

considered. The chapter, "New Media," covers a discussion of performance, the development of orchestration; "Work-Fidelity" relates to interpretation, phonograph, radio and mechanical reproduction. "From Minuet to Swing" throws much light on the perpetual conflict between serious and "popular" music. He criticizes frankly the weakness of the I.S.C.M. as he sees it. He asks "must opera perish?" and answers with practical suggestions involving radical changes of policy in production and a different concept of the essence of opera, with new methods of expression and new music to

present them. He also believes that "the composer's status in the imagination of society would change soon enough if new music were more strongly emphasized" in musical education.

And finally he says "the greatest psychological dangers of our time are a frivolous optimism which rejects all problems, and a desperately smart nihilism which, *a priori*, regards their solution as impossible and much prefers to await the 'inevitable disaster.'" He warns that both these attitudes are unworthy, and that we must proceed to the solution of the problem "here and now."

Marion Bauer

AN IDEA FOR BIOGRAPHY

ONE pledge of Deems Taylor's perfectly is redeemed by the short biographies of composers "from Bach to Stravinsky" making up Wallace Brockway and Herbert Weinstock's *Men of Music*. "Whatever your reaction to the contents of this book" volunteers the famous commentator in his introduction to the volume (Simon and Schuster), "you will not, I promise you, be bored." Dutch Cleanser chases dirt no faster than it chases ennui. All is humanizing lack of awe in it, piquancy, alertness, a brightness at times witty and not infrequently sagacious. The texture cheerfully mixes intimate anecdotes and picturesque details with flashes of sometimes poetic and original insight. While giving the musical public the low-down on its favorite composers' venereal infections and sex-neuroses: the syphilis of Gluck, Beethoven and Schubert; Tchaikowsky's homosexuality, Chopin's effeminacy, the mother-fixation of Brahms, Wagner's

tendency to entanglement with married couples etc., at the same time audaciously it reappraises many a masterpiece. Possibly a few of the judgments are silly: for example the characterization of the *poco allegretto* in Brahms' *F-major Symphony* as "tepid and unadventurous." Possibly a few others are merely cheeky: for instance the complacent citation of Professor Dent's unfortunate "Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* should long ago have been retired to the shelf." Others of these revaluations are well-advised. Of course the *Appassionata* "ends in an orgy of musical fist-shaking!" Of course the *F-minor Fantaisie* of Chopin "has an architecture of its own as discoverable as cogent to its interpretation as that of a classical sonata!"

Not that *Men of Music* doesn't here and there – despite its unusual brightness – give one the effect of something a trifle antiquated. To begin with: its covert but essential *East Lynne* pathos. The ancient

melodrama exhibited: (1) The history of a loving wife who foolishly elopes from her comfortable habitation, (2) A bedroom in Paris, the romantic scene of the unhappy woman's desertion by her seducer over the cradle of illegitimacy. (3) The victim's desolate final years in her former household – in a condition of servitude, deprivation of her children's recognition of herself as their true mother, disconnection from her spouse etc. *Men of Music*, like all biographies of its type, for its part broadly stresses the miseries and inferiorities of free and interesting persons in its accounts of what may be presumed to be their transits through life. . . . Again: the method isn't the most penetrating. Scarcely if ever carried beyond themselves, the two enterprising authors have largely selected isolated facts about their subjects. They haven't felt wholes: clear, tight relationships between the parts of their own experience, the "lives" and "works" of their composers. We go no distance with them into the worlds of meaning and of beauty in which the composers periodically dwelt and into which their music periodically has conducted and continues to conduct human millions. – To say nothing about Messrs. Brockway and Weinstock's insensibility to the truth of the great artist's life known to the interested public as the fact that he is a self-creator; that the Ugly Duckling regularly transforms himself as well as is transformed into a Swan through his experiences with his proper work. If genius has any secret, it is this power of self-creation: none at least is more essential. Doubtless the process is obscure and criticism only just beginning to comprehend it. Yet Rolland's last Beethoven-studies and works of the late Friedrich Gundolf such as his *Goethe* and

his *George* abound in intimations of the self-creative process. Its comprehension thus would seem to be the inevitable next step in the biography of genius; the perfect balance for the materialistic, Taine-esque, Freudian, Marxist ideas that in the last decades have been brought to bear on the topic. Mind you, we do not censure Messrs. Brockway and Weinstock for not having illuminated the process. Critics far more ambitious than themselves have not cast any light on it. One merely fears that the authors' complete insensitivity to the problem will help "date" their brightly put together volume as biography.

For the benefit of readers still mystified by our reference, let us explain that this Process is the one through which genius derives from its creative activity not only the craft-knowledge but the self-knowledge indispensable to its progress. The works help create the creator: it is to self-knowledge with universal implications gained from production that we must ascribe progress such as that made by Beethoven in the years of the *Eroica*; far more than to the external events and tragedies or to experiments with form to which critics long have been attributing it. Probably that is what Renoir meant in saying that "the artist learns nothing from nature." Through production and the constant emersion from his unconscious of new themes and ideas, the sense of new relationships and new methods, incidental to it, the great artist apparently becomes conscious of the presence within himself of a will or power not in his control and possibly excessive of the limits of his personal being. Simultaneously he would seem to grow aware of the existence in objective reality of a kindred creative force. Lesser artists also have

this experience, but they have it sporadically. The genius however is possessed by it; and the ubiquitous "will" or "creative force" becomes the expanding content of his experience. "Cosmic poetry" and music like the *Jupiter*, *Eroica* and *Seventh Symphonies*, *Der Ring* and *Prometheus*, all have the aspects of symbols of this maturing comprehension.

At the same time, the genius would seem also to be forming within himself a "self" distinct from his ego or possibly its transfiguration. Originally he may be thought to come to his work with personal feelings mixed with a sense of the whole truth and the relationship of its parts. For the reason that he is an artist he takes less interest in his personal feelings and resentments than in this whole. The more personal impulses he suppresses in favor of those which embrace it. Gradually there comes to exist independently in him a bundle of impulses, a "self," a soul, an ethic related to, almost formed in the image of the truth and its incarnate representative. It replaces the original ego. No doubt, this development has its counterpart in every spiritual life; to some extent perhaps in every responsible existence. But in the artist, it is intimately connected with his art: it takes place largely at his work table. We repeat: the process still wants illumination. Yet it is a little difficult to see how biographies of great artists ignoring this process of self or soul-creation, can in the coming years manage, no matter how

brilliantly put together, not to appear "Hamlets" a little without The Prince of Denmark.

III

It's delightful, meanwhile to be able to welcome the "larger and completely new 1940 model" of *How Music Grew* by Marion Bauer and Ethel Peyser (G. P. Putnam's Sons). Basic revisions have brought the encyclopedic and engaging little volume up to date. The chapters on "the babyhood of music" have been augmented by the knowledge born of the most recent researches into the origins and the most ancient forms of music. The records of the events of the last fifteen years – the deaths of musicians which have occurred since 1925; the new talents that have come to light up to and including Robert Delaney, David Diamond and William Schuman; the latest direction of music and mundane conditions' effects on them – furnish invaluable additions. To be sure, the book may be a dangerous one. Mad to know everything rathermore than feel, our age is tending to lame the powers of action by undating the minds of children and of adults with "information;" and may conceivably misuse *How Music Grew*. Still the volume can be very beneficial. All that is necessary is that it be used as the amplification and clarification of a natural musical experience. Thus it may be a perfect boon for teachers and for students.

Paul Rosenfeld