

Music

By IRVING KOLODIN

SO little has been known about the workings of a composer's mind, and so seldom are they themselves aware of any conscious direction of their faculties, that the objective study of musical literature has been able only to observe the existence of various individuals and their works, without being able to segregate the elements that comprise their individualities or to speak, (except in the most general terms) of their personal styles. However, what seems to be a most interesting and promising progress in that direction has been achieved by Heinrich Schenker, a musicologist of Polish birth, who, though he is sixty-four years old, the author of many volumes on theoretical problems, and the editor of numerous "editions," has yet to be honored by inclusion in Groves "Dictionary of Music and Musicians." To state it in its baldest form, Schenker's discovery is that in the works we have learned to regard as great music (from Bach till Brahms) the structure and development of every piece are dominated by what he terms the *Ear-line*—a pattern which is inherent in the thematic germ of the music, and which can be traced through the composition from beginning to end, and to whose inner life the composer's mind is inseparably linked. ~~This I have before me in the~~ nocturne of Chopin, opus 9, No. 3.—the pattern here is the descending line in the first full measure, or, without its embellishments, d sharp, d, c sharp—on it the entire piece of 156 measures is dependent. In the third measure it is used from the third step higher, and in the middle section it is used in an ascending, instead of descending form. Of course, the idea of thematic development is the basis of all musical analysis—but the question of why one composition should follow a procedure which is entirely different from that of any other has customarily been considered the result of a composer's manipulation of it. Schenker's analysis demonstrates that he is merely supersensitively endowed to follow the lead which his brain, in the form of the motive, has invented—and rather than directing it, his function is to react to its implications. I have no doubt that Chopin was completely ignorant of the existence of the pattern just described; yet his responsiveness to its suggestions, and the resourcefulness of his musical mentality create out of it an entity whose inevitability is satisfying.

Curious to know more about this fascinating idea (to which I had been intro-

duced at the Mannes School. This has been Dr. Weisse's first year in America; his English is excellent, as the following transcript of his remarks shows.

"Schenker," said Dr. Weisse, "came to the Vienna Conservatory to study composition with Bruckner, but he found little there to stimulate him, and determined to study by himself. This took the form of playing and analyzing the masterworks of musical literature, and gradually, in the course of this, he discovered the *Ear-line*, which is the dominating feature of the great classical music. After much observation, he came to the conclusion that harmony, in the sense that we understand it, did not, and does not, exist for the composer—to him, there is only counterpoint—or better, let us say that harmony and counterpoint are both facets of the same idea, and that music exists only as the flow of line from point to point. Music, to the composer, is never vertical (as "chords") it is only a horizontal, moving organism. In the conventional analysis of a composition, there would be detailed a mass of "chords" of whose existence the composer would be completely unaware. . . . for, to him, there was simply the concern of the melodic germ expanding itself to its pre-ordained destination, a progress of the melodic line and its supporting counterpoints below, to the ultimate points of rest."

A perfect example of this is the second prelude in the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavichord (the C minor prelude). It is a toccata, in style, written in two voices. One could fill a page, detailing the chords which apparently occur in its forty measures—yet, from the linear approach, it yields simply a movement down the scale from C to E flat, and to G (the dominant) and back to the tonic. Thus, in the whole piece there are exactly two harmonic impressions—the tonic chord with which the piece begins, and the dominant chord twenty-eight measures further on . . . yet the ear is never bored or disinterested, because once the melodic line be-

gins to move, it moves directly down the scale, to its inevitable destination. In preparing that inevitability, and in managing a subtle and marvellously diverse palette of color to effect that transition is the genius we call Bach.

This also illustrates pointedly Dr. Weisse's remark, "The basis of all music is the common chord of the key in which the composition is written, or in C, the notes C, E, G. When the space between these notes has been filled in (by using them as the strategic points in the work) the composition will be found to be completed. Schenker's conception of tonality," he added, "is not the usual one of the tones revolving around a certain note as the key-center. It is, rather, as the raw material, the marble from which the statute is chiseled."

I was curious to know if the same approach is possible to a work of the proportions of a sonata or a symphony.

"Schenker's latest work" he answered, "now being completed, is an analysis of the *Eroica*. It is an amazing thing—the idiosyncrasies of form, the rhythmic aberrations, the strange accents—all take a natural and logical place in the scheme of the work as a whole when perceived this way. Of course, we have always known that they satisfied our ear—now we are beginning to find out why they do."

