

quartet in the capital. It proved to be typical Prokofieff—energetic, tuneful, somewhat sardonic, and youthful to the point of immaturity. Sabanayeff has written “Prokofieff is not an eaglet who will grow up to be a big eagle; he is a stabilized eaglet who will remain such.” Nevertheless the slow finale to this new quartet is a movement I should like to hear more than once before deciding that there is no maturity of feeling in all of Prokofieff.

The concluding concert of the festival was given by Holle’s Madrigal Singers, from Stuttgart, an organization new to this country. They sang German and Italian madrigals, a couple of Mozart trios, and choruses and part songs by the modern composers Petyrek, Reutter, Schönberg and Bartok. The Schönberg work, called *Peace on Earth*, opus 13, was the most important of these, but it is distinctly a piece for a big chorus and not for a madrigal group of ten. The Petyrek settings of texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* were full of tricky spots of vocal coloring and harmony. For these modern works, and for the rarely heard continental madrigals, Dr. Holle’s group is a very welcome addition to American musical affairs.

Alfred V. Frankenstein

NEW DRIFT IN GERMANY’S I.S.C.M.

IN Germany of late there has been a marked change in the place and problems of the International Society for Contemporary Music, particularly of the local groups. The I.S.C.M. was originally organized to be the agent of a musical union between different races and the pioneer of modern music among the German bourgeoisie and intellectuals, who had been uprooted by war and revolution.

The music loving Germans, after the isolation of the War, eagerly welcomed any distraction from its psychosis that would offer new fields for development and regeneration. This new musical material, originating mainly in France, Russia and Italy, reached Germany abruptly—“from another world”—without any process of gradual assimilation. The bewildered public and most musicians at first completely failed to understand it whether they accepted it, instinctively or snobbishly, or whether they disliked and stubbornly rejected it.

The result was excitement and disturbance in the concert halls, due to the sharp conflict between the public's divergent preconceptions of these works when they were presented for the first time. Uproar was almost inevitable at a Schönberg or Stravinsky premiere; the audiences came armed with noisemakers.

The best German musicians took this advanced style seriously and accepted the developments in Western Europe, while at the same time trying to pursue their own path. But most of the public had a quite different attitude. The trouble lay in the lack of systematic development and absorption of the elements of the new music. To bring about recognition, understanding and liking, earnest and persistent study of the new means of expression was essential.

This period saw the birth of the International Society for Contemporary Music and its first performances in Berlin. The I.S.C.M. was an organization open to all, without the rigid discipline of, for example, the Arbeitergesangsvereine. It was dependent on the general public, especially at the start. In its early stages its supporters contributed their personal ideas and requests with their money. The directorate assumed control, membership fell off. Others dropped out for economic reasons, and a nucleus of regularly paying members remained the only supporters. Interested and willing, they became the backbone of the local groups. A series of small chamber music soirees was organized. Works by international composers (since recognized) were given world and German premieres. This period is indissolubly linked with the activity and directing genius of Max Butting.

Young, capable performers, enthusiasts for the I.S.C.M., gave their services, mostly without remuneration. The cooperation of artists better-known or of great drawing power could seldom be obtained. They were unwilling to exchange their established repertoires for a new one, except at a generous compensation, and such fees naturally exceeded the resources of local groups. From the very start there was lacking the support of these important and popular artists, who had some influence over the taste of the public. Had prominent performers sponsored modern music in its early stages in Germany, had they consistently promoted it

and devoted themselves to the gradual building up of a public which would accept the new music as "legitimate," the art would not be in the condition we find it today. Among those who resisted modern music, passively or actively, were Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Fritz Kreisler, Bronislaw Huberman, Wilhelm Backhaus, Edwin Fischer, the Klinger and the Busch quartets. Among its supporters and defenders were—and still are—Herman Scherchen, Otto Klemperer, Eduard Erdmann, Eduard Steuermann, Stefan Frenkel, the Kolisch and the Have-man quartets.

Thus the public came to regard the new music as an outsider in German concert activity. However the official recognition of some composers (whether they were understood or not) was brought about by the authority and solidarity of the International Society for Contemporary Music whose yearly festivals were reported in the remotest corners of the country; by the undeniable operatic successes of some men; and finally by a certain cultural and nationalistic consciousness of the German citizen. Modern music could no longer be completely ignored by the prominent performers. The few composers who had been successful were given a hearing. The new music became an external token of cultural importance adopted by cities, states, radio, music schools and artists.

Naturally the force of the original impulse of the I.S.C.M. was lessened. Pioneer work was no longer necessary. The public preferred to hear a modern work in an appropriate setting, with a well-known virtuoso, rather than in a smaller place with an obscure though capable performer. And in Berlin, with such a concentration of artists all playing the new music, with the possibility of hearing modern works outside the I.S.C.M., public interest in the society was considerably diminished.

There were elements of weakness in the organization itself. As a public body it always ran the danger of succumbing to favoritism and fashions in music. At the very moment when the curious and the sensation seekers had been satisfied, when political and intellectual reaction had set in, a large part of the public turned from the ideas of the I.S.C.M. In the world of art the equilibrium established among the newly developed elements of

modern music was confounded with their negation and a solution was again sought in Schubert and Brahms.

Now after the new art had been somewhat recognized (thanks mainly to the I.S.C.M.) and established composers no longer needed an introduction, the Berlin group attacked as its next task the advancement of younger and still unknown talents. This purely idealistic and objective problem attracted even less interest from the public. The crisis which this local group now faces is not due to lack of organizing ability on the part of the society's leaders, but to the indifference of members and public.

If modern music, including its radical advance guard, had actually been able to carve out an assured place for itself, there would now be no reason for the existence and activity of this group. But the very gains the new art has made are being assailed on all sides, even by the younger generation. Without realizing the nature of this new music they give themselves up to blind reaction, or else deliberately deprive it of its bourgeois-esthetic foundation and reduce it to the level of political propaganda for the proletariat. Thus it seems that the task of the I.S.C.M. has now become the purely artistic one of conserving and strengthening the traditions of the radical vanguard of bourgeois music of the second decade of this century.

The fulfillment of this task devolves upon the various German provincial sections. The groups in Cologne, Hamburg, Lübeck, and Mannheim, and the societies for new music in Munich and Dresden have demonstrated their activity and competence. What is slighted in Berlin may get a quite different reception in Hamburg or Mannheim. It is in the provinces that we expect an influence to arise which will revive and synthesize the new music. Once the groundwork has been systematically and skilfully laid, the public will become more appreciative. Confident and enlightened leaders among the masses will be stimulated to continue the cultivation of modern music. But in order that these local groups may carry on their missionary work and withstand the attacks of their opponents they must surround themselves not only by an interested public but also by cultivated and intellectually honest musicians.

Wladimir Vogel