

from a libretto which is more a philosophic dissertation than a play.

The second program of "intimate opera" brought forth Debussy's *Enfant Prodigue* and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. The Stravinsky ballet, although composed in 1919, had not been presented in this country before. As is well known, its score, to use a phrase of Beethoven's, was "zusammen gestohlen aus diesem und jenem" among the forgotten operas of Pergolesi. Its story, too, goes back to Pergolesi's place and time—Naples in the early eighteenth century. It is like one of Pergolesi's own *intermezzi*, spirited, and rather bawdy even in its music. The older composer's forthright tunes, so bound to formula and yet so close to Italian folk melody, lead their own life in Stravinsky's version, but the Russian composer's mastery of the small orchestra and his unflinching sense of ballet rhythms has added vigor and vividness to what would otherwise be a rather dismal exercise of penmanship in a library. *Pulcinella* is in some ways like Kurt Weill's *Dreigroschenoper*. In it the gay, brawling, crooked, proletarian, and lecherous life of a day that is gone lives again, not because it has been revived, but because it has been recreated in a thoroughly modern mind.

Alfred V. Frankenstein

### ON THE PACIFIC COAST

**M**OST of the modern music heard on the Pacific Coast this spring, summer and fall has been presented through the efforts of Nicolas Slonimsky, the New Music Society of California, and the Pro Arte Quartet. The single outstanding exception was the Western premiere in Los Angeles of Gruenberg's *The Emperor Jones*.

Slonimsky's experience at Hollywood Bowl this summer was the reverse of his Harris-Ives triumph at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium six months earlier. Besides having a less responsive audience, he had a decidedly unobliging orchestra. Varese's *Ionization*, Rudhyar's *Towards Reality*, Cowell's *Reel*, Schönberg's *Three Cinematographic Scenes* and Roldan's *Rebambaramaba* ballet pieces were among the presentations. Slonimsky's own *Conjectured Version of a Choral Fragment from*

*the Orestes of Euripides* proved too modern a bit for the classic Hollywoodians.

The Hungarian composer Desider Vecsey is a newcomer to the movie studios. First National has signed him for cinema adaptations. Nathaniel Finston at Paramount, Max Steiner at RKO, De Francisco at Fox, will determine the direction of Hollywood cine-music this season. The outstanding bobble of the fall has been Dr. Paul Riesenfeld's arrangement of the score accompanying the Sinclair-Eisenstein moving picture *Thunder Over Mexico*. The Mexican-Spanish material for the arrangement was written by Juan Aguilar. Not only was the picture cut without the slightest understanding of Eisenstein's montage technic; the music was apparently calculated to heighten the abortive horror inspired by the butchery of one of the best modern art-films. Pictures with music by Tansman, Auric, Glière, are at this time interesting the movie producers.

Cadman's *Dark Dancers of the Mardi Gras* was presented at the Bowl during the summer. Its "rich orchestrations were enthusiastically received." At Mills College, Roy Harris' place was taken by Henry Cowell, who lectured on the Music of the World. Two other New Music Society officers—Carol Weston, conductor of the Mills College String Orchestra (and an orchestra at Carmel), and Gerald Strang, founder of the Eastbay New Music Workshop—have done a great deal to encourage interest in modern music at Mills. Egon Petri, augustly honoring Brahms before the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge music shrine, excited no fraction of the interest aroused by the Pro Arte Quartet's interpretations of Milhaud (good Milhaud: the *Quartet No. 2*), the premiere of G. Dal Saleski's *Suite for String Quartet*, Aaron Copland's *Two Pieces*, Bartok's *Quartet No. 1*, Bloch's *Quintet in C Minor* and Domenico Brescia's charmingly old-fashioned *Quartet*.

Governor Rolph came into prominence twice during the autumn: once when standing by the San Jose lynchers, and once when backing a production of Verdi's *Falstaff*. No reconciliation of the Oriental and Occidental musical hemispheres was effected when composer Hadley, interpreting the Orient (*Sleeping Lotuses*, etc.), was interpreted by conductor Hadley. Ro-

mantic composer Hanson's *Symphony No. 2* was well done by practical conductor Hanson.

