

he has a belligerent faith in the individual and in the value of doubt. "European civilisation has profound doubts about itself. Well and good! I do not recollect that any civilisation ever perished from an attack of doubt. . . . The sensation of shipwreck is a great stimulation to man. On feeling that he is being submerged, his deepest energies react, his arms strike frantically in the effort to rise to the surface. The shipwrecked mariner becomes a swimmer. . . . Life is impossible without illusions. The old experience of Europe has tried them all: all except one on which it is now about to embark: the illusion of disillusionment."

Stephen Spender is working on a translation of Goethe's poems for the complete new edition being assembled, and he has been asked to do a translation of *Faust*, of which there are already 49. He gave a gently daring and witty lecture, beautifully spoken, with some modestly profound definitions of English poetry, and comparisons between the dimensions of *Faust* and *Hamlet*. Several subsequent speakers have disagreed with him, but as he had stopped short of making final and dogmatic points, in the baffling way the English have, they have had a hard time of it. Some boys were enjoying the Fourth of July outside the tent, and he professed himself terrified at the sound of gunfire celebrating a victory over the British. The audience gasped with surprise, and several warm-hearted Americans assured me afterwards that "We never think of it that way." Professor Curtius and Dr. Mahadevan had so much to contribute from other ways of thought that we could have settled down happily for weeks of discussion



AFTER Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, Artur Schnabel sets off on the world's longest chair-lift.

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with them. Thornton Wilder gave the most moving speech of all, though it is easier to remember what any one of the others actually said. All the lectures and symposia have been recorded for broadcasting to Europe and for immediate sale here, and they will also be printed.

Altitude Affects Music

The Aspen concerts by Mitropoulos and his Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra are the last that will be heard from this long, alliterative partnership. He goes next to join Stokowski to see what can be done about the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Antal Dorati, now at Dallas, Texas, will go to Minneapolis, and no doubt graduate from there with first-class honours as Ormandy and Mitropoulos have done. To Mitropoulos music is a function of the whole mind and body; like Beecham, he can make any number of unorthodox gestures without ever appearing irrelevant or ludicrous. He is the most athletic conductor I have seen and he jumps higher than de Sabata. His Petrouchka-like figure of tragi-comedy seems to conjure out the music for his own fantastic dance. In the long programmes with many items outside the usual repertoire he never refers to the score in performance or rehearsal. He holds to a belief, pretty well outworn elsewhere, that the movements of a symphony follow each other logically without break in tension; he rehearses these transition passages rigorously. As for turning the pages, "You must manage," and they do, just as they manage without a break for tuning, coughing and chair-moving. They love his amiable strenuousness, and the result is the most consistently lively playing I have heard. At this altitude the instruments and the wind-players' lips and lungs behave oddly. Each composer comes out overlaid with a harsh brilliance; which is probably necessary if the music is to make any impression in this sensational environment.

Rehearsals begin at mid-day. If the morning lecture overruns its time, the trumpet will innocently practise his *Leonora* No. 3 call backstage. The management not unreasonably tried to exclude onlookers from rehearsals, but Mitropoulos likes them there, and students sit next to their favourite instruments in the orchestra and discuss it all with the players. Rehearsals are only one part of the unofficial programme, which is as strenuous and interesting as the official. Visitors from isolated communities value the congruence of people and interests; those from the compartmented life of big cities value the close-up view, the chance to see the wheels go round. Students who want to follow up a particular line of thought take their specialist off to the Roaring Fork cafe where good conversation grows easily—Stephen Spender to read his poems, Thornton Wilder to talk of James Joyce and Kafka, Professor Curtius to discourse on modern German poetry. Or they find the musicians in the hotel lounge ready to clown publicly to their questions.

Ubiquitous Photographers

Nothing is private. In sinewy athleticism the camera-men are close runners-up to Mitropoulos and the chipmunks; they crawl out from under pianos and



AT THE END of a wet afternoon, Nathan Milstein (violinist) and Gregor Piatigorsky (cellist) play Brahms's Double Concerto. Dimitri Mitropoulos is in the background.

cafe tables, climb the tent-poles and give chase in motor-cars. A Viennese from another city brought in a fine little collection of books by Schweitzer and Goethe, and set them up in the window of the hardware store among the rakes, hoes, gumboots, harness and kettles. I went in and laid hands on a copy of *Faust* which I have not read. A car drove up, a man jumped out setting up equipment and calling, "Hold it!" The picture will be used by the State Department in Europe, though I do not know what it is meant to prove. We'll never see the bulk of these fascinating pictures, but we enjoy reading the national journals now pouring in, especially when they anticipate the event, or call us an "Arty stampede on tough old mining town." Sober, old-fashioned journalism is practised by the three-sheet *Aspen Times*, which prints itself each Thursday in a shed, and absorbs the Aspen press conferences and interviews into its traditional format.

In February, 1950, Aspen will hold a World Ski Championship, and in July it will probably honour the bicentennial of the death of J. S. Bach. This first festival is exploratory, and successful mainly because the diverse people who have come from all over for many different reasons are excellent mixers. They introduce themselves quickly, giving Christian name, plate of residence, occupation and interests. Talk moves into essentials at once. They are all specially kindly to New Zealand, and have enough energy left from Goethe

to bombard me with difficult and well-informed questions about Social Security legislation and the Maoris. One teacher looked me up because he had seen a recent issue of *Kiwi* and wanted to know if our student publications were always as good. Many teachers and students want to visit New Zealand and would welcome an exchange system.

Underneath all this we keep hoping that no harm will come to Aspen itself. When I came before the Festival, working dogs were taking a trusting siesta in the middle of dusty streets. Motorists have been courteous and none of them have been killed, but they have retreated, and so have a few old-timers who have bought themselves shacks in ghost villages up the valleys to retire to during invasions. City capital has brought the Festival here, and city visitors do not mean to destroy the retreat they love and need. The greatest security is the pride and generosity of the Aspen born. They turn out of their best rooms for us, share their home life, cook for us night and day and refuse to profiteer. Theirs is the unsparing immediate hospitality of isolated, hardworking people—the kind we know in the mining towns of our own western mountains. The wooden houses of Aspen, the decaying sheds, and the strong, hopeful ramshackle atmosphere are themselves so reminiscent, that I am often glad of the Stars and Stripes lining Main Street to remind me that I am in a country where the traffic comes in on the wrong side.