



## Handel in the Air—Verdi by Walter—Anderson

**A**N OPPORTUNITY for acquaintance with the Handel that was before he became the Handel that is marked the beginning of the Philharmonic Orchestra's six week ceremonial centering around the 200th anniversary of the composer's death in mid-April. With admirable enterprise, Leonard Bernstein provided a virtual opus 1, the "St. John's Passion" of 1704, written when Handel was nineteen and not yet embarked on the travels that would make him the first great cosmopolite in music.

What we have in this "Passion" is the work of a phenomenally gifted youth, thoroughly equipped for the craft to which he was to bring such distinction, but it would be rash to discern in this score a flowering of seeds without knowing a good deal more about his predecessors (such as Schütz) than we do. There is a clear blend of Italian operatic influence in the aria writing, Germanic bent in the orchestral and choral elements, as one was alerted to observe by Herbert Weinstock's program comment. But what seemed lacking to me—and this is a rearward, birds-eye view from the eminence of the later Handel—was a rich enough contrapuntal texture to weave it all together. What Bernstein provided, in effect, was an affecting preview of the genius which is being honored world-wide rather than an authentic example of it full formed.

He honored it particularly through the dignity and reserve of a manner conditioned by his occupation with the harpsichord continuo, so that the music accumulated in its own expressive time without being underscored by undue interpretative italics. His variable solo group did not bring the distinction to their tasks that one would have wished, Russell Oberlin being ill and replaced by a young countertenor named Robert White (his father was once celebrated as the "Silvermasked Tenor" of radio). He has all the aptitudes for his work but insufficient present command of the crucial part of Pontius Pilate. Norman Farrow as Jesus, David Lloyd as the Evangelist, and Morely Meredith, bass, were all on the fringe of acceptability, but Margaret Kalil has not learned how to manipulate the florid line of Handel's writing with her bright-sounding young voice.

A kind of heavy scholarship was invoked to justify the performance of an organ concerto (F major, opus 4, No. 5) between the two halves of the Passion. Handel did it, we are told, and it also took the place of the sermon interpolated at this point in church performances. Well, Mozart and Beethoven also accepted expedients (performances of vocal music between movements of a symphony or concerto) which Bernstein would shun as indefensible today. Tradition is always expendable when it wars with good musical sense.

**T**HE more mature Handel of "Acis and Galatea" had the benefit of the suitable voices of Victoria de los Angeles and Cesare Valletti when it was performed earlier in the week under the direction of Alfred Wallenstein, who had prepared last summer's presentation at the Karamoor estate of Mrs. Lucie Rosen in Westchester. At best it was methodical Handel that Wallenstein provided, with zest and musical poetry in rather short measure. Miss de Los Angeles made the occasion memorable with her singing of "As when the dove laments her love," and "Of infant limbs," but it is a poor evening for Handel when attention must be focused on a brilliant soprano's typical execution of her requirements. Russell Oberlin's replacement on this occasion was Charles Bressler, whose diligent efforts were insufficient. Mac Morgan's low voice is hardly equal to Polyphemos's "O ruddier than the cherry," which can be a basso's equivalent of "Caro nome." But not this time.

**G**OOD FRIDAY brought with it Verdi's "Requiem" at the Metropolitan in place of the customary "Parsifal," with as much fine music in substantially shorter time. Bruno Walter's presence in the opera house for the first time since the spring of 1957 was an overriding influence on the outcome, for he provided a largeness of design and depth of understanding that were appropriate to the greatness of the work.

However it was inherent in the nature of his associates that some "overriding" be done, for Zinka Milanov was unable to perform, and the vocal command of Heidi Krall, who replaced her, was under constant stress: Rosalind Elias's mezzo is not the large one demanded by Verdi,

and Giorgio Tozzi's low voice hasn't the substance for "Mors, stupebit" and similar pronouncements. Carlo Bergonzi came closest to what was wanted with his well-colored, beautifully controlled "Ingemisco" and "Hostias." It was a group with a good deal of vocal health, capable of some fine sounds: but without the grasp of the subtleties their parts contain.

For Miss Krall, who has yet to sing a leading soprano role of substantial size at the Metropolitan, this was a privilege with some possibilities of disaster. She showed strong vocal stuff in seeing it through, up to a secure B flat at the end of the "Libera me": but there were many details of meaning, phraseology, etc., which were wanting. A tendency to sing notes rather than lines, and intervals rather than meaningful curves must be overcome if she is to get maximum results from her very usable equipment.

In the aforementioned "Libera me" Miss Krall showed the occupational inclination of opera performers—the chorus also offended—to wander from pitch when singing unaccompanied. An earlier passage in the "Lux aeterna" was similarly muddy in sound, with Bergonzi, on the inner line, the offender here. On the other hand, the chorus sang and the orchestra played with a degree of animation that surpassed the actual physical effort put forth by Walter. Whether attributable to their memory of a previous collaboration (in 1951) or, more likely, to his ability to convey (by looks and gestures not visible to the listener) his will to the performers, it provided the large audience with an authentic experience of Verdi in the mood of the "Manzoni" Requiem.

**H**AVING been listening to Marian Anderson since her Town Hall debut on December 30, 1935, it is no part of pleasure to report that her latest appearance in Carnegie Hall found the once noble instrument only a vague suggestion of its former self. To a typically discriminating program that began with Ahle and Hook, proceeded to Mozart ("Die Ihr des uner-messlichen Weltalls"), Schubert, Strauss, Sibelius, and Rachmaninoff en route to a group of spirituals, Miss Anderson applied all of her formidable resources of artistry and temperament, but there were as many wrong as right notes in the uncussed, ill-supported vocalization. Now and then, in "Der Doppelgänger" and "Erlkönig," there were stretches of the kind of vocal distinction associated with Miss Anderson, but very little of the discipline associated with her long admired artistry.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

# Emerson to Salinger to Parker

By ALLEN SCHRADER

**T**HE "New England Renaissance" course in which I was to meet Emerson and "cool" jazz had hardly begun when the "prof" dropped the information that

There are sixteen-year-olds who get the hang of what Emerson is saying immediately.

Rounding out his initial statement with a delayed *appoggiatura*, the "prof" added,

Reading Emerson is somewhat like listening to a "cool" saxophone. Parents can hear a Charlie Parker record and not have the foggiest notion about what's going on. Yet "Junior" seems to sense right away what's being said.

At the time I heard the preceding remarks, I didn't quite comprehend how "Junior" could possibly appreciate the often complex Emerson and the intricate patterns of "cool" jazz so readily. However, two semesters later an event happened in my life; the "prof" in my American "lit" course that featured writings of a comparatively recent vintage decided that his students ought to read J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye." In the process of probing beneath the surface of mid-twentieth century culture via Salinger's X-Ray awareness, I managed to do more than complete the immediate assignment. Not only did I begin to see the per-

ceptive Holden Caulfield, the teenage protagonist of "The Catcher in the Rye," in a believable perspective, but the highly involved output of Emerson and the "cool" jazz artists—in relation to "Junior," that is—began to appear less opaque.

My enlightenment to the fine arts of jazz, Emerson and Salinger did not take place, I must report, during my first romp through the pages of "The Catcher in the Rye." In fact I found my initial observations of Holden's rare, analytical powers puzzling, though exhilarating. To me, Holden, a sixteen-year-old who is



Salinger—"might be scattered . . ."

at all times keenly sensitive to the very essence of what the creative artist attempts to produce, did seem—and still seems—an exciting protagonist. Yet I could not accept the idea that Holden—even if he were to be certified as the most talented "Junior" in a school for exceptional children—had the ability to make unerring judgments about the various individuals in his society. After all, Salinger suggests that Holden has only to glance at a fellow being in order to deftly catalogue him as a "phony" or an effectual human being.

My doubts about Holden being an accurate index to a flesh and blood character—plus the plausibility of "Junior's" immediate understanding of Emerson and "cool" jazz—were partially explained, however, during the third class discussion of Salinger's work. Before I had completely finished the sentence in which I asked

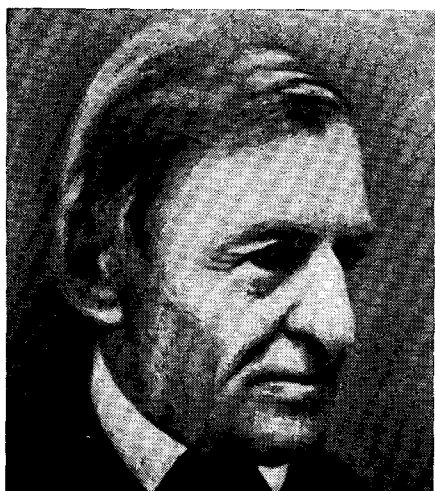
whether Salinger had created in Holden an anomaly, the "prof" suggested,

that a sixteen-year-old just doesn't have as many things in the way as a person your age.

Evidently it was the phrase, "many things in the way," which helped to unplug the dam, the dam that up to this time had kept me from understanding and appreciating—in a very complete sense, that is—the underlying message of Emerson, "cool" jazz, "The Catcher in the Rye," or any other creative work wherein worth-while values might be scattered, horizontally and vertically, over a complex maze.

That I heard the phrase *many things in the way* and immediately became sensitive to the very core of what makes Emerson, Salinger, and "cool" jazz tick, might make interesting reading, but it would mean highly inaccurate reporting. My metathesis from the unaware to the aware was hardly that sudden! In actuality, finding out exactly what the "prof" had meant by his phrase, *things in the way*, proved to be a delaying but meaningful excursion in semantics. At first I thought of *things in the way* as a set of preconceived notions that are likely to be entertained by "Junior's" elders when they meet up with anything new in our culture. That is, "Junior" or Holden—as they have hardly scratched the surface of their "four score and plus"—do not seem to be hampered by a conditioned set of responses that automatically force the supposedly mature patrons of the arts to immediately evaluate any new experience as good, bad, or indifferent. Since "Junior" and Holden did not exist during the first third of our present century, a period when jazz was frequently

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Parker—"over a complex maze."