

of years alone, it is the freshness, the sharpness, the bursting yet shy intensity of a miraculously projected adolescent.

But Lifar has got off to a very poor start in New York (Nov. 5). None of his best ballets appeared on his program. Instead, the audience was made to sit through his own dreadful interpretation of Beethoven's *Prometheus*; he is, unluckily, no choreographer. Everything good and bad in it he learned from Balanchine (there were some dismally inept imitations of Balanchine's telegraphic style, and use of knees and hands). There is nothing, too, so painful or funny as a chorus of bad male dancers; Lifar has picked a bevy of the clumsiest of them, all soubrettes and ingénues. They disported themselves in short drawers which hung and clung, vine-fashion; they ruined the chances of a ballet, already (in idea and general execution) very inferior to the local movie-house product. Only in *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* did one begin to get a sight of the real Lifar. This dance is superimposed on the music, a counterpoint to it; like it, it aims at linelessness, the pinning down of what is evanescent for a moment, yet is angular, gently abrupt and pointed as against the music's undulations. Lifar here resorts to no tricks, no prima donna methods (apparent in the bad manners of *Prometheus* and *Spectre de la Rose*). He is not Pan, he is a faun: an inarticulate kind of dance, with rushing precise gestures, quivering pauses, telling arched movements of fingers and head. *La Chatte*, spoiled again by the chorus, seemed on the whole more successful than it did in Paris. It revealed Lifar's ability to infuse joy and ardor into what would be in another dancer mere acrobatics. One wishes either that he had more brains, or that he would entrust himself implicitly to a *régisseur* such as Massine or Balanchine. Whether Lifar has great spirit, great personality, is not the question. He is the perfect instrument (if only he would allow himself to be it), and almost anything can be gotten out of him.

Marc Blitzstein

THE SECOND YEAR AT YADDO

THE individual pieces performed at the Yaddo Festival, 1933, have been widely reviewed elsewhere. Those of merit need no added encomiums here; those which were tentative or

of slight importance need no further disparagement. Rather what was the occasion like in general?

The festival is only in its second year. But, as if from an over-activity of the ductless glands, it has grown rapidly in size and importance. It seems already to have arrived at years of discretion. The radical kicking and screaming of last year have turned to a stately tread and decorous speech. Gone the non-conformity, gone the hearty satisfaction of smashing everything in sight; gone the passionate conviction, gone the spirit of the Mohawk trail.

Gone, but will it be missed? Yes, ten times yes, if what happened at two years is the only alternative. For, with the exception of a few pieces already widely praised, there had crept over the festival not only maturity, but signs of old age. Not the old age of Whitman, with its "lambent peaks," not the old age that produced *Meistersinger* and *Falstaff*, but a kind of emotional old age: weariness, faint-hearted longings; nervous, futile sallies at a display of strength; mental lucubrations dry and brittle as bones no longer growing; reminiscent dreamings, over-exquisite gayety, ponderous sobriety; grief for the joy of grieving; a general lack of feeling well, of being in a good humor.

Is our music already seeking to retreat and escape? Is there no string of courage and conviction on the national lyre? Can it not be played with candor? Sad or gay, light or serious, can it not convey forthright, unmixed emotions? Broadly speaking, if one is to judge from the three concerts at Yaddo, we have already begun to enter a period of nocturnal mists and preciousity. Decadence creeps on us, and all its attendant interest in the particular, the remote, the bizarre.

The festival ended with an all too short discussion of problems now confronting the composer. The spirit of working together in a common cause was fine to see. Admirable also was the emphasis laid on the importance of giving up the attitude of separatism and world renunciation, to play instead an active part in the thinking life of the country in general, its music education in particular. The subject of esthetics was quite ignored. This was unfortunate. Much of the music played revealed technical virtuosity: if it bespoke a need for any one thing, it was for

a rousing discussion of concepts and feelings. Another year the conference (or, better still, a group of conferences) might well be devoted to these highly important considerations. In view of the curious esthetics revealed by much of the music which was played, the tendency on the part of some to stress the idea of uniting to push our music to the fore was regrettable. In the long run, organization for high-powered salesmanship not backed up with the genuine article can be little more productive than scattered efforts and cut-throat competition. Obviously, as one of the participants remarked with melodramatic effect, the first duty of the composer is to write good music.

Randall Thompson

PARIS NEWS

THE spring season this year was principally the ballets. Never in my time has Paris been so ballet-conscious. But before going into that I had better recount the purely musical events, such as they were. Aside from the galas of repertory, such as the usual *Tristan* at the Opéra with German stars and Furtwängler and two hundred franc seats, the activities of Madame Homberg's admirable Société Mozart and Landowska's classical Sunday afternoons at Saint-Leu-la-Forêt, the musical season consisted of exactly three concerts; namely, two Sérénades and a Markevitch. The ballets, as I say, are a story in themselves. So is Kurt Weill. The performance of an operetta by Franz Léhar (a piece called *Frasquita*) is worth noting here only for the fact.

I may as well remark, however, a movement that has been going on for several years and that has just become general news because it is now possible for everybody to recognize it. Mozart has taken the place of Bach as the Great Master of Music and Bach has become an Emeritus like Palestrina. Nobody plays much Bach any more. Everybody plays Mozart. This is going to continue, as the Bach movement did, until everything has been heard and until a satisfactory modern style of performance for Mozart has been put on the market, as it was for Bach in the decade of 1910-20. After that, another master will have his inning. For the moment, how to play Mozart is the thing that