

turns of phrase. Later, with the romantics, Strauss and Debussy, single words evoke their special music. It is a lucky thing that the cadence at this point diffuses and all but disappears, or we should have, in *Pelléas* or *Elektra*, a new piece with each word.

A new instrument is presumably invented to enlarge the musical range and capacities of mankind, not to limit or cripple them. Henry Cowell's "rhythmicon," perfected and demonstrated by Leon Theremin (January 19), scarcely fulfills this primary condition in its present state. It does produce rhythms of any combination from 1 to 16 simultaneously and at all speeds; but insofar as one is constrained to represent a single rhythm always upon the same repeated note, and without deviation from the regular beat, the limitations far outweigh the advantages, from the point of view of musical application. The instrument might have conceivable use in the schoolroom, to show pupils what a thirteen-against-sixteen sounds like; it is certainly easier to manage than several metronomes. And it was a good idea to give each rhythm a different pitch in sound; although any set of pitches would have done. . . . Theremin's electrical instruments have undergone steady perfecting; without much result. Their tone color (it is the same for all—keyboard, space control and fingerboard instruments) remains lamentably sentimental, without virility. The most perfected one, like a cello, exposes most brutally the cloying sound.

Marc Blitzstein

VIENNA RESISTS THE DEPRESSION

SINCE the fall, as everyone knows, the economic situation in Vienna has been acute. What can be expected of music at such a time in an impoverished city where, moreover, the attitude towards art is so conservative? The season opened with great misgivings. But our theatrical and musical life must indeed be enjoying a false spring. For the dramatic and operatic theatres are well-attended, often sold out and many of our concerts fare better than in more favorable times. It was not to be expected that producers and managers who ordinarily cared little about modern music would be more venturesome in a cru-

cial period, so that an interesting season was not anticipated. Yet we were pleasantly disappointed.

What our State Opera will do next is always a mystery. The first few months of the fall it repeated works in the repertory. The director was busy arguing with the Minister of Finance who demanded drastic reductions in singers' salaries and other expenses. The decision might just as well have been made earlier but everything was postponed until the last moment. It arrived. The whole personnel took a severe cut and no expenditure for acquisitions or new arrangements was permitted until the beginning of the year. Not till then was the first premiere allowed. Two months after Berlin and Munich, Vienna brought out *Das Herz* by Hans Pfitzner. This is not modern music, although it is not the art of yesterday. It is, at least as we got it here, forceful music of ample dimensions. However, it is not likely to find a permanent place in the Viennese repertoire.

The opera has no program for the remainder of the season. Rumor indicates a premiere of Janacek's *Totenhaus*; and Wellesz' *Bachantinnen* and Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* will doubtless be produced again; the comic opera, *Spuk im Schloss*, by the Czech, Kricka, has just been accepted, its premiere having recently been given in Breslau. This is modern music that is based on folklore and therefore pleasing to the public, winning a reception similar to Weinberger's *Schwanda*.

Since December, in the suburbs of Vienna, there has been reopened another opera theatre, the Volksoper, whose doors had been closed for three years. Until 1928, there had been a self-supporting Volksoper for twenty years. The last director before its closing was the young conductor, Leo Krauss who gave an excellent performance, one memorable evening, of Busoni's *Arlecchino* and Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat*. The same Krauss has reopened the theatre as a "workers' association," after the fashion of so many enterprises in Berlin. The workers' association of the Volksoper is naturally committed to a season of successes, even more so than the State Opera. It can do little for modern music. So far it has presented only the opera of the director himself, *Die Nachtigall*, a work which is perfect for singers and not too modern. The Volksoper audience did not

shy from it, and therefore no embarrassment was caused the treasurer. This organization makes no promises for the rest of the season, either.

In the concert field, the situation is somewhat better. Even the Philharmonic Concerts, given by the opera orchestra on its own, offer novelties. The conductor is almost invariably Clemens Krauss, the opera director, who is ambitious enough, at least in his own concerts, to dig up works that have been neglected by previous Philharmonic leaders. He recently gave the three middle movements of Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*. That was daring but no damage was done. Maurice Ravel appeared as guest at a special Philharmonic concert which was devoted to an entire Ravel program. Another Ravel concert took place at the French embassy with the cooperation of the composer. Paul Wittgenstein, the one-armed piano virtuoso who lives here performed the *Piano Concerto* Ravel wrote for him with great success.

As far as the remaining orchestral and choral concerts are concerned, one hears practically no contemporary music. Fabian Sevitzi gave Bloch, Debussy and Stravinsky. The *Metamorphoseon* by Respighi was presented under the direction of Oswald Kabasta but without the effect inspired by previous works of the composer. Alexander Tcherepnine repeated his spiritual *Piano Concerto*.

The chamber music groups and soloist have done better. Practically all our quartets give us a new work with every performance. So far as one may discuss the modern Viennese composers as a group, we may say that, excluding the Schönberg school, they write in a moderately modern style, pay strict attention to form, do painstaking thematic work and do not overtax their audiences with their harmony or counterpoint.

The Choral Union of the composer Dr. Hans Pless must not be overlooked. Recently they made an exchange with Dutch composers, presenting modern Netherlands, Ruynemann in particular, while the Dutch put works of Austrians on their programs.

No less than four supporters consistently concern themselves with modern music, the Austrian Composers' League, The Austrian section of the International Society for New Music, a less

radical Society for Contemporary Music, and a New Music Fellowship which has even taken a concert hall, the Streichersaal, where Beethoven was once given but which had long been closed. The International Society gave a special performance devoted to Frederick Jacobi, who was present and gained a great success. This group also sponsored the first Vienna concert of the Pan-American Association of Composers on February 21. Anton Webern was the conductor and the works presented were Ruggles' *Portals*; songs by Ives, Copland and Garcia Caturla; a movement from Henry Cowell's *Sinfonietta*; *Three Canons* by Wallingford Riegger; Carlos Chavez' *Sonatine* and a movement from the *Chamber Symphony* of Adolph Weiss.

Over the radio this season, the musical director, Oswald Kabasta, presented Honegger's new *Symphony*, Hindemith's Coolidge work for piano and brasses, and new piano concertos by Ernst Toch and Karl Weigl. In Austria and Germany, the radio is becoming increasingly more important for the dissemination of modern music.

Paul Stefan

THE "ORGANIC" APPROACH TO MUSIC

SIBELIUS was born in 1865, Koussevitsky in 1874, and both men are typical—although entirely antithetically—of their period. The chief impression one gets from reading Arthur Lourié's *Serge Koussevitzky and His Epoch** and Cecil Gray's *Sibelius*†, is a sense of fundamental vitality and abounding variety, which is sadly lacking in these sophisticated, disillusioned and consciously experimental days. The range of Koussevitsky's sympathies, experiences and activities is astonishing. He is, as everybody knows, a virtuoso on the double bass, and has composed a concerto for double bass and orchestra; he is the founder and editor-in-chief of the Russian Music Publishing House in Berlin; his conducting experience was obtained from direct contact and independent study of the methods of Nikisch, Wein-

**Serge Koussevitzky and His Epoch*. By Arthur Lourié. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1931.

†*Sibelius*. By Cecil Gray. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.