

ever, felt little that was archaic; and the distinctively Russian element, though no doubt subtly pervading, was decidedly unobtrusive. On the contrary: that which pleased was the fact that the composer, his protestations notwithstanding, was apparently *not* preoccupied by questions of style. He was impelled, rather, by the message he had to convey; something which he had obviously felt and which, like a true artist, he wanted others to feel with him. There appears, indeed, to be something of a mixture of styles; but by his earnestness and his integrity Nabokoff has welded them into a whole which is both personal and convincing. Like de Falla, he has a praiseworthy detachment from prevailing tendencies, an approach which is direct, and these things give his speech validity.

Job is well-planned and well-conceived; it has an admirable clarity of outline. The prevailing spirit is reverent yet lively; Nabokoff has approached the age-old text fearlessly and the emotions which he has so obviously felt before it have not beclouded his intellect nor prevented the casting of his ideas into musical molds which are sturdy and self-sufficient. Naturally, there are things in it with which one could find fault: a choral writing which, as such, is, to say the least, uninteresting; a tendency to fall at times into musical patterns which are facile. But *Job* has the mastery which is born of honesty and directness. The opening chords, like a fanfare, are immediately arresting; the opening chorus has something of the quality of the whirlwind itself which has brought destruction on Job's children and their belongings. Nabokoff has not fallen down on words like: "Canst thou bind the sweet band of Pleiades and of Orion, canst guide Arcturus with his sons?" . . . The final section, the discourse of God, has majesty and grandeur. *Job* is both effective and moving; it is a work which should appeal to a wider public. One must be thankful for the Worcester production and one can hope that it will be heard often.

Frederick Jacobi

LITERATURE, MUSIC AND THE BALLET IN PARIS

TODAY in Paris Ida Rubinstein has assumed the role formerly played by Diaghilev, great stimulator, lover and pa-

tron of the dance. Despite the gulf that lies between her ballet and his, growing unfortunately ever wider, the stimulus of her importance as an artist and as a person should not be underestimated. Others, more expert and perhaps therefore more severe as judges, may analyze and find fault with her art and her troupe. But the musician must gratefully recognize that in a world which is becoming more and more indifferent and unfriendly to art, the activity of this woman represents something gained and something valuable. Even though her work may not be on the highest plane, even though her season is at times undertaken with inadequate resources, it is here that the art of the ballet, which is not a dreary prancing or a childish toe dancing but a spiritual expression, has found its last refuge.

The very names are proof—and not only the names of the musicians, even though, beginning with Debussy, the best are represented. It was the great feat of the modern ballet to attach to itself not only musical but literary and spiritual importance. When Cocteau demanded of a work of art that it be an expression of all the muses, and therefore, unlike Wagner, and even in definite antagonism to him, called for a new union of the arts, his desire was fulfilled by the creations of Diaghilev.

This co-operation of illustrious literary figures with great composers has now been going on for two decades. The first noteworthy work of this exalted type was Debussy's *Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911), with a book written by none other than D'Annunzio. And from that point stretches a never-broken chain to the programs of 1934 on which the names of Gide and Valéry appear next to those of Stravinsky and Honegger.

It is true that this relationship must soon suffer an alienation. It is entirely impossible that men like Gide and Valéry, who have made great spiritual contributions to literature, should be content with writing mere dance scenarios. Masters of the spoken word cannot dispense with it, if they wish to manifest themselves as artists. The ballet, therefore, must accommodate itself to a new form, fruitful though fraught with peril, the form in which the word, sung or declaimed, plays an important part, for which the name ballet-oratorio has been coined.

It is hardly a coincidence that the development of this form

coincides with the classical and essentially antique tendencies of the new music. The best example is *Oedipus Rex* with its mythological content, aloof inflexibility of action, and highly stylized music. In no scene, in no measure does Stravinsky's newest work, *Perséphone*, belie its descent from this example. It is the latest demonstration of a strong, imposing, and at the same time simple style, in no way esoteric. While it is true that it does not have the weight of the Theban scene, greater richness, greater variety of expression make up for this.

As a matter of fact, on one hearing and without previous knowledge of the score, it is possible to recognize in this work all our experiences with Stravinsky's efforts, unified by his light hand, almost by routine. The reader, who explains the course of the action in *Oedipus*, now appears as a tenor who stands on a dais, and with the musical means of very melodic song-speech, fulfills the same function. The chorus, too, is again present, entrusted with the same underscoring function. But these elements are just side-issues, they do not lie at the heart of Stravinsky's present mode of expression. This derives its richness from the virtuoso liveliness of the *Capriccio*, as well as from the Bach-like effect produced by the two-part writing of various concerted pieces; and in the third, the strongest and most remarkable tableau, one may even trace reminiscences of the Russian nationalistic harmonic system of his early work. All these elements, different as they may seem, develop and unify themselves in the closest union with the atmosphere and content of Gide's poem, into a style unequalled for strength of expression and impressiveness.

The danger inevitable in this relationship, which is very special and certainly not conducive to popularity, is the ever-present tendency of the poetry to become the master and to subordinate not only the music but the choreographic elements. We already see the logical effects of this development. Mme. Rubinstein when asked why she had chosen Jacques Copeau, the famous theatrical regisseur for the direction of her presentations, bluntly explained that these new works could hardly be called ballets. For in so far as emphasis is removed from the dancing to the action, and further, from the action to the idea, to that extent

does one betray the ballet as an art form. Stravinsky merely touches this boundary, he does not cross it and a more choreographically complete production, with a performer ideally equipped to unite dance and speech, would surely prove how fundamentally choreographic the conception of this joint art work really is.

Such is not the case with the Valéry-Honegger *Semiramis* whose premiere, received not without protest, was the second performance in the Rubinstein series. Honegger's fundamental weakness is his stylistic indecisiveness. He is always wavering between classical definiteness of form, declamatory pathos, traces of Wagner, or at least Strauss, and a purely tonal musical presentation. In his best works he has been able to come to some agreement, as in *King David*, for example. Just because he was unable to do this in *Semiramis* it ranks poorly. Not that the score lacks beauty and delicacy. Its greatest power lies in its sonority which often reveals astonishing new effects, as in the use of two Martenot apparatuses. But the music develops in a way that the interpretation of the ballet flatly contradicts. The melodic lack of form, the rhythmic vagueness give the dance an illusory aspect. A more unatmospheric music has seldom been composed for a ballet. There is a forced movement to the mythologically confused finale of the middle part of the work, where *Semiramis* holds a rambling discourse with her four astrologers and then departs into a flaming pit in the earth; while individual and unusual, it is entirely foreign to the dance. Here the boundaries of the danger zone have been crossed.

Hans Gutman

ORCHESTRAL VERSION OF HARRIS' CHORALE

I THINK Roy Harris' *String Sextet* is one of his best works, thoroughly representative of both the manner and the matter of his music. Specifically, I have no reservation about the melodious and contemplative *Chorale* which forms the second movement of the *Sextet*. It offers, like the second movement of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, say, or of Mozart's *G Minor*, in rhythm a period of repose, in sonority a satisfying richness, in