any question of interpretation or psychological analysis of the events. But each time the singing voice leads the melodic line, shaped according to the accent of the words in typical Slavic fashion, half psalmodic, half gesticulatory, back to the God-forsaken atmosphere of the prison.

His inconsistencies are not to be regarded as deliberate tricks. When the Pope, giving his blessing, enters to the tune of a march almost of the character of a fox-trot, no trace of irony is intended. Another example is the surprising overture to this sorrowful opera, a cheerful piece, suitable for a concert, with cadenzas for the solo violins. Later we read that for the prolog, sketches for a violin concerto were tried out. This might be called dilettantism, but it is a productive dilettantism, as with Moussorgsky, of whom Janacek often reminds us. A lusty, genuine stirring music but quite inimitable. This naturalistic principle of Janacek's music is fruitful only to a limited extent. In the hands of a less original composer it would degenerate into crude barbarism.

Aus Einem Totenhaus was first presented in Mannheim. In Berlin it was the last effort of the Krolloper, an unforgettable performance inspiringly directed by Fritz Zweig, set in a dark background by Neher, scenically designed with understanding by Curyel. The production again demonstrated what the avant-garde have lost in this theatre. The public, at least that portion of it which does not cling in stupid obstinacy to Wagner, has every cause to regret that the closing of the Krolloper has deprived it of the opportunity to gain a more thorough understanding of this unusual, last work of Janacek.

Hans Gutman

SOURCE BOOK OF AMERICAN MUSIC

I CONFESS that I anticipated no particular pleasure in reading *Our American Music* by John Tasker Howard. American music seemed to me a dull and trivial subject, of more interest to historical societies and Sons and Daughters of the Revolution than to those whose musical interests outweighed the

patriotic. I thought any book of six hundred odd pages on the subject must be wandering, dull, verbose, and inflated; that it must consist of a series of gray and unimportant stories about gray and unimportant people.

I confess that in almost every one of these pre-judgments I was entirely mistaken. American music is neither a trivial subject nor dull one, and *Our American Music* is quite the opposite of most of the things I thought it must be. It is, in the first place, history: not, of course, a tight, concise, logical story of a tight, concise, logical development—that would be fiction—but a continuous and connected story of interrelated influences and events. It is, in the second place, readable—delightful reading, in fact—from the charming account of the naivetés of early musical America to the excellently restrained and impartial account of the MacDowell-Columbia affair.

It is, of course, not always possible to agree with Mr. Howard. In most cases he is careful, and wisely so, to leave questions of appraisal to others. So, for example, in considering the stature of MacDowell he quotes Gilman's exaggerated statement at MacDowell's death that he knew of no piano sonatas since Beethoven that could compare with the four of MacDowell for passion, dignity, and breadth of style, and sets it off against Paul Rosenfeld's equally exaggerated sneer: "He is nothing if not a daughter of the American revolution."

Occasionally, however, when Mr. Howard expresses his own opinions, he lapses into gross exaggeration on his own account:

"Foster was one of the greatest melodists we have yet produced, and some of his simplest songs are among the most beautiful that have ever been written, anywhere” And later, also referring to Foster: "So ended the life of a man who made the world a better place to live in."

It is something of shock, too, to find the chapter heading of page 367 read as follows:

“Chapter XIV”

“We Climb the Heights”

“I. Ethelbert Nevin”

“(1862-1901)”

(MacDowell comes later in the same chapter.) It is a worse

one to hear that the *Rosary* "performed sincerely and with restraint by a true artist . . . is an almost perfect work of art."

But, of course, the ever-present problem in a book like this is how much and when to sneer, and it is not to be expected that anyone should in every case combine praise and blame in exactly proper proportions. Mr. Howard does not err always on the same side, but he tends to be too charitable rather than too harsh.

With the chapter on our folk music and the composers who have used it, an element enters into his book which he would have done better without. It is certainly not history; it is at most bibliography. In the last two hundred pages, nearly every person in America who has set pen to staff paper, even for the simplest and trashiest little teaching-piece, is mentioned. No writer of a history of the United States would list every member of Congress, or every governor of every state; and these interminable lists disfigure the latter portions of the book and make them much closer to a musical *Who's Who* (and who isn't?) than to a history.

All this dull and historically unimportant material makes the book a valuable reference manual. But a history and a directory do not really belong in the same volume. If Mr. Howard had wished to fill out his historical account, instead of stuffing the volume with names of little people and their little pieces, he might have given us fuller accounts of important phases of American music-making treated in the earlier chapters of the volume and strangely neglected in the later ones. Henry Lee Higginson, Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden, Lillian Nordica, James Gibbons Huneker, Philip Hale, Elizabeth Coolidge, Oscar Hammerstein, Percy Goetschius—some of these are important names in American music and deserve more than the passing reference accorded to those mentioned at all.

The treatment of the younger generation of American composers ("The Modernists") is based chiefly on what they themselves have been able to put into words about their aims, or on what sympathetic critics have written about them. The discussion is consequently incomplete, though not unfriendly, and often lays stress in strange places.

The book, finally, is provided with admirable appendices—lists of works and bibliographies—and an excellent index. The latter could be made much easier to use by setting index numbers in bold face when they refer to discussions of person or subject indexed rather than to mere references to them.

Arthur Mendel

ENCOUNTERS STIMULATING AND OTHERWISE

AT each of last summer's outstanding fiestas of modern music, the one at Munich, the week of the I.S.C.M. in Oxford and London, and the Pan-American in Paris, new works of great vitality were presented. In general they exhibited a higher level of creative, emotional or at least, technical maturity than the morbid and confused average which many a past season has brought forward.

However, this summer's festivals were again marred by the chronic flood of mediocrities and nonentities that are slipped into the programs through diplomatic manœuvring. The very appearance of some of these products at representative modern music concerts is shocking; the trickery of their sponsors too evident.

There could be no more telling juxtaposition than was offered by the two major compositions of the Munich Festival, the new operas, Malipiero's *Torneo Notturmo* and Alois Haba's finally achieved quarter-tone opera *Die Mutter*. Here at last we saw the woods behind the trees, and could appraise the new academic labels, classifications and pseudo progressiveness which still confuse us.

Malipiero's *Torneo Notturmo*, a work of conservative technical habits so far as the music is concerned, fairly vibrated with freshness of stage conception, of dramatic fancy and invention of detail. The composer's favorite operatic idea, so convincingly embodied in *Sette Canzoni* has found a new and varied development in the *Torneo*. The grouping of the tonal material of each scene around a rigid musical form as a gravitational center, Malipiero now supplements by grouping the dramatic material around a central emotion from which the climax is developed.