

well-built and erect; Bartok is little and lithe, etc., etc. The plan is followed out with a regularity which becomes monotonous; no artistic device conceals the technic of construction.

There are, however, many sympathetic touches, new biographical angles, and colorful bits such as Mr. Ewen's account of his meeting with Sibelius; his description of Falla's surroundings; his analysis of Bloch's Hebraic quality; his revelations of Delius' early private life and his account of Hindemith and the Nazis.

*Marion Bauer*

## MEMORIAL TO BERG

**T**HERE are two approaches to the writing of artists' biographies: one of belles-lettres, the other of analysis. The first way is good for dealing with the private life, it may serve in some respects to improve on reality. The extreme example of such easy biographical fiction is Franz Werfel's *Verdi* which is openly called a novel. One need not be blind to its poetic qualities to point out that it has projected a slightly incorrect conception both of Verdi and of Wagner.

Pure analysis of artistic phenomena frequently suffers from too great concentration. Hardly any one is capable of closely following the excellent interpretation of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* made by Heinrich Schenker. Here is an objectivity that bars every approach to the artist by the layman.

The most popular compromise between fiction and analysis is the form of objective biography, interspersed with simple and intelligible descriptions of the works. Literature of this type on Beethoven and Wagner is abundantly supplied. Its intentional appeal is to the demands of the average reader and book-purchaser.

Dr. Willi Reich, well known to readers of *MODERN MUSIC*, has published a book on Alban Berg (Herbert Reichner Verlag, Vienna) which achieves the same end by reversing this process. He puts analysis into the foreground but includes all kinds of references to time, environment and cultural sociology. As fellow contributors to this volume he has Ernst Krenek and Dr. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno.

Wiesengrund-Adorno has made the majority of the analyses,

Reich has only interpreted the two operas *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* and the *Violin Concerto*. Krenek has turned his brilliant style and deep insight on the little known product of the radical middle period: the five orchestra songs after postcards by Peter Altenberg, Opus 4. Reich is the author of the short biography and the epilog.

But the last third of the book is written by Berg himself. It consists of eighteen articles, speeches, acrostics and notes, until now scattered in newspapers and magazines all over the world. For the connoisseur of Berg's music these masterly contributions are of the highest value. In some way they complete and they reflect his peculiar method of production. They expand the portrait of an immensely gifted but problematic composer into that of a universal spirit combining steely acuteness with a brilliant formal sense and magnificent associative capacities. Three of the articles may be mentioned as particularly important. The essay "Why is Arnold Schönberg's music so difficult to understand?", the longest and most characteristic of the series; the short reflection on "The voice in opera;" and last, but by no means least the disarming polemic "The musical impotence of Hans Pfitzner's *New Aesthetics*."



The role Arnold Schönberg has played in Berg's life as teacher, friend and model is well known. It has often led to the wrong judgment of his work. This book is noteworthy for its clear explanation of how Berg's music, when closely examined, differs from Schönberg's. Wiesengrund-Adorno's analysis characterizes the relation thus: Schönberg utopianly invents the new material, Berg adapts it by restoring the historical connection. Hence this artist who in *Wozzeck* created the most revolutionary opera, is revealed in essence as conservative, for despite his modernity he remains linked to the past. The principle of "the least transition" ("Kleinster Übergang") which Wiesengrund-Adorno recognizes as the essence of Berg's music, is also a decisive hint to the understanding of his artistic development.

Among Reich's own contributions I like that on the *Violin Concerto* the best. The essential problems of this last work by Berg are dealt with in a tight form and clear diction: the synthesis

of twelve-tone-technic and tonal melody (sometimes even harmony); the formal severity in alliance with a poetical programmatic idea (requiem).

Berg's beautiful head, remotely recalling that of Oscar Wilde, adorns the cover of the carefully printed book. A portrait of the youth, very romantic and feminine, the pathetic death-mask (cast by Anna Mahler, the daughter of Gustav Mahler) and the last photograph show the development of this face so stamped by genius. There is also an amateur's portrait of the young Manon Gropius to whose memory the *Violin Concerto* is dedicated.

*H. H. Stuckenschmidt*