



## Schwarzkopf's Marschallin, Gorr's Dalila

TWO new productions are more than an expectable dividend for an opening week of a Metropolitan Opera season, but it was what might be called an older reproduction that provided its greatest artistic profit. New York may be the last great opera center of the world where Elisabeth Schwarzkopf has sung the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, but the pleasure long deferred was a pleasure doubly enjoyed—on both sides of the footlights.

She comes to the Metropolitan at the crest of a long and distinguished career which has given her a hard-won command of every nuance of the actress's trade to go with the vocal finesse that has made her a great lieder and concert singer. Some vocal quality was, perhaps, sacrificed to volume on this occasion, but there was ample to match every gesture with a sound worthy of it. There are those who would rather die than switch their allegiance from the cherished memory of Lotte Lehmann, but, in Mme. Schwarzkopf they have an opportunity for a gay form of *Liebestod*, in the lilting three-four of the Ochs waltz rather than the measured four-four of Wagner.

As the Marschallin appears in two acts, each of a different character, there are at least that many ways of playing the part. With Mme. Lehmann, there was always the tear trembling on the crinkle of the smile. With Mme. Schwarzkopf, one is readily certain that, in the end, the tear will be most likely from a displaced eyelash and that the smile will not come off. Already, one suspects, she is thinking of another Octavian by a different name, while regretting that she has lost this one so soon after teaching him not to leave a sword lying around a lady's boudoir. Hers is the Marschallin of the waltz rather than the dirge, well versed in *c'est la vie, toujours l'amour*, and all that.

The gravitation to the French in a consideration of Mme. Schwarzkopf's Marschallin is more compulsive than voluntary, a tribute to the lightly brittle way in which she sips her bitter cup (champagne sec rather than tea). Nor is this inconsistent with the Viennese background of the story. After all, even Ochs makes a point of his social French, and if the country cousin, why not the city cousin? Others have sought to pursue this thread in Strauss's writing of the part, but it has remained for Mme. Schwarzkopf to weave it into an international texture.

The telling factor, beyond her shrewd mind and responsive voice, is the aura of physical beauty she brings to the part. Front face as well as profile, she presents a cameo of chiseled features and aristocratic poise which, however they may sag in the mirror she holds up to herself, still will age enticingly, Dietrich-ly. Thus, when she comes to the moment of renunciation in Act III, it is still at the height of her mature appeal and with the worldly wisdom that, as there are other Octavians, so there are other hairdressers than the inept Hippolyte of Act I who made her, for a fleeting instant, look like "ein altes Weib."

NO such mastery is won without a price, and Mme. Schwarzkopf has paid her dues, in a vocal production that has its worn patches and rough spots. But these were of indifferent consequence at most, and of no consequence whatsoever in any important passage. In these, the preparation was always so thorough, the awareness of the difficulty to come so profound, that the precise tracery of sound—whether for a tender delivery of the silver rose to Mohamet in Act I, or the curt dismissal of Ochs in Act III—were always available. From coiffeur to finger paint, and filmy negligee of Act I to the huge tent of a ball gown she wore in Act III, every detail of the physical image was in complete keeping with a penetrating inner vision of the effect she ought to achieve. Operatic artistry can hardly be more encompassing.

Thanks to a revival of Otto Edelmann's vocal strength and a far more refined study of Baron Ochs than he has ever offered here before, and the mostly good conducting of Thomas Schippers in his first Met venture with the score, this was an evening of almost constant pleasure. Least to the point of a well-balanced ensemble was the Octavian of Lisa Della Casa, often good to hear but rarely in keeping with the visual image that was wanted. A pouty, unmasculine, and rather insignificant figure in the part—her Octavian would scarcely have intimidated even the most craven Ochs—Miss Della Casa seemed unaware that she was, after all, playing the work's title role. Anneliese Rothenberger was a steady Sophie, Norman Mittelmann a promising Faninal, and Mignon Dunn (Annina) and Andrea Velis (Valzacchi) refreshingly resourceful as the social eavesdroppers. Sándor Kónya gave name

value to the role of the Singer in place of the indisposed Barry Morrel.

