

Music. Few composers in the history of music have excited as much sharp partisanship as Igor Stravinsky. Some critics aver that he has been in an artistic decline for the past three decades; others maintain that his works reveal a steadily growing mastery of form and expression. The latter view is propounded, in a somewhat ceremonial fashion, in the symposium "*Stravinsky in the Theatre*," reviewed below... The new State of Israel has inspired a spate of books dealing with the cultural heritage of Jewry. The latest is "*The Music of Israel*," an account by Peter Gradenwitz of an ancient and actively flourishing musical tradition. . . . Deems Taylor, the best-known and a skilful popularizer of music in America, has just published a new volume, "*Music to My Ears*," that should gratify his large lay audience.

After Boos and Hisses

STRAVINSKY IN THE THEATRE.
Edited and with an introduction by
 Minna Lederman. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy. 228 pp. \$3.75.

By CECIL SMITH

FOR nearly forty years Igor Stravinsky has been one of the most arresting creative figures in the lyric theatre. A large share of his most significant energy has been directed toward the purposes of the stage ever since the earliest days of his career. Yet until now no single volume in English has ever been devoted specifically and exhaustively to this phase of his output.

Two years ago Minna Lederman, formerly editor of the lamented *Modern Music*, brought together for a special issue of the now equally lamented *Dance Index* a group of analytic and appreciative articles by artists and critics, under the title "*Stravinsky in the Theatre*." These materials, augmented by further contributions, by bibliographies, a list of recordings and a tabulation of public performances, and by additional photographs and drawings of uncommon evocativeness, have now been made available in book form.

Readers who are not ardent admirers of Stravinsky may find the prevailing tone of the book a little hard to accept. It has a good deal the air of having been written primarily to please Stravinsky; one feels that a dissenting opinion, had one been raised, would have been quelled by the editor before it had a chance to appear in print. It is the sort of book that usually gets published on the seventieth birthday of a distinguished man, or just after he has died. Since Stravinsky is neither seventy nor dead, an occasional suggestion of ar-

tistic fallibility on his part would have lent greater plausibility to the things that are said—usually with full justification—in this much too ceremonial volume.

A case in point is provided by the remarks of Ernest Ansermet, the distinguished Swiss conductor who has directed the premieres of a considerable number of Stravinsky's works. Mr. Ansermet devoted an article in a recent issue of *Musical America* to the charge that Stravinsky's neo-classic esthetic does not constitute an altogether healthful musical influence nowadays; yet in his two and a half pages in "*Stravinsky in the Theatre*" he contents himself with smiling platitudes. There is, to be sure, no reason to doubt the genuineness of Mr. Ansermet's conviction that Stravinsky "has brought to music an enrichment that none can dispute," any more than there are grounds for



—Gene Fern.

Igor Stravinsky—"an enrichment that none can dispute."

questioning the sincerity of Aaron Copland, Alexei Haieff, Pierre Monteux, Darius Milhaud, Leonard Bernstein, Vittorio Rieti, or William Schuman, all of whom single out true and important facets of Stravinsky's art for their unqualified praise. But I wish they did not all sound as if they were introducing him at a public dinner.

The book does, however, contain three very solid articles, as well as appropriate fragments from Stravinsky's "*Autobiography*" and lively anecdotal reminiscences by Jean Cocteau, C.-F. Ramuz (who collaborated with the composer upon "*L'Histoire du Soldat*"), and several others. Arthur V. Berger offers a thoughtful and clarifying analysis of the consistent line of Stravinsky's musical development, showing the ways in which his theatre works parallel his contributions to "pure music" and are often concerned with essentially the same problems. Robert Craft, in what is by all odds the best piece in the whole book, traces Stravinsky's experimentation and purposeful growth in dealing with the relationship between music and words; when you have finished Mr. Craft's chapter you know a great deal that is tangible, important, and orderly in arrangement. George Balanchine, the most successful of the many choreographers to Stravinsky's scores, sheds light upon this composer's relation to the dance, indicating the aspects—primarily rhythmic—of Stravinsky's music that provide a special stimulus and challenge to the choreographer. There is also an article by Nicolas Nabokov on "*Stravinsky and the Drama*," which starts out well by precipitating the reasons why Stravinsky has never set himself the task of composing a work in traditional operatic form (allowing for the possibility that "*The Rake's Progress*," which he is now writing with W. H. Auden, may turn out to be a bona-fide opera), but Mr. Nabokov is ultimately deflected from his original investigation by an urge to establish none too fruitful generalizations about the composer's *Weltanschauung*.

The wide range of topics included, for better and for worse, and the celebrity of many of those who treat them, will undoubtedly win a ready audience for "*Stravinsky in the Theatre*." Nor should matters be otherwise, for many of its pages are both illuminating and provocative. But it is an incomplete book, and one that seems more trivial than it ought to.

What it lacks above all else is at least one sizable article of genuinely philosophic weight, devoted to the attempt to state the values of Stravinsky's attainments in a context more profound than that provided by the

factual technical analysis, historical documentation, elegant catch-phrases, and diverting anecdotes the authors variously furnish. It is not enough to be told, with proof laid before us, that Stravinsky has made an important and individual contribution to the lyric theatre. This we knew already, if not in such detailed fashion.

