

FORECAST AND REVIEW

A CRITICAL PORTRAIT OF STRAVINSKY

IT is to be regretted that the series of volumes called *La Musique Moderne*, published in Paris by Aveline under the editorship of André Coeuroy, has finally been concluded. Its great variety and interest placed it, so to speak, at the cross-roads of all the tendencies in modern music.

In this collection André Georges discoursed learnedly and intimately upon *Arthur Honegger*. Robert Jardillier, in his *Pelleas*, revived a whole epoch still very close to us. The *Musique et Poésie* of André Suarès was a brilliant example of the grand style in the romantic manner. I do not often find myself in agreement with the *Etudes* of Darius Milhaud (which I cannot discuss in detail here), but this much is true of the book, and it is after all the important thing: on many a page one feels the presence of the creative spirit of the man who composed the finale of the *Eumenides*, which, in my opinion, has some claim as a work of genius.

The two most important volumes seem to me to be *Le Jazz*, by Schaeffner and Coeuroy and the *Stravinsky* of de Schloezer.

Schaeffner and Coeuroy's *Jazz* is particularly important for its historical material. The African and Afro-American antecedents of this genre are studied anew, with a precision made possible by the examination of a large number of ethnographical documents, many of them still unpublished. Reports of travelers, copiously cited, describe musical structures which seem very clearly to be the forerunners of our modern jazz forms. The authors endeavor to clarify the connection between jazz and negro music, and dwell at length upon the principles of negro rhythms. From the point of view of instrumentation they analyze the use of percussion and its evolution. Step by

step they show how jazz rose to the status of an authentic style, and how, by employing solo instruments or small orchestral groups it influenced the renascence of genres in the music of our day, the vogue of the concerto, for example, or of chamber music as it was practised in the eighteenth century.

By thus attributing all that is essential in jazz to negro origins, the authors have stirred up a spirited controversy. Arthur Hoérée, in a very interesting article in *La Revue Musicale*, undertook to demonstrate how much jazz owes to the arrangements of European and American orchestrators. For him, modern harmony from Liszt to Ravel has been at least as important to jazz as have the negro rhythms. The two opinions express two complementary truths.

The *Stravinsky* of Boris de Schloezer is undoubtedly one of the monuments of contemporary criticism. I do not, of course, share all the ideas expressed here; but a depth of thought and breadth of view such as one finds in this book, at once so profound and so precise, far transcend the domain of analytical criticism. Reading it, I have more than once thought of Oscar Wilde's dictum that criticism is the truly creative art. Such a book takes its place immediately in the body of contemporary culture.

Its chapters are devoted to the problem of esthetic nationalism (the Russian and the European conflict in Stravinsky), that of technic and of style, and finally the very general problem of the nature of a classic art.

Stravinsky for Schloezer is as profoundly Russian in the works written since *Pulcinella* as he is in *Petrouchka*, or in *Noces*. He thinks we conceive Russian art incorrectly if we separate it too rigidly from the European, if we orientalize it too sharply. Taking an example from architecture, the Place du Théâtre in Petrograd, pure eighteenth century stylistically, is nevertheless as truly Russian as the Kremlin in Moscow. He finds in the Russian spirit a ceaseless desire to be European, not Asiatic, a tendency towards a universality, a catholicism, of which Stravinsky seems to be a striking representative. Carrying this notion to its logical consequence we are confronted with the apparent paradox that Stravinsky is the most occidental of living musicians because he is the most Russian.

I confess that I regard Stravinsky rather as one of those "transplanted" artists among whom are to be found some of the most interesting of "the children of the Muses." In the days of the pre-renaissance, for example, nothing was more Italian than the art of certain Flemish artists who had wandered south of the Alps; recall only Cyprien de Rose. And precisely what esthetic nationality shall we attribute to a Roland de Lassus? To this "*espèce des transplantés*" one might oppose the "rooted" artists, a type of which Bach is one of the best examples.

The name of Bach, one feels, haunts the chapters devoted to the technic and the style of Stravinsky. In Schloezer's view, the composer of the *Octuor* and the *Sonate pour Piano* has returned to the style of Bach for no superficial reasons, but rather because it is precisely Bach who is "the master of the organic style, he who of all musicians has carried to its greatest perfection that form of development of musical thought which may be called dialectic, in which one idea directly engenders another without the intervention of any psychological factor."

