

style, quite characteristic of current music for woodwinds.

Arthur V. Berger

DANCE NOTE

THE recitals of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman are always important dance events. Let us attribute the failure of the large new Humphrey-Weidman opus to an unfortunate choice of music. Roy Harris' *Clarinet Sextet* is one of its composer's best works and one which stands on its own perfectly well, when it can draw complete attention to itself. It is a complete composition. Dance music is something else and usually something less in one way or another. It is generally less complete and it is desirably dependent on the dance which is its planned complement. To point to exceptions is to be bromidic. The Harris *Sextet* is not an exception. In the Humphrey-Weidman choreography there were "impulses" which were not noticeable in the music, and again time after time there were musical "impulses" which received no consideration in the dance.

Martha Graham's new work *Course* (music by George Antheil) is one of the most exciting dances presented on any stage. It must be seen again before any accurate report can be made of it. Its breathless swiftness, vigor, and healthiness are unique. The separate sections have an unaccustomed classic purity about them; choreographically it is unlike anything the writer has seen before. The truth is that *Course* passed by so quickly and excitingly that the audience was left with only a magnificent impression and an overwhelming enthusiasm; analysis was impossible.

L. E.

MUSIC HO! A BRILLIANT SURVEY

CONSTANT LAMBERT, whose book *Music Ho!* (published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935) is subtitled "A Study of Music in Decline," might better have described it as "A Study of Contemporary Music." That it is the "decline" is the author's personal assumption. However, his pessimism is by no means unrelieved, for he concludes jubilantly, thanks to his

faith in two living composers. They are the veteran Finn, Sibelius, and the Dutchman, Bernard van Dieren, who has lived so long in London as to qualify rather as an Englishman. Mr. Lambert, British himself, evidently moves in those English circles where Sibelius, with Cecil Gray as prophet and high priest, is confidently hailed as the Great God Jan.

Mr. Lambert, who is under thirty, has the exuberance and daring of the youth that chooses to live dangerously. *Music Ho!* is brilliant and impetuous, yet it is neither impudent, careless, ill-considered, nor ignorant. For all its energy and pace, it is remarkably well documented, and its author, even when you disagree with him, always commands your respect, because you never have any doubt about being in the presence of an educated and cultivated man, a man of burning sincerity.

Son of a distinguished painter, Mr. Lambert employs freely and aptly analogies from the visible arts, which, together with his literary allusions, enlarge the scope and interest of his book and give it a place among the important studies dealing broadly with the problems of post-war culture. Furthermore, Mr. Lambert is a trenchant, forceful, and epigrammatic writer, who keeps entirely clear of metaphysical mists and mazes.

Nevertheless, he avoids also the over-simplification and consequent unfairness of what might be termed the professional epigrammatist. When he says: "There is a strong flavor of the Black Mass about Schönberg," he proceeds to back up the assertion as follows: "He has the complete lack of humor of the diabolist, while a glance at his earlier work indicates how devout a believer he once was." I doubt whether the ultimate impression produced by Schönberg could be conveyed more directly and concisely, or more fairly.

Inevitably both Schönberg and Stravinsky come in for a great deal of attention from Mr. Lambert. Courageously challenging and laying about him with his drawn sword, he thus plunges into the subject of Stravinsky and the orchestra: "In his search for ever more brilliant and pungent tones, Stravinsky was led away from the clear colors of Rimsky-Korsakoff's orchestration to a gradual distortion of the natural timbres of each instrument, so that it is rarely that a player is given a passage to be played

in the ordinary manner in the ordinary register. This persistent use of extreme coloring eventually becomes as monotonous in its way as the drab shades and muddy impasto of Brahms. The principal objection to Stravinsky's scoring lies not so much in its monotonous eccentricity as in the fact that it, is essentially applied scoring Like everything else in his music it is two-dimensional, and bears much the same relation to Sibelius' scoring as Gauguin's color does to that of Cézanne."

Now, while admiring Mr. Lambert's forthrightness and his obvious sincerity, some of us will persist in our belief that Stravinsky's feeling for timbre (distortions or not!) is unsurpassed, if, indeed, it has been equalled, and the taken-for-granted monotony of Brahms suggests so definitely an utterance from a dark age as to cause one for the moment to wonder whether Mr. Lambert can ever really have listened to Brahms.

It will be seen from the foregoing that there is plenty in this book to differ with; and what will the strict sect of the Debussyites say to the declaration that *Pelléas et Mélisande* is one of its composer's weakest and most mannered works? But there is no use in going further in the matter of illustrative citation. *Music Ho!* is quotable from cover to cover. It is a book to be read rather than reviewed. Where every division and subdivision is engrossing and provocative, it is an ungracious task to pick out this or that for special praise or discussion.

Without attempting to do anything of the sort, the reviewer may still point to "Impression and Disruption," "The Age of Pastiche," "Abstraction in Music," "Nationalism and Democracy," "Mechanical Music and the Cinema," and the entire final division ("Escape or Submission") as particularly deserving of attention. In the concluding pages, too, the author emphasizes the importance of Sibelius and Van Dieren, and the inference is plain that their not unkindly light may lead the way out of the encircling gloom of the blind alley in which most of the other makers of music find themselves today.

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