

ever, in this sphere tragically, in the annihilation of a species. Here again the reviewer must abandon proof and fall back on a tenacious and undeniable instinct.

Herr Krenek in some measure seems to answer and justify this charge at the end of his fifth chapter where he admits the fragmentary impression created by his "new music" which he considers part of its character as the *innermost expression of reality* (Das Innerste Ausdruck des Wesens). But is it not precisely the nature of art to transcend this fragmentary reality and to give it significance through synthesis—through the creation of a spiritual world in which "the unattainable" in Goethe's words "becomes event" and the fragments achieve a unity impossible in the real world. The significance thus attained is no doubt never a truly definitive one, but it is perhaps in a still deeper sense the "Innerste Ausdruck des Wesens" since it represents the creative embodiment of the most constant even if ultimately the vainest aspiration of mankind—that of transcending itself and approaching something like divinity. Is not art therefore, significant precisely in so far as it is not fragmentary, and are not the greatest works of art those in which completeness, not so much of form as of range and depth and intensity, is most fully attained?

*Roger Sessions*

### A NOVEL ONE-VOLUME ENCYCLOPEDIA

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY's volume, *Music Since 1900*, (W. W. Norton & Co., 1937) serves many purposes and all of them magnificently. As a source book of general information much of it is of value for the layman as well as the professional, but for the most part it will probably be read by those who have a particularized interest in music. Although for the student of modern music this work will perhaps not present a great deal of new or unfamiliar material, the manner in which important events in music and political and social happenings bearing on musical thought and activity are brought into focus, makes this volume an extremely important document of contemporary history and an indispensable addition to any well-stocked library.

Following a general introduction and an explanation of various terms used in relation to twentieth century music, the author

has divided the book into three parts, Descriptive Chronology 1900-1937, Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Musicians and corrections and additions to the works of Hull, Grove, Rieman and Moser, and Letters and Documents. "The main body of the book," states the author, "the descriptive chronology, is intended to be a sort of news-reel, reflecting the 'inner headlines' of musical events that are not at the moment of their occurrence of any seeming importance, but contain elements of evolutionary power that subtly but surely influence the entire future of music."

Through the index to the descriptive chronology found in the back of the book, the reader may trace the development of many individuals and organizations as reflected in the dates marking the starting, completion, publication, recording, performance and immediate criticisms of compositions as well as a record of the formation of various organizations and programs of festivals devoted to modern music. Sometimes the announcement of a new work will carry a statement from the composer, sometimes criticisms from the press, and often one of Mr. Slonimsky's lightning tabloid statements about the style and esthetic of the composition. The careers of various artists and organizations and their relation to the performance of new music reveal the stultifying apathy on the part of some and the amazing activity of others. Thus the page references for Koussevitsky run to six columns while artists of similar rank engaged in this metropolitan area show much less productive history on behalf of new music.

The author has been broad-minded in the selection of his "inner headlines" and it is picayune to criticize selection in the face of this gigantic research job. One may read with interest the development of tendencies in popular music such as jazz and blues but wonder, nevertheless, why the particular song hit *Tea for Two* should be given a space in this volume when a development such as the Composers' Forum-Laboratory of the Federal Music Project is not mentioned at all. Incidentally the book records the formation of several composers' groups and it is rather curious that the Composers' Forum-Laboratory, perhaps the only organization to carry out the expressed democratic aims of the others, is apparently not considered worthy of inclusion.

The concise biographical dictionary of twentieth century musi-

cians and the additions and emendations to the four standard dictionaries mentioned above are of obvious value in research. The letters and documents included as the third portion of the book make exceedingly interesting, and in several instances humorous, reading. Taken in its entirety *Music Since 1900* is a scholarly array of impressive evidence objectively determined.

*William Schuman*

## NEITHER FISH, FLESH NOR FOWL

IN the preface to his book, *La Musica Contemporanea* (Ulrico Hoepli, Milan, 1938), Herbert Fleischer announces this point of view: "The book considers contemporary music as an element integrating the life and spirit of the new century." Then, in presenting his own rebellion against Wagner, against "the morbid, yearning romanticism of Strauss" and the *petit bourgeois* music of Bruckner and Mahler, he speaks with strong admiration of the "crystalline sound-world of Stravinsky," the sharper music of the European composers of today.

At the end of the book, in an italicized valedictory, Mr. Fleischer reiterates the thesis propounded in the preface: "*The new music, in its noblest works, unites nations and humanity.*" One reader, however, found nothing between these humanistic pronunciamientos that proved their claims, no paragraph, even, indicating that they are more than hopes in the author's own mind.

The actual material between preface and valedictory consists entirely of analyses of the style and tendencies of the composers who have worked during the past fifty years in Germany, Austria, France, Italy, and Hungary—and some of the Russians. Despite the inclusive title of the book, however, it does not contain a single reference to DeFalla, Sibelius, Shostakovich, or any English or American composer. Mr. Fleischer's belief that "the centre of the musical life and production of today is Europe" explains the absence of Villa-Lobos and Chavez, of Ives and Copland. But no phrase explains whether his omission of DeFalla, for example, means that he considers the Spaniard unimportant—while finding Petrassi and Dallapiccola worth including—or does not consider Spain one of the nations worth uniting.