

Significant in this sense is a *Concerto* for orchestra, by Paul Hindemith, recently introduced by Furtwaengler. While we cannot say that the new style is fully revealed—there is still a wavering between chamber-music and the full-sounding orchestra—its evidences are promising, and from Hindemith, surely a dionysiac spirit, we may hope for a still further advance. What still unfortunately marks his work is a one-sidedness which indicates superficiality and haste. He has, however, revealed certain definite values of an important character, as in his *Serenades*, in which the soprano voice is framed by the viola, oboe and cello. This peculiar investiture is a step toward the expression of a new romanticism not at all related to the past.

While conductors, singers and directors oppose the new music, the International Society carries its development still further. At its meetings chamber-music is fostered, musicians of all countries find a hearing. A violin sonata in three parts, by Karol Rathaus, shows a mingling of the old tradition with the new spirit. An evening of compositions by the Viennese, Rudolf Reti, who failed at the earlier music festival in Prague, presents us with a new personal style not easy to characterize since his music is born of ecstasy, and his gestures are often cramped.

What deep roots Strawinsky has struck in Germany was demonstrated by a Strawinsky festival recently held in Frankfort, at which the only new work was the piano *Serenade*, written in the manner of the piano sonata, a piece which pays tribute chiefly to the contrary spirit that now animates this composer.

One thing is obvious, that even today when economic conditions exclude the "big sensations" from the concert halls, the musical life of Germany continues still varied and prolific.

By Adolph Weissmann

WOZZEK, AN ATONAL OPERA

ALBAN BERG'S *Wozzek* was produced at the Berlin State Opera House last December, under the direction of the genial young Erich Kleiber, with all the circumstance of a "sensation." The premiere occurred during a crisis brought on by a conflict with the composer Max von Schillings, who was director

of one of the State operatic theatres. This divided Berlin even politically, while in the artistic world it developed into a struggle between the representatives of the younger and older generations. Eventually the whole matter was peacefully adjusted, leaving Kleiber alone director of both the Berlin State Opera Houses.

Wozzek was a test of his endurance and unparalleled energy. More than a hundred rehearsals were necessary, and when the public dress rehearsal took place a member of the audience became noisy enough to give the press that was hostile to Kleiber sufficient excuse to talk about "demonstrations" and "scandals". The truth of the matter was, however, that the work met with an unexampled success, it became a box-office draw. In the last few weeks (this is written at the end of February) it has been given seven performances.

Before considering *Wozzek* let us discuss Berg. He was born in Vienna in 1885 and early became the pupil of Arnold Schoenberg, living in retirement, devoted exclusively to composition. In his first youth he made piano arrangements of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, of Schreker's opera *Der Ferne Klang* and of Mahler's *Eighth Symphony*. He also wrote a remarkable introduction and analysis for the first performance of the *Gurrelieder*. From his own pen there came a very beautiful piano sonata, a string quartet, songs, orchestral pieces and finally, works for clarinet. With his friend and co-worker, Anton Von Webern, he underwent a development of style that paralleled Schoenberg's, a result not of slavish imitation, but of close intimacy and simultaneous attempts to solve certain harmonic and formal problems. He adopted the small and rigorous form, refused to recognize a fundamental tone in the twelve-tone scale, granted autonomy to all tones, and tenaciously carried out any motif presented in the course of a given composition. All these ideas—the Viennese "atonality"—had been adopted, rejected, or distantly observed, but no one had known how to apply them to opera.

Shortly before and then during the war Alban Berg set himself this task. Bound to an official service in Vienna he interrupted his work and only resumed it in 1918; in 1922 it was complete.

In the interest of non-German readers it should be explained that George Buechner, whose *Wozzek* Berg has faithfully set to

music, (only rearranging the scenes), was a late romantic, a poetic figure, who appeared in Germany after E. T. A. Hoffman, to pave the way for a transition to the cynical naturalism of the latter half of the nineteenth century. With a sort of spectral joviality *Wozzek* presents the fate of a poor soldier of that period during peace time, stationed in any small German city. Wozzek is the servant of his captain; the military doctor, a complete scoundrel, performs medical experiments on him. For this he receives money in addition to his wages, which he brings to the girl who has borne him a child. But Wozzek is a dreamer, and the girl is won by an under-officer. In his despair Wozzek destroys his Marie and then drowns himself. This tale is told to the little child, who quietly goes on with his games.

Out of these fugitive scenes Berg chose fifteen and combined them into three acts. Even musically each of them has a perfect form. The first act begins with a suite, in the second scene there is a passacaglia with twenty-one variations. The five scenes of the next act are a symphony in as many parts—sonata, prelude and fugue, largo, scherzo, and rondo. The third act has six inventions, one of them an orchestral interlude; the inventions employ one theme, one rhythm, one simple sonority. The unity and completeness to which Berg is dedicated are felt in the smallest detail.

He orchestrates in the grand manner, not hesitating at the boldest combinations, making use of contrast in soft, gentle passages. The demands on the singers are excessive, for, as in *Pierrot Lunaire*, even the *spreche-stimme* is employed.

It has been Berg's fortunate destiny to evoke sounds that profoundly stir the depths of the human spirit. Despite all newness and strangeness the music is so convincing as to have immediately and completely won its public.

By Paul Stefan