



## Bernstein's Shostakovich, Farrell's Strauss

**W**HETHER or not the time was ripe, there was an almost tangible spirit of "Off with the old, on with the new" at the year's first concert of the Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall. It marked the first appearance of Leonard Bernstein as conductor since his appointment last month as the orchestra's new music director—a status which does not become official until next fall, but one that a large portion of the audience appeared to regard as already effective.

Bernstein contributed to the atmosphere of change in several ways. One was by altering the seating of the players so that the double-basses were arranged, on a platform, across the rear of the stage. This was doubtless intended to make them more audible as well as more visible, but balances are hardly so critical in Bernstein's orchestral performances as to influence the outcome very much. For the first time in memory, he used a baton (barely more than a pencil's length) in deference to a back injury which made the larger gestures for batonless-conducting painful. There was also a piano at hand, on which he performed the solo part of Dmitri Shostakovich's Concerto No. 2 in its first performance outside the Soviet Union. As the program also included Strauss's "Don Quixote," with Laszlo Varga and William Lincer of the orchestra as soloists, it was one of those "never a dull moment" evenings.

The expression, actually, is applicable mostly in the visual sense, for the music (Schumann's "Manfred" overture began and Ravel's "La Valse" ended) seldom sounded as well as it looked. A typical instance was the Shostakovich, a twenty-minute piece written for his twenty-year-old son Maxim (fortunately, he is not yet thirty, to warrant a thirty-minute piece). Bernstein gave this the Bach clavier-cembalo treatment, with his back to the audience and the keyboard in full view. It is, by any standards, a thin piece, with restricted technical requirements related to the skill of its chosen performer, and a typical assortment of compositional mannerisms. Among these are quasi-banal tunes, climaxes achieved by endless repetition of thematic fragments, a narrow harmonic range. Its best section is the pensive slow-movement, with a kind of expressivity that might be called Rachmanikovich.

It could be argued that a finer pianist than Bernstein, given the orchestra the full attention of an equally able conductor, would have produced a better result. On the other hand, the showy duality of Bernstein's effort provided two distractions from the substance of what was being performed. The performance was always entertaining, whether the music was or not. It was difficult to tell whether the robust applause was a tribute to his juggling act or the script which it utilized. Personally, I would prefer a conventional treatment which would put the emphasis—for better or worse—where it belongs: on the music.

In the opening hour of the program, Bernstein reverted to the first two works he directed with the Philharmonic as an emergency replacement for Bruno Walter in 1943. Doubtless he knows more about the "Manfred" overture and "Don Quixote" than he did then; but does he know enough, feel enough, about them for the responsible position he now occupies? My judgment is—not quite. For, with the knowledge, the feeling, the talent which are undoubtedly his goes a lack of discipline to meet the music on its own terms. The taut, alive sound of the orchestra was good to hear—not so, the exaggerated contrasts of the Schumann, the inability to convey the delicacy of the Strauss score as well as its mass.

In his treatment of excerpts from the novel of Cervantes, Strauss wrote many things, but not foot-stamps for the conductor. This may seem a trivial detail, but it is symptomatic of the conductorial truism that clarity begins at home. If a conductor cannot discipline his own actions, how can he extort such obedience from his players? The cultured art of Varga, in particular, deserved an orchestral backdrop of more finesse and cleaner texture than Bernstein provided.

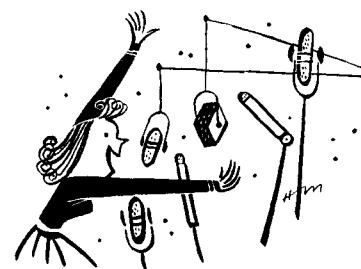
**P**UTTING this year's version of "Ariadne auf Naxos" into Carnegie Hall did more than enable a larger number of listeners than before to hear the Little Orchestra Society's version of the Strauss work under Thomas Scherman. It also gave the listener optimum opportunity to gauge the current vocal stride of Eileen Farrell (who again sang Ariadne) as previous performances in Town Hall never could. And it left no doubt that Miss Farrell's imposing vocal endow-

ment is now at its most compelling, with a breadth, ease, and power of Flagstadian dimensions. For such a singer to live in New York and not be active at the Metropolitan makes no more sense than when the singer's name was Helen Traubel.

