

existence of the salon today is artificial). On the program given at the New School on November 8th, the *Sonata* for violin and piano (1930) established the spirit and style of Thomson's work. It has the relaxed mood of a well-carpeted cocktail hour, fundamentally sanguine, with a few well-timed sighs. "Satisfied," it neither puts itself forward nor belittles itself. Everything is discreet; and a personal neatness perfects this essentially social tact into punctilious clarity. A slight but graceful voice—the instrumental works too seem written vocally—carries on a melodic murmur with perfect breath-control and prosody. This ease is not merely facile but is based on a severe and fluent technic. The five brief sketches from the *Forty Portraits* (1935) titillate the company with non-musical comparisons (but the musical epigram "Henrie Waste, *tempo di polka*" for instance says itself in the title). *Stabat Mater* (1931) similarly, and more deeply, depends on associations—as emotional impact is outside Thomson's range or intention—to draw the listener into a ritual (another form of theatre). It is a great pity that the tradition invoked by Thomson's music in general is for most of his listeners dead; the evocation therefore gets a mournful response.

Eva Goldbeck

STRAVINSKY BEGINS HIS CHRONICLES

THE first volume of Igor Stravinsky's *Chroniques de ma Vie* recently published in French by Denoël and Stelle, does not materially add to our knowledge of the composer nor his works. The principal facts of his life as well as those related to his music have been well known before this; so, too, his changing esthetic creeds, which he has published in manifestoes from time to time, and so, too, contemporaneous comment and reaction. The present volume, starting with his birth in 1882 and continuing as far as 1918, when Stravinsky took up his residence in France, the period which covers his creative activity through the completion of *Pulcinella*, is slight in size and unpretentious in style. Yet it has the ring of something which is simple and true: something which will be illuminating in twenty or thirty years from now and which, with its air of unaffected veracity, may be sym-

pathetic to future generations much in the way that the early photographs of a Stieglitz or an Atget are to us today. Stravinsky, whose followers have frequently made him appear a man of mode and snobbery, a leader of musical fashions, and who, it must be admitted, has often, through his exaggerated and overviolent statements, contributed toward this picture, appears in his memoirs to be a fundamentally simple and earnest man, striving directly and honestly for the attainment of his ideals, surprised, at times, at the importance which the world has attached to his work. Here is none of the megalomania of a Wagner; one is struck by his sense of justice, poise and balance.

His emergence from the shell of a not-at-all extraordinary young music-student is as amazing as is, perennially the transformation of the ugly duckling. At the age of twenty, when he went to visit Rimsky-Korsakoff who was summering in Heidelberg, and showed him, for the first time, his early efforts, the latter did not dissuade him from taking up a musical career but advised him to study privately. He feared that at the conservatory Stravinsky might become discouraged by finding himself scholastically so far behind the other young music-students of his age. Seven years later Diaghileff, hearing a work by Stravinsky at a concert given under the direction of Siloti in Saint Petersburg, ordered from him the orchestration of some pieces by Chopin for the performance of the ballet, *Les Sylphides*. During that summer Stravinsky received a telegram from Diaghileff asking him to write the music for a prospective ballet, *L'Oiseau de Feu*; and this masterpiece, begun with considerable trepidation by the young artist, was ready and performed the following season.

At what moment does the divine drop alight upon the head of the anointed one? This eternal mystery is baffling each time anew!

During the course of the book Stravinsky speaks of his views, his theories, his creeds. Many of these are already familiar but he expresses them here with less violence, less over-emphasis, than in the past. They are still strongly personal and debatable; their weakness lies in the fact that they are limited rather than that they are untrue. What he says is often convincing enough but

he seems always to fall short of giving us an idea which is full, universal or even nearly complete. Among the things he discusses are "interpreters" and the "interpretation" of music; the so-called "expressiveness" of music; and the differences of our attitudes toward a "spectacle of art" and a "religious ritual"—this latter apropos a performance of Parsifal which he attended in Bayreuth as a young man. Throughout, his language is most carefully and deliberately chosen: he seems to take a pride in his excellent French!

Though the book gives us little that is factually new, it does elucidate and define certain points in Stravinsky's character and it dispels the legendary and anecdotal atmosphere which has surrounded certain episodes of his life. We are struck by the intensity of his intellectual passions and the enthusiasm with which he has attached himself to different things at different periods of his life. At one moment he is "emballé" for Russian folk-poesy, at another he is fascinated by the Hungarian cymbalom and later we see him keenly amused in the selection of paper, prints and designs for the publication of one of his works. His sensitiveness to the various things and, in particular, to the special atmosphere of cities and countries with which he has come into contact is delightful and his descriptions of these, though slight, are extraordinarily apt. It goes without saying that his comments on the personalities of the people with whom he has been closely associated, and in particular those of Diaghileff and Nijinsky are illuminating and amusing. He seems, in regard to Nijinsky, particularly eager to dispel some current misconceptions. In regard to himself and his personal sufferings both moral and physical he is inclined at times to become somewhat tearful and self-pitying. But, on the whole, one feels his desire to be tempered and just; he appears to us a man of enormous emotional and nervous energy, making a constant effort to keep in balance the finely adjusted mechanism of his personality.

Frederick Jacobi

DANCERS IN NEW YORK, AUTUMN, 1935

IF the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo had presented nothing but the revival of Fokine's *Scheherazade*, its brief season in New