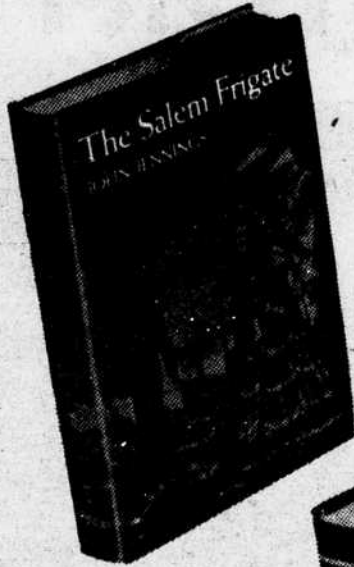
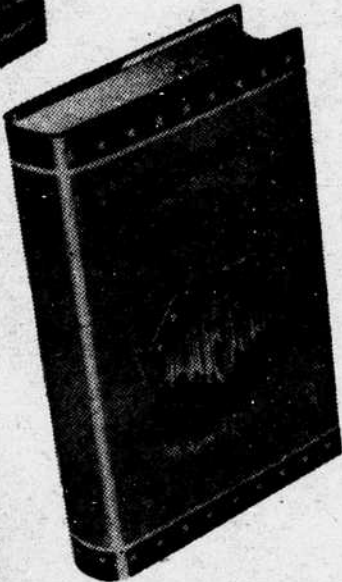


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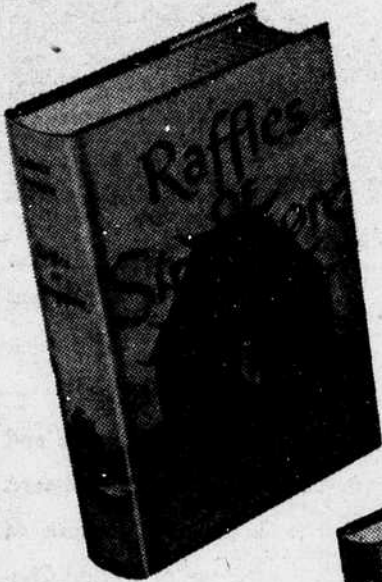


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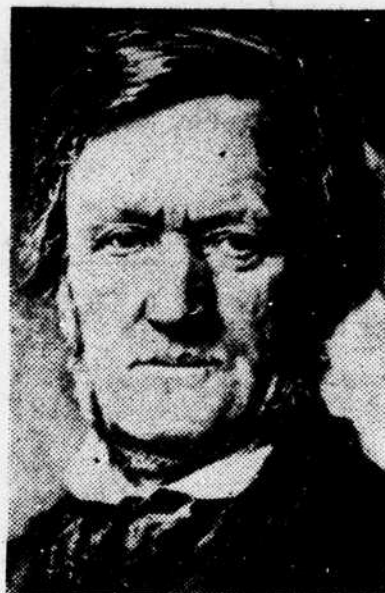
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Books on Music

By Alice Eversman
Music Editor of *The Star*



RICHARD WAGNER.

IT IS something of a coincidence that, with the war ended, should come the final volume of Ernest Newman's "The Life of Richard Wagner." This great German composer was animated by much the same ideas as developed under the Nazi regime and it will remain for future historians to prove how influential was his unswerving belief in the destiny of Germany to work the world's salvation, in building the political edifice that caused so much havoc.

Wagner dreamed of art as the great regenerator, however, yet he was political minded enough to take sides firmly in such matters all during his life. He, too, believed in the power of racial purity among the Germans, of their intellectual superiority, of the saving grace of German culture and of a new world they would build. But he dreamed of himself as the great spirit in this movement and not of a Hitler who was to do him honor by reverent command performances of his music dramas in the focal point of Wagner's kingdom, Bayreuth.

Newman published the first volume of his "Life of Richard Wagner" in 1933 covering the initial 35 years of his life. The second volume discussed the next 12 years with the third limited to the following important six years. The concluding work, which is by far the most important musical book of recent issuing, rounds out the stormy and brilliant story of one of the greatest figures in musical history.

One of the Greatest Biographies in Music

As in the preceding volumes, Newman is animated by his deep admiration for Wagner's genius, but is not blinded by it to a just estimate of his character. The material for this book is close to the memory of an older generation and has to do with his marriage to Cosima von Bulow, his friendship with King Ludwig II of Bavaria, the creation of Bayreuth, and on to the composer's death. Wagner's questionable behavior toward the King, his peculiar thought processes and the fanatical devotion of Cosima to him and to his plans are not glossed over but lucidly brought out.

The four books form one of the greatest biographies ever written. Mr. Newman is not only a profound scholar, sure of his facts as the 16 years required for the completion of the biography shows, but a writer who presents his analysis in a readable style. In the exhaustive treatment of his well-documented subject, it is a book for musicians and laymen alike. Yet, as Newman says, "No life of Wagner can be considered as anything like final until Wahfried has opened many more of its treasures to our examination; it is probable, indeed, that more than one of our present facts and judgments will call for correction or modification when certain eagerly awaited documents are published in full, when letters are released from quarantine and when a number of passages that have obviously been suppressed in letters already published have been restored."

The Causes of Modern Music

The subject of contemporary music has been approached often by various writers, but never from quite the same angle as does Max Graf in his book, "Modern Music." This eminent and prolific author takes as his thesis the causes of modern music. He glances comprehensively over the political, social, philosophical and artistic trends of centuries that unite to form the revolutionary musical ideas of the present time. The direct influences can be summed up in his words: "Contemporary composers no longer lived and created in a uniformly intellectual world. They were no longer united by an absolute world philosophy. Each of them stood by himself in the midst of whirls of ideas."