There is no doubt that the New Music Society of California, this year as for many past, did more for modern and ultra-modern music than did any other California organization. Henry Cowell gave a piano recital of his own works at the Kamokila Theatre, and various courses in San Francisco and Palo Alto. Arthur Hardcastle's concerts and conversations and lectures have been invaluable in furthering interest in sound modern music. Douglas Thompson is putting ultra-modern music on the air. Katheryn Foster was Radiana Pozmor's brilliant pianist at a New Music September concert which permanently established the attitude of Bay Regioners toward Charles Ives' music; *General Booth Enters Heaven* (Lindsay) in particular aroused enthusiasm. Other composers represented on the Pozmor program were Pierre-Octave Ferroud, Alejandro Caturla, Hindemith, Bartok, Marian Bauer by her good *To Losers*, Ruth Crawford by the too pale *White Moon*, Still in a lively and amusing *Winter's Approach*, and Cowell by several songs. The Western premiere of Louis Gruenberg's *The Daniel Jazz* was given at the Century Club by the New Music Society at a spring concert. As music and entertainment *The Daniel Jazz* proved far superior to *Emperor Jones*. On the same program, Aaron Copland's *Piano Variations*, Adolph Weiss' *Sonata for Flute and Viola*, Wallingford Riegger's *Suite for Flute Alone*, four songs by Charles Ives, and a robust and dynamic *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings* by Gerald Strang were given. The last piece was atonal, rhythmically complex, compact, well-integrated; skeletonization of variations taxed the attention.

At the New Music Workshops (two of them; both outgrowths of the New Music Society's activities), composers have their works played, performers familiarize themselves with modern idioms, and laymen become inducted into the mysteries of modern music. The atmosphere, like that of the old Harvard "47 Workshop" (Professor Baker's), is quite informal. Every thing contemporary that can be found is played and analyzed. An immense quantity of manuscript and printed material — from Achron and Antheil to Webern and Weisshaus — has been

sight-read at these weekly meetings.

The Finnish Workers' Chorus continues to present proletarian poems in middle-class musical settings. Mountain-high quantities of such graftings will yield no mole-hill of revolutionary quality. On the other hand, the New Music Workshop continues to present technically revolutionary original compositions of great formal interest which say little. Since art is not simply a matter of formal relationships, but is rather a synthesis of form and content, one can scarcely help wondering what would be the result if the revolutionary musical technic of the New Music Workshop composers were to be used in expressing the revolutionary concepts served by the Finnish Workers' Chorus. Why not *Variations on Themes from The Internationale, No. 1* as a starter? Or *California Cotton Strike*? Or *Leipzig Trial* or *Lynching* or *Hunger March*, or *Soapbox Impromptu* or *Anti-Fascist Etude* or *Dirge to Democracy*? John Weatherwax

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

WHATEVER else may be said about modern music, it seems fairly certain that posterity will not suffer from a lack of documentation. In no other period of musical history have composers been so busy writing about music; and remarkably, about the works of others as well as their own. However, Marion Bauer approaches distinction in being the first American woman composer to write a book about the actual material of modern music, in addition to its philosophy and objectives. In her *Twentieth Century Music*\* there is much that is illuminating and valuable for the lay-listener who desires a closer contact with contemporary music than the unaided ear can provide.

After a preliminary survey which enumerates the transitional periods in the development of musical thinking and elucidates their contributions, Miss Bauer makes a close examination of the divergent directions in contemporary writing. There are long chapters on Impressionistic Methods; on Impressionism and Renaissance; on Atonality, and one dealing with neoclassicism, dissonant counterpoint, *Gebrauchsmusik*, quarter-tones and what she terms *ether-music*. The most direct and clarifying

\*G. B. Putnam's Sons