



Shankar and His Magic Sitar

PHILHARMONIC HALL in Lincoln Center has so long been rated a cold, dead, awesome place for the recitalist that it would hardly seem possible for it to be made warm, animated, and friendly merely by a play of personality. But when the personality is one with so much to play with, and about, as Ravi Shankar, truisms must give way to truth.

As one who sat long and rewardingly at the feet—also the limbs and torso—of his famous brother Uday, it was absorbing to see the resemblances as well as the differences in the art they practice. As a dancer trained in Western techniques, Uday Shankar was aristocratic, elegant, and yet possessed of an inward fire that burst into a blaze whenever it was appropriate. As a performer on the sitar who has had a profitable encounter with Western musical thought, Ravi Shankar is also aristocratic, elegant, and possessed of inward fire. Out of whatever combination of elements, he has learned to make the sitar—whether strummed, plucked, or made to ring with the response of its sympathetic strings—an instrument of personality as well as power. He has found in it a voice for the mercurial, the humorous, the languid, enticing, or breathlessly impulsive, as his mood decrees. In prospect it seemed that one might miss the absence of a visual counterpart to its sound. But he quickly made clear that there are fewer physical barriers to the flights of fancy possible for ten fingers than there are for the movements of two feet.

Undeterred by the kind of knowledge that might make for caution, I can only report the impression that Ravi Shankar has carried the art of the sitar to regions of expressiveness unapproached by the predecessors known in these parts. This may have to do, in part, with the development of an instrument which has greater tonal depth, more clarity of sound, a broader range of resonance than those heard in the Thirties and Forties from the players associated with his dancing brother. Certainly the use of two sizable speakers helped to equalize the imbalance of tonal weight versus the large hall. But, as even the grandest piano would give back more to Horowitz than to almost anybody else, so the most responsive sitar would hardly yield as much to another performer as it does to Ravi Shankar.

Allowing for all the differences of means and method, what carried him to heights of compulsion (sufficient to ab-

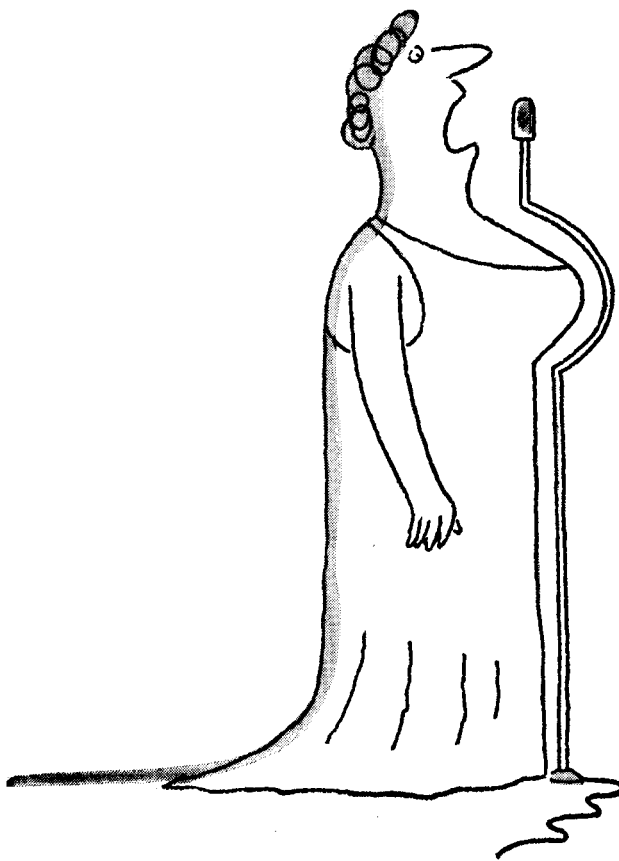
sorb an audience in the half-hour length of the raga *Maru Bihag*) were the virtues that distinguish the great interpreter of any school from the average or even the superior one. Among them are a richer sense of color and variety, a stronger awareness of dynamic contrast, a livelier instinct for the tactical foray as well as the strategic retreat. These are even more critical elements in the music of the East, which is, after all, to a large, if mathematically indeterminate extent, an art of improvisation. But, as in the last analysis, even a Schnabel played himself as much as he played Beethoven, so a performer of a sitar plays himself. There is, simply, more of Ravi Shankar to play than there is of those who have come and gone here over the years.