The "autogeneration" of musical thought is one of the problems most admirably thrown into relief by Schloezer, and about this problem a great deal of ink has flowed since Schloezer's book appeared. This tendency to regard a form of thought which "realises itself spontaneously" as the highest state of being seems to me to be clearly of Hegelian origin. Reading Schloezer and noting the importance he attributes to the desire for universality, for catholicism, discoverable in the Russian soul, I have thought often of the great Slavic philosopher Solovieff, in whom this desire was almost overpowering and whose thought was deeply impregnated by Hegelianism. I do not mean to say that Schloezer was at all inspired by Solovieff. But there is an exciting subject for speculation in their conjunction of ideas, their cross currents and their analogies.

The whole subject should be cleared up, furthermore, by the studies published by Schloezer in *La Revue Musicale* under the title, *A la Recherche de la Réalité Musicale*, the substance of which reappears in all those chapters of the *Stravinsky* bearing upon classical art. Classic art is, as Schloezer conceives it, dead so far as reality is concerned; but it introduces us to a

reality *other* than the one we habitually conceive, to a spiritual rather than a natural reality. For romanticism, however, the Beautiful *is* the Natural, or rather is immanent in the Natural.

I have no wish to plunge into the metaphysics towards which the Franco-Russian writer carries us so happily and so smoothly. I do wish to remark, however, that in my opinion the importance of the mode of generation of musical works has been greatly exaggerated. A work of "pure" music, like a fugue, may be the expression of some psychological impulse. On the other hand something as eminently dramatic as the *Lamento d'Ariane* of Monteverdi may reach so far beyond itself that it is lifted into the realm of pure and absolute beauty. The line "*Lasciate mi morire*" (this example is only one of a hundred possible), has an absolutely autonomous existence which is quite divorced from its original inspiration, and yet could never have come into being without it. How often does one find at the origin of things, or of a development, something utterly different from the final results! And the end alone matters. André Gide loves to retell the biblical story of Saul, who set out into the desert seeking his lost asses, and returned with them—and a crown.

Another very interesting and apparently paradoxical idea developed by Schloezer is that one of the characteristics of Stravinsky's growth is a uniform and progressive tendency towards melody. This is true enough but has not been sufficiently noted, dazzled as we all have been by the rhythm of the *Histoire du Soldat* and the color of the *Sacre du Printemps*. The dominant concern of the composer of *Mavra* and of *Oedipus* appears to have been the perfection of a melodic organization which should be genuinely musical, rather than poetic. But I am not sure that Schloezer has really "dotted his i's;" I am not sure that he has hit the nail on the head. He speaks of "melos" and even of "song." Now the Stravinskian melody, his song, has never been adapted to the human voice and throat and larynx.

If I may risk an image, Stravinsky seems to me to be like Maeterlinck's wife of Bluebeard, who with her master's keys opened door after door and closet after closet, discovering endless treasures in jewels and precious metals. But Stravinsky has never opened the last door, the only one that matters, the

door through which one must pass to discover the secrets of life and death. For Schloezer this is the very essence of Stravinsky's power. But for others it is precisely this which prevents him from drawing upon the treasure of true "melody." All true melody is, as the writer Henry de Montherlant once said in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, a canto jondo, in the sublime Spanish phrase: a *profound song*, probing the very depths of life.

Raymond Petit

BERG'S NEW WORK, DER WEIN

AFTER the volcanic dramatic effect of his opera *Wozzeck*, Alban Berg turned to more intimate types of music and produced his important chamber works, the *Concerto*, for piano, violin and thirteen wind instruments, and the *Lyric Suite* for string quartet. An element common to both is a latent "program" which, in the *Concerto*, celebrates the fiftieth birthday of Arnold Schönberg, while in the *Suite* it is recognizable as the lyric and dramatic presentation of his own personal character. Both works reveal a masterful treatment, contrapuntal in the *Concerto*, sonorous in the *Suite*. The *Concerto* may be described as a paean to the friendship of Schönberg, Anton von Webern and Berg, whose names are woven into an anagram that is set forth, after the manner of the old masters, in the work itself. But in the *Suite* it is the demonic heights and depths of life which here have found a new musical expression. The concluding work in this series of compositions, whose instinctive yet unerring goal has been the intimate revelation of a personality, was the cycle of *Seven Early Songs*. Composed in 1907, they were not orchestrated and published until 1928. They are obviously based upon the most profound love-experiences of the composer. Firmly adhering to tonality, they have an intense and deeply emotional melodic line, which makes them the finest example of vocal inspiration in contemporary music.

In *Der Wein*, a concert-aria for soprano and orchestra, completed last summer, Berg reveals the first indication of a new tendency, namely to check his advance, after these earlier works, in the expression of individual feeling, and to seek out again