

romanticism as the mid-Victorian three volume novel. On the other hand, the *First Symphony* of Sibelius this year reminded us that there are certain ageless qualities of genius that will always seem newer than the latest cerebral experiments.

For the rest, one goes somewhat wearily down the line. A sonata by Eugene Goossens for oboe and piano accomplished no more than its apparent intention to show the resources of the lesser known instrument. A program of American music by the League left one wondering which did more damage to the cause,—the actual works or the verbiage indulged in by the composers. Marc Blitzstein, explaining his piano sonata, advanced the theory that “silences” instead of “transitions” would “eliminate the possibilities of padding.” The argument proved more logical than the spasmodic repetition of phrases that resulted. Quinto Maganini offered a highly banal and reminiscent sonata for flute and piano as a “release from the boredom of diminished sevenths, augmented triads, authentic cadences,” etc. As for Roy Harris, who showed a considerable lyric talent in his *Sextet* for string quartet, clarinet and piano, he did that talent no little injustice by describing the first movements as “developed from two contrasting germs.” Marion Bauer alone refrained from this precious and too often ridiculous nonsense; and it is not surprising that her string quartet, while neither as finely conceived nor as moving as her sonata for violin and piano, was invested with the only sincere emotion manifested.

One regards the list rather sadly. Is this what we fought for so hardily and at such long odds in the old days? Will even *Oedipus Rex* bring us any farther than those thrilling days of *Le sacre du printemps* and *Les noces*? Or of a *Pierrot lunaire*? The fight for modern music has been won. But oh, how tame seem the fruits of victory!

Henrietta Straus

YOUNG VOICES IN MILAN

ALTHOUGH the musical life of Milan is very active today, one can hardly say that its most promising aspects are obvious in the theatres or concert halls. These lack, for example, that

vitality, curious and ever eager for novelties, which has been Alfredo Casella's particular contribution to the Roman scene. Over La Scala and the Societa del Quartetto there hangs a heavy pall of conservatism. The Ente Concerti Sinfonici supported and directed with signal good taste by Count A. Cicogna, is more open to present-day tendencies. To this organization, unfortunately limited to ten concerts a year, we owe the first Milan performance of *Le sacre du printemps* and the piano concerto of Stravinsky, of *Le pastorale d'été* and *Pacific 231* of Honegger, of *Le commedie goldoniane* of Malipiero and several works by Ravel and De Falla.

The doors of the Teatro alla Scala remain obstinately shut against anything which is not within the bounds of the traditional theatre. Its most advanced offerings have been Pizzetti's *De bore e Jaele*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Petrouchka*. *Le rossignol* disappeared from its stage after two performances. Malipiero and Ravel, to cite two names which first come to mind, remain outside the pale. The Societa del Quartetto is also conservative. After a season devoted to Schönberg, Casella, Stravinsky, Honegger and Goossens, the programs have returned largely to the usual German romanticists, occasional classics, and more rarely, works by Debussy and Ravel. The Teatro del Popolo in theory at least is the proper medium for presenting new compositions. As a matter of fact, hardly any are given there. Usually an entire program is devoted to a single composer—Schumann, Schubert, Beethoven, Brahms and so forth, or else there appear quartets of Dvorak, Beethoven, Brahms, bits from the old Italian masters and perhaps a work by Malipiero, Debussy or Ravel. But that is all.



It is really therefore among the young composers living in Milan (hardly one of them a Milanese) that the germs of a new life are seething; young men who live isolated, hardly one of them aware of the other's existence, working in silence. The arrival of Ildebrando Pizzetti at the Conservatorio and his subsequent residence in Milan, has, of course, augmented the ranks

of his imitators here, but it is not among these that we can find the breath of a new movement.

A contest for an opera, sponsored by the newspaper, *Il secolo*, offering a prize of 50,000 lire, was recently decided with the award divided between two young musicians, Giacomo Benvenuti and Antonio Veretti, whose success has widened their circle of admirers.

Giacomo Benvenuti, of Tremosine on Lake Garda, a pupil of M. E. Bossi, is by temperament and quality one of the most interesting of present day Italian musicians. His keen self-judgments and dislike for notoriety have prevented him from publishing many works, but there is no reason why they should not be published. In objective and disinterested fashion Benvenuti has often, for the purpose of criticism, made comparisons of his own work and that of the old Italian masters of music. He is now preparing a complete edition of the works of Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli. This constant communion with the old masters has, despite his being a pupil of Bossi and living so long in Germany, kept him free from the pedantry which a German musical education generally inculcates. The Italian influences have destroyed all that in Benvenuti and have left him only the love of solid construction, of precise architecture, of clear contour.

His *Quartetto* in one movement, for example, is latin in the great lyric quality which dominates it, in the spirit which seems to model its outlines in a precise form, in the polyphony that relates it to the works of the Italian madrigal masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but it also reveals a certain spiritual affinity with the last quartets of Beethoven. Under the apparent liberty of his manner there always runs the clearly conceived design of a dominating will that leaves nothing to chance. I have examined other works by this author in manuscript—a magnificent chorale, austere and richly solemn; variations upon a theme of Mendelssohn, of uncommon loveliness; in the lyric field Grecian fragments by Sappho and Anacreon set to music of classic simplicity, animated by marked poetic feeling; and a setting of practically all the quatrains of Omar Khayyam.

