

is doubly astonishing for a period which saw in fantastic improvisations the apex of the virtuoso's art. With Chopin the illusion of improvisation is part of the fragrance of his art, so impassioned and tender . . . Chopin had learned at the Grand Opera, in Rossini and Bellini and Meyerbeer, what sort of *fioritura* brings out the applause, and he wanted to avoid that kind."

There are illuminating thoughts on originality in music, on predestination in the life span of the great composers; on music as a counter-expression of the spirit of the times. In regard to the latter Einstein speaks of the "sedative qualities" of the music of the sixteenth century: "a gift from heaven which lifts up the soul, purifies, comforts and pacifies the hearts of men." He reminds us that this was the century of religious schism, the century of the sack of Rome, of Saint Bartholomew's Night and "a never ending sequence of wars and epidemics." He continues: "Are the *Ring of the Nibelungen*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal* . . . affirmations of the nineteenth century? *Parsifal* . . . the flight from sensuality . . . the teachings of Saint Francis . . . exhibited before the belated, tired, industrialized, newspaper-reading citizens of

the nineteenth century!" Not all art is a counter-expression of the times in which it is produced; but enough to give the lie to those who assert, as so many in America do today, that art must necessarily express only the immediate: the now and the here.

Perhaps the most striking passages are those which deal with the "happy and the unhappy periods" in the history of music; the winged but well chosen words with which he speaks of the Mozart piano concertos and of the Schubert songs; the comparison between the seventeenth century and our own. With his ideas on this latter one need not agree: the composer, who mostly sees the horizon as bright and clear and beckoning — for otherwise he would be no composer — cannot be expected here to see eye to eye with the critic. But like much else in the book, this too is provocative and striking: the product of a sensitive, astute and learned musician.

Well translated, of course, by César Saerchinger, the book nevertheless contains a few mistakes and one (to me) wholly inexplicable passage about Wagner and Debussy.

Frederick Jacobi

QUICK-SKETCH OF SPAIN

FEW people realize how strong has been the Spanish influence on the course of musical history, especially during the crucial years around 1600 and 1900. In *The Music of Spain* (W.W. Norton and Company), Gilbert Chase throws some much needed light on the subject. He points out that, unfortunately for the glory of Spanish tradition,

some of the greatest Spaniards have labored in Italy where their names were Italianized, while many of the greatest composers who worked in Spain were Italians whose names never were "Spanish-ized," hence the general underestimation of Hispanic influence.

Though the author sets out to give us "not so much a history of Spanish

music as a panorama of its salient features," he achieves only a conventional historical treatment of his subject. Perhaps more extended and more thoroughly analyzed musical examples would have indicated the "salient features" with greater success. As in the case of so many other musicological treatments, we are given verbal raptures when a well-chosen excerpt from the composer's work might speak much better for itself and its creator. The author forgets that most of the music of which he writes is, if not totally unavailable, available to relatively few of his readers. The result is an experience about as bloodless as going to a concert and reading the pro-

gram notes without staying to hear the music. May we see the day when no such treatise is without a generous appendix of musical examples. The excellent record list is a step in the right direction.

Chapters on the dramatic forms, the dance, and the inroads of Spanish influence abroad fill in details of the picture. The effect of history on the course of musical development in South and Latin America is more clearly shown than in the case of Spain itself where the wealth of detail and the large number of regional differences make the main issue hard to trace. A good essay on Portuguese music by Albert T. Luper is also included.

Robert Ward