For the rest, it was much the same kind of Scherman-Strauss as before, enlivened by a partial use of the large stage for mime action by the dancers cast as Arlechinno, Truffladino, etc. This added movement to the picture if not much meaning to the action. Mattiwilda Dobbs sang her Zerbinetta with typical fluency and precision, sharing audience favor—and it was considerable—with Miss Farrell. Jon Crain (Bacchus) and Russell Oberlin (Brighella) were the best of the associated performers. Scherman preceded "Ariadne" with four interludes from "Intermezzo," in which the added strings and winds were like so much sand in the cleanly textured smaller group. The large audience did not appear unduly disturbed.

**A** VICTORIA de los Angeles "Figaro" at the Metropolitan turned out to be a Lisa della Casa "Figaro," when los Angeles (who had been substituting liberally this season for the absent Renata Tebaldi) succumbed to a seasonal ailment. Happy the management which can substitute one Mozart singer of such quality for another at short notice! It would be happier, no doubt, if it had similar resources in Verdi, where Mary Curtis-Verna has doubled recently not merely in reasonable circumstances, but also in unreasonable—as when she sang leading roles in "Forza" and "Aida" on successive nights.

With Erich Leinsdorf firmly in charge and Cesare Siepi, Roberta Peters, and Martial Singher in familiar roles, primary vocal interest was contributed by Rosalind Elias as Cherubino. She has had at least one previous opportunity, but Cherubinos do not flourish sight unseen, the part requiring playing and more playing. Miss Elias met its vocal challenges surely and suavely, with apt vocal quality both for the solos and the ensemble. Given suitable opportunity, she could become thoroughly qualified in the part. —IRVING KOLODIN.





## BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

### Notes on the Edge of a Ticket

**FARE ENOUGH:** By the time the Spring migration to Europe begins, the airlines will have established three distinct classes of air travel to Europe, adding a new sub-tourist strata of spartan journeying to an already complicated rate schedule. The new rates have been approved by IATA, the international aviation association, which means they can be offered by all airlines at precisely the same fares commencing April 1. Two companies, however, KLM, the Royal Dutch Airline and BOAC (the British Overseas Airways Corporation), have already announced the newly approved, and as yet unnamed, budget-class air service.

Roughly speaking, the fares will be about 20 per cent lower than former tourist class prices. On the other hand they will be higher than the fifteen-day excursion fares that had been instituted as a compromise gesture some time back. KLM's fare for the New York to Amsterdam route, for example, will be \$272 one way. To meet the lowering tariff KLM has already begun modifying seven Super Constellations, adding sixteen seats, to bring the passenger payload to ninety-seven. Since the economy class passengers will not be served elaborate meals the size of the pantry will be reduced too.

BOAC, with a choice of Stratocruisers, Britannias, and DC-7Cs, will initially use its DC-7Cs, may operate all three classes on one airplane. These will be the basic differences:

First class: Sixty-six pounds luggage allowance; sleeper seats, fully reclinable, with foot rest, elaborate meals served without charge; free liquor. Fare, New York-London roundtrip, \$783. Berths extra at \$75 each way.

Second class: (formerly known as tourist class). Forty-four pounds luggage allowance; reclinable seats; free meals; liquor purchasable by the drink. Fare, New York-London roundtrip, \$567. Berths not purchasable.

Third class: Forty-four pounds luggage allowance; thirty-four-inch pitched seat; (thirty-four inches from rear of seat in front to front of passenger's chair); free coffee, tea and sandwiches, other meals purchasable. No liquor served. Fare, New York-London roundtrip, \$453.60.