But what is Stravinsky's place in current musical and musico-dramatic esthetics, with reference to the opposing forces of neo-romanticism and the twelve-tone system of composi-

tion? How good a thing is Stravinsky's neo-classicism, and what problems does it leave untouched or unsolved? What future developments can be predicated upon the results of Stravinsky's experiments, methods, and convictions? These are some of the big questions that "Stravinsky in the Theatre" does not undertake to answer.

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From Davidian Lyre to the PBS

THE MUSIC OF ISRAEL. By Peter Gradenwitz. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 334 pp. \$5.

By MAX HELFMAN

THE word "Israel" has been dramatically re-minted by recent history. Not only has its meaning changed significantly; its very sound has a different ring now. The overtones of a Biblical tribalism have given way to the brighter harmonics of a living contemporaneity.

This fresh connotation completely suffuses Peter Gradenwitz's "The Music of Israel" and gives it its special character—a character which sets it apart from those speculative Ph.D.ish dissertations preoccupied with dissecting some obscure minutia of an extinct culture, and removes it from that school of apologetics passionately bent on proving that the Jew has "contributed" his full share to the art.

Here we have an utterly non-self-conscious, buoyant, and stimulating recital of the fascinating saga of Jewish music from its earliest days in the desert to its present return to Zion—through its long and tortuous trek through Hellas and Rome, medieval Spain, seventeenth-century Italy, the ghettos in Eastern Europe, and its fruitful sojourn in America.

The author, an Israeli critic and composer who received his training at the University of Prague, unfolds this chronicle with a clearly distilled and unostentatious scholarship, and in a spirit of an enlightened musicologic humanism. Thus the bare musical facts are constantly enlivened and illuminated by being presented against a vivid background of salient social and political forces; so that Jewish music is here seen not as an isolated or separatist artistic phenomenon, but as an inextricable part of Israel's spiritual history, and intimately interrelated with the music-cultures with which it came into contact—absorbing, metabolizing, rejecting, and en-

riching their various elements. So, for example, in ancient days the Jews were able to wrest from their servitude in Egypt (among other things) "some of the modes there already developed into a well-defined system, expand and perfect them to serve their own needs and later pass them on to the Greeks." And so, too, in modern times "the modal technique of motive combination"—used in the present-day cantillation of Scriptures and stemming from Arab and Hindu practices—"recurs throughout music history from the Gregorian chants to the art of the German Meistersinger, and from medieval composition to Schönberg's twelve-tone system, and the spirit of improvising on short melodic phrases has been revived in modern jazz." This catalytic quality of Jewish music is, in fact, repeatedly stressed; and the Jew as a sort of divinely infected music carrier—"the mediator between peoples and civilization"—seems to be a fundamental concept in Dr. Gradenwitz's thinking.

Obviously, any attempt to cover, within the limits of some 300 pages, "The Rise and Growth Through Five Thousand Years" of an art—as the subtitle optimistically suggests—will necessitate a good deal of telescoping. In this case, the telescoping often results in an almost microscopic treatment of whole phases of the subject. Thus the vast area of the Jewish folksong of Eastern Europe—so rich in variety, in eloquence, and influence—is given only a most cursory treatment, and that not in terms of the material itself, but only from the secondary point of view of some of its collectors and arrangers. The colorful—if rather naively tinselled—music of the Jewish theatre is curtly dismissed with a few meager references. The thriving, extensive, and surprisingly durable Jewish choral movement in America, which in the past several decades has stimulated the creation of a sizable and respectable vocal literature, is completely ignored. Many

a productive life is here compressed into one or another of those meaningless, conglomerate lists so beloved by encyclopedist compilers.

But in spite of all its omissions and compressions, this book is still a tour de force of comprehensiveness and a commendable example of catholicity of judgment. Ranging as it does over a breathtaking panorama of achievement from the mythical Jubal to a flesh and blood Sabra (native Palestinian), barely out of his teens; from the Davidian lyre to the Palestine Broadcasting System, it still finds space for a leisurely obeisance to the Jewish masters of world music, from Mendelssohn to Schönberg, and manages to pay a deserved tribute to Ernest Bloch and his circle with a highly perceptive and sensitive chapter evaluating his unique position both as composer and symbol. Dr. Gradenwitz allows himself even the luxury of some side excursions, as for instance, his discussion of non-Jewish compositions on Biblical themes.

It is, however, the final chapter—"The Return to Zion"—that gives the book much of its ideologic thrust and dramatic impact. Here we have the thrilling story of a great musical homecoming of a profoundly musical people—and Dr. Gradenwitz tells it *con amore*. From the four corners of the earth we here see its musical children returning to the little land of their forefathers. They come with a complete mastery of their art so painfully acquired in their long exile. When all this genial skill and craftsmanship is brought into full play on the raw material of the East, who can foretell the full extent of the results? At present, there is a babel-like confusion of sounds and styles, shepherd songs and string quartets, pentatonic tunes and micro-tonic experiments. But to the discerning ear this is a creative confusion, out of which is bound to come, sooner or later, the great musical fusion of East and West.

It is one of the main values of Dr. Gradenwitz's book that we get from it this sense of great-things-about-to-come; the feeling that for all the extent of its traversal in time and space, this history may after all be only a prelude to the history of Jewish music now in the making.

