

Renaissance-Baroque (which has general European validity) cuts across the nationalistic, anti-historical antithesis between 'German and Italian feeling for form'. Indeed, since the nineteenth century, it has been part of the paraphernalia of German Nationalism to see the whole of Germany's past in terms of a time-defying racial antithesis expressed as 'German-foreign', 'German-Latin' or 'Gothic-Classical', and to talk either of a basic German longing for the Mediterranean-Classical or *vice versa*, according to the current state of political relations between Germany and Italy. For example, the German Renaissance (Dürer and Holbein) is now accused of being a betrayal of the basic German-Gothic feeling for form. Naturally Wölfflin, in his book *Italy and the German Feeling for Form*, published in 1931, never descended to the depths of nationalistic phraseology. But there is, nevertheless, an irreconcilable contradiction between on the one hand the nationalistic, time-defying conclusions of this book (which depend on an identification of classical art with 'Italian'), and on the other, the *Fundamentals of Art History*, in which the conclusions have, like all true historical concepts, a supra-national validity and relate to a very definite stage of historical development.

[Translated by DOUGLAS COOPER]

SWISS COMPOSERS OF TODAY

ERNEST ANSERMET

IN the musical sphere, Switzerland is characterized by the fact that she gives no scope for nationalism. That does not mean that the Swiss musician, whether he be composer, performer or listener, is not strongly marked by his race: he is Germanic or Gallic (the Italian community, peasants, artisans and hotel-keepers, have, as yet, no significant musical life), but this racial character does not, so to speak, infuse his body; it remains an individual trait in a musician who lives in the midst of a wider culture. A French or a German composer almost inevitably participates in the fate of his national culture; he benefits by its momentum and its prestige, and suffers from its limitations. A Swiss musician has neither this privilege nor this handicap. He is not borne forward by his

environment, but he is relatively free from binding tradition; therefore, he is more responsible than others for what he is, and has more opportunity to shape his fate: the fact is that his horizon cannot be bounded by his country. From the outset, musical life in Switzerland is organized on a plane of international cultural activity; Switzerland is at the heart of this plane, and has a view down all its avenues. As a result of this, her composers are in a situation analogous to that which existed for the European composer before the advent of nationalism, and this situation doubtless anticipates that which will exist for the composer in the world of tomorrow. We may talk about Swiss composers, but we may not particularize about Swiss music. For instance, we find Honegger, a Germanic musician, and one who has remained thoroughly Germanic, associating himself closely with the French musical movement; and a musician of French-Swiss stock, like Frank Martin, writing music strongly impregnated with the Germanic spirit. We are, of course, affected by our origin, but our spiritual boundary is European, and it is perhaps more necessary for us than for others that it should be so.

The only one of our living composers in whom national character may be discerned—and even then in the restricted sense of one of the national groups which constitute our State—is Othmar Schoeck. Germanic, that is to say, derived from that section of the German population where art and culture have flourished best, the music which he writes would not have been different if his region had never been federated with others, or if it had been returned to the great Reich. The author of as many *lieder* as Schubert, and of several operas, he is, together with Pfitzner, the only Germanic musician of any value since the generation of Richard Strauss and Reger, who has pursued the classico-romantic tradition without interruption.

Though Schoeck is highly rated in German-Swiss circles, we, none the less, consider the personality of Arthur Honegger to be even more significant, both in relation to our country and to music as a whole. This Parisian Swiss is distinguished amongst contemporary composers by a touch, light of course, but undeniable, of that which Beethoven would have made of our epoch, or, at least, the image of it which Romain Rolland has traced on the features of Jean Christophe. An innovator, he was one of the pioneers—along ways peculiar to himself—of the musical

evolution which took place between the two wars, yet in his innovations he remained faithful to certain permanent norms of our art. One of these norms is authenticity of sentiment. He is occasionally satisfied with little, but his mastery and his personality are manifest in the least of his works. When he gives of his best, as in the *Symphony for Strings*, the *Danse des Morts* and *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher*, to cite only his most recent works, he attains great heights, and enriches contemporary music with his most cogent accomplishments.

A musician who has sought his style for a long time (he is over fifty) has in the last few years attained a maturity which has given him a high place in our musical life: that is Frank Martin. Three important recent works show him to be a lyric musician of great range. The first is the *Vin Herbé*, a cantata for twelve mixed voices, seven string instruments and piano, composed for Joseph Bédier's admirable version of the story of Tristan and Iseult; the second is a cycle of twenty-three songs for alto voice and chamber orchestra, the *Cornette*, for the Lay of the Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke, by Rainer Maria Rilke; and the third is a short oratorio, *In Terra Pax*, for five soloists, double choir and orchestra, to a text chosen from the Bible by the composer. This last work, ordered by Radio Geneva to celebrate the end of the war, was broadcast effectively on the day of the Armistice by the Sottens transmitter, and repeated several days later in a free concert given to the public by our broadcasting institute. These three works restate eternal themes, which are astonishingly transfigured by the novelty and strength of emphasis in the music. It is by a personal application of the technical processes of Schoenberg's twelve tones, yet marked by a harmonious feeling which Schoenberg seemed to have banished from music, that Frank Martin has succeeded in forging for himself a style which gives these works the stamp of mastery and finish. There can be no doubt that his name will soon travel beyond our frontiers, and will gain further glory by a substantial output.

A dominating characteristic of many young composers in French Switzerland is their search for a polyphonic style marked by increased tonal feeling, of which Hindemith may be said to be the originator. Yet not one of them possesses Hindemith's sureness of touch, and their works in no way stand out from that uniform dullness with which we were saturated before the war. Nevertheless,

the sincere and forceful personality of Willy Burkhard has in recent years stood out in relief amongst those composers. His choral works, the oratorio *Das Jahr* in particular, have fulfilled the promise of his pre-war *Vision d'Isaïe*, and his instrumental music, *Hymnus* for orchestra, his concerti for cello and for violin, and his symphony in one movement, show him to be an interesting musician, but one from whom, I think, we may expect even more decisive evidence of quality. Besides Frank Martin, French Switzerland has a certain number of composers who extend to our land the garden of French music. They are André-François Marescotti, whose piano works, the *Aubade* and the *Concert carougeois* for orchestra, have a charming spontaneity; Jean Binet, who has just given us some intensely poetic *Chansons du mal de cœur*, as well as a fresh and pastoral *Musique de mai* for orchestra; René Gerber, Aloys Fornerod and Pierre Wissmer. The last-named has proved his worth by the success of his ballet *Le beau dimanche*, very reminiscent of pre-war Paris and *Jeune France*.

Finally, two names, unconnected with each other, and outside these groups, must yet be noted: those of Robert Oboussier and Henri Sutermeister. Oboussier, born at Antwerp, educated in France and Germany, returned to his own country, Switzerland, since the war, and is a musician whose wide culture and high spirituality inspire his rare, solitary works, condensed in expression, where a classical spirit is incarnated in an extremely modern and personal musical substance. His concert piece *Antigone* (from Sophocles), and his *Trauermusik* for orchestra are impressive because of their form, austere and yet stamped with true greatness. As for Sutermeister, he is one of those who seek to solve the æsthetic problem by conditioning their art to their practical aims, and this determination has cost him immediate success. He has dedicated himself to reviving an opera rid of the preoccupations of lyrical drama, and inspired by the ideal of Verdi. His eclectic musical language, and his technique, at once summary and subtle, skilled in 'effects', go directly to their aim. In his lyrical interpretation of the dramatic content of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'The Tempest', he has been partially successful. His next opera, *Niobe*, will no doubt be the decisive test of what may be expected from this young composer, whose tendencies have some analogy with those of Benjamin Britten.

[Translated by NATALIA GALITZINE]



NICOLAS MANUEL, 1484-1530: Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand. *Kunstmuseum Bern*



NICOLAS MANUEL: Flute Player.
Drawing.
Basle Museum



URS GRAF: Standard Bearer. Drawing.
Basle Museum



NICOLAS MANUEL: Pyramus and Thisbe.

Basle Museum

URS GRAF:
Two women assaulting a monk.
Drawing.

Basle Museum



Woman killing herself by a stream.

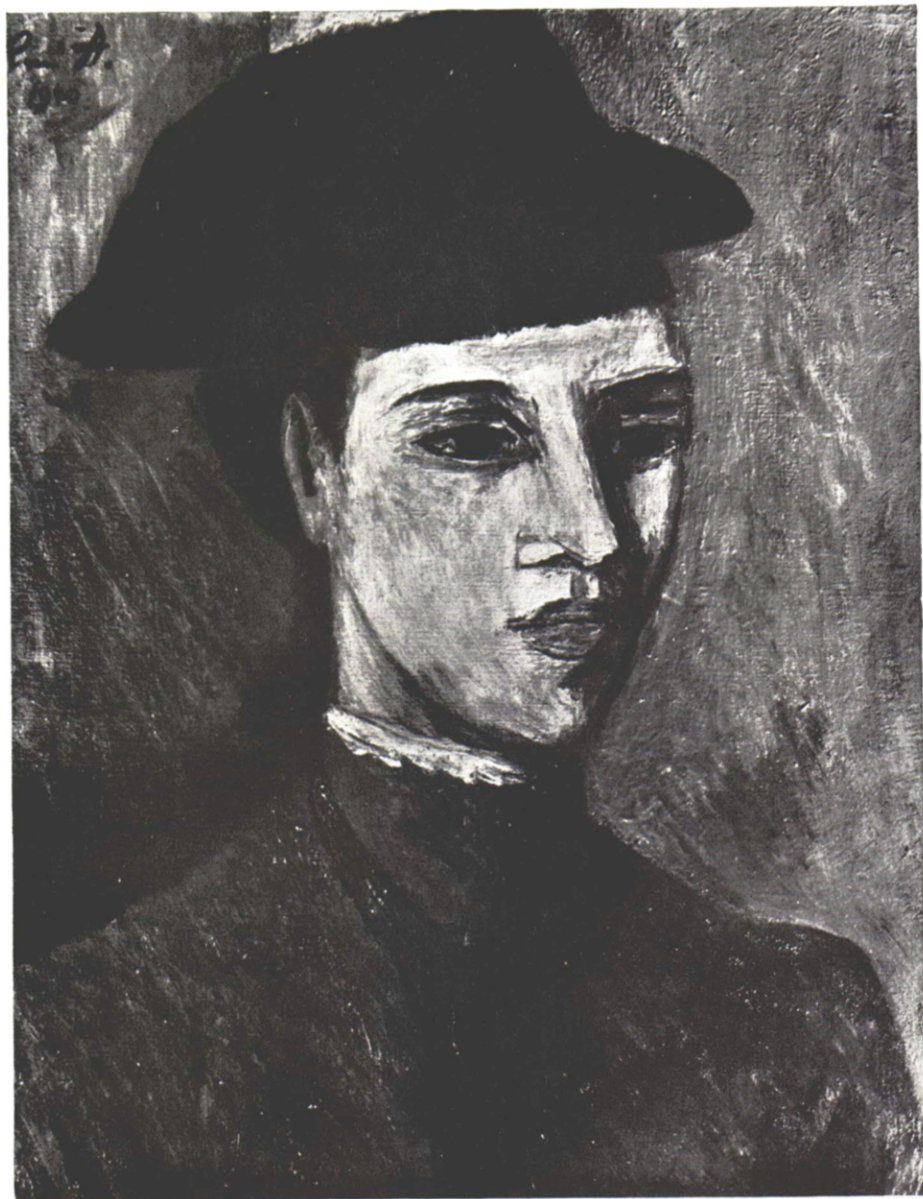
Basle Museum



NICOLAS MANUEL: Lucretia.