Our conversation progressed to modern music, of which Dr. Weisse has a very slight opinion. "The *Ear-line*," he said, "is very prominent till Brahms, but even in the works of Wagner, it is less frequently encountered, and then, over shorter sections of a work. In a sense, this is because of its relationship to the text, which, of course, has a life of its own."

To him, this lack is the elementary poverty of modern music. "Berg and Schoenberg," he said, "I am convinced, are serious men. But there is something in the psychology of the ear to which they do not appeal, some necessary element in aural understanding which they deny. They are pursuing a false path."

I am not prepared to agree with that particular phase of the subject, for if two hundred years of music was written before a Schenker discovered that such a thing as the *Ear-line* exists, is it not possible that some new phase of it is being developed, of which we are yet unaware? The contemporary taste found much of Bach unpalatable.

Worth Hearing
March 20-27

Sunday — Perolle String Quartet —
Brahms program at the Dalton
School (E).

MY DEAR DR. SALZER,

YESTERDAY, A VERY INFORMATIVE LETTER ARRIVED FROM DEAR HANS W(EISSE). HE IS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE URLINIE-TAFELN FOR THE MANNES SCHOOL; THEY ARE TO BE ISSUED AS "PUBLICATIONS OF THE M. SCHOOL." MR. MANNES WOULD ALSO LIKE MY ASSURANCE FOR THE NEXT INSTALLMENT.

Wann heute für Dr. Salzer!

Gestern ist ein Brief an Dr. Salzer
bringt die letzten Hans W. Mannes
Briefe, die die Umlauf-Tafeln
für die Mannes-Schule enthält, die
sollen die "Umlauf-Tafeln der M. Schule"
genannt werden. Herr Mannes legt
mir auch schon auf die Umlauf-Tafeln
den Fall.

Wie oft ich Sie interviewe bei;
ich in der Arbeit, wie Sie es

zu Ihnen, wie ich verspreche.
Ohr-Linien "gefällt mir
" und Wohl.

Ich habe mich für Sie
als Ihre treue Freundin

H. Schenker

19.4.32

ENCLOSED WITH THE LETTER WAS THE
INTERVIEW; MAY I ASK YOU ON FRIDAY TO TELL
ME WHAT IT SAYS. "EAR-LINE" (OHR-LINIE)
ISN'T HALF BAD.

WITH BEST REGARDS TO YOU AND YOUR
DEAR WIFE,

YOURS,
APRIL 19, 1932

H. SCHENKER

Mein lieber Herr Dr. Salzer!

Gestern ist ein sehr ausführlicher Brief des lieben Hans W[eisse] eingetroffen, der um die Umlinie-Tafeln für die Man[us]kript-Schule wirbt; sie sollen als "Publikationen der M. Schule" herauskommen. Herr Man[us]kript legt mich auch schon auf die nächste Lieferung gern fest.

Dem Brief lag das Interview bei, darf ich Sie bitten, mir Freitag

zu sagen, was darin vorgeht.

"Ohr-Linie" gefällt mir nicht übel.

Mit besten Empfehlungen an
Sie u. Ihre verehrte Gattin

Ihr

H. Schenker

19.4.32

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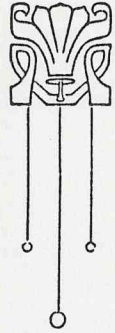
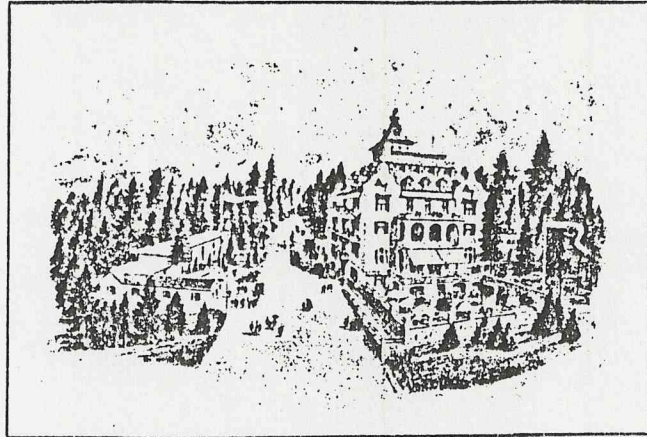
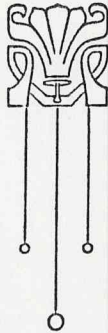
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Hotel Regina del Bosco Waldkönigin



RONZONE

Ronzone *21. Juni* 1903
 Post Fondo; Tirol

Nota pour *M. Herr Dr. Heinrich Schuber*

KUNSTANSTALT A. 1908 & CO., AARAU

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