

of the festival. Here was a trick film full of floating derby hats, men who walked upside down on ladders, views that were turned sideways, and kindred absurdities. Perhaps there were upside-down quirks in the music too. At any rate, for three men to have written it was the prize trick of all. Still another film, devoted to close-ups of machines, possessed, for this writer, utterly meaningless music by Hugo Herrmann—en rapport with meaningless views.

This same Hugo Herrmann, however, contributed to the program a set of *Gallows Songs*, set for small chorus to poems by Christian Morgenstern, that possessed a distinct measure of skillful writing, and one, *Das Gebet*, more than a little of traditional beauty. The one other work of the festival in which there was beauty in a traditional sense was Joseph Matthias Hauer's oratorio, *Wanderlungen*, for soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra; a work that sought to recapture the Greek classic spirit and was of some kinship to the Stravinsky *Oedipus Rex*. It possessed a firm, strong line and a well sustained mood of lofty exaltation. Doubtless, it will be heard again.

Mention should also be made here of two chamber operas, *Tuba Mirum*, by Gustav Kneip, and *In Zehn Minuten* by Walter Gronostay. Both farces would have yielded quite as much of comic-strip fun if no music had been written for them. Gronostay displayed the defter hand. Schönbergian songs by Erhart Ermatinger, two orchestral bibelots by Boguslav Martinu, and organ numbers accredited to Fidelio P. Finke, Hans Humpert, Ernst Pepping and Philip Jarnach need not be lingered over after the event. It was a festival of the commonplace and escaped the trivial chiefly in the rather traditional vocal writing of the *Gallows Songs* and *Wanderlungen*.

*Oscar Thompson*

### BERLIN AND MODERN WORKS

**I**N Berlin one would imagine conditions to be highly propitious to the performance of modern music. Possessing as it does three opera houses, two distinguished symphony orchestras, several first-rate choirs, numerous string quartets and other chamber music groups, the city can boast almost inexhaustible re-

sources. Yet in the cultivation of contemporary art, Berlin remains behind expectations.

The Staatsoper in Unter den Linden, recently reopened after a prolonged period devoted to rebuilding, is to continue in the strict service of tradition. The managing director, Professor Hörth, has proclaimed that his stage is to be the abode of representative art; approved works are to be performed in the most finished manner possible. Therefore music that is experimental has nothing to anticipate here. It is regrettable that the chief musical director, Kleiber, happens to be pledged to this theatre. He is an incomparable interpreter of contemporary works and the production of present-day opera should be his main task, as was made perfectly clear by his rendering of Berg's *Wozzek*.

The fame of Bruno Walter, director of the Stadtoper in Charlottenburg is justly prodigious but his taste does not lean towards his contemporaries. The most modern opera conducted by him last season was Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane*, a work that had no success whatever in Berlin. If newer music is to be admitted to the Stadtoper at all Walter will leave it to his younger conductors. During the last season *Jonny Spielt Auf* met with the greatest success while the old Stravinsky *Nachtigall* was a failure with the public. For this winter Walter has promised us the works of younger composers, for such names as Krenek, Prokofieff and Kurt Weill are included in the opera programs.

The man most favorably inclined to the creative artist of today is Klemperer, the director of the Krolloper. He introduced two important works to Berlin—*Oedipus Rex* and *Cardillac*. While *Oedipus* is known all over the world, *Cardillac* has hardly crossed the German frontier, though it is an excellent example of Hindemith's vigorous style. Klemperer expanded his performance of *Oedipus* to an entire Stravinsky evening. Besides *Petrouchka* he produced the merry, farcical parody, *Mavra*. A new opera by Hindemith—the title still unknown—, three one-act operas by Krenek and *Mahagonny* by Weill are promised for the winter.

The opera houses of Berlin like those elsewhere are still dependent on the works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is true that the general decline in the taste for Wagner, so well summed up recently by Casella, is distinctly perceptible here, yet

the routine repertoires can no more forego his works than those of Mozart, Verdi or Puccini.

Curiously enough, modern opera receives more attention in various smaller towns than in Berlin. Nearly all important first performances of the last few years have taken place outside of the city. *Jonny*, Krenek's one-act operas, his *Orpheus*, Weill's *Protagonist* and *Der Zar Läst Sich Fotografieren*. Hindemith's *Cardillac*, Schönberg's *Glückliche Hand* and *Erwartung* were first performed in either Leipzig, Dresden, Wiesbaden, Cassel or Breslau. The Baden-Baden festivals, which set themselves certain annual problems of composition for solution, produced short operas both this summer and last, and though the results were not apparently remarkable it is strange that none of the performances should have found its way to Berlin.

Contemporary music finds a better welcome in the concert halls. The great symphony programs always offer a considerable number of new names. We have heard Janacek's *Sinfonietta*, a work of bright color, Hindemith's *Concerto* for viola, and also the *Concerto* for an orchestra of wind instruments which culminates in the ingenious variations on *Prinz Eugen, der Edle Ritter*. The boisterous temper of Bartok's *Piano Concerto* aroused opposition when performed in Berlin. The most energetic representative of the modern movement is the distinguished Herman Scherchen from whose highly varied programs one need only select for mention the fascinating *Suite* by Hauer. Other young conductors also show a lively interest, as do the leading recitalists while contemporary chamber music is fostered by the Amar and Havermann quartets and by the societies for modern music, the pioneers in the movement who are still active.

Finally it remains for us to speak of radio, which has held itself far from aloof. Scherchen gave the premiere of a *Sinfonia Fugata* by Walter Vogel before the microphone, Butting broadcast his own *Chamber Symphony*, and Horenstein recently amused us with Krenek's *Potpourri*. The importance of radio for popularizing modern and unusual music can hardly be overestimated, and hence a congress has recently been called in Göttingen to discuss the proper conditions for broadcasting.

*Hans Gutman*