

## INDEPENDENTS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

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ON reviewing the musical production of the last decade we may conclude that after a period of creatively valuable experiment, modern music has reached a plane of quiet development which capitalizes the experiences of the last ten years. Pioneering and progressive aspects still characterize the movement because the line of creation has been unwaveringly carried along from the leaders to the younger, not yet self-sufficient composers.

Of those who have stamped their characteristics on the new tendencies Stravinsky and Schönberg are of course the most noteworthy. Contemporary production is still permeated with their peculiarities and they continue to determine the lines of growth of their disciples.

Schönberg's disciples are fewer than Stravinsky's because his principles of style and composition demand a high degree of personal consistency and conviction in their adaptation. Many of the younger musicians find it easier to follow Stravinsky and to adopt the clichés of his development for their own work. Each of the phases of Stravinsky's evolution has left its traces in contemporary production; the most minute ramifications of his changes in style are traced and followed by his adherents. Recently Hindemith has established his personal tonal idiom as a new characteristic and tendency-forming impetus for the young Germans, and to some extent for composers of other countries.

In addition to these leaders, Central Europe has produced many strong and independent personalities of less pronounced individuality. Not blindly following modish principles of style, but developing outside the influence of the musicians mentioned above, they have matured and created valuable works.

Philip Jarnach is one of the most important figures in contemporary German music. Spanish by birth, he is rooted in German

culture, although his work does not completely belie his Latin ancestry. One of the rare masters of the new music, he has thoroughly assimilated his essential inspirations, fused them with his personality and succeeded in establishing his own style.

Jarnach does not dazzle by external brilliance or striking power of conception. He is among those whose work we can grasp and learn to like only when we penetrate into the substance of their art. Fortunately, he escapes the danger of an altogether contemplative and resigned expression through the other side of his nature which by ease, elegance and the mastery of all technical and formal means reveals his Latin origin. Thus he creates a counter-balance to the serious basic aspect of his work.

Jarnach has distinguished himself in orchestral, organ, piano and chamber music—most successfully in the latter two. Although his *Morgenklangspiel* for orchestra is rich in poetry and his orchestral *Prelude* with its solemn background is an effective piece of music, the orchestra is less appropriate to Jarnach's talent than the chamber ensemble or the piano. His *Piano Sonata*, opus 18, with its three movements, felicitously contrasted, is one of the best piano pieces of recent years. The first movement is distinguished by a delicate, serene lyricism, which rises to a most powerful strength of expression.

In addition to Jarnach, two other composers of modern German music deserve special consideration: Alexander Jemnitz and Karol Rathaus. Like Jarnach, they are not really German. Rathaus is a Pole, Jemnitz, Hungarian. In the musical sphere, however, they are claimed by and belong to Germany.

Rathaus has proved himself an individualist in all fields of his art. In Germany his piano and chamber music and his orchestral work are equally appreciated. His style cannot be called striking, his peculiarities are not obvious, and yet his individuality, setting him apart from average German composition, is indubitable. His typical mode of expression has a brooding and analytical quality. Although his early work lacks richness, although the ideas of his first piano pieces are more forced than forceful, his recent music has a vitality of rhythm which happily counterbalances the somewhat labored method of expression, which is often too heavily overlaid with chords. His best and

most mature achievement is the *Suite* for violin and chamber orchestra, opus 27.

Alexander Jemnitz is akin to Rathaus in that his compositions have a certain brooding note, but the nature and technic of his idiom rise from a different sphere of music. Jemnitz is one of the few Central European composers who, touched by Schönberg's art, have preserved their own identity. His delicately articulated linear technic lends his chamber music a peculiar charm. To his language there always clings something visionary, something indefinable. The *Trio-Serenade*, opus 24, and the *Duo-Sonata* for viola and violoncello, opus 25, may be cited here.

Since we have admitted these three foreign-born composers into the family of German music, we can hardly exclude Alexander Tcherepnine. Unlike the others, Tcherepnine's individuality has strength and clear outline, which is rare indeed among contemporary composers. This personal note is equally marked in the melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and sonorous elements of his style. Tcherepnine bases the melodic and harmonic units of his latest works with unerring consistency on the major-minor system which he advocates and whose application gives his music its peculiar aspect. An ever transparent tonal color is still another characteristic. Tcherepnine likes to reduce the tonal elements of his piano works to two or three lines, to transpose them to the most typical register and, by thinning out the middle section, obtains effects which are particularly attractive on that instrument. The sharply marked rhythm of his conceptions, the concentrated form of his structure, the purity of his lyric expressions (all of which were weakened in his earlier compositions by a certain shallowness) place his works among the most interesting contemporary music. His new *Piano Quintet*, opus 44, marked by all the characteristics of his art, is a valuable addition to the scanty production of modern piano chamber music.

Slavic characteristics, barely discernible in Tcherepnine, are much more marked in Bohuslav Martinu. Living in Paris, he may be called the most promising musician of the younger generation. The richness and strength of his inspiration, his overflowing temperament, which at times threatens to disregard form, reveal him as a most forceful creative power. Like Tcherepnine,



Martinu is a supreme master of rhythm though of a different type. If Tcherepnine, by his method of breaking up line, may be designated as typical of linear rhythmic composition, Martinu, with his more personal, compact rhythm—often suggesting a dance style—may be called a master of vertical rhythm. The smoothness and elegant expression of Martinu's recent smaller piano pieces reveal a new absorption of qualities from modern French piano music. We may single out the second *String Quartet* as quite characteristic—it is a lusty piece of chamber music with an austere andante of unusual expressive power.

Switzerland, which in Honegger claims one of the leading figures of international music, has found in Conrad Beck another promising representative in the camp of the moderns. Beck, who lives in Paris, leans toward the young German music but combines with a certain objectivity of expression—never descending to dryness—the spirit and caprice of French musical taste. His already large output reveals a sharply outlined rhythm in lively passages and an austerity and simplicity of expression in his slow movements that give his music the distinction of an extraordinary maturity. His piano pieces, of which the *Concertino* is outstanding, are mostly a sort of frolicking “Bewegungsmusik” whose freely flowing style contrasts with the thoughtful calm of the central passages. Beck's best work is his cantata, the *Death of Oedipus*, for chorus, soli, four brass instruments, organ and kettle drums. Using extremely economical means, he demonstrates an extraordinary mastery of technical equipment.

The work of these six composers—to whom a few more could be added—emphasizes the present state of contemporary music. As we have indicated, the period of experiment with styles has yielded to a more peaceful era. The younger generation has abandoned the problems of former years and seeks a clear, unequivocal, thematically accented mode of expression. The linear principle of technic allies itself with a reviving preference for harmony, although not for functional harmony. The trend towards objectivity in the control of expression prevails as a reaction to the romantic ideal and leads to a valuable concentration of thought. There is a continued emphasis on music style but its exclusive pursuit has been weakened by a recent tendency to return to the orchestra and the larger forms.