Had Dino Yannopoulos contented himself with the best of his improvisations (such as the comedy doctor who examined Ochs in Act II), his staging would have commended itself as an improvement on its predecessor. However, he brought on a second serving maid to confront the disguised Octavian in Act I for the sake of a momentary snicker, and otherwise showed a weakness for compounding the obvious. In all, for artistic effort on the level of this *Rosenkavalier*, reservations may be restricted to those left at the box office.

HIGH hopes for the future of the French repertory at the Metropolitan were prompted by the debut of the estimable George Prêtre as conductor of a new production of *Samson et Dalila*, the first hearing of Saint-Saëns's cultivated score here in seven years. What this fortyish Frenchman has suggested at his concert performances in New York was affirmed in the more demanding conditions of the theater—that he is a conductor with not only the mind and the heart but also the ear to restore the glow to a repertory tarnished by disuse, not to say abuse. It was comforting to hear the high spots of the score so well projected, but it was an absolute delight to experience the duet "Pres de moi" of Act II shaped with such certainty, flow, and sensitivity. In a purely physical sense, Prêtre is the kind of conductor with the power to "move" an orchestra, and this one, to its credit, responded, individually as well as collectively, to his urging.

In this duet as well as elsewhere, most of what was Prêtre-worthy on the stage came from Rita Gorr, who poured out a stream of well-modulated sound as Dalila, and from Gabriel Bacquier, who made himself welcome as the High Priest. Gorr has never sounded so good nor acted so effectively in prior roles (mostly Italian) as she did in this exacting French one. Visually as well as aurally she commands the voluptuous means to make Dalila a figure of some grandeur, while skirting altogether the possibilities of travesty the role contains. Oddly, her familiar specialty ("Mon coeur") was pushed slightly sharp, the result, probably, of trying too hard, but "Printemps qui commence" and "Amour, viens aider" had the grand line and assurance that have been lacking in such music hereabouts for years. Such singing, when combined with the leadership of Prêtre, subdues complaints that *Samson* is static or nontheatrical.

A little more of the same from Jess Thomas would have muted them altogether. He has both the range and the physique for a convincing Samson, but  
(Continued on page 76)

# The Uses of Guilt

Continued from page 27

cise of will for Lee Oswald, but for the rest of the country and the world . . .

But even in the existential action the possibility of guilt persists in what Dr. Sarano (*La culpabilité*) called "the guilt of non-liberty," the inner enemy that humiliates our defeats. The pertinent links between the facts of Oswald's life and the inner world of his diary and the inner life of Dostoevski's young guilt-ridden student Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* are fantastically similar. And though Sartre would be loath to admit it, the hero of his existential drama *The Flies* could just as easily be driven guiltily to king-killing as to being, as depicted by Sartre, the only free agent in a guilt-ridden city.

The guilt of non-liberty, which may be the driving force of free actions, can result in good or evil. Young people can never really understand the profound despair of choices made without aid of counsel or creed, especially with the understanding that the choice is made for all mankind, nor can they make these choices in a world that is meaningless. These things are too much for the individual to bear.

Is there, then, a possibility of Christian liberty, and is there some possible meaning to the guilt that Freud found so destructive to man's purposes?

There is a possibility for both. Both are implicitly a part of two books by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *The Phenomenon of Man* and *The Divine Milieu*.

In the first, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard described the evolution of the world, the evolution of the plants and animals, the evolution of man. With man, the ultimate product of the evolutionary drive came consciousness, man's ability to reflect. Consciousness itself has evolved even in the relatively short time of recorded history. After a lifetime of work in archeology and paleontology, Teilhard de Chardin found the unity in the world, a unity that he based on scientific observation:

Christ, principle of universal vitality because sprung up as man among men, put himself in the position (maintained ever since) to subdue under himself, to purify, to direct and super-animate the general ascent of consciousnesses into which he inserted himself. By a perennial act of communion and sublimation, he aggregates to himself the total psychism of the earth. And when he has gathered everything together and transformed everything, he will close in upon himself and his conquests, thereby rejoining, in a final gesture, the divine focus he has never left. Then, as St. Paul tells us, *God shall be all in all* . . . the expectation of perfect unity.

