

FIRST AND LAST LOVE

by Vincent Sheean

(Gollancz, 21/-.)

The children of Chicago tend to be endowed with exceptional intellectual, aesthetic or scientific awareness. Judging by the number of native born Chicagoans who make their mark in the world the place, for all the disagreeable things that are said about it, is a cradle of the talents. Vincent Sheean, whose life as a journalist has been far from uneventful, tells here the story of his double life, so to speak, as a music lover. The technique is not dissimilar. He has sat in the dressing rooms of and eaten meals and hobnobbed generally with most of the distinguished international opera singers of the past 25 years, and he knows many of them by their christian names—not that that means much nowadays. His enthusiasm for opera is patently genuine, like his enthusiasm for the events that make news. But there is a kind of basic superficiality in what he writes that will render the book boring for anybody who knows as much as, or even a little less, about singing than he does. He doesn't believe, incidentally, that it is possible to learn singing in England and he does not mention any English opera singers of recent years, no doubt because their surnames, let alone their christian names, do not make sufficient news.

ANTHONY GISHFORD



LETTERS

THE EDITOR, *TEMPO* 50 WILLOW ROAD,
LONDON, N.W.3.
2nd September, 1957.

SIR,

First, let me correct two misprints in my report on Schoenberg's opera *Moses and Aron* (Summer issue, p. 3):

"*Moses and Aron* . . . utterly convinced everybody, apart from the London critics. . . ." What I had written in the galley proof was "three London critics." The majority of London critics (including myself) were in fact utterly convinced by Schoenberg's supreme masterpiece.

"If [the president of the Zürich town council] had read the [dictionary] article on

HOW TO ENJOY MUSIC

by C. Whitaker-Wilson

(World's Work, Heinemann, 12/6.)

This book is interesting only from the point of view of professional ethics. It is deplorable that Dr. Whitaker-Wilson, who may write with more insight and fewer pretensions as the fly-leaf informs us he does on London, philology and philosophy, did not have recourse to the advice of a musicologist.

Let a few excerpts suffice: "The finest form of sacred music, the oratorio. . . ." What of the mass?

"Holst who was born . . . of English parents." (Page 68).

". . . Holst was born . . . of Swedish parents." (Page 213).

Of Josquin des Prés: "His music . . . does not signify in these days."

"Purcell was very great indeed *for his time*; up to *our time* Elgar is the greatest composer we have had."

"Now for Strawinsky. I think you had better regard him as a semi-extremist. He has never been a full-blown atonalist. He became so dissonant that he fell out with his conscience. . . . I think his music appeals to the emotions more than to the intellect—which would annoy him if he knew anyone had said so because it rules him out as a modern Bach."

Of Scriabin's early death: "Had he lived . . . he might have become saner and returned to the idiom of Chopin."

Bartók and Schoenberg are treated with smug condescension. Britten and Walton would be touched to know that Dr. Whitaker-Wilson is concerned about their futures lest they be "bitten by the atonality insect."

MALCOLM WILLIAMSON

'Schoenberg' rather than that on twelve-tone music, the composer would have shown no signs of wanting to turn in his grave at *one* age's technique-conscious amateurism" What I had written in the galley proof was "at our age's technique-conscious amateurism."

Secondly, Mr. R. A. Bullock complains (p. 35) that the programme note for the first of the "Music of a Century" concerts "failed to set out the note-row for Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, so that we were left completely in the dark as to the composer's intentions." The *Orchestral Pieces* were written in 1909, the first twelve-tone pieces in the early twenties.

Yours faithfully, HANS KELLER

THE EDITOR, *TEMPO* 4 NORTON WAY N.,
LETCHEWORTH,
HERTS.
22nd August, 1957.

DEAR SIR,

In his review of the English edition of my book on Alban Berg (*TEMPO*, No. 44, pp. 4 ff), Erwin Stein speaks of "many wrong statements and many erroneous assumptions" and gives a warning to prevent the book becoming "a source of misinformation." In view of the seriousness of these assertions I should like to clarify briefly the issue for your readers. I believe that Stein's critical strictures can be easily refuted and his queries satisfactorily answered by the German edition of my book, just published.* Perhaps it might have been wiser if Stein had waited for that somewhat delayed larger publication which forms the basis for the English edition (written later but published earlier) and in which most of the points raised in his review are discussed at length. I cannot hope to dispose of all of Stein's allegations within the limits of this letter, hence I will confine myself to dealing with three questions only.

Stein says "the *Gurre Lieder* were never conceived as a *Liederspiel*, as Redlich will have it. . . . I wonder where he got the information from. They were planned on the largest scale from the beginning, in 1899. . . ." Footnote 29 of the German edition supplies the answer. The information comes from Dika Newlin's book "Bruckner-Mahler-Schoenberg" (New York, 1947). On p. 216 the writer relates that the information came to her from Schoenberg himself. Footnote 29, however, is careful not to overlook contradictory information about the *Gurre Lieder*'s origin coming from other quarters. It goes on "Im Gegensatz hierzu berichtet Josef Polnauer, er habe von Schoenberg selbst gehört, die *Gurrelieder* seien von vornherein für ein noch grösseres Orchester als das der *Götterdämmerung* gedacht gewesen, unter deren Eindruck Schoenberg zur Zeit der Konzeption stand. Ich halte es für denkbar, dass beide Entstehungsgeschichten authentisch sind und—in einem gewissen historischen Nacheinander—sich ergänzen. . . ."

Later on Stein refers to my attempt to liken the youthful charm of young Berg to the silhouette of the Austrian poet Hofmannsthal. Stein believes that Hofmannsthal was not representative of the early 20th century Vienna in which Berg and his friends grew up and thinks that "Karl Kraus, Loos and Altenberg, rather than Hofmannsthal, were congenial to the later composer of *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*." This sentence reads as if my book had

remained silent on these contemporaries of Berg. Quite the contrary: Kraus, the satirist, and Altenberg, the poet, and their lifelong influence on and importance for Berg are amply discussed on pp. 210/14, 293, and footnote 226 (Kraus) and on pp. 76/78, 193/94 (Altenberg) of the German edition; while the much shorter English edition devotes pp. 168/69 to Kraus's relations to Berg and discusses the artistic phenomenon of Altenberg on pp. 40 ff, 59, 60 and again on pp. 226/28.

Stein also gives a deliberately incomplete and therefore misleading quotation from the English edition of my book (taken from pp. 13/14), which runs as follows: "The creative activity of Schoenberg's school . . . began around 1900 with Schoenberg's own earliest songs and chamber music, followed by Berg's first essays in composition. . . ." He thinks this statement plays havoc with the sequence of events, omits the composition of the *Gurre Lieder* before 1900, neglects Schoenberg's departure from tonality, about 1908, and is also otherwise misleading. So it is, especially in the truncated form in which the reviewer presents the thoughts of the reviewed. The complete sentence in question runs as follows (words and sentences omitted by Stein are printed in italics

"The creative activity of Schoenberg's school covered a period of fifty years. It began around 1900 with Schoenberg's own earliest songs and chamber music, followed by Berg's first essays in composition. *It reached its apogee in the 1920's, when Schoenberg's first compositions in twelve-note technique, Berg's 'Lyric Suite' and 'Wozzeck' and Webern's . . . Symphony op. 21 were written. . . .*" The very next page (p. 15) refers to Schoenberg's "gigantic conceptions of 1899-1907" in general and to the *Gurre Lieder* in particular, thereby coming close to Stein's own corrective statement, as quoted above.

In calling the English edition of my book "a biography" Stein commits the very thing he accuses me of: making "a wrong statement and an erroneous assumption." For my books on Berg are not biographies but analytical assessments of the man and his music, as their subtitles clearly indicate. Only 25 out of 316 pages of the English edition and 21 (footnotes excluded) out of 404 pages of the German edition are taken up by the biographical chapter.

