

# FORECAST AND REVIEW

## NEW LIFE IN BERLIN

**B**ERLIN is making an earnest effort to gain first place among the musical capitals of Europe with Paris about the only competitor. Were the recent concert season selected as a criterion, the question, "Berlin or Paris," would remain unsettled; but with the opera season in view the balance swings in favor of Berlin.

Berlin's possession of three opera theatres enables her to make good the widest range of promises, especially since Klemperer has taken his place at the head of the Krolloper. This house again presented Hindemith's *Cardillac* and Stravinsky's *Oedipus* (the latter on a program with *L'Histoire du Soldat*) and also gave us the first Berlin performance of Krenek's three one-act pieces. The next novelty is to be the premiere of Hindemith's gay new work, *Neues vom Tage*. Unfortunately, Berlin operagoers proved not to be ready for the *Soldat*, so that a repetition of the Stravinsky evening was cancelled. The presentation of Krenek's little pieces can be explained only by the present popularity of *Jonny's* composer. There is an attempt to put words and music across by means of banality and silly jokes. Of the quality of the three works, it may be said that the first is a feeble imitation of Puccini; the second, of Schreker, and that any American jazz composer would ridicule and pity the third—they have all done this sort of thing better. Such stuff is merely the expression of the modern German composer's attempt to satisfy the demands of the masses.

Brecht and Weill attempted a new solution of the problem of the music theatre with their *Dreigroschenoper*. In this work Brecht gave us a highly individual and scenically striking adaptation of the old English *Beggar's Opera*. Weill, who wrote the

music, still pursues that light style already sought by him in *Mahagonny*; there are effective, striking song numbers of a dance and ballad character. Though its success was sensational the music is not contrived with a high degree of skill; in some respects it has the characteristics of *Gebrauchsmusik* (the word launched by Hindemith and applied by him to many different types of music). The most marked example of this tendency is Weill's extremely simple treatment of the voices, so that actresses, not opera singers, were able to render the songs. Furthermore, the slight burden placed on the accompanying orchestra, reduced to a small wind ensemble, liberates the work from dependence on complicated operatic machinery. Comparison with Stravinsky's epoch-making *L'Histoire du Soldat* is inevitable; but Stravinsky denied himself the ultimate compromise, the yielding of his individuality to the demands of the musical "customers," preserving intact the artistic entity of his music.

The Staatsoper, whose destinies are controlled by Kleiber, gave an especially welcome repetition of Berg's *Wozzek*; this production of the work may be considered a model. For later presentation this spring Krenek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* has been announced.

A much greater number of new works can be reported for the concert season. In this field too, we may thank Klemperer for many valuable introductions, as for example, the German premiere of Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète* in the Konzertsaal. The hope with which we always anticipate a new work by Stravinsky was unfortunately unfulfilled this time. In *Apollon* I missed the strength of that personality which has prevailed in the diametrically opposed styles of the *Sacre* and *Oedipus*, of *Petrouchka* and *L'Histoire du Soldat*. The music suffers in emotional effect from a lack of inventiveness and from the fatigue engendered by an instrumentation confined exclusively to the strings. It is hard to classify the style of this work.

Klemperer presented two more premieres, a *Sinfonietta* by Hauer, and Krenek's *Kleine Sinfonie*. Hauer, whose prestige has mounted since the success of his *Seventh Suite* at the Frankfort festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, gave us a new and complete demonstration of his original, creative

talent. This is an individual work whose harmonic principle is determined by a stern application of the twelve-tone technique which he has brought to such an extreme development. How this system can determine the form of a composition (as Hauer claims it can) remains unclear, for the formal element in the *Sinfonietta*, except by a strained interpretation, does not effect an especially logical structure. It is interesting to note that this Austrian, whose spirit seems that of a Bruckner transposed to today, is at home among contemporary rhythmic problems. The last movement shows traces of Stravinsky, but Hauer has been able to reconcile his own characteristics with this influence. On the whole, one of the best works of Berlin's season.

Krenek's *Kleine Sinfonie* is a ray of hope in the work of his latest period. He has tried to maintain his reputation as a pioneer by the instrumentation, the new thing here being the inclusion of a special section of pluck instruments, mandolins and banjos. The rest, transparent and adroit, gains an odd color because of this group, which brings benefits to more than the jazz passages. The musical material is not too weighty; it is composed with a charming elegance and light touch that give it the air of an amusing conversation. In places the style even goes beyond the level of light music, which, on the whole, is what we should call the *Kleine Sinfonie*. Other premieres that I was unfortunately unable to attend included Furtwängler's performance of Schönberg's *Variationen*, and Kleiber's of Butting's *Symphony* and Slavenski's *Balkanophobia*.

The concerts of the chamber orchestra founded by Michael Taube have made a place for themselves in the musical life of Berlin. Under Taube's baton, Hindemith played his *Concerto for Viola d'Amore*, the latest, and, one may as well admit it at once, the weakest of his important cycle, opus 36. It is especially interesting to note that in the chronological order of Hindemith's work it comes right next to the *Concerto for Viola*, which may be ranked as a model not only in Hindemith's output but in all the literature of modern music. The *Viola d'Amore* concerto compelled no satisfying impression. The composer's strength and creative vitality are absent here; the polyphony does not seem the product of a creative imagination—rather of sterile handicraft.

Taube gave us a *Vorspiel zu einem Märchen* by Toch, whose delightful *Spiel für Bläsorchester* was also heard. This *Gebrauchsmusik*, written for the Donaueschingen festival, is a brilliantly successful attempt to adapt the modern style to the orchestra of wind instruments. The number of technical difficulties, of course, bars it to a great extent from the usual military repertory of marches and overtures, but the work is worth the trouble. Taube also introduced a *Suite* by Wolfgang Jacobi, an earnest work which shows talent, and a *Concertino* for piano by the highly gifted young Swiss, Beck.

Herbert, the Berne conductor, has announced an evening of symphonies for the later season. Among other presentations he gave the premiere of *Six Small Pieces for Orchestra* by Wiesengrund-Adorno, which revealed this young composer's spiritual kinship to Schönberg's circle. The works are in Webern's style, musical aphorisms of great expressiveness and significance.

The most important concentrated production of new music was given by the Berlin section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. One interesting performance was devoted to the vocal works of Schönberg and two musicians spiritually akin to him—Steuermann, whose *Piano Sonata* proved itself more important than the songs of the second man, the aforementioned Wiesengrund-Adorno, who here gave the impression of empty imitation of the master.

Although, in review, one finds a whole series of new, interesting works that were heard in Berlin, modern French music seems to have won little consideration on these programs. No important work of Milhaud, Poulenc, or Auric was presented. Honegger, too, appeared infrequently. Not only he, but Ravel and Prokofiev are too seldom guests in our concert halls. Here is an opportunity for the Berlin audience to make many more worthwhile musical contacts.

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### REDISCOVERING THE DYNAMIC LINE

**W**HAT is the Dynamic Line and how does it operate? Imagine a piece of music tracing in its course every change of dynamic color, not only the more obvious *pianissimo* to *fortis-*