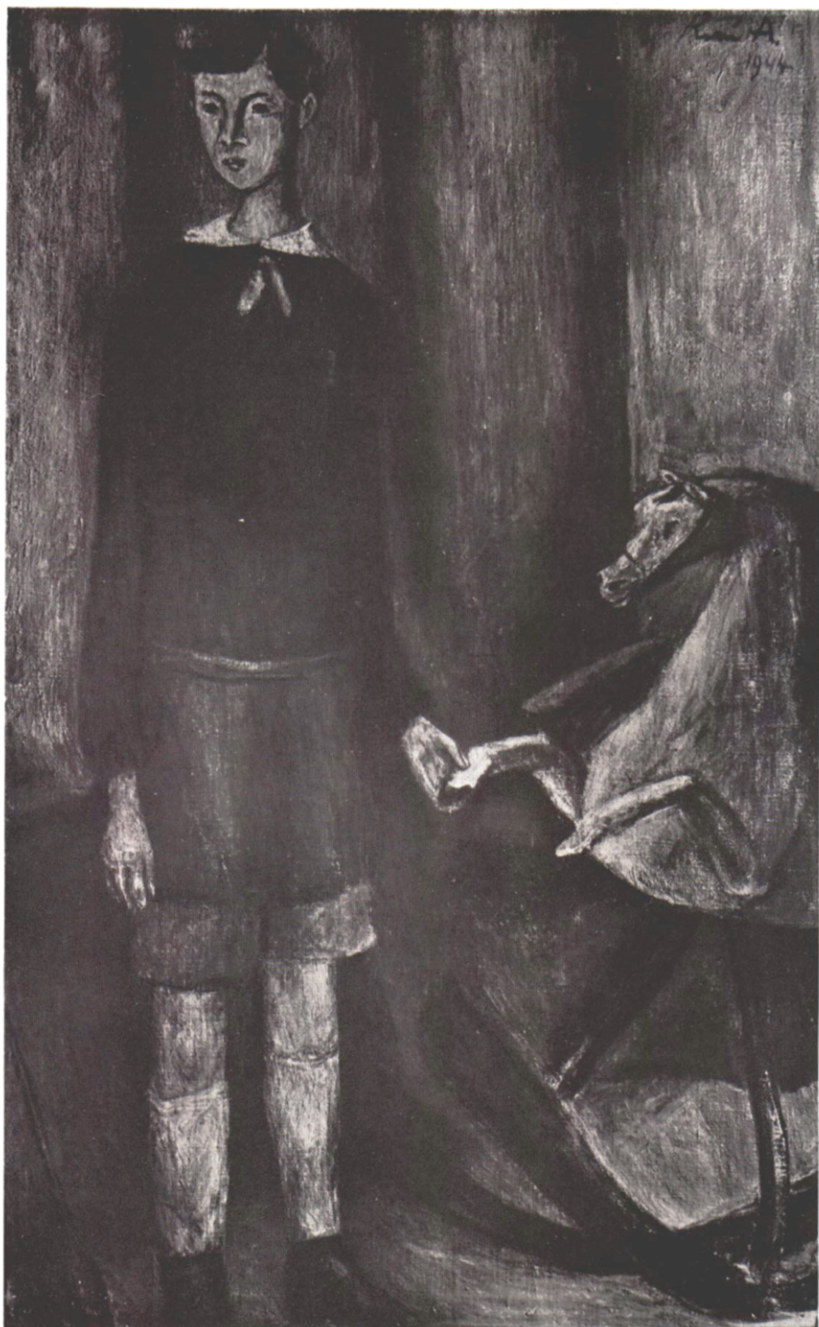
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Manuel 'Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand' by
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RENE AUBERJONIS: Portrait in a black hat. 1940.

