

AR 4312

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Julius Buchwald Collection

1950s

Letters to the Editor

Licia Albanese, who will do Desdemona.

FROM THE MAIL POUCH

To the Music Editor:

I AM writing on account of the Mahler controversy. Olin Downes in his reply to Charles Cole has apparently chosen the most beside-the-point letter to chalk up an easy victory.

Mr. Downes' attitude can be summed up in two sentences:

- (1) I don't like Mahler;
- (2) Because I don't like it, it is bad music.

I don't like Mozart, but I would never assert that on this account his music is bad. Yet your music critic thinks himself omnipotent enough to decide things on such a basis. So many distinguished art and music critics in the past and present have tried earnestly to find out what is good and what is bad in art and music, but it was left to Mr. Downes' ingenuity to find such a profound answer to such a vexing question. From now on, Mr. Downes' likes and dislikes will decide the quality of any music.

There are two more points that puzzle me. Why does Mr. Downes drag in Sibelius? To show his hero in shining armor besides that poor beggar?

Nor is it the first time that Mr. Downes has abused his powers to stab vicious jabs at a man who cannot defend himself any longer; in fact these assaults have become very frequent. For a man who hates Mahler to the point of "jumping from his seat right in the middle of the third part as if he had been shot from a cannon," it is very peculiar that he is crowding himself into every available Mahler performance, not to let any op-

portunity slip to listen to this detestable music. There is but one conclusion left, that it gives him so much pleasure to write his vitriolic attacks as to outweigh his dislike of the music.

JULIUS BUCHWALD.

New York.

More on Mahler

To the Music Editor:

Let me endorse Mr. Downes' contention that the what of a concert is more worthy of the critics' attention than the how. Also his estimate of Mahler as a composer.

I knew him when he led our Philharmonic, then at one of its lowest ebbs, and his baton seemed to me no mightier than his pen. He must, however, have been a far better conductor of opera than of symphony. To his eternal credit, he had recently irritated the happy-go-lucky Viennese musicians with a touch of discipline and a spot of hard work (thereby sawing off the limb that sustained him).

What I most admired in Mahler were his shining talent for instrumentation, and his conversational gift, especially when I could lure him into a discussion of musical esthetics. Then he spoke with the tongues of men and of angels.

ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER.

New York.

Complaint About Audiences

To the Music Editor:

For some time my national pride has been offended by the insistence of my foreign-born friends that the United States is not a music-loving country. I have always contradicted these slighting remarks, but I am

RENCH WORKS

Sept. 19th 1951

Julius Buchwald
25-37, 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, L.I.

The Music Editor, New York Times. (concerning review: Bruckner Symphonies)

Sir:

H.C.S. has proved to be the blasé nephew of his benevolent uncle Anton Bruckner, who has not understood his message that: Faith can move mountains; and it is only one among many instances of cultural immaturity in the pages of the New York Times, that this article could pass on to the printer.

H.C.S. is but the average American, who, being brought up in security, luxury, soap opera and speed records, has little use for Symphonies like Bruckner and Mahler that take 60 to 80 minutes to perform.

To the real Brucknerite, his music is heavenstorming, much more than Beethoven or Brahms, and on his palette he has the shades of a Rembrandt, the baroque pomp of a Tintoretto, and the unmatched angelic beauty of a Murillo. His Symphonies are not too long, but too short to listen to, and he is not the greatest symphonic composer since Beethoven, but since all time. It is pleasant to recall, that Hanslick, who poured his scorn at Wagner and Bruckner alike was wrong once already. Your correspondent seems to dread the prospect that his 1st and 9th Symphonies will come out on long playings too. Certainly, there must be demand for his work on the other side of the Ocean to justify recordings. Matter of fact: he is THE up and coming composer on the European Continent whose place among the great stands beyond doubt. But, only people who have known insecurity, fear and misery are capable of delving into his music, a factor erroneously called mysticism by your correspondent.

The matter boils down to these basic principles: ought those immigrants from Europe be given a chance to listen to some of their favorite music (Bruckner and Mahler) or should the American listener prevail by the will of the majority? I submit that minorities have sacred rights in this country f.i. of their own food, their speech, their holidays. To these I would add: freedom of unbiased criticism, (if criticism in the case of an established master is warranted at all) and freedom of listening to favorite music, not all of the time, but some of the time. And in this case, the Radio Station of the New York Times has in the past grievously neglected its duty as is f.i. shown by its record since the 1st of January: 5 Bruckner and 5 Mahler performances. In a city where immigrant influx is heaviest in the country, and where, appropriately enough, the cultural level of the U.S. is being developed, the immigrant deserves a better treatment.

Yours truly