

on the hazards of pioneering it. Mr. Krenek's enormous technical background (most atonalists were highly successful tonal composers — so it isn't sour grapes!), plus an impressive historical mastery, makes this a "must" book for students. Particularly, the section called "The Concept of Music in the Western World" should be required reading for apprentices.

The legend is gross caricature which has Oscar Levant a venomous Timon of Athens, operating joylessly from a cave somewhere off Times Square. Actually, in *A Smattering of Ignorance* he has a sulky good word for almost everybody — everybody, that is, except Oscar Levant, who is an adept at that appeal direct to the mothering instinct which consists of presenting oneself scornfully in the worst possible light. The effect of this bittersweet fortitude sustained for 267 pages is positively heartbreaking, and by now dear old ladies all over the land are probably knitting him mittens.

The truth is, of course, that Mr. Levant is much meaner (and funnier) than his best fans pretend, which keeps his solo from becoming a discordant version of *Hearts and Flowers* with brass. His masterly study of the species Movie Producer breathes all the mellowed charity of a dying cobra. (Also see his playful dissection of the genus Symphony Conductor.) His saga of the Harpo Marx tourist home should quickly provide him, assuming that some of the guests still read, with more celebrated ex-friends than any living composer. Finally (though the error may be a plant, shyly designed to deprecate an awesome reputation for infallibility), one must hunt with the pack and point out that Chopin's Funeral March never was nor will be in the B-Minor Sonata. A half-tone sharp there, Mr. Levant!

ROBERT OFFERGELD

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA, 1883-1939**, by IRVING KOLODIN (Oxford, \$3.75).

This book, when it first appeared four years ago, was hailed as the only definitive history of New York's opera house. Correlating much hitherto inaccessible newspaper material, such as reviews of the old Academy of Music and the (comparatively) new Metropolitan Opera House, *The Metropolitan Opera* quickly became a standard reference book and brought much credit to its author, Irving Kolodin, of the *New York Sun's* music staff.

In the second edition, just brought out, Mr. Kolodin has carried his narrative through the season of 1938-39, with pungent comments on the present million-dollar drive to save the opera house. "It is plain," he claims in the epilogue to his recent chapters, "that the losers would be the subscribers to such a fund, who would be forced to endure for a period of unspecified length an opera already long superannuated, indeed unsatisfactory from the first night's performance of *Faust*."

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**THE JOHN DAY COMPANY**

Whether or not one agrees with the author's contention, the taking of sides does not injure the ultimate reference value of his book; for it is next to impossible, living through an age and participating in it as actively as Mr. Kolodin, to present a social panorama without touching on the controversial. This he has done in a dignified and forceful manner which makes one respect, if not always endorse, his opinions.

One of the chief virtues of Mr. Kolodin's book is its delving into nearly all the available data concerning the opera and its offering the reader a vital cross section of Metropolitan activity for reference purposes. Occasionally, however, the author invalidates fine material by an approach that is too subjective. When he records the debut of a soprano still with the company in this wise — "A plump secondary singer . . . began a long series of uneventful services" — he is drawing entirely on his own viewpoint, which, though authoritative, is only one part of the critical scene. Such lapses, however, are infrequent.

A further table of performances in the rear of the book now brings the volume completely up to date. In rereading the earlier portions, there is again occasion to admire Mr. Kolodin's valuable inclusions of performances by the visiting Chicago Opera Company, with its historic mountings of French lyric drama, and his account of the German Opera Company, from whose ranks Friedrich Schorr, Editha Fleischer, and Alexander Kipnis eventually were graduated into the Metropolitan.

There are one or two slight inaccuracies in the recent chapters. On page 518 we find that "Manski replaced Thorborg as Herodias," while the author undoubtedly meant to say that Mme. Manski replaced Karin Branzell. Another slip concerns the Opera Guild rehearsal of *Otello*, when Gina Cigna substituted for Eide Norena as Desdemona, only to yield place at the *première* to Elizabeth Rethberg. This incident is told with some slight confusion. With all the material which has been carefully sifted by Mr. Kolodin, however, one or two such errors are mere flyspecks. The new edition of *The Metropolitan Opera* is a necessary adjunct to any musical library.

ROBERT LAWRENCE

**WAR IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: a Symposium,** edited by WILLARD WALLER (Random House; \$3.00).

Herewith Professor Waller of Barnard College unveils an impressive idea: the scientific dissection of war by a group of selected specialists. The result is a volume of fifteen essays by thirteen gifted writers, each dealing with certain social, economic, or historical aspects of the subject.

Unfortunately for the impressive idea, however, most of the authors bogged down in their own blazing sincerity. They couldn't remain scientific and

impartial. Some of them hate war so bitterly that they weren't sufficiently careful with their facts. They produced some magnificent writing, but it's not the kind of special pleading calculated to make converts. All the authors regard war somewhat as the late Mr. Coolidge's pastor regarded sin — they're agin it. They appear appalled at the discovery that soldiers frequently use bad language and sometimes get sweat on their shirts and blood on their hands.

Soldiers with a sense of humor may spend a happy half-hour chuckling over Dr. Harry Barnes's strategy and tactics and Professor Waller's army. Dr. Barnes is rather badly entangled in the details of the Schlieffen Plan and the First Marne, but any first classman at the U. S. Military Academy could straighten him out in three minutes. Straightening out Professor Waller might take longer — his army is an eerie organization which seems to be impartially composed of Balieff's Wooden Soldiers and Hitler's Storm Troopers.

Dr. David Krinkin succeeds in analyzing the Russian revolution and the Soviet state without once mentioning Leon Trotsky. He reminds us of Russia's repeated declarations that she doesn't desire "one inch of territory belonging to others." And Frances Winwar's delightful chapter on arts and artists devotes so much space to class consciousness, Dadaism, and *La Révolution Surréaliste* that there's none left for such topics as Sholem Asch and *The Nazarene*.

On the other hand, Harvard's Benjamin Higgins contributes an understandable discussion of currency devaluation to the chapter on economic war, and Minnesota's Clifford Kirkpatrick points unerringly at the resemblance between Fascism and communism. "It is difficult," he adds, "for a rich democracy to retain its pacifism without displaying a national weakness, which is a temptation to aggression on the part of militaristic fascist countries."

LOWELL M. LIMPUS

**INSIDE EUROPE** (1940 war edition), by JOHN GUNTHER (Harper; \$3.50).

John Gunther calls Russia "Duranty's Inferno," and Walter Duranty calls Gunther's *Inside Europe* "the best book about Europe anyone ever wrote." It is a pleasure for this reviewer to be able to agree with both Gunther and Duranty, in one sentence.

Gunther's European book has had an interesting history and one of almost unparalleled success. It first appeared in January, 1936, with a total length of 180,000 words. The new "war" edition of 1940 contains approximately 265,000 words. In between, there appeared half a dozen other revisions or editions, in which the author and publisher co-operated in keeping the useful volume up-to-date. And up-to-date it certainly is. A new introduction reviews, in some detail, the first four months of the second Armageddon, and throughout the book are to be