Finally, Stein declares "If biographies there must be, they should at least give correct data. But second-hand information is rarely exact . . .", meaning by implication, that he takes a poor view of biographers who have not been personally acquainted with their

subjects. Now, I heartily disagree with this theory and, curiously enough, posterity seems to be on my side, relegating contemporary biographies—such as Mainwaring's *Handel* and Glaser's *Wagner*—quickly to the lumber-room in favour of biographical masterpieces—such as Chrysander's book on Handel and Ernest Newman's *Wagner*-biography—conceived when their respective subjects were dead from fifty to one hundred years. As to Stein's implied doubt regarding the correctness of my data, I should like to inform your readers that the German edition has been carefully read and corrected in manuscript and proof by Josef Polnauer, Schoenberg's trusted assistant and amanuensis and a lifelong friend of Berg's. In the post-script to that edition eloquent tribute is paid to Polnauer's efforts to exclude any statement inconsistent with the historical facts from the pages of my book. Polnauer, whose authority as a Schoenberg- and Berg-scholar is unchallenged, will be painfully surprised to see the English edition of a book pilloried as a possible "source of misinformation" to the perfection of which he has contributed so much.

Yours faithfully, HANS F. REDLICH

* H. F. Redlich: *Alban Berg—Versuch einer Würdigung*, Universal Edition, Wien-Zürich-London 1957, pp. 404.

ERWIN STEIN REPLIES :

Dr. Redlich's letter worsens his cause. He cannot plead the German version as justification: I am concerned with the English edition which alone is of interest to English readers.

(1) If the German edition has been "carefully read and corrected in manuscript and proofs by Josef Polnauer," to whose "efforts to exclude any statements inconsistent with historical facts" Redlich pays "eloquent tribute in that edition" (but not in the English edition)—if this is so, the book evidently needed revision, and my friend Polnauer is not responsible for the mistakes in the (earlier published) English version. Thus Redlich cannot claim Polnauer as a witness for the defence.

(2) I see that Redlich has the information about the *Gurre Lieder* from a book by Dika Newlin, who erroneously (probably by way of a misunderstanding) assumes that the work was originally intended as a song-cycle with piano accompaniment. Polnauer, in the German edition only, confirms my statement that it was from the start ("von vorneherein") conceived with orchestral accompaniment, as is apparent from the texture of the music.

But Redlich wants to have it both ways: he deems it imaginable ("denkbar") that the contradictory terms (*originally with piano and from the start with orchestra*) may complement each other "in a certain historical succession" ("in einem gewissen historischen Nacheinander sich ergänzen"). I cannot follow this train of thought.

(3) Dika Newlin's song-cycle becomes in Redlich's English edition a "*Liederspiel*"—but a *Liederspiel* is, according to Hugo Riemann, a variety of the *Singspiel* (probably suggested by Goethe), "whose vocal numbers are exclusively based on songs of a popular type." I wish Redlich would distinguish between the terms song-volume (i.e. a collection of songs), song-cycle (i.e. a coherent sequence of songs), and *Liederspiel* (something akin to ballad opera).

(4) The havoc Redlich plays with the sequence of events on pp. 13/14 of his book is even more striking in full quotation. The creative activity of the "Schoenberg school" did not cover 50 years. It did not begin around 1900. And it did not reach "its apogee in the 1920's." The composition with twelve notes was not an apogee, but a new start.

I need not reply in further detail to Redlich's desultory defence. It is not just facts, but the ways they are put, that give a wrong picture. Finally I have nowhere described Redlich's book as "a biography." But it contains (in the English edition—I have not read the German) a sufficiently large number of wrong biographical dates to come under the heading of my warning: biographies should be read with discretion.

BOOKS RECEIVED

"THE MAGIC FLUTE," by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallmann. Published by *Faber & Faber Ltd.*, 24, Gt. Russell Square, London, W.C.1. Price: 15s.

"FIDDLELING FOR FUN," by Robin Gilbert. Published by *Faber & Faber Ltd.* Price: 10s. 6d.

"THE HOFFNUNG COMPANION TO MUSIC," by Gerard Hoffnung. Published by *Dobson Books Ltd.*, and *Putnam & Co., Ltd.*, 42, Gt. Russell Street, London, W.C.1. Price: 4s. 6d.

"SCHUBERT'S SONGS," by Richard Capell. Published by *Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd.*, 3, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2. Price: 30s.

"LEARN TO READ MUSIC," by Howard Shanet. Published by *Faber & Faber Ltd.* Price: 15s.