The scientific aspects of Teilhard's work has yet to be corroborated, but the evolution of man and thought was to him incontrovertible. The world was anything but absurd to Teilhard.

If the meaning of the world can be established both scientifically and theologically, if there is a rise of consciousness toward what Teilhard labeled "the Omega Point," what possible relevance can guilt have in this ascent?

When the pre-human first crossed the threshold of consciousness, he must have known guilt. If that first human being was aware that he could understand why he acted, he must have been aware that he failed to conform or succeeded in conforming to that which was expected of him. Once he was conscious of his actions, these actions ceased to be the simple actions of an animal. However simple—even brutal—that first consciousness must have been, it must have precipitated in that first act an awareness of need, of approbation or scorn by the immediate members of his tribe, of loss of love, of satisfaction. To know guilt is to know man, for part and parcel of the evolution of consciousness is its by-product, guilt.

**T**EILHARD does not speak directly of guilt, but there is much in *The Phenomenon of Man* and *The Divine Milieu* that indirectly puts the focus on guilt. In *The Divine Milieu*, for example, Teilhard speaks reluctantly of hell:

Of all the mysteries which we have to believe, O Lord, there is none, without a doubt, which so affronts our human views as that of damnation. . . . We could perhaps understand falling back into inexistence . . . but what are we to make of eternal uselessness and eternal suffering?

Hoping to find some loophole, however tenuous, Teilhard grasps at any straw:

You have told me, O God, to believe in hell. But You have forbidden me to hold with absolute certainty that a single man has been damned.

For Teilhard's vision of unity does include every human being. The evolution of man toward the Omega Point is for every man in conjunction with every other man.

By inference Teilhard rejects the age-old concept of sin, guilt, and atonement. He has rejected, as Christ rejected, the "do this, do that, or you face this" concept that has proved so destructive in human affairs. To accept Christianity, according to Teilhard, is to accept Christian freedom—the greatest force in the ascent toward consciousness. That is not to say that Chardin dismissed the possibility of sin or evil in the universe, but he rejected the taboos, the Old Law with its

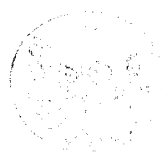
prescriptions and ritualistic atonement.

Evil, according to Teilhard, is that which inhibits the rise of consciousness or discourages and causes anxiety as the ascent proceeds. The first of these evils is that of disorder and failure. ("How many failures have there been for one success?"). The second is the evil of decomposition (" . . . death is the regular, indispensable condition of the replacement of one individual by another along a phyletic stem"). The third is the evil of solitude and anxiety, the "great anxiety (peculiar to man) of a consciousness waking up to reflection in a dark universe in which light takes centuries and centuries to reach it—a universe we have not yet succeeded in understanding either in itself, or in its demands on us." And the last is the evil of growth (the least tragic, according to Teilhard, because it exalts us), which makes all progress in the direction of increased unity express itself in terms of work and effort.

There can be no allaying of anxiety and guilt as consciousness ascends. Every time a man rejects a fallacy or an illusion, a penalty is exacted in the sorrow of loss or the guilt of revolt. But growth, though evil, is inevitable; and progress, according to Freud, is paid for by forfeiting happiness through the heightening of guilt. But if this increase in consciousness loses its edge in cynicism and despair in an absurd world, there will be little gained.

What is needed is the independent strength of the existentialist, a commitment to the ascent of consciousness, to one's particular role in the development of the noosphere, as Chardin labeled it—the world of thought. The strength of Christians is not in the churches, as John F. Kennedy pointed out in a controversial address given at the Columbian Fathers Seminary in September of 1957. The churches will find accommodation with existing political orders. What the Communists fear, said Kennedy, is individual commitment to a spiritual life as well as a material life. And the spiritual life for man is the world of consciousness with its concomitant tension, anxiety, and guilt.

Guilt will continue to play a decisive role in man's future, but it can be the guilt of failure to use every means to strengthen the life of spirit or thought. The individual can fashion man in fashioning himself, can accept the responsibility for his action. But he must accept the world as meaningful, as moving toward a higher and higher consciousness in spite of the many setbacks. Freud was entirely correct when he spoke of the destructive power of guilt, but he was referring to infantile guilt. Growth is not only possible; given a commitment to the ascent of consciousness, it is inevitable.



