

BOLSHEVISM IN MUSIC

Bolshevism has been described as a desire for freedom expressed by methods inconvenient to the majority. According to M. Pederewski, Bolshevism is directed against all who use the toothbrush. There are, however, tendencies in art which can be conveniently summed up as Bolshevik. Whoever has done in art what was not done before has been considered Bolshevik by his contemporaries. Monteverde was a musical Bolshevik because in 1600 he dared to sound together, for the first time, the notes forming the then unpardonable discord of G, B, D, F, the now familiar dominant seventh. The composers of the early seventeenth century who revolted from the Palestrina school of pure vocal writing were a body of determined Bolsheviks, who laid the foundations for us of opera and instrumental music. To come to a much later period, Beethoven was hailed as a Bolshevik when he defied tradition by beginning one of his symphonies with a discord. Schumann, the Romanticist, was in his time a formidable Bolshevik, as were those wonderful innovators, Liszt and Wagner. But the most complete and astounding overthrow of what might be called respectable musical society has taken place during the last 20 years or so, at the hands of the Lenins and Trotskys of modern musical art, Richard Strauss, Debussy, Ravel, and Strawinsky, not to mention Schönberg, whose later works seem to be the absolute negation of everything previously known as music.

The outward and audible characteristic of Bolshevism in music is the throwing overboard of all accepted rules. What are these rules? They are something set up from time to time by theorists from an analysis of the practice of composers. But since the work of the composers comes first in point of time the rules have always been behind the times. The edifice of musical theory, which has to all intents and purposes been demolished during the last 20 years, is like a low, rambling building erected by many hands during the course of centuries. While it has been added to here it has been crumbling there, but it has served its purpose very well so long as musical art has been based on continuity with the past, as was the case until Wagner's work was completed.

But the last 20 years of music represent fresh methods which can hardly be regarded as part of the development of what has gone before. At the beginning of polyphony, ages ago, the first attempts at counterpoint, or more than one tune at a time, took the form of the addition of fourths, fifths, and octaves to a given melody. Later on, the parallel use of these intervals, fifths in particular, came to be regarded as anathema in vocal and instrumental part-writing. Composers of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries avoided them entirely, yet their systematic use has become a characteristic of Modernism in music. The theorists used to say, "Beethoven resolved chords in such a way, therefore you must." But examine any modern composer, such as Debussy, and you will find that if discords are resolved at all it is in a way unconnected with previously established principles.

To cut a long story short and avoid technical analysis, it seems to me that the development of art in general and musical art in particular might be represented by a circle. Proceeding to the left from a point in the circumference you begin with primitive notions of music—plain chant, folk-song, and the scales in use before the present major and minor scales became a convention. You pass on through the growth and perfection of the vocal polyphonic period, through the early instrumental attempts, to Bach, where perhaps the half-circle is reached, then onwards through Haydn and Mozart to Beethoven. Then the line of the circle proceeds through Schumann, Wagner, and Brahms, representing the perfect fusion of Romanticism and Classicism, and the logical, unfettered development of all that went before. Here you are confronted with a fresh phenomenon. A new spirit enters into musical art. What is it but an arc of the circle comprising the extreme developments of the preceding brought into

contact with the primitive elements of the beginning? Here comes a new art; the marriage of form and formlessness; of the primitive and the sophisticated. The two extreme elements of art have come together, and the New Birth is the result. This, in art, stands for the transmutation of the alchemist, the glistening powder of magistral force, the Wine of the Sabbath. Who can measure the possibilities opened to art by this union of opposites? It may be that the new music of the last 20 years is the merest shadow of what is to come when the composer arises who is great enough to synthesise and put in order the results of all these experiments and turn them to big, human uses.

Music having reached this position of flux and instability, the problem for the coming generation of musicians becomes increasingly difficult. Even performance is affected, and what would have passed muster 10 years ago cannot now be tolerated. Students are faced with entirely new problems, and to solve them a fresh generation of teachers is needed. It is perhaps of a piece with the present state of the world that on the educational side of art, especially musical art, nothing can be presented to the student as final in authority. The music student of to-day is a born Bolshevik; there is no rule to which he can give unqualified allegiance, and his natural bent is to rebel against every form of artistic discipline. The laws underlying the latest development in music are only known to those who are concerned in those developments, and to them only in a subconscious way. Theorists cannot possibly begin to analyse or formulate them. This period in music is, therefore, the moment for the instinctive artist, as well as the opportunity for the plausible charlatan, and the public is not yet in a position to make any distinction. We have arrived at a time in musical art when neither experience nor knowledge can in any effective way control the stream of tendency. Any attempt to keep the coming musical generation in the old paths is futile. The sanction of the old laws is lost, while the new laws are obscure, and the result is Bolshevism.

In so far as these changes of outlook affect the general public, a restlessness and want of confidence in both old and new work is evident. The old foundations have been shaken. It may be that out of all this will come a greater and deeper appreciation of fundamentals in music, a more intelligent if less voracious appetite for what is in itself good, and a more discriminating standard of musical art generally in this country and elsewhere.

—PICCOLO, in *Everyman*.

"BURY ME IN THE SUNSHINE."

Several years ago the late Archbishop Ireland was discussing the subject of the crypt in the new Cathedral, the place intended for the burial of the Archbishops of St. Paul. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Oh, bury me in the sunshine when I die." A few days before his death the venerable prelate gave expression to the same sentiments when he said:—"Let me lie out there with my people, under the green sod of Calvary; it is my wish."

James Nolan, who was present at the above meeting, put the sentiments into the following verses, which were published at the time:—

Bury me in the sunshine,
There would I have my rest,
On some fair slope, tree-sentinelled,
In the great all-mother's breast.

Rain-swept, wind-swept, snow-swept,
As the seasons come and go,
And God renews the gala dress
Of this His world below.

Sarcophagus of porphyry
In dismal crypt or vault—
If this must be the seal of fame,
I gladly make default.

For me the sunshine, twittering birds,
The waters' gurgling flow;
Where God renews the gala dress
Of this His world below.