

they are not understood? Occasionally, it is true, the contrast between word and tone produces a humorous effect, as when Laura, in her bathtub, sings a most serious aria eulogizing the advantages of the hot water supply. Or when the hotel guests intone a pathetic chorus to the words: "How embarrassing!"

This work of Hindemith's is superabundant in sharply drawn themes, in originality of design, and, last but not least, in the peculiar vitality of its scoring. The orchestra favors hard color, two grand pianos emphasizing this tendency. One of the most successful scenes is achieved by means of the two pianos and two voices. The stage is divided. Edward, lying on a bed of planks in prison, and Laura, on a couch at home, read their fate in the newspaper. The chorus of men at the registrar announcing births, marriages and deaths, and handing in divorce pleas, is a highly amusing scene. The chorus of stenographers at their typewriters is another; as they sing, "In reply to yours of yesterday regarding the delivery of a smart marriage witness," the opera chorus executes the business letter.

One need not assert that Hindemith lacks the humor for a comic opera, but his wit is obviously more intellectual, his entire manner more serious than this libretto permits. *Neues vom Tage* attempts to revive the opera-bouffe in the spirit of the twentieth century, but it remains an experiment. Hindemith's further stage productions will be successful or not according to whether he finds the right poet, a person who, up till now, has eluded him.

Hans Gutman

JÜRIG JENATCH

THE outstanding performance of Heinrich Kaminski's *Jürg Jenatch*, given under Fritz Busch at the Dresden State Opera last summer, contained all sorts of surprises.

Kaminski of the *Concerto Grosso* and of the *Magnificat*, a rather conservative, though original creative power with an apparently polyphonic mind, revealed himself as a stage composer of the first order. *Jürg Jenatch* is really a spoken drama in a framework of orchestral preludes and finales, interpolated with vocal dialogues and mass scenes. But Kaminski's musical and

stage invention, his keen instinct for the theatre and his tense emotional fervor developed this structure into a music drama, much better knit and more forceful than anything I have heard in the last decade. The spoken word, an avowed enemy of musical logic and of formal continuity, has here become to our amazement the friendly neighbor of situations musically described.

The book of the opera uses an episode taking place in the Swiss cantons during the Thirty Years' War. Jürg Jenatch, leader of the Evangelical Alliance fighting the Swiss Catholic forces, is strangled by a net of intrigues woven by the Republic of Venice, Spain, the Duke de Rohan and that almighty spider, Richelieu. Jürg sees his home burned by the enemy, his beloved wife killed; he himself is wickedly misled and trapped.

The novel musical proceedings which Kaminski applied to these "resurrected" Huguenots are as extraordinary as they are well thought out and wise.

Several choruses, now singing old Swiss chorales, now reciting long moral homilies, now shouting, exclaiming or laughing, are set in most unexpected places with admirable effect. One choir is placed above the stage, the other in the coulisse, the third in the orchestra pit but with their backs to the parquet and facing the musicians. The grim, reverberating murmur of the last group, now sinister and now violent, discharged into the vast stage spaces, is unforgettable.

Another amazing effect of great dramatic power is created by a daring procedure, the effectiveness of which could not have been predicted. For scenes of terror Kaminski uses bells in unison with three grand pianos set back of the stage at increasing distances.

His main orchestra is equally interesting. He employs no trombones, but the other brass groups, horns and trumpets, are of the same triple composition as the woodwinds. Thus he is enabled to get a full harmony colored by any single timbre he wishes. The peculiar use of lutes and mandolins lends another individual tinge of color to his orchestra.

There are passages of genius in this opera, such as the finale of the first act when the band of assassins sees Jürg Jenatch's face illuminated by the flames of his voluntary martyrdom and re-

treats, muttering perplexedly "Il santo? Il santo?" This scene, in fact the whole work, reestablishes our faith that historic opera in spite of its present senile conventionality, is not yet dead. Perhaps, after all, historic portraiture is destined to be the same vital force in opera as it is today in belles lettres.

One might have expected from Kaminski magnificent and intricate polyphonic writing, but the contrapuntal and rhythmic difficulties surpass the so-called "worst" scores known, such as *Les Noces* or Bartok's *Dorfscenen*. Nothing could be a greater tribute to Fritz Busch's superb musicianship and mastery and the perfection of his Dresden ensemble, than his triumph over the difficulties of *Jürg Jenatch*, his performance with its clarity and verve, its driving unity and its finely articulated detail.

Lazare Saminsky

FLY-WHEEL OPERA

THE play, the novel, the symphony have made a god of the machine—why not opera?

Maschinist Hopkins, the lyric-drama by Max Brand which first was revealed last July at Duisburg, in the Rhineland, where it was one of the two chief successes of the fifty-ninth Tonkünstlerfest des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins, and which more recently has been mounted in Dresden and is scheduled for Berlin this winter, strives to apotheosize the flywheel.

It courts savagery and relentless brutality. To some small extent it humanizes the machine, but to a larger extent it mechanizes man. However, it is not a score for mechanical instruments. A mechanical piano, purposely out of tune, contributes to the atmosphere of a low-life dive, otherwise Bony's Bar, which, at Duisburg, was painted in stripes suggestive of the American flag, this opera being one more example of the Germanic obsession just now for things American. Otherwise the musical mechanics of *Maschinist Hopkins* are those of orchestral imitation, and they are limited to two scenes in a great machine hall, where human kind are put in their places as pigmy serfs of the levers, cogs, belts, pistons and wheels they operate.