After a summary of conditions during the classic and romantic periods, he moves quickly to the outstanding modernists. He analyzes the intervals before World War I, that of the years between the two wars and the present day. From his very interesting ex-

planation of modern music in relation to world events, its progress has more logic.

Russian Composers

Biographies of Russian composers continue to exceed those of other nationalities. The most informative of these is Alexei Ikonnikov's "Myaskowsky, His Life and Work." This book about a composer who is not too well known here is chiefly valuable for the detailed listing of his works and their content. The biographical data is condensed but shows the influences at work during the early life of the composer under the Czarist government and those under the Soviets where he won enduring fame. Israel Nestyev's "Serge Prokofieff, His Musical Life," written with the co-operation of the composer, is a comprehensive study of different periods and circumstances that had a bearing on his musical development. He begins at the beginning, faithfully tracing the composer's progress claiming, however, as the flowering effect on his genius, his return to the Soviet fold. No new light is contributed on the composer in Antoni Gronowicz's "Sergei Rachmaninoff" as it follows almost literally the "Rachmaninoff Recollections," by Oskar von Rieseemann. Mr. Gronowicz adds only the last years to a formerly better told story.

"The Music of Tchaikovsky" is a survey of the composer's works written by different music critics and edited by the British critic, Gerald Abraham. The various branches of composition which the Russian essayed are portioned out between these writers, nine in all, who analyze them with a thoroughness never before accorded them. Only one chapter, by Edward Lockspelser, is devoted to "Tchaikovsky, the Man," the rest of the biographical material being woven into the estimates of his compositions by the other authors. It is a readable and informative book in spite of the collaboration of so many writers.

Decidedly entertaining but for different reasons are Bruno Walter's autobiography cleverly entitled "Theme and Variations" and Gretchen Damrosch Finletter's "From the Top of the Stairs." The former is a nostalgic look backward by the renowned conductor on the years of his childhood in Berlin and his subsequent career all over Europe. While Mr. Walter dwells with affectionate remembrances on those past times, he enlivens his rather romantic style with word

Recommended

THE LIFE OF RICHARD WAGNER—1866-83, by Ernest Newman. (Alfred A. Knopf; \$7.50.)

MODERN MUSIC, by Max Graf. Philosophical Library, N. Y.; \$3.)

LETTERS OF COMPOSERS. Edited by Gertrude and Miriam Lubelle Shrifte. (Alfred A. Knopf; \$5.)

THEME AND VARIATIONS, an autobiography by Bruno Walter. (Alfred A. Knopf; \$5.)

TWO WORLDS OF MUSIC, by Berta Geissmar. (Creative Age Press; \$3.)

pictures of famous people; royalty, writers, sculptors and painters beside musicians and composers. Descriptions of places and events help to lengthen it considerably which is forgivable for the intimate view it gives of the milieu of a great musician's development. By far the most poignant chapters are those dealing with his contacts with Nazism.

Walter Damrosch's daughter has written the gayest book of the year. As a precocious child in a gifted household, she gives inside information of how it operated and many behind-the-scenes events, all viewed from her position as the second of four lively daughters. It is cleverly written, amazing to an outsider in its revelation of the turmoil of an artistic family life and amusing in its keen appraisal not only of her parents but of many of the celebrities frequenting their home.

Another behind-the-scenes book is S. Hurok's "Impresario" written in collaboration with Ruth Goode. Here are brought back those great personages of the operatic, concert and ballet world who formed such a brilliant coterie a generation ago and whose careers were entrusted to Mr. Hurok. Including also tales of artists now under his management, it is a book by which a vivid picture is gained of celebrities through the anecdotes and personal information the author possesses.

The trend to present the renowned of the music world to the public from their most human side is carried out also in the "Letters of Composers," an anthology covering the years from 1603 to 1945 which is edited and put out by Gertrude Norman and Miriam Lubelle Shrifte. This is a revealing book on the character, methods of thinking, aspirations, conditions of working, philosophy and intellectual interest of men of every nationality and era. Most important also is the inclusion of letters of many of today's composers.

The eminent Herbert Weinstock has produced another biography of Handel which is noteworthy for its painstaking investigation. It presents Handel, however, almost exclusively in his role as impresario with valuable information of the background and production of all his operas and oratorios. Somehow, the book fails to strike a note of realism for its pedantic weighing of accepted stories, its rather dry notation of events and concern with historical happenings rarely allows the personality of Handel to emerge with any vividness.

Karl Geiringer's "Haydn, a Creative Life in Music," on the contrary, makes the composer a living personality. This is a much needed history of a man who has not been the subject sufficiently of deep research. Many new facts regarding Haydn's life are brought to light by the author, who, as curator of the collection of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna, had access to hitherto untouched material.

The personal experiences of Berta Geissmar in her "Two Worlds of Music" are an answer to questions musicians on this side of the Atlantic have asked regarding conditions during the Hitler regime. Dr. Geissmar was Furtwaengler's secretary and manager of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. She tells of the rich musical life before Hitler came to power and its deterioration afterward. Of Jewish parentage, she was suspected by the Nazis and was finally forced to take refuge in England, where she became general secretary to Sir Thomas Beecham and organizing manager of the London Philharmonic. Her story deals with the difficulties of a number of famous artists during this period and is a most illuminating revelation of the struggle between art and dictatorship. It is perhaps, the first attempt to make public the conditions existing at that time and its authenticity gives it an appealing quality.

For Singers

ROUNDS AND ROUNDS, collected by Mary C. Taylor. With decorations by Richard Erdoes. Music designed by Joseph Zizza. (William Sloane; \$3.) Over 100 rounds with music and highly amusing pictures. A delightful volume.