Benvenuti's goal is clarity of line, solidity and transparency of construction, richness and power of content. The outstanding characteristics of his work are a lack of formality, a keen feeling for effect and the ability to mold his material to his own will.



Antonio Veretti of Verona, pupil of Alfano and considerably younger than Benvenuti, cannot boast such an extensive output. Nevertheless his few published works reveal sound culture and musicianship. From the *Sonata quasi Fantasia* for violoncello in which one detects various contradictory influences, up to his most recent *Sonata per violino* and the *Duo instrumentale* a process of refinement both of form and matter is visible, a development which still reveals the influence of Pizzetti, though Veretti can hardly be called one of his followers. His opera, *Il medico volante*, which shared the first prize with the *Juan José* of Benvenuti in the contest mentioned above, reveals several definite traits—an intrinsic sense of form and a noble aspiration which link it to the old Italian operas on the one hand and to the *commedia dell'arte* on the other.

Significant in Milan's varied musical activity, is another young man whose tenacity, force and aspirations are entirely foreign to the petulant and utilitarian spirit of our age: the Triestian, Livio Luzzato. His opera, *Judith*, the fruit of ten years uninterrupted labor, whose final pages of instrumentation are still being polished by the composer, is a work which resembles nothing at present to be heard on the stages of our land, even though certain cultural and spiritual ties between him and Pizzetti are evident. But while Pizzetti's primary concern is the creation of a music drama inspired by the poem, Luzzato, first and foremost a musician by temperament, creator not only of the music but of the drama, molds both elements into a single form, one inseparable from the other. Luzzato's art may perhaps be called dramatic lyricism but it is nevertheless supremely lyrical, not in the manner of the composers of nineteenth century opera but rather in that of the Italian masters of the seventeenth cen-

ture. Besides this quality in Luzzato's music, there is in his handling of the orchestra a very colorful style, ornate and rich, deriving somewhat from the Wagner-Strauss tradition. But his vocal lyricism, especially in his choruses (there are many in *Judith*) betrays a direct descent from the polyphonists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially Palestrina. The solid yet translucent structure, the love of form and keen care for detail, the complete absence of anything which might be called uselessly decorative, the massive musicianship of the ensembles, render this kinship still more evident. Nevertheless, his musical language, which ignores the current musical fashions of atonality and polytonality, is of greater modernity than that of Honegger or Pizzetti. I might almost say that Luzzato is the only one in Italy who has been able to follow the lesson and example of Pizzetti, creating, with forms already known, a synthesis of expression absolutely personal.

Among the youngest mention should be made of Mario Pilate who has already written a *Ninna-nanna*, a *Habanera* for orchestra and a recent *Suite* for piano and string orchestra which have shown him free of earlier influences and in his own right a genuine musician. Then there is the Neapolitan, Salvatore Musella, whose fine lyrical temperament has given us several charming songs and an astonishing *Suite napoletana* for orchestra.

It would be unjust to end this rapid survey without mentioning a small but bright hearth where love of art is fostered and the stranger always welcome, the home of Maestro Giulio Bas. He is one of the greatest living Gregorians and although the duties of teaching infringe upon the precious time which should be devoted wholly to composition, he has written splendid works of religious inspiration. Anti-pedantic, anti-dogmatic, cultivated in every branch of composition, he draws round him a wide circle of young musicians who seek his beneficent influence. And on many a night they gather to read and discuss the music of today and yesterday; quite often a chorale of Bach will follow a new work of Hindemith's, or a Monteverdi madrigal precede something by Stravinsky. All are analyzed and commented on by M. Bas with a wide catholicity of taste; and this is the only

place in Milan where the cult of true music is still kept alive—true music, no matter the form in which it is expressed.

Domenico de Paoli

SONGS OF THE AMERICAN FOLK

THE AMERICAN SONGBAG, By Carl Sandburg: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

CARL SANDBURG'S assortment of some two hundred and eighty ditties from the American scene raises again the not too original question: "Should a folk song be harmonized as simply as possible?"

Of course, you may argue that some of Mr. Sandburg's baggings are not folk songs, in the pure sense of the term, but they represent the equivalent of traditional native airs. After all, a folk song is something that is sung by folks, and not a branch of anthropology, and Mr. Sandburg's selections come, says the compiler, "from the hearts and voices of thousands of men and women."

"Ballad singers of centuries ago and mule-skinners alive and singing today helped make this book," he observes. "Pioneers, pick-and-shovel men, teamsters, mountaineers, and people often called ignorant have their hands and voices in this book, along with minstrels, sophisticates, and trained musicians. People of lonesome hills and valleys are joined with 'the city slicker,' in the panorama of its pages." That seems to include almost everybody except musical saw virtuosi.

The arrangements, with a few exceptions, include complete piano parts which were made from sketches and verbal suggestions by Mr. Sandburg. The musicians who worked out Mr. Sandburg's notions are Edward Collins, Ruth Porter Crawford, Charles Farwell Edson, Arthur Farwell, Hazel Felman, Harry M. Gilbert, Lillian Rosedale Goodman, Henry Joslyn, R. Emmet Kennedy, Marion Lychenheim, Elizabeth Carpenter Marshall, Mollie Nemkovsky, Thorvald Otterström, Henry Francis Parks, Leo Sowerby and Alfred G. Wathall. From the literary world come Rupert Hughes (whose musical career seems to have been forgotten by those who know him only as a novelist) and—absolutely!—H. L. Mencken, who has arranged *The Drunkard's*