

FORECAST AND REVIEW

MR. KLEIBER PRESENTS—

THE new music that New York has had a chance to hear thus far in the season of 1930-31 has been spaced almost exactly over the six weeks during which Erich Kleiber of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden conducted the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra here. It is he who has been responsible for the introduction of nearly all of it and, since he has been invited to come back again next year, it is to be supposed that the casualty list among Philharmonic subscribers, because of his generous modernism, has been small.

Perhaps very little of the music Mr. Kleiber brought from Berlin and Vienna was, even for Philharmonic audiences, particularly hard to take. Nonetheless, it was vastly greater in quantity than they have been accustomed to, even for a whole season; and it is perhaps significant that a conductor of unobtrusive personality, even though of convincingly sound gifts, should be able without reproof to fill his programs so largely with new music.

Aside from unimpressive piano works by Bax and Szymanowski played respectively by Harriet Cohen and Walter Gieseking, and a brummagem violin piece by Castelnuovo-Tedesco brought back from Paris and revealed here by Jascha Heifetz, Mr. Kleiber had all this new music to himself. A good deal of it was quite naturally operatic. It included a sequence of excerpts from Berg's *Wozzeck*, the overture that Hindemith has partly rewritten for *Neues vom Tage* and two bits worth of *Schwanda der Dudelsackpfeifer* by the young Czech, Weinberger. Additionally he brought forward the very late *Kleine Symphonie* by Krenek, a recently retouched *Introduction and Scherzo* by the young Russian Lopatnikoff and even an American work, Gruenberg's *Enchanted Isle*, introduced to New York last season.

Nearly everybody has the habit of slapping the yardstick of "importance" against new music and if it doesn't meet the test, spanking it heartily. None of Mr. Kleiber's importations, with the exception of *Wozzeck* was perhaps in any sense important music. But (with the same exception) none of it was apparently intended to be. The quality of solemnity was notably absent. It was all peculiarly light-hearted music; and if this be not merely fortuitous but a real touch of tendency it is decidedly novel and certainly interesting. Perhaps our swiftly changing post-war attitude is being transformed once more.

There is of course nothing light-hearted about *Wozzeck* but then it is scarcely true post-war music since Berg began his opera in 1914 and finished it eight years later. What was played here made an unmistakably deep impression. There were only portions of two scenes from the first of its three acts and several scenes from the last; but this was enough to disclose its quality. Berg's formal ingenuity is striking, but perhaps *Wozzeck's* most noticeable aspect is its tincture of atonality, here a well considered means to a definite expressive end. Berg's discipleship is plainly obvious in this music but it seemed to the writer that he had improved on his master; that the Schönbergian idiom was employed with greater freedom, greater precision. In the matter of the *sprechstimme* alone (which Berg seems to have used generously in his principal voice parts) there was an elasticity which one misses, for example, in *Pierrot Lunaire*. In *Wozzeck*, song merges into speech and speech into song in an apparently effortless emphasis upon the flow and ebb of word and emotion.

The lighter operatic music that Mr. Kleiber presented may perhaps be distinguished as inevitably destined or not destined for the Metropolitan Opera. The polka and fugue from Weinberger's *Schwanda*, if the rest of the work is anything like them, are enough to put this work in the first class—jolly but old-fashioned music and probably conventional opera. The overture to *Neues vom Tage* seemed to be second-rate Hindemith, rather hard-worked superficiality lacking in invention.

Young Lopatnikoff's *Introduction and Scherzo*, the latter originally written for mechanical piano and played in that form two summers ago at Baden-Baden, was an amusing trifle—

amusing for its instrumentation and its animatedly swift, staccato propulsion which cleverly retained its earlier spirit. But Mr. Krenek's *Little Symphony*, which plays with tango and jazz rhythms and throws violas and cellos out of the orchestra for the sake of mandolins, banjos and a guitar, was a good bit of a disappointment. It was written the summer before last and evidently in a hurry. Krenek is thirty and this is his Opus 58. *Jonny spielt auch zu viel*.

Irving Weil

HINDEMITH AND BACH AT CHICAGO

OF the twenty-four works making up the five programs of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge's festival of chamber music held at Chicago from October 12 to 16, five were given their initial performance and six were heard for the first time in America.

The first *Uraufführung* was introduced at the opening session on a program which was in itself a novelty, presenting as it did three works of Bach and three of Hindemith. The new work was Hindemith's *Konzertmusik* for piano solo, eleven brass instruments and two harps. The four movements of the composition presented the usual Hindemith picture, vigorous counterpoint based on simple, diatonic germinal motives. The combination of instruments employed—no liquid woodwind, no lyrical strings—was dry, straightforward and cool, with the usual loud liveliness of Hindemith's composition for instruments.

The combination of Hindemith and Bach is one we have experienced before at a Coolidge festival. At the last Library of Congress festival Graeser's arrangement of *The Art of the Fugue* was juxtaposed with an organ concerto of the Frankfort composer. Here the contrast was simple, the older classicism and the new. But at Chicago the line of comparison was not so clear. Hindemith was shown not purely as a neo-classicist but as an experimenter in a variety of new methods. Beside the *Konzertmusik* we heard a sonatina in canon form for two flutes, in which Mr. Barrère and Mr. Liegl of the Chicago Symphony orchestra said "hello" and "good-bye" in the first bar, and said "hello" again at the end. The third Hindemith work of the first program