



Léger

J A Z Z

For the immediate future there will be only two kinds of music, the Banal, and the Mechanistic.

Ragtime embraces the first and is the nucleus of the second.

The first will derive its energy from the pulse of the new people, and the second from the direct environment of these masses; the towers, new architectures, bridges, steel machinery, automobiles, and other things which have a direct functioning, and are aesthetically placed directly apart from the organization of the sentimental which the first includes.

The first will be both sentimental and banal, and will be the artistic reorganization of the new people by a solitary genius. Here organization has the uppermost hand. It will find its energy in the most powerful musical fragments of these people — the most obstinately banal ones.

The second will be purely abstract and will derive its energy from the rhythmic genius of a solitary innovator whose sense of time spaces comes from the present moment of intricate machines which are new arms and legs of steel and reach out and change the entire epoch. This man must invent new machineries for the locomotion of time, or the musical canvas, in such a way that we have a new musical dimension.

At any rate it is impossible to imagine that we shall go on with innumerable pseudo-Schönbergs, or for that matter Schönberg himself.

A score which presents the illusion of a Mendelssohn with false notes is of no value to a present generation. Everyone knew that something was wrong, Schönberg was dry. The reason is that he had no grip upon spaces, no draughtsmanship that compelled itself. It is equally as futile to write violin solo sonatas which is now the smartest mode.

Of the others it is difficult to distinguish the sincere classicalists from the downright fadists who profess to gain all their necessity to compose from the last string quartets of Beethoven. To Beethoven and Brahms they add Schönberg. This is the situation in Germany.

Schönberg has not created a single new musical machinery. Strawinsky has, but he belongs to the first group. Auric, Poulenc, and de Falla are lesser stars. Casella is at best when he is sympathetic with Rossini. What Malipiero is trying to do is not always clear; I am not sure that Strawinsky has come more to the point about the music of old Italy with his tiny four-hand piece, "Napololitana" than all of the impressionistic uncertainty of "Pantea". Of one thing I am certain, that the "Espanola" of the same group of four-hand pieces far outdoes anything that has to date come from modern Spain. The last opera of Strawinsky, "Marva" which has to do with an Italian subject, and has arias, duets, and the usual arrangements of an old Italian opera score, is surely the essence and sum of the whole business.

As for the modern Englishmen, they are not so far away from Cyril Scott as they would have us think. In spite of themselves they will forever persist in using the machinery and aesthetic of The Master of Chromatic Sings.