

but precise use of wheezes, bleats, and unusual noises. Unfortunately, like Burian, he has not unraveled the problem of notation. No one who had not heard him could conceivably take the words and make what he does of them. If he would even use present musical notation to indicate the rhythm, tempo, dynamics and approximate pitch of his performances, it would be an aid.

Of these three talents, Burian, Eisler and Schwitters, Schwitters' is the most finished. Burian is developing an art and is continuing to enlarge its possibilities. He lacks entire seriousness but not persistence, and he has cleverness enough to see new ways ahead. Eisler has poured primitive and vigorous feeling into a new choral harmonic scheme. But his music is technically crude and he makes no attempt to improve it. Schwitters has taken one original idea of expression, and kept it within such limits that he has developed an exquisite perfection of form and technic.

Henry Cowell

GERMANY'S NEW MUSIC LITERATURE

MMUSICAL literature in Germany, in the days before the war, was dominated by the scientist. He offered panoramic views of development in cultural history, he wrote standard biographies of the classical composers and erudite monographs, flavoring his learning with anecdotes about half-forgotten old masters. Besides the academic literature there were any number of dilettante works, composed for the most part with more enthusiasm than competence, interlarded with curiously naive legends about the great masters. Almost all the Wagner literature belongs in this category.

After the War, however, a reaction set in, and the musical literature market met a crisis. The public no longer bought sentimental, uncritically eulogistic biographies, and the philological researches of the pedants, consecrated to the past, were, if anything, even less highly esteemed. The musical book publishing trade had come upon evil days.

During the post-war years, a new temper and a new idiom in musical literature gradually emerged. Not the academician and the dilettante, but the musical specialists have coined this new idiom. It is the distinction of Paul Bekker and Adolph Weiss-

mann to have signaled, from the watch-towers of criticism, the birth of a new musical world and to have stimulated the growth of a literature which, no longer focussed upon the past, concerns itself with the present and the problems of the present. Bekker's books, *Kritische Zeitbilder* (1921), *Neue Musik* (1923), and Weissmann's *Die Musik in der Weltkrise* (1922) and *Die Entgötterung der Musik* (1927, his last book) have been the guiding lights for the younger generation of writers.

Broadly surveying the field, we may comment thus on modern musical literature. First, it is no longer the personality, the life of the artist, but the artist's work, which commands exclusive attention. Secondly, relevance of the discussion to the practical problems of the musician is demanded and maintained; purely theoretic treatment is not emphasized. Thirdly, the style of the writer on music has become pungent and vital. It is no longer enough merely to have mastered one's subject matter; literary skill as well is required of the critic.

These generalizations apply equally to the whole body of literature devoted to modern music. The quarrel between theory and practise is an old one in musical history; modern writers have thrown their entire weight on one side of the controversy. There are very few contemporary books which expound a theory of art, an artistic program. The creative artist himself shuns program notes. Paul Hindemith, for example, writes very seldom—and then not about his own work. Ernst Krenek, alone, undertakes to explain, in prose, his purpose and his aims. But he is too creative to care much about the construction of his theories and he declines to enter upon criticism of his contemporaries and of modern music as a whole.

Nevertheless, there is a great need for a reconsideration of the opposing elements in contemporary music. Since the shibboleths "*New Objectivity*," "*Expressionism*" and "*Gebrauchsmusik*" no longer provide the basis for even a superficial view of the great variety of distinguishable types, a systematic analysis of the new music becomes a need if the public is at all to understand the developments under way. The moment is at hand for the appearance of a few fundamental studies which shall eliminate persisting errors about the new styles. An attempt, for example, should

be made clearly to reveal the single line of evolution in Stravinsky (down to the "neo-classic" period), in Hindemith, in Krenek (the Krenek of the *Zwingburg* and of the *Jonny*).

The first attempt at a complete survey has been made by Kurt Westphal in *Die Moderne Musik*. Westphal, a young Berlin critic, makes his point of departure the parallel chord structure of Debussy. Here he finds "the foreshadowing of all modern music." With masterly clarity Westphal connects the productions of the moderns, from Mahler and Reger to Hindemith and Krenek, with Debussy's treatment of form. He has written not so much a treatise on the whole of modern music as a penetrating study of the contribution of that master and of impressionism to the development of modern music, and, in particular, of the significance of modern harmonics and chord structure.

Westphal's conclusions are not recognized as valid by Heinz Tiessen in his book *Zur Geschichte der Jüngsten Musik*. Tiessen, himself a composer as well as a teacher, and at one time profoundly influenced by impressionism, believes today that impressionism has been superseded through the experience of Schönberg. But although he has much that is very interesting to say on practical problems of composition, his book is on the whole too personal. What we have here are the rather delightful confessions of a not unknown composer, more or less haphazardly strung together. The most valuable passages bear upon the relation between theory and creation.

Particularly distinguished for his judgments and elucidation of modern music is Hans Mersmann. In *Die Tonsprache der Neuen Musik*, he happily evades subjectivism and a vain show of learning. A thorough scholar, equally at home in theory, in history and in practice, he turns first to the phenomena, to the concrete facts themselves; then he notes their organic interrelations. This volume is instructive in the best sense; it is addressed not only to the professional musician but also to the auditor of music for whom he paints a vigorous picture of the transformations of elements and forms in the new music.

The effort to come to grips with these elements also explains the work of Herman Erpf, in his *Studien zur Harmonie und Klangtechnik der Neueren Musik*. This is one of the most

thoughtful books on the new music; here again the living work of art is the object of analysis, and the analysis is not theoretical but eminently practical.

The first biographical study of an artist of the younger generation has been written by Heinrich Strobel, the Berlin critic. That this first monograph should concern itself with the career of Paul Hindemith is not surprising. For Hindemith is not only the undisputed leader of the younger generation in Germany: there is this further point, that his style is now so fully developed as to sustain a reasonable analysis. Strobel's study is a striking example of the new biography. We learn about Hindemith's life in but a few sentences, and almost immediately turn to the history of his works and a discussion of the driving powers of Hindemith's art, presented in the most telling fashion.

In Germany, marvelous tales and anecdotes about American jazz have been making the rounds for a long time. There even came to be a sort of Jazz Myth. Paul Bernhard's *Jazz: Eine Musikalische Zeitfrage* is an excellent exposition of the subject. Bernhard is to be complimented for having avoided all trace of pedantry in his treatment. Freshness and vivacity of style, appropriate to such a study, have been admirably achieved.

With jazz we approach the realm of "Gebrauchsmusik." But on this subject no worthy consideration has yet appeared. An important contemporary problem, it has not as yet stimulated a comprehensive literary work. In the sphere of the new technic, to be sure, a whole series of important works is being published. Walter Gronostay is finishing his first book on the tone film. A great collaborative work on *Kunst und Technik* will soon be ready for publication. However, the phonograph and the radio are still awaiting treatment. And a very necessary volume on the sociology of music is sadly wanting. But as the writers themselves employ themes of contemporary interest the demand for books on music will increase. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the critics will address themselves more and more to what is in fact their most vital task, the consideration and evaluation of the musical phenomena of their own time. We do not need a dozen classical biographies a year; but we do want competent studies of what is happening today.

Eberhard Preussner