LIKE sundry others of his Eastern subcontinent we have grown to know in these recent decades of rapid interchange—whether politician, dancer, or conductor—Ravi Shankar has a highly developed sense of theater, an intuition for the kind of ritual that makes believers of skeptics. First the attractive Kamala Chakravarti, who plays the tam-

boura (a kind of perpetual drone to the evolutions of the solo instrument), made her entrance, bearing with her the sticks of incense which engage the nostrils even before the ear is enticed. She was, in turn, joined by the fabulous Alla Rakha, whose tabla-playing beggars the common conception of what can be evoked from a pair of smallish drums struck, tapped, or fondled by the bare hands. Finally, and in due course, the central figure of the trinity, Shankar himself, made his appearance. But, even so, no music. There followed, rather, a lengthy, almost agonizingly intent period of tuning that conditioned the audience to maximum attention for the slightest inflection in the sound patterns that were finally heard.

It would be misleading to imply that this audience required such conditioning. In size and enthusiasm, it was reassuring evidence that the enterprise of Ravi Shankar's management in presenting him three times this week and three times again in December was not misguided. In age and appearance, it presented a cross section of persons of both sexes, mostly young, mostly mod—but not extravagantly so—who were, in all probability, unaware that there had ever been another Shankar than Ravi. But it was quite content to honor, at maximum, the one it had come not merely to hear, but to revere.

Doubtless it had been preconditioned—whether through records, radio, or pri-



S. GROSS

or live experience—to an appreciation of what it was going to hear. But the order of reponse prompts some speculation as to why this kind of music now enjoys an appreciation unknown in the Forties. Has the music itself added some elements of Western influence that make it easier to comprehend, or is it simply a case of Western ears being more responsive to its tonal temporizings, its quavers and clashes of fractional intervals? My guess—and it has no scientific basis whatsoever—is that the ears of the younger generation have been so assaulted with so much sound that is more bizarre, less disciplined, and infinitely inferior in artistry to Shankar's, that it is merely exercising a legitimate, and highly discriminating, option.

THE New York City Opera began its new season in the New York State Theater with a sequence of performances that included two works of Mozart: the Beni Montessoro production of *The Magic Flute*, and a less elaborate but no less workable version of *The Marriage of Figaro*, designed by Ed Wittstein. The former was much as it had been last season, and thus called for no new evaluation; the latter had a scattering of new performers to make it something different than it was when last heard and seen.

Of principal influence was the conductor, Charles Wilson. New to opera audiences in New York though not to consequential music-making otherwise (he is an assistant to Erich Leinsdorf in Boston), Wilson showed a lively sense of the theatrical as well as the musical requirements to make *Figaro* worthy of an evening's attention. That is to say, he was not disposed to make it either an exercise in musical scholarship or a series of comic contretemps. Each element was assigned a suitable share of importance, with a properly Mozartian outcome as directed for the stage by Christopes West.

In addition to such tested performers of New York City Opera as Norman Treigle (*Figaro*), Frances Bible (*Cherubino*), and David Clatworthy (*Almaviva*), the cast included Anne Elgar as Susanna and Maralin Niska in her debut with the company as the Countess. Miss Elgar is a properly youthful, vibrantly musical, and wholly promising interpreter of this part. Her peril is the absorption of all the mannerisms known to all the Susannas of the past, thereby converting the character into a stereotype rather than a person. The solution, perhaps, would be for her to do everything differently from everybody else, and thus arrive at something of her own. The quality of Miss Niska's effort gives rise to hope she may be heard soon again in something else.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

Check List of New Books

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Miscellany

ALL ABOUT WINE. By Blake Ozias. Crowell. \$3.50.

DESIGN FOR DEATH. By Barbara Jones. Bobbs Merrill. \$10.

DIARY OF FLORENCE IN FLOOD. By Katharine Kressmann Taylor. Simon & Schuster. \$4.50.

HOW TO BE AFFLUENT. By George Mikes. Heineman. \$4.95.

INDIA, INDIA. By Lisa Hobbs. McGraw-Hill. \$4.95.

KITES: An Historical Survey. By Clive Hart. Praeger. \$12.50.

MYTHS OF THE SPACE AGE. By Daniel Cohen. Dodd, Mead. \$5.95.

THE PREVALENCE OF NONSENSE. By Ashley Montagu and Edward Darling. Harper & Row. \$6.50.

PURITY OF DICTION IN ENGLISH VERSE. By Donald Davie. Schocken. \$5.

THE STORIES OF THE GREEKS: *Men and Gods; Greeks and Trojans; The Vengeance of the Gods*. By Rex Warner. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$8.50 until Dec. 31; \$10 thereafter.

YOU AND YOUR STOCKBROKER. By Robert J. Schwartz. Macmillan. \$4.95.

Music, Theater

THE GREAT CONDUCTORS. By Harold C. Schonberg. Simon & Schuster. \$7.50.

THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE. By Howard Taubman. Coward-McCann. \$10. (Revised edition.)