Collection M. Heubi, Lausanne



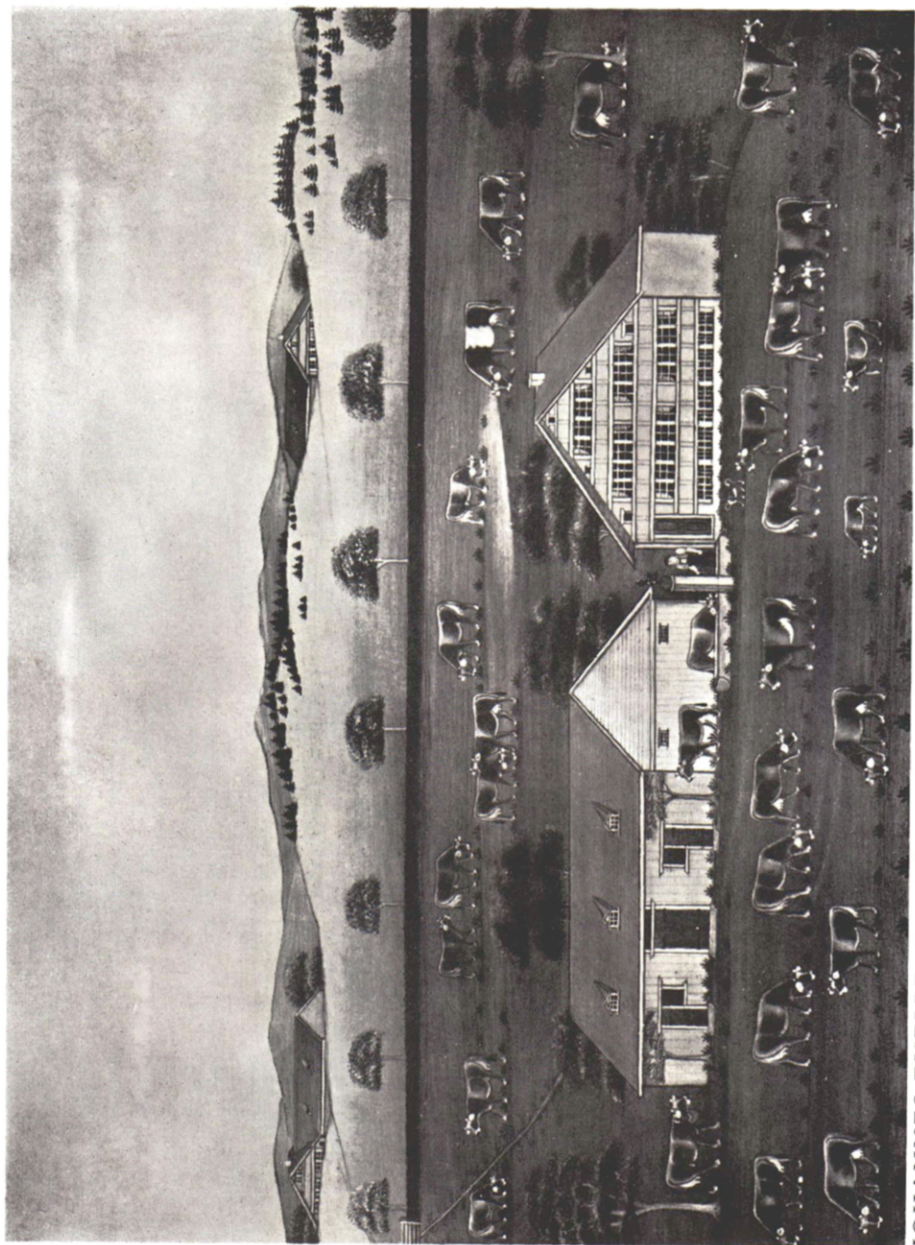
RENE AUBERJONOIS: Boy with Rocking Horse. 1944.

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