# Books

SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR SR

## LITERARY HORIZONS

### Conversations with Contemporaries

IN THE past two years Roy Newquist, who has done many reviews both for newspapers and radio, has been interviewing writers of various kinds in this country and in England. Now he has brought together sixty-three of his interviews in a volume called *Counterpoint* (Rand McNally, \$6.95). I have no idea how the persons to be interviewed were selected, but the table of contents suggests that sometimes Newquist was willing to settle for anyone who had ever written a book and happened to be handy.

Newquist states in the introduction: "My interviews haven't the depth, nor the prolonged analysis, that goes into the superb pieces on writers done by the *Paris Review*." This is certainly true, but there are extenuating circumstances: Newquist is just one man, whereas the *Paris Review* has used a number of two-man teams; Newquist was pressed for time, and the *Paris Review* people weren't. Moreover, *Paris Review* has pretty well limited itself to highbrow writers and addressed itself to highbrow readers. Newquist has been running all over the literary field and writing for a middlebrow audience.

Newquist worked out a formula for his interviews, and, though he did not always adhere to it, he has used it so often that it becomes tiresome. He begins with a brief but usually fulsome introduction of the author to be interviewed. Then, as a rule, he asks for a brief autobiography, and goes on to the literary career. He then asks a series of questions that go something like this: What advice would you give a young person who wants to become a writer? Do you feel responsible to the materials of your book, to the public, to yourself? What do you think readers a hundred years from now will make of your work?

As I have suggested, some of Newquist's interviewees are rather surprising. Although I work hard to keep up with contemporary writing, there are writers here—I say this apologetically—

of whom I have never heard: for instance, a humorist named William Peter Blatty and a pair of mystery writers, Mildred and Gordon Gordon. We also find a couple of publishers, a theater director, an author of controversial political books, an anthologist, and so on. On the other hand, a good many writers are omitted who seem to me to have an important place in contemporary literature: Saul Bellow, Wright Morris, Bernard Malamud, Flannery O'Connor, John Hawke, and several others. But we do have Truman Capote, Herbert Gold, Diana Trilling, Dwight MacDonald, and a few others who have to be taken seriously as literary persons.

Newquist is not altogether to be blamed if some of the interviews don't get anywhere. Even if he were as skillful as Mark Van Doren, in a foreword, says he is, he could not have expected to be 100 per cent successful. There are interesting bits in most of the pieces. It is astonishing to have James Jones say, "I still think *Some Came Running* is the best book I've written." (I think it is very nearly the worst book ever written by anybody.) John Fowles dis-



- 37 Literary Horizons: Granville Hicks reviews "Counterpoint," edited by Roy Newquist
- 38 Markings, by Dag Hammarskjöld
- 51 A Nation of Immigrants, by John F. Kennedy
- 52 The Interrogation, by J. M. G. Le Clézio
- 53 Courage, the Adventuress, and The False Messiah, by Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen
- 54 The Burnt Ones, by Patrick White
- 54 Night Light, by Marie Bardos
- 55 Russia at War 1941-1945, by Alexander Werth
- 56 Russia in the Thaw, by Alberto Ronchey
- 57 SR's Check List of the Week's New Books
- 60 The Free Enterprisers: Kennedy, Johnson and the Business Establishment, by Hobart Rowen

cusses his novel, *The Collector*, as an expression of Existentialism, and Doris Lessing talks well about politics in England, the United States, and Russia. John Crosby takes off on Marilyn Monroe. Truman Capote tells about the non-fiction book—an account of a Kansas murder—that he has been working on for some time. (Bennett Cerf, the book's publisher, says that "it may turn out to be one of the most important books ever published in America," and Harper Lee says, "There's probably no better writer in this country today than Truman Capote. He is growing all the time.")

Gabriel Fielding, author of *The Birthday King*, talks with fine frankness about his religious views and his theories of fiction. ("I think that the writer who is most worthy to be published and read is the writer absolutely and totally obsessed with what he has to say.")