

# MODERN MUSIC

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## ON ARTISTS AND COLLABORATION

A SYMPOSIUM

Who are collaborators and what should be done with them? The artists of any country are often better known to the great world than any of their compatriots and international publicity now rages around the heads of all those under suspicion. Judgment, it seems, is not to be the exclusive concern of local governments since the Allies are involved, either through representatives on the spot, or by the expression of public opinion at home. . . . Because of widespread interest in the fate of musicians, MODERN MUSIC has solicited the views of several distinguished composers, formerly of Europe, now living in America. We print below replies by Arnold Schönberg, Darius Milhaud, Ernst Krenek, Vittorio Rieti, Bohuslav Martinu.

### A DANGEROUS GAME—Arnold Schönberg

THERE are a great many categories of collaborators in Germany and in the conquered countries. One must distinguish between the many who have been forced and those who have voluntarily collaborated. There are, besides, others who simply "missed the bus," who would have preferred to emigrate rather than bow to dictates, if it had not become too late for them. And there are those whose stupid egotism led them to believe that evil could happen only to others while they themselves would be spared. Some did only what they were ordered to do, others functioned as agitators, prosecuting those who did not conform to the prescribed style, and based their conduct on the theoretical party line.

With the thought in mind that the captain in *Carmen* is not intended to represent a coward but simply a man who yields to the argument of the guns which confront him, only those should be authorized to blame the forced collaborator who have themselves proved fearless

before the menace of the concentration camp and of torture. People like that of course also exist.

Curiously, few realize that politics, a nice topic to talk about, is a rather dangerous game into which one should enter only if he is aware that his life and that of his opponent are at stake and if he is willing to pay for his conviction – even that price.

Artists generally deal with this problem as thoughtlessly as if it were merely a controversy on artistic matters; just as if they were discussing merely “art for art’s sake” as contrasted with “objectivity in art.” Even in such arguments a participant’s life may be at stake. I wonder whether Richard Wagner knew that he would be living in exile for so many years as an outlaw when, because of artistic corruption, he participated in setting the Dresden Hoftheater on fire.

On the other hand, very few of those who emigrated can ask to be honored for their political or artistic straightforwardness. Most of them had no other chance of being spared, either because of their race or that of their matrimonial partner. Many had been politically implicated and others came under the ban of “Kultur-Bolschewismus.” There are probably not many who emigrated voluntarily; and even among such “real” emigrés there are some who tried hard to come to an agreement with the powers only to give up in the end.

Yet despite the fact that little personal merit attaches to the inability of many to swim with the official current (*Gleichschaltung*), there is this to be said for them; they all had to abandon their homes, their positions, their countries, their friends, their business, their fortune. They all had to go abroad, try to start life anew, and generally at a much lower level of living, of influence, of esteem; many even had to change their occupation and to suffer humiliation.

There may be no merit in all that; still if those who had to do it could do it – why should not others also have preferred to preserve their honesty, their integrity, their character, by taking upon themselves of their own free will the suffering of an emigré, like those who had no other way?

That would have been of some merit!

I am inclined to say:

Those who here acted like politicians are politicians and should be treated in the same manner in which politicians are treated.

Those who did not so act should escape punishment.

But considering the low mental and moral standard of artists in general, I would say:

Treat them like immature children

Call them fools and let them escape.

## MUSIC AND POLITICS—Darius Milhaud

I HATE to see these two words together, as music is what I love the best and politics what I dislike the most.

First of all I think that we must never forget that this war is a kind of international civil war with the forces of fascism and oppression against the forces of democracy and freedom.

In occupied countries there has been a small minority of collaborators. In countries which have had the luck not to feel enemy oppression there is a minority of fascist minded people which probably would decrease if an enemy occupation should occur.

I don't see why artists should not be treated as ordinary citizens. Jacques Benoist-Mechin is a composer who has written a few works in which you may find a certain gift. He was a minister in the Laval cabinet. Now he is arrested, accused as a traitor, a German spy. I hope he will be shot. That he may be a Nazi does not change his music, of course. I would not recommend that his works be performed right now. But the life of a work is independent of the composer . . . Being so far away we can have nothing to say about all that. The people who have suffered and fought in the Underground and who have been cold and hungry, who have helped the persecuted and risked their lives at any time are the only ones who can act and have the right to do so. Let them mete out justice. They will certainly know who is a real collaborator, I mean a Nazi-minded person, and will make a sharp distinction between him and those who have had to bear pressure and continue to work to be able to live. And what can we know here? So often I have heard: "This one went to Germany, he is a Nazi." Do you know if he has not been there for the Underground? I know a story of an aristocrat in a castle near a little town who had a German general and all his staff to dinner. That seems terrible! But this dinner was organized by the Underground to keep those Nazi officers out of the town to facilitate the destruction of a bridge and a railway station. Harry Baur, the movie star went to Germany. In America, every Frenchman said: "What a traitor!" He was