

# FORECAST REVIEW

## MODERN MUSIC IN GALLUP, NEW MEXICO

THE trans-continental comes to a stop in the middle of the vast plateau which is western New Mexico. Under the hot sun of early autumn lies Gallup, with its Main Street sprawling back from the railroad tracks. The street is alive, swarming with Indians from all parts of the Southwest. They come from far-off Taos, at the foot of the Colorado mountains, dignified in their white robes, their black braids hanging heavily over their shoulders; from the hot brown villages of the Rio Grande valley, from the Mesa villages, the fortified hill-towns of the Zunis and the Hopis. And the Navajos, eternal shepherds, eternal nomads, with raven locks and arrogant moustaches, their blouses hung with silver and turquoise, are riding in from their neighboring grazing lands, high on horse, followed by wives and children, like conquering hordes from the plateaux of Tibet. They have come to take part in the Inter-tribal Festival. Already impatient groups are singing and dancing. The brass band is playing. It is a Wild West Show, really wild and West, with Madison Square far away.

It is not possible to describe what takes place in Gallup for three days and three nights. A sun-dance by the Indians from Zia—the dancers' half-naked bodies gorgeously painted, some golden, some black, (the black ones, Night, with their long hair falling wildly over their faces) is a symbolic orgy—the clash between Night and Day—beside which the most exciting moments of the Russian Ballet seem pale. A Bow-and-Arrow dance by the Indians of Tesuque is of a rhythmic intensity and power unknown to us in our concert-halls. In the charming Basket-dance by the Indians from Santa Clara the men weave beautiful designs around the women, who, scarcely moving from one spot,

supply a sort of static element by balancing with gentle rhythm from one foot to the other. The grotesque and lascivious antics of the Hopi Fun-Makers which vastly amuse the onlooking Indians, are a reminder of the joy which we eternally take in beholding the ape in man. There is a thrilling War-dance of the Comanches. There is the eerie and silent Fire-dance of the Navajos, which the men, completely stripped except for loin-cloths, dance at night, around a colossal bon-fire, seeming to scorch themselves on the flames. All this must be seen and heard if one would know what great artists are the Indians and what a potent thing their music.

The music of the Indians is in some ways simple and crude. Instruments of exact pitch are practically unknown to them and they must express themselves completely in the fundamental elements of music, rhythm and melody, the rhythm of their instruments of percussion and the melody of their voices. The contrapuntal cathedrals of Palestrina have come and gone. Harmony has evolved from Monteverdi to Schoenberg. Indian music still stands where it was, in its primeval simplicity and strength.

The simplicity of their music, though, is more apparent than real. Their rhythms are remarkably complex. They have an amazing way of swinging abruptly from one to another and then back again to the first—a momentary jolt, a discomfort which makes the comfort of the initial rhythm all the more pleasurable. Their phrases are rhythmically free and not, like ours, constrained by bar-lines and symmetrically-shaped periods. In this way their music retains much that we no longer have. With an instinct for sustaining simultaneously two or more rhythms, far more subtle and genuine than ours, they constantly sing in rhythms of three against drum-beats of two, and vice-versa. And they do these things quite naturally, with ease and precision. At the moment of sunrise, in the Hopi Snake-dance, it is said that as many as seven distinct rhythms are kept going simultaneously—a frenzied delirium of rhythm.

Their melodic sense is less striking. Often charming in line, the melodies are expressive of a number of clearly defined moods, a gentle tenderness, a barbaric wildness and fury and a virile full-throated jubilation. They are almost invariably pentatonic, though

it is not always the same five notes which are used. We find sometimes wild combinations of chromatics with very clear suggestions of quarter-tones—a gorgeous impurity of sound. The War-songs, strangely enough, are usually of a very open and major character.

The Indians have a fine sense of design, as we know from their baskets and their pottery. The construction of their melodies is marvelous, combining clarity with firmness of outline, subtlety and strength, and they attain wonderful climaxes. Evangelio Gutierrez, a musician of the Pueblo of Santa Clara, showed how he composed his melodies by drawing carefully on a piece of paper lines of various lengths—each line a musical phrase, the repetition of each line, the repetition of that phrase. It was a charming design—on the paper and in the music.

Their instruments of percussion are many and varied. They beat on drums, tom-toms of various size and pitch, some more vibrant, more sonorous, some more tight, more incisive. They shake gourds, whose seeds, rattling in the hard shell, symbolically fructify the earth. We have seen men from Jemez with desperate energy beating sticks on bundles of hides, to supply a dull and distant throb for their dancing companions. The dancers themselves are hung with instruments of percussion so that their every move is at once a living sound. Around their necks and around their strong brown legs are strings of little shells, which tinkle softly. From their waists hang ropes of sleigh-bells, which jangle wildly, with a relentless and deafening insistence. The noise is hard and shrill—as brilliant as the painted bodies in the glaring sunlight. They rarely clap their hands as we do, but the sound of their bare feet beating against the hard earth is a very real intensification of the living rhythm.

Indian music is music of today. It is more of Stravinsky than of Brahms. It has a certain objectiveness. Not sentimental, not descriptive or anecdotal, it has clarity and strength of form. As in jazz, the rhythmic element predominates, but here the rhythm is a more integral part of the melody, of the phrase. There is also far more diversity of rhythm than in jazz.

The Indians do not care much for our music. With apparently no direct contact between theirs and ours, as there is between ours and the negroes', their music remains uninfluenced; and we, until

now, have not been ready for Indian music. Today we feel kinship with primitive man and respond to it for the first time.

Crude and primitive this music may be, but, throbbing with intense energy, its wild insistent rhythms, its barbaric dynamics fascinate us. One is reverent before its spirit, for the Indians' music is most often a part of their ritualistic dances—Rain-dances, Corn-dances, War-dances—and acquires therefore a religious, or at least a symbolic significance. This is great and unconscious art, which finds its roots deep in the past, in aeons of racial unity and race-tradition. In the early-morning atmosphere of the Far West one's senses are reborn. One marvels anew at sunset and sunrise and at those two eternal phenomena—melody and rhythm. And one sees in the simple strength of Indian music, wild, yet ordered, a complete expression of the soul of a great race.

*By Frederick Jacobi*

## ANOTHER SCHOENBERG DITHYRAMB

OF all living composers who have achieved international fame, the troublesome fellow is still Arnold Schoenberg. We have pretty well got the hang of Stravinsky—or think we have. He no longer shocks, alarms, or puzzles by his riddles and his wild capricious ways. Not always does he even amuse. Signs are not wanting that his once scandalous *Sacre du Printemps* will shortly be heard by audiences with the same equanimity that they mete out to the *Fingal's Cave* overture. Of course Stravinsky may yet turn about and astonish those of his critics who, like Mr. Ernest Newman, have already appraised his worth and designated his permanent place in the cosmos. The composer of *L'Oiseau de Feu*, of *Petrouchka*, and of *Le Sacre* (with its few "great pages" soaring from a trivial undergrowth), this one-time Antichrist of music turned *bon petit maître*, numbers his years, let us not forget, at only two and forty.

Schoenberg at fifty has been extravagantly praised and as hotly denounced, but, save for those who long ago consigned him to everlasting perdition, I am not aware that anybody has attempted the final summing up. The composer of the *Five Pieces for*