THEATRE EXPERIMENT. Edited by Michael Benedikt. Doubleday. \$6.95.

Natural History

ANIMALS IN OUR WORLD. By Jacques Lecomte. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$4.25.

THE FOUR SEASONS OF SURVIVAL. By William L. Van Allen. Barnes. \$8.50.

THE PEREGRINE. By J. A. Baker. Harper & Row. \$4.95.

Personal History

ADVANTAGE ASHE. By Arthur Ashe, Jr. Coward-McCann. \$4.95.

BORN TO RAISE HELL: The Untold Story of Richard Speck. By Jack Altman and Marvin Ziporyn, M.D. Grove. \$5.95.

DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA. By Sir Charles Petrie. Norton. \$6.95.

THE HIGH HARD ONE. By Kirby Higbe. Viking. \$4.95.

A MATHEMATICIAN'S APOLOGY. By G. H. Hardy. Cambridge Univ. Press. \$2.95.

MAX SCHELER, 1874-1928: An Intellectual Portrait. By John Raphael Staude. Free Press. \$6.95.

ONE MAN'S EDUCATION. By Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis. Knopf. \$10.

PULITZER. By W. A. Swanberg. Scribners. \$8.95.

THE PULP JUNGLE. By Frank Gruber. Sherbourne. \$3.95.

THE RESCUER. By Peter Maas. Harper & Row. \$5.95.

SVETLANA: The Story of Stalin's Daughter. By Martin Ebon. New American Library. Hardbound, \$4.95. Paperback, 95¢.

THROUGH THE MINEFIELD: An Autobiography. By Constantine FitzGibbon. Norton. \$5.95.

TO LEAVE BEFORE DAWN. By Julian Green. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$4.95.

WE NEHRUS. By Krishna Nehru Hutheesing with Alden Hatch. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$6.95.

Poetry

THE FEAST. By Bink Noll. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$4.50.

FOLLOW UP. By Arthur Lerner. Swordsman. \$3.50.

THE HARD HOURS. By Anthony Hecht. Atheneum. Hardbound, \$5. Paperback, \$2.45.

LANCED IN LIGHT. By Larry Rubin. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$4.50.

THE LICE. By W. S. Merwin. Atheneum. Hardbound, \$4.50. Paperback, \$1.95.

SIR CAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT: A New Verse Translation. By Marie Borroff. Norton. \$4.50.

Psychology

THE MADNESS IN SPORTS: Psychosocial Observations on Sports. By Arnold R. Beisser, M.D. Appleton. \$4.95.

YOUR FEAR OF LOVE. By Marshall Bryant Hodge. Doubleday. \$4.95.

YOUR GROWING CHILD AND SEX. A Parent's Guide to the Sexual Development, Education, Attitudes and Behavior of the Child from Infancy Through Adolescence. By Helene S. Arnstein. Bobbs-Merrill. \$4.95.

Religion, Philosophy

THE CHINESE MIND: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Edited by Charles A. Moore. East-West Center. \$9.50.

THE EMPTY PULPIT: A Study in Preaching as Communication. By Clyde Reid. Harper & Row. \$3.50.

THE GOD I WANT. Edited by James Mitchell. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3.95.

PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH AND REVELATION. By Karl Jaspers. Harper & Row. \$15.

Science, Technology

DESIGNING THE FUTURE: The Role of Technological Forecasting. By Robert W. Prehoda. Chilton. \$8.50.

ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM. By William A. Wood. Columbia Univ. Press. \$5.

MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE. By William R. Corliss. Crowell. \$5.95.

TWINS AND SUPERTWINS. By Amram Scheinfeld. Lippincott. \$6.95.

Travel

BETWEEN MAULE AND AMAZON. By Arnold J. Toynbee. Oxford Univ. Press. \$5.

MONGOLIA: In Search of Marco Polo and Other Adventures. By Silvio Micheli. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$6.95.

THE PERU TRAVELER: A Concise History and Guide. By Selden Rodman. Meredith. \$6.95.

—Compiled by RUTH BROWN.

Nazi Defeat on Volga

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God and country, nor even men under stress, but puppets in a mechanical game, case histories in the pathology of war. The fact that the Germans went by Central European time, hours apart from the Moscow time of the Russians, assumes a deeper meaning in the self-destroying economy of the battle. The clock and the thermometer matter more than time or the sense of touch: "The consumption of food of a temperature of less than 10° Centigrade above freezing is to be avoided." The conclusions that count are drawn by the internist, not the historian: "Instead of red and yellow bone marrow, a transparent, quaking, jelly-like substance, liver congested, heart small and brown. . . ."

