

tinu; a beautiful, impassioned *Sonata* for piano and violin by Franco Alfano which served to prove that romanticism and grandiloquence have not yet disappeared in Italy, and finally the splendid *Quintet* for piano and strings by Bloch. This monumental work, spacious, strong, Biblical, coming as it did after so much music of an experimental character, spoke in tones of irresistible power and roused the admiration of the international audience.

The conclusions developed from the sixth festival of the Society point to an almost complete disappearance of atonality with a strengthening—daily more evident—of form, of rhythm, of architecture, and to a melodic renaissance. What will Geneva offer in 1929? I believe that the next session will show a still firmer movement toward clarity and a definite return to the great European tradition.

Alfredo Casella

MORE FUN, LESS MUSIC

INTENTIONALLY or otherwise, the extra-musical preponderated over the musical at the German Chamber Music Festival, held in the Kurhaus at Baden-Baden in mid-July. In a program of films and music the pictures were first, the music a minor, perhaps even a diminished second. One melodrama and two farces, in an evening devoted to chamber opera, proclaimed the supremacy of the word, the relative unimportance of the note.

Illustrative of the same tendency was Darius Milhaud's oratorio, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, in that its earnest and often convincing effort to arrive at a form of intervallic speech suitable to the text may be regarded as having largely excluded more purely musical considerations. But as the Milhaud *Prodigal Son* is now eleven years old, having been finished in 1917, and as it certainly is not German chamber music, it occupied almost the position of a guest composition among the products which Messrs. Paul Hindemith, Heinrich Burkard and Josef Haas placed on their programs in illustration of the trends of the day in Central Europe.

The film and chamber opera programs were the most character-

istic and the most discussed of the festival, and it was in these that independent musical inspiration reached its nadir. The spirit of both programs was largely that of foolery, as if our adventurers were tired of stormy voyages on uncharted seas and craved a little buffoonery as a relief from their years of technical experimentation. Nothing that this festival brought to light stressed audacity in the use of materials; there was no tangible "advance" over Donaueschingen; no problem of harmony, rhythm or form propounded. The desire to amuse or to be amused was much more manifest than any great urge to discover, explore, innovate, liberate or add new expressiveness to the gamut of music.

The most successful of the film and music demonstrations was the one in which least attention was given to the music. Ernst Toch's underscoring of an American *Felix* cartoon comedy was mildly droll in its own right; that is, when uproarious laughter aroused by the pictures permitted it to be heard, which was only infrequently.

Of the so-called chamber operas the one which left the most vivid memories was the spoken melodrama, *Saul*, for which only such incidental music as has embellished plays since the time of the ancient Greeks was contrived by Herman Reutter. If the object in each instance was to illustrate how music can be humbled to serve a secondary and utilitarian purpose in support of another art, it was achieved; but not with any such originality or distinction as to separate these presumably experimental performances from the routine of either the cinema or the drama.

Of four examples of the union of music and the motion picture, the only one in which the music asserted an interest proportionate to that aroused by the screen was Wolfgang Zeller's score to accompany an elaborately drawn fantasy on the tale of Aladdin and the lamp. The pictures were amusing and grotesque; the music engaging and decidedly apt in spite of its too evident kinship to the Stravinsky *Firebird*. Milhaud's *Actualités* apparently had no connection with the ordinary news reel that was displayed while the music ran its unmomentous course. How three men—one of them Hindemith, the others Werner Graff and Paul Richter—could have collaborated to produce the commonplace piano score that accompanied *Morning Spooks* was one of the puzzles

of the festival. Here was a trick film full of floating derby hats, men who walked upside down on ladders, views that were turned sideways, and kindred absurdities. Perhaps there were upside-down quirks in the music too. At any rate, for three men to have written it was the prize trick of all. Still another film, devoted to close-ups of machines, possessed, for this writer, utterly meaningless music by Hugo Herrmann—en rapport with meaningless views.

This same Hugo Herrmann, however, contributed to the program a set of *Gallows Songs*, set for small chorus to poems by Christian Morgenstern, that possessed a distinct measure of skillful writing, and one, *Das Gebet*, more than a little of traditional beauty. The one other work of the festival in which there was beauty in a traditional sense was Joseph Matthias Hauer's oratorio, *Wanderlungen*, for soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra; a work that sought to recapture the Greek classic spirit and was of some kinship to the Stravinsky *Oedipus Rex*. It possessed a firm, strong line and a well sustained mood of lofty exaltation. Doubtless, it will be heard again.

Mention should also be made here of two chamber operas, *Tuba Mirum*, by Gustav Kneip, and *In Zehn Minuten* by Walter Gronostay. Both farces would have yielded quite as much of comic-strip fun if no music had been written for them. Gronostay displayed the defter hand. Schönbergian songs by Erhart Ermatinger, two orchestral bibelots by Boguslav Martinu, and organ numbers accredited to Fidelio P. Finke, Hans Humpert, Ernst Pepping and Philip Jarnach need not be lingered over after the event. It was a festival of the commonplace and escaped the trivial chiefly in the rather traditional vocal writing of the *Gallows Songs* and *Wanderlungen*.

Oscar Thompson

BERLIN AND MODERN WORKS

IN Berlin one would imagine conditions to be highly propitious to the performance of modern music. Possessing as it does three opera houses, two distinguished symphony orchestras, several first-rate choirs, numerous string quartets and other chamber music groups, the city can boast almost inexhaustible re-