

number of wood-winds, offers interesting possibilities provided a balance with the strings is maintained.

But there is a problem the near future will disclose which, without doubt, is attended with more serious consequences than the increase or reduction in the number of orchestral instruments. That is the introduction of mechanics into the execution of works. The machine is gradually conquering the earth, and more and more determines all the phases of our activity. Should that day dawn which sees the completely mechanical orchestra, bringing whatever marvels can be realized by a perfect machine, necessitating an altogether new technique, will it close with disaster to the art of music? This is a question which can only be raised, not settled, in any brief prophetic discourse.

By Albert Roussel

ECHOES FROM PRAGUE

THE International Society for Contemporary Music, embarked last year on the enterprise of holding festivals for orchestral music as distinct from those for chamber music in Salzburg and more recently in Venice. The first of these, held in Prague in 1924, in connection with the Smetana celebration, was followed by the one last May. At that time Prague heard three orchestral concerts, and one devoted to Czech choral works, and one evening of opera performed in the Czech theatre, another in the German theatre. It was an exceedingly interesting and delightful week, and yet I am inclined to believe that the Society has been, perhaps, a little rash to attempt so soon the arrangement of annual festivals for orchestral music.

It seems to me now definitely beyond dispute that music which is authentically modern is at its best in compositions of the smaller, more intimate type—in chamber or chamber orchestral works. Of course several of these pieces written on a larger scale had been intended for the opera and therefore sounded strange in the concert hall. On the other hand it is more likely that the reason for the general flatness lay in the determining condition, that contemporary music achieves its most characteristic expression through the smaller orchestra. Perhaps the day has passed for

the great musical scheme, the large orchestra, even the symphony itself. There are many portents for such a conclusion. Little, surely, is to be gained if on such occasions as these festivals, always the same names, or at least not many new ones, make their appearance.

A feeling of this nature was in the atmosphere at Prague. Even before the festival, all the doubts had been thoroughly aired in the newspapers. There were warnings against the formation of new groups, and expectations were anything but optimistic. If, however, none of us arrived with great hope, neither did we leave in disappointment. No new genius, and perhaps not even one new name was discovered, a few outstanding figures were revealed as still steadily advancing, but most of the program could have been heard at any concert, and moreover, two or three of the best pieces were performed on evenings not devoted to the official program.

These happened to be the opera evenings. The Czech theatre presented *The Sly Little Fox*, by the Moravian composer Leos Janacek, now seventy years old. It is a sort of animal epic for the stage, the story of a little fox which is developed in a remarkable parallel with the story of a little girl, revealing this wonderful and strange old man in a sort of pantheistic credo. His music is best described as that of a modern Moussorgsky. He composes entirely in the spirit of his verbal language, trying to reproduce its melody in his music. But he is enough of a musician to make his appeal through melody and rhythmic strength. His personality is marvelous for its modernity, which is the more marked if one remembers his old age and secluded life.

Besides *Ariane* by Dukas, the German theatre presented three symphonic fragments from Alban Berg's *Wozzek*. The composition will be produced in its entirety this season in Berlin and very likely elsewhere by the large opera companies. Here Berg, a disciple of Schoenberg, for the first time finds his own very fascinating language, which makes the work noteworthy, aside from the construction of the opera, which is built quite consciously on symphonic principles.

Among the compositions on the festival program, the Czech pieces may be viewed for their general effect, rather than in detail.

A symphonic poem *Damon*, by Rudolf Karel, showed great talent, but not the newness which the occasion demanded. Historical considerations, perhaps, accounted for the performance of *Toman and the Wood-nymph*, an older work by N. Novak, who, with Josef Suk, is at the head of the Czech movement today. On the other hand there was a piece, *Half-time*, by young Martinu, exceedingly modern, in the manner of Strawinsky, revealing, however, a lack of personality.

A very pleasing and promising picture was provided by the Italians, Rieti, Malipiero, and by the French with a ballet of Roland Manuel and several intermezzi by Darius Milhaud. A few noteworthy works were sent from Germany, a *Concerto grosso* by Kaminski, and another composition bearing the same title by the young and talented Ernest Krenek. Paul Pisk returned to the old form of the partita and reveals a quite exceptional sense of line and melody. Ernest Toch and a young Hungarian Georg Kosa gave us a very delicate blending of instrumental tints. Perhaps the greatest success of the festival was Bartók's dance suite, a lively, magnificently sonorous piece, full of motion, constructed entirely on national motifs, one which is already tempting all the conductors.

By Paul Stefan

MUSIC HEARD IN ENGLAND

THE outstanding feature of English musical achievement during the first half of 1925 was the performance by the British National Opera Company of Gustav Holst's *At the Boar's Head*. The existence of the opera is due to a curious concatenation of events. It is a well known fact that Holst has always been fond of English folk-songs. He has lately written much that shows their influence. Less deeply philosophical than Vaughan Williams, more direct in expression, Holst has made melodies and whole movements that are clearly molded on these forms of country dance and song. The special circumstances that caused the new opera to take shape in Holst's mind were these. Last year Holst fell ill after an accident, and while lying convalescent, he turned to some sets of old English melodies, Playford, Chap-