

typical in its dynamic sweep of the vitality of the new theatre.

Side by side with the progressive stage we still find the Russian Grand Opera, whose origins are in the Russian Imperial Theatres, the Marrionowsky in Leningrad, the Grand Theatre in Moscow and the former Momtavsky and Winter Opera Houses. Even here attempts have been made to take new steps.

But after all is said, opera remains opera, the most conservative art and the least amenable to change. All the influences brought to bear by those modern theatre tendencies which are not purely operatic will make after all but a slight impression that affects the detail and not the essence.

Reform in opera can only occur through the writing of opera itself, and in Russia we have faced the need for change. The desire for a new form is felt by the public as well as by the artists. So far attempts at innovation may be divided into two kinds—first the reconstruction of old material into new and hardly recognizable work such as the re-written *Coq d'or* of Rimsky-Korsakov, second the alterations of the outer form with the retention of original inner content.

Neither of these it seems to me is conducive to operatic transformation. The change must come from the composer and not the producer. Not until some genius appears, to produce an entirely new work which will meet the modern psychological need, will Russia be able to satisfy its yearning for new opera.

By Victor Belaiev

FILM MUSIC

THE most interesting problem connected with the development of film music is the extent to which it has been affected by modern art tendencies in general. How little such music reflects the modern spirit either in the idiom employed, or structurally, in the matter of form is obvious when one compares the musical output for films with such a picture as *Dr. Caligari*. No score that has been written for the cinema has the distinction of this production in its truly contemporary feeling or unity of form. The best approach to a modern film score which has been heard here was written for *Beggar on Horseback*. It was a true jazz

opera with jazz themes employed as leit-motifs to unify the whole work.

There are two conditions which account for the lack of progress in developing this form of music. The first is the obvious one—the scarcity of films which, like *Caligari*, have been molded in their setting, atmosphere and plot by modernistic tendencies. The source of inspiration is not plentiful. Preparation of scores for the average film has developed certain easy methods, which are however, amenable to a great improvement. The music ordinarily composed for the movies is of a petty descriptive quality, employing leit-motifs in an exceedingly primitive and mechanical way. In character it achieves only the effect of re-echoing Wagner's themes and descriptions. When the material of the film itself is improved, and it acquires an aesthetic and dramatic unity, the inadequacy of the present type of score becomes obvious, and the need for better music is then clearly felt.

The second retarding condition is one which, though of a mechanical nature, is still extremely important. Films are produced with incredible abundance and rapidity. The speed of production necessitates the creation of stores of film leit-motifs and bits of musical description which shall be suitable to all the stock dramatic incidents and atmospheres with which we are familiar. These musical fragments must be of a kind that can be quickly amalgamated, so that a score may be concocted *ad hoc*.

Moreover each film has a very short lease of life, and this fact, together with the mechanical conditions which are imposed on the musicians have alienated the interest of the better composers and leaders of the contemporary movement. And until the film itself, its nature, atmosphere, time for production and of duration, is submitted to a basic change, the music written for the movies will not achieve a higher level.

By Hugo Riesenfeld

FOR A NEW REPERTOIRE AT THE OPERA HOUSE

IF one's life is spent amid the symphonic pleasures and cinema palaces of New York, I doubt very much if one ever realizes in dragging himself to this oversupply of things musical and un-