

rigor to his own work as a critic. A contemporary dance critic might well attempt to integrate critically into the body of academic tradition those further principles that Isadora Duncan and Nijinski each made clear. Since their day a critic can look in his critical way—as they looked in their way—for a touchstone: "the roots of human physical activity in its theatral uses." The book gives no impression of integrity. At least, Mr. Kirstein is full of fine enthusiasms, for Noverre, for Isadora, for Balanchine. On the other hand it is a shame he thinks that because you can see it further away, Massine's Farucca from the *Three-Cornered Hat* is better than real Spanish dancing. But why should Mr. Kirstein be taken for a critic when he offers us only a compilation.

E.D.

THE OFFICIAL STRAVINSKY

IGOR STRAVINSKY's *Chroniques de ma Vie*, (Volume II,* Paris, Denoël et Steel, 1935) is brief and smug. Smug is perhaps too strong a word to describe the neat aplomb of it, but there is something in the work somewhere, or in the author's attitude toward it, that gives one the feeling that Mr. Stravinsky has just swallowed the canary and doesn't mind our knowing it.

It is all surprisingly like his post-war music. I say surprisingly, because although composers have often written voluminously and well, almost none has ever carried quite the same conviction on foolscap as on music-paper. Stravinsky does. He writes French with the same tension, the same lack of ease with which he writes music. It is a tight little package, like the *Sonate pour Piano*. It is as neatly filled up, too. It may be stiff and *guindé* but it is not empty.

It seems strange he should continually pose himself such limited problems, that he should never for once really want to do something large and easy. But restriction is apparently of his nature. It certainly is in his later music, much as I admire many of the works. They have tension and quality but no *envergure*, no flight. He seems for some years to have been quite content to say small things in a neat way and to depend on instrumental incisiveness to turn his little statements into concert- or theatre-

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pieces. He is objective and impersonal like the notices in railway carriages, and not without the same authority.

Objectivity is fine. But how can a man of his vigor be so dry? Reticence about one's family life and feeling is only genteel. But when he stops his narrative to write a formal cadenza in honor of Diaghilev, why do I feel at the end of it that his affection for his life-long friend and patron has been exactly measured out to cover the qualities he discerned in him, just that much and no more. Completeness there is, but never any abundance. There is no evidence of his ever having had a musical idea he didn't develop into a piece. An exact adjustment between inspiration and labor seems to be back of all this ant-like neatness.

He apportions out paragraphs of praise to musicians past and present very much like a college president conferring honorary degrees. Glinka, Tchaikovsky and Beethoven, Weber, Gounod, Satie and Chabrier receive certificates of merit for having existed and for having been of some service to the art of Mr Stravinsky. Debussy, Ravel and Prokofieff come in for honorable mention. The megalomania of orchestral conductors is reproved, but most of the orchestral celebrities get nevertheless a button for having performed some work of the author in a satisfactory manner.

Scattered throughout the book at appropriate intervals are clearly-stated maxims about music. There is nothing in these to quarrel with. They are the truisms of the modern world. They could be framed and exposed (they *should* be indeed) in every conservatory and college. None of these principles are, so far as I know, original with Stravinsky. None of them are at all shocking any more either, though they might be inspiring to the young.

And yet the book is interesting. Because a good workman writing about his trade is always interesting. Also because it convinces one by making it evident all over again through a different medium that the stiff little man we have had to deal with these last fifteen or so years is exactly what he seems to be, a stiff little man, and that we shall probably have to deal with him as that for the next fifteen or so years if we care to deal with him at all.

Virgil Thomson