

yan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, fixes before our eyes a deliberate musical tableau, he achieves a strange serenity at once intimate and aloof.

And in the meantime, Holst can, by taking thought, add still another cubit to his stature.

By Jeffrey Mark

GEORGE ANTHEIL

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been written about George Antheil. The real personality of this extremely talented young American composer has been cleverly concealed by a welter of words from the most varied sources.

First we have the Antheil concocted by the musical journals,—a godless, red-as-they-come Bolshevik, whose concerts have resembled riots and whose final pleasure and purpose is to turn all Europe topsy-turvy with his astounding musical noises. Then there is the Antheil of the high-brow, literary magazines,—Mr. Ezra Pound's Antheil,—the young "genius" who has invented the "new propulsion of time-spaces," "new mechanisms," the fourth dimension of music, etc., etc. Finally, there is Mr. George Antheil's Antheil who, strangely enough, is hardly less a figment of the imagination. Mr. Antheil sees himself as a modern Mozart, experimenting in disjointed rhythms and ear-splitting dissonances, hopelessly misunderstood by the music critics of Berlin, Paris and London.

For those interested in the future of American music, some attempt should be made to present George Antheil as he really is.

It must be clear from the outset that Antheil is no mere upstart. There was a time, perhaps, when he used rather questionable methods of calling attention to himself,—touring Germany as a self-styled futurist composer and publishing wild manifestoes in the *avant-garde* magazines. In the last analysis, this was not charlatanism but simply the naïveté of a very youthful person carried away by the mode of the day. Certainly he was awarded a greater *réclame* than was good for him and it did, in some measure, turn his head. But Antheil is essentially a very sincere

musician, absorbed in his work and oblivious to the opinions of everybody.

It is not sufficient, however, to be merely sincere. Antheil is more than that,—a born musician if ever there was one. He is of Polish extraction although Trenton is his native town. From the age of four to thirteen he lived in Poland and those nine impressionable years have left their mark on his music. He possesses a gift of melody-making and a keen feeling for striking rhythmic agglomerations that are uncommon in so young a composer. It is difficult to remain coldly critical before his perfect musicianship. Hear him play the accompaniment of a Mozart concerto and you will understand what is meant; when he plays his own compositions the effect is electrifying.

Although Antheil has a considerable list of works to his credit, few of them withstand close examination. The *Symphony for Five Wind Instruments* has no backbone, no structural significance, the *Sonatas for Violin and Piano* lack a sense of climax, the *Jazz Sonata* is simply a poor restatement of the Stravinsky *Piano Rag-Music*. And if Antheil's music did not make us suspect his lack of a natural feeling for form, the various articles he has written on musical subjects would convey that impression. Occasionally they are a mere "mass of verbiage" and "must be taken rather as evidence of mental activity than as exposition of ideas." In the same way it is to be feared that, so far, Antheil's compositions have been signs of musical activity rather than finished art-contributions with a life of their own.

All this points to the inference that Antheil's teachers, Von Sternberg and Ernest Bloch, had very little influence upon him. "Counterpoint," he says, "can be learned by any idiot in a couple of years." Bloch, the teacher, hardly interested him, but Bloch, the composer, fascinated him. Before that, Antheil had undoubtedly been fascinated by many another contemporaneous master; his early piano pieces sound for all the world like pure Debussy and others make excellent use of the Scriabinic technique. Antheil, himself, would be the last to blush because of all this unconscious plagiarism. "Every Beethoven," he says, "must have his Mozart."

In 1921, when Antheil returned to Europe for a second time, he met his Mozart in Igor Stravinsky. Ever since, he has been

struggling to shake off the powerful influence of that Russian giant. Antheil was not simply content to write four-hand piano duets in the manner of the *Cinq Pièces Faciles*, but he must note them down on manuscript paper of the same shape and size used by the Swiss publishers. Because Stravinsky utilized dynamic effects with consummate mastery Antheil became convinced that "all music is rhythm" and that anyone who composed solely in a 3-4, 2-4, 6-8 or 4-4 bar for an entire piece, was writing nothing but "doggerel." It must be admitted that the lot of the young composer who comes after Stravinsky is truly a hard one. He cannot even react from Stravinsky as Debussy reacted from Wagner, for the simple reason that Stravinsky has already reacted from himself.

Fortunately, Antheil now realizes the part Stravinsky has played in his musical development. That means that he is one step nearer to finding his own personal idiom. Exactly what kind of music he will write in the future would be impossible to prophesy. But certain passages in the *Piano Concerto*, in the two *Sonatas for Violin and Piano*, and especially in the *Symphony for Five Wind Instruments* make us confident that an enviable future is before him.

By Aaron Copland

A BRAZILIAN RABELAIS

AT first hearing, the music of Villa-Lobos strikes the ear with an effect of shock, painful or baffling. Eventually it divides its audience—to some it brings an authentic musical message, to others it represents a mere dissipation of energy.

Crossing the seas that separate Europe from his own continent, the music of this young Brazilian within the last ten years has found a way more or less triumphant into the concert halls of most important musical centers. The occasions on which his works were heard in Paris last season were demonstrations of a unique power to get under the skin of the audience and win either supreme admiration or supreme contempt.