In addition, BOAC, like many an-

other airline, was offering a fourth, or pre-first class, de luxe service. It calls for Boeing Stratocruisers, lightly loaded with forty-four passengers, a bar in the belly, and the right to buy a berth at \$75 per crossing. The fare for super service, New York-London and return, \$873.

In bringing on the new "economy" fare, the carriers were also raising the ante in the other two classes. Tourist class was up \$55, for the London roundtrip, and first class was up \$63 for the same excursion. But whether the new arrangement was really low enough to attract that whole new class of Europe-bound travelers the airlines (and the European countries and the travel agents) have been seeking to woo, is doubtful indeed. The new economy fare would even be more expensive, by \$28.60, than the seventeen-day excursion fare which had been obtainable all year round but which will be discontinued when the economy fare goes in. Still cheapest is family fare which, at \$844 for two round trips, New York to London, is available between October 15 and March 15.

The new rate structure will hardly prove an incentive to European hotel interests to build low-cost inns for the middle-class American whose presence abroad has long been talked about. That would have to wait for the jets with their big payloads, their fast turn-arounds, and presumably, their lower fares.

**THE JET SET:** With B. and K. tooling around in a Russian jet for some time now, and even Russian U.N. workers coming to work in New York in a new Tupolev 104, it was getting rather embarrassing to send our large wigs hither and yon in an old-style piston-engine plane. Finally, it was announced that Mr. Nixon would henceforth be quipped with a KC-135 Boeing jet, the military version of the swept wing, four-engine Boeing 707 which will begin flying commercial routes for the world's airlines next year. The plane would not be flown by the President, who is still lumbering around in the *Columbine*, a Lockheed Constellation. A newer style Constellation on charter from TWA carrying the White House press to Paris for the NATO meeting recently, left forty minutes after the President, flew nonstop, got there

seven and a half hours ahead of him. The official word is that the Boeing is still, after all, an experimental plane, as yet not fully approved by the CAA. More probably the extreme heights flown by the jet would also prove a consideration in deciding whether Mr. Eisenhower should fly in it or not. The Boeing was to stay with the Air Force, await Mr. Nixon's call. Presumably he would call for it on upcoming forays around the world.

However, just when it looked as if we would be able to display our latest techniques in passenger-carrying aircraft Senator A. S. Mike Monroney sent a wire to Defense Secretary McElroy which asked by what right the Air Force would make such a plane available to Mr. Nixon. The senator from Oklahoma thought the use of the plane "as a cross country taxi" would prove "extravagant and dangerous."

The Air Force was required to issue an immediate statement that all it had done was offer Mr. Nixon a ride, not a whole airplane. Presumably the best the government would be able to give Mr. Nixon on his next foray across the globe is a piston engine aircraft which even a Russian UN clerk would now have to consider about as progressive as a Spad.

**WILD WHITE YONDER:** One U.S. airline will start the new year with the first Negro stewardess ever to fly in a regularly scheduled American plane. She is Ruth Carol Taylor, a twenty-six-year-old, handsome, college-bred registered nurse from New York City. Interviewing her over Manhattan's WRCA, late-hour round-table Tex McCrary described her as "a cross between Lena Horne and Harry Belafonte and that ain't bad." Miss Taylor's employer is Mohawk Airlines, a small feeder line operating exclusively in New York State. She has previously applied for a stewardess job with TWA, been turned down because of "intangible reasons."

As Stewardess Taylor began schooling for her runs inside New York State, TWA extended its routes deeper into colorful Asia, flying beyond its previous outlying points in India to Bangkok and Manila. There it will link up with the Northwest for new U. S. round the world service. Round-the-world fare for Asians or Americans traveling the new U. S. global service: \$1,364.30 and up.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Although many railroads practiced segregation, the eighty-five-year-old Pullman Company hires Negroes exclusively as Pullman car porters in the U. S. and has a few Filipinos as stewards in