

But one does not hesitate to say that *La Mandragola* shows the sure effect of the tendency to simplify, common to all the young schools. At the same time, there is also a tendency to sing which seems to me the leading characteristic of certain Italian musicians who are somewhat outside the modern movement—almost withdrawn in a sort of isolation which although it may appear to be provincial, is not.

In *La Mandragola* as in the *Concerto Italiano*, there is more than one surrender to the charm of melody, which is noteworthy not only as indicating a tendency but also for its value in expression. That this attitude might be called "Italian" seems to me beside the point, since we are no longer dealing with any artificial imitation of melodic formulas used in the past but with an out and out melodic line that unfolds itself amply, with restraint, and above all with an absence of qualms about being too sentimental or seeming *coram populo*. This, which may be either boldness or weakness, according to whoever judges, seems to me one of the greatest merits of the work of Castelnuovo. Young, even among the younger set, smiled upon by fortune from the beginning, this Florentine has known how to resist the temptation of throwing himself in the vanguard. Within the walls of his native Florence he has withdrawn more and more into himself, seeking always to reveal those characteristics which have gradually been shown to be individual. Thus he has followed one path without deviation or perilous turnings, not closing his ears to the voices of others but contemplating all with that true Florentine spirit which is pre-eminently ready to mock the defects and inconsistencies of things and of men.

By Guido Gatti

HONEGGER'S "JUDITH"

FROM incidental music written last summer for the Swiss production of *Judith*, the biblical play by René Morax, Honegger has drawn the material for an opera which was most successfully performed in Monte Carlo on February thirteenth. To bind together the choruses, solos and symphonic passages already in existence, all that was necessary were some recitative

passages and scenes of dialogue. His music carried the composer into a bold departure from the poetic text and the story is told in four brilliantly painted scenes.

In the first, Judith raises her voice with the other women of Bethulia, supplicating heaven. With the city besieged, on the verge of surrender to the Assyrian, she resolves to seek out Holofernes and plead for her people. In the second, Judith, pausing by a spring, listens hesitatingly to the distant sounds of the enemy's camp. At her servant's suggestion to go back, she rises and continues her journey.

Holofernes, with his captains, feasts in his tent. The pleading Judith is ordered in to "refresh his sight and his mind," and without protest she submits to his caresses. He sends out his soldiers, turns a deaf ear to her prayers, and growing ever drunker, falls asleep. Judith takes up a sword and closes the tent; her servant outside is startled by a strange sound. There is an impression of terror here which somewhat recalls the cistern scene in *Salome*. Slipping outside, Judith gives the servant a heavy bag and flees with her. Once more among her people, she reveals Holofernes' head and incites them to fall on the demoralized foe. From the shadows there bursts a battle chorus, a huge fresco of sound whose vigor is Handelian, a passage which is to be ranked among the best of Honegger's achievements. At the next dawn the women, bearing palms, appear before Judith's house, and enter into a suite of choruses, which, alternating and combining with solo voices, mount crashingly to a climax in a hymn of gratitude from the delivered Israelites.

Although Judith's role is important, it is clear that the Israelites, represented by the principal choruses, are the central character in this biblical drama. These choruses comprise at least two thirds of the score and form by far its most vital and beautiful part. The prayer *Lord, Pity Us*, and especially the lament, *O Bethulia, Bethulia, Abandoned*, in themselves create the initial atmosphere of distress and poignant anguish. Contrasted with these female lamentations is the chorus of the Assyrian warriors, brilliant and distinct, sometimes in unison, sometimes in two parts, with the accompaniment in the orchestra repeating a fixed, rhythmic design. Most impressive of all is the battle hymn.

With an irregular and rapid rhythmical movement in the orchestra, the basses and baritones at first produce onomatopoetic sounds; then the tenors raise their voices while the deeper ones maintain the rhythmical accents and the orchestra, ever less united, is broadly released. The complex polyphony of this passage is doubled by a genuine counterpoint of superimposed rhythms.

Such complexities, as a matter of fact, characterize all the choruses of Honegger. The broad melodic lines unfold smoothly, each guarding its rhythmic independence. This is also true of many designs allotted to the instruments. One might expect such involved devices to produce confusion and disorder, but on the contrary, Honegger invariably creates the effect of simplicity because he knows how to emphasize the principal lines and to fashion the smallest details in conformity with the whole.

The recitative passages are of unequal value. They are always in a melodic form and are even supported by the sonority of the words. Like Lully and Gluck, Honegger uses a very accented lyric declamation quite unlike the ordinary speech which Debussy and Ravel sought to achieve. It is plain that certain phrases are simply joining passages, but in general, though added later, they are one with the lyrical episodes they serve to bind. Some of these recitatives are peculiar in that they call for singing while the orchestra pursues a quite independent symphonic development. Wagner and his imitators employed symphonic music as the basis for their songs, rather than as an orchestral accompaniment in the fashion of opera. The song and orchestra in *Judith* retain complete independence and are accorded parallel development. We have in this a curious experiment from which Honegger may draw novel effects in the future should he systematize his method.

The orchestra is admirably exploited. In their sonority Honegger's effects are always strongly reminiscent of Richard Strauss, and yet quite individual. He has no need of an immense orchestra and rare instruments to produce impressions of strength and extraordinary strangeness. His distinction lies in achieving the unusual by the simplest means.

The chief characteristic of this new score is that of power. Not since Berlioz have such magnificent ensembles been written. In violence of energy they surpass those of *Le Roi David*. What is especially remarkable is that this force is much less dramatic than lyric. Exactly here is to be found the distinction which sets Honegger apart from Strauss, with whom it is so natural to compare him. In everything he writes Strauss shows himself a man of the theatre; he always places his art at the service of the drama. Honegger, on the other hand, does not blindly follow the outlines of a dramatic situation. It is when nothing happens on the stage, in the voice of a whole people raised in thanksgiving, that his gifts are most manifest. Through his sensual and turbulent music, there flows the great lyric inspiration of the Bible.

By Henry Prunieres

RUSSIA'S NEWEST COMPOSERS

FROM the time of Michail Iwanow Glinka, the father of its national music, Russia has been rich in great talents. Generations of composers have rapidly succeeded one another, each presenting to the world brilliant names. Glinka was followed by Alexander Dargomizky, who laid the foundation of Russian declamatory operatic style. After Dargomizky came the famous *Five* with Moussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakow, Balakierew and Cui. Then Tschaikowsky appeared, the first to place Russian music on a world plane. Rimsky-Korsakow founded the so-called "new Russian School" which included Alexander Glazunow, Anatol Liadow and others. At the same time Sergei Iwanowich Taniew began composing and after him came Sergei Rachmaninow, the gifted Alexander Scriabin and Nicolai Medtner. Not all of these men have finished their careers, yet we already have an entirely "contemporary" generation of Russian composers headed by Igor Strawinsky and Sergei Prokofieff and counting in their ranks such important figures as Nicolai Miaskowsky, Samuel Fineberg and others.

There is today, however, an even newer school, a group of talented youths either just beginning their work as composers or trying their strength in first, but already promising attempts.