

TEMPO

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF MODERN MUSIC

Edited by Colin Mason

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The triple bill of Bartók's stage works given by the Budapest State Opera and Ballet Company in the first week of the Edinburgh Festival, and John Ogdon's performance of his three piano concertos in the course of the last two weeks, perhaps indicate the beginning of a revival of sophisticated as well as popular interest in Bartók's music. Since the period of intense interest immediately after his death, the struggle for Schoenberg and the astounding late fertility of Stravinsky have rather diverted attention from the relatively non-controversial figure of Bartók, who is accepted but at present possibly somewhat undervalued. The triple bill of one-acters affirms his gift for the theatre more strongly than any of the works singly, and makes us keenly aware of the loss that it was for modern opera that the discouragement he suffered over these works deterred him from ever writing for the stage again after 1920.

The importance of Bartók's contribution to the modern piano literature is more fully recognized, though here too there is one rather neglected work in the magnificent First Piano Concerto. I had hoped to publish in this issue an article on this work written at the time of its composition, and at the request of the composer, by Aladár Tóth, the distinguished Hungarian critic and early propagandist for Bartók. This proved very difficult to track down, and a copy could not be found in time for inclusion here, but it is hoped to publish it in a later issue. Bartók's own article on the Second Piano Concerto, published here in English for the first time, was written in 1939 for the journal *La Radio Lausanne*.

Dr. Benjamin Suchoff, who contributes the note on the Third Piano Concerto, is also the author of the guide to *Mikrokosmos* which is the subject of John Ogdon's opening article. This extremely valuable little book (part of a more comprehensive study not yet published) contains Bartók's own comments on the technical and musical problems raised in each of the *Mikrokosmos* pieces, which Ann Chenée (then President of the New York Piano Teachers Congress) took down in the course of four study sessions with the composer, and later passed on to Dr. Suchoff. Among his many other activities Dr. Suchoff is also a research assