

MUSICAL REACTIONS—BOLD AND OTHERWISE

THERE is an ever more prevalent opinion abroad, that a great American national characteristic is the inability to have definite views on anything but the most practical matters. We are supposed to be people so confused intellectually that we cannot decide on which side of the fence to be, if, indeed, we can discern the fence at all. Now this idea does have a certain truth when we consider the degree to which the large, regimenting organizations of press, radio and moving pictures control us. These agencies cannot afford to take sides if they want the whole public to be with them. It is therefore refreshing to find a book like Deems Taylor's *Of Men and Music* (Simon and Schuster) which, written to sell to the large radio public, comes out with such definite ideas on important questions in music. He treats of the American composer and the lack of audience for him, royalties, the badness of virtuoso programs, and the general neglect of the new in music with force and intelligence. On these he is very worth reading.

When he comes to the subject of "modern music," he hedges. This tendency he shares with his fellows of the press, perfect Wagnerites all. His taste is for overpowering, colorful music like that of Strauss, Delius, Debussy, Berg and the early Stravinsky and, tentatively, Honegger. On the general subject of modern music, he can boldly take both sides of the fence in alternate chapters. After the season of 1926-7, Taylor seems to have ceased experiencing contemporary music as anything vital enough to write about it in detail. He is very reluctant to discuss its development from that date, which corresponds roughly to the end of his reviewing career for the *World*. Though interestingly written, and with considerable love for his art, one could wish that Mr. Taylor's taste were a little less dated, a little less well geared to the demands of the radio audience.

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