

far they have been unable to present any talents except a selection of mediocrity: Graener, Vollerthun, Trapp, Schmalstich and Bullerjahn.

Since the recent "American" concerts of Ansermet and Slo-nimsky which were so passionately discussed, Berlin's interest in modern American music has grown considerably. There had been debates over Ives, Ruggles, Varese, Cowell, Copland and Weiss. People were eager to learn something about works from "over there." Two orchestral concerts met this demand in most unsatisfactory fashion. Neither the Breslau conductor, Ernst Hoffman nor Howard Hanson, director of the Eastman School, appear to be thoroughly informed on the status of modern American production. The former gave us the composing industrialists, featuring William Woodin's *Oriental Suite* whose completely artificial ecstasies betrayed its dilettantism. Frederick Converse seemed to depend more on the power of popular songs in his *Flivver Ten Million*. Nor did Griffes' *Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan*, given at both concerts, seem representative or typically American.

Hanson's program was not much better. His own symphony attempts to justify itself by the description "romantic;" it wallows in oversweet sound and post-Wagnerian instrumentation. Bennett's *Sketches from an American Theatre*, called a "concerto grosso" by the terminologically inexact composer, does not achieve more than a witty, humorous Ravel-Stravinsky-eclecticism. The most definite impression was made by the folklore group; the Negro, W. G. Still, hit the mark with an elaboration of national dances. Sowerby and Powell received a good deal of applause. We hope that Mr. Hanson took better music out of Germany than he brought in.

H. H. Stuckenschmidt

PARIS SEASON UNDER THE CRISIS

THE Paris season was resumed in October with the two subventioned music theatres (the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique), and the six weekly or bi-weekly orchestras (Conservatoire, Colonne, Lamoureux, Pasdeloup, Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, Poulet), to which were added in January those of Siohan and

Straram, the two latter borrowing musicians from the others.

The economic crisis has not made the situation of these numerous orchestras much more difficult; it has simply reduced their resources and lowered the level of their maximum receipts. The size of the audience has not diminished to any great extent. Conditions in general therefore, are practically unchanged. In the present situation, the most favorable thing that can be said is that there is continuing a slow but unmistakable process of education of the Parisian public which started at first under the double influence of Wagnerianism and Russian music, and is happily marked with the new sign of Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky.

As for the music theatres, their lack of adaptation to modern conditions, the unbelievable absence of artistic discernment among their directors and performers, have made them antiques, put them really only at the border of modern life. The most incredible audiences attend their performances, ranging from the public of the painting salons to trippers from the provinces.

The really new music is played more or less well in the special concerts whose audiences are not so much limited as they are the victims of clan spirit. Alongside the Société Nationale de Musique and the Société Musicale Indépendante (S. M. I.) whose activity has been getting less and less, there is the Société de la Sérénade, formed two years ago, which gives concerts for small and chamber orchestras and represents the neo-classic movement. This year the Triton was organized, a society for chamber music of a more international nature, more "modern" in the already outworn sense of the word and which has something of the spirit of the international festivals at Geneva, Frankfort and Venice.

I expect much from the co-existence in Paris of these two societies. Each counterbalances the excesses of the other. Thanks to the Sérénade Parisian audiences recently became acquainted with two important works of Kurt Weill, *Mahagonny* and *Der Jasager*; these two remarkably executed pieces won a great success and coincided furthermore with the production of the French version of the film *Dreigroschenoper* and the growth of a wave of intellectual attraction towards communism. This success had its way paved long before by an evolution of musical taste

which goes back to *Mavra*, that Stravinsky work which remains generally so unappreciated.

From Stravinsky we have now had the premiere of his *Duo Concertant* for piano and violin. In general this work was not grasped on its first hearing but I am sure that time will work in its favor. All the elevated character, sublime and at the same time tragic, of a phase of Stravinsky's art appears here in superb fashion. As in the *Sérénade* for piano which preceded *Oedipus Rex*, Stravinsky approaches the spirit of Greek tragedy, at the same time giving himself up to technical problems, of which the principal one here is the balance between a melodic instrument and one essentially harmonic but which Stravinsky treats more and more according to contrapuntal arabesque methods. The freedom of modulation in the final movement discloses that he still retains powers of discovery.

The new *Concerto* for piano by Maurice Ravel, specially written for the left hand, also failed of a favorable reception from the critics. In the piano part, aside from the vivacity of the writing for the left hand which succeeds in deceiving the ear and giving the impression of the use of two hands, we again find that sensibility or rather that sentimentality in harmony and even melody to which the composer of *Miroirs*, *Histoires Naturelles*, *L'Heure Espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* has shown himself subject. The orchestra is handled at once with dignity and simplicity; imagine the accompaniment to *Paon*, with which the *Histoires Naturelles* opened, orchestrated, give it a soft accent somewhat parsifalesque and you will have an idea of this instrumentation, rich yet simple in effect.

Neither did the new ballet of Prokofieff gain critical favor. *Sur le Borysthène* appears inferior to *Chout*, to *Pas d'Acier*, to *Fils Prodigue*. The rhythm of Prokofieff here lacks elasticity; the sonorities are dampened. But as a matter of fact, of what good was this performance by the Opéra? I would hardly attempt to pass on a work given under such circumstances. As to dramatic proceedings, it revealed once more that Serge Lifar, a sympathetic dancer, is devoid of all the qualities of a choreographer. Here is another innovation of the Opéra management that has turned out to be a boomerang.

Some interesting dramatic music for the theatre has been written by Darius Milhaud for a production of the Atelier, the *Chateau des Papes*. This little score for voice, for piano, for trumpet and for the Martinot radio wave instrument is rich in accent. The new film by René Clair, *Quatorze Juillet*, has popular music arranged and composed by Jaubert; a grand waltz by Grémillon, cinemist and composer, is its best effect.

André Schaeffner

A BOOK AND TWO CHAPTERS ON NEW MUSIC

THE task of rendering into a book of three hundred pages the dizzying panorama of the modern musical world has been achieved with more than ordinary success by Guido Pannian in his *Modern Composers* (Dutton, 1933). He has simplified his undertaking by limiting himself to a single chapter on general musical tendencies and devoting the body of his volume to essays on a dozen composers from Strauss to Honegger. Through his consideration of men so varied as Stravinsky, Vaughn-Williams, Kodaly, Hindemith, Bloch, Falla, Szymanowski, Busoni and Schönberg runs a single theme—the fusion of personality through technic and idiom, with the value of each assessed by Signor Pannian in proportion to the extent that he conceives this fusion to have been effected.

The discourse is carried on by a critical method that is happily the blending of musical and literary ideology, particularly in the essays on Stravinsky and Schönberg, both of whom he appraises as having been led astray (to different ends, of course) by the blandishments of objectivist thought-processes as opposed to their intuitive bent. As expository writing, the Schönberg summary is accomplished with singular clarity and directness, a survey of his development which, for impartiality and erudition, has not an English equivalent. Less valuable are the chapters on Strauss and Ravel; his castigation of the former partakes of the common misconception of him as a contemporary composer, rather than a predecessor, historically, of Debussy; and checking against him insufficiencies to whose solution he never aspired. Equally unstable is his praise of Ravel, which is invalidated by a procedure of selecting for analysis those works