The scientific detachment with which life and death at Stalingrad are recorded contrasts starkly with the reactions of the clergy and the instructions in the *Soldier's Manual for Winter Warfare* ("Troops must be given hot food and hot drinks more often in winter than in summer."). The sermons, whether invented by Kluge or actually delivered at the time, reveal the sterility of religious solace better than a satire could do. Everything from the hair that does not fall without God's will to a letter written by Bismarck to his wife is in-

voked to bolster the morale of the civilians at home. Nothing, Kluge makes plain, grows stale as quickly as pious sentiments in the service of war.

Kluge's own language is cold and clipped, and as precise as an IBM card. Hard-edged to the core, *The Battle* is the functional analysis of a fight that took place more than two decades ago. But Kluge has not merely dissected a historical event. By stripping Stalingrad of all emotions that winners and losers have come to attach to it, he has laid bare the ultimate absurdity of that and every other battle. He has created a document that compels our attention without tugging at our heartstrings. Like a Brecht play, *The Battle* is an exercise in the kind of alienation that drives home its point most forcefully.

THE English version by Leila Vennewitz is generally excellent and does justice even to the idiom of ministerial directives and Prussian officers' jargon. Some sections of the German original, either because of their technical nature or their experimental quality, have been left out, others reshuffled. These changes, while not without harm to the artistic integrity of the novel, were no doubt made with the reader in mind. But should not this consideration extend to telling him that he is reading a slightly abridged book, or whether the changes were approved by the author?

Confluence of Pain

An Antique Man, by Merrill Joan Gerber (Houghton Mifflin. 278 pp. \$4.95), observes the reactions of relatives to the slow death of a gentle man. Seymour Epstein's latest novel, "Caught in That Music," will be published this fall.

By SEYMOUR EPSTEIN

TO PUT the subject as pitilessly as the author does, this novel is about death: the death of one man, a man neither ordinary nor extraordinary; lucky, perhaps, in his capacity to give love and receive it, unlucky in that he fell victim to a disease that was sure to take his life, and to take it in a way that would wring agonies from those who loved him.

In this respect, Merrill Joan Gerber is as relentless in observing the symptoms of the spirit as a doctor must be in observing the symptoms of the body. The same disease attacks each person a little differently, and then proceeds in its destructive course at a varying rate. So, too, the reaction to the knowledge of

death is unique in each person who must live with that knowledge. But, in charting the course of fear and grief as accurately as she does, Miss Gerber underlines all the diversities and gives them the common denominator of art.

The story of *An Antique Man* is narrated by Janet, the older daughter of Abram Goldman, a junk dealer whose euphemistic style of life changes whatever he touches from what it was to something a little better. Therefore "junk" becomes "antique." Abram is seen by Janet as a gentle man who never failed to make the important distinction between mere "things" and the invaluable possessions of the heart. Janet herself is married, has two children of her own, and represents that exquisite posture of involvement as it stands midway between the daily demands of responsibility and the abandonments of sorrow.

When the family learns that Abram has leukemia, it is Janet who must comfort her mother, be brave for her father, attend to the needs of her own family, serve as mediator between her parents and her younger sister who has taken up



the hippie life as a defense against loneliness, and find time for her own heart-sickness when she can. Perhaps it is this situation the author needed to produce such excruciating effects as this:

An idea occurred to me; I needed to find a tool, some kind of tweezer it seemed, I must need, with which I could rescue my father out of his rotting body. It seemed so easy a solution; he was fine inside that network of ruined blood, if I could only extricate him somehow, he could go around, so to speak, in his soul.

The limitation of *An Antique Man* is that it deals with no more than it does. Janet particularly, through whose intelligence and character we come to know these circumstances, is reduced by the pressure and chill of her sorrow to the condensation of a woman. She is pure grief and a living text of her father's disease, and, while this is rendered by the author with nerve-flaying insight, it does leave out other elements in Janet's life which would surely run through the weeks and months of her ordeal. It is not that one wants more information about Janet out of mere curiosity, but rather for the sake of feeling the life that has flowed into this confluence of pain, and will flow out again.

Perhaps if the author had not made the sensibilities of her main character so vividly alive, we wouldn't be asking for more. But the fine truth about Merrill Joan Gerber's first novel is its vivid, at times almost unbearable life, and her accomplishment is not to be minimized by this or that shortcoming.

Bird Hunt

By Norman Jackson

TO the severe frost that stiffens,
He bends low:
Afraid to break cover
And hold the air under him in flight,
His shape changed to a ground creature.

He knows this season,
The click of guns, obedient dogs
Barking into anything important.
To be small and keep quiet about it
Is the unreasonable thing.

Ignorance defeats him,
Exchanging shape for shade,
The cold air picks him out,
And just being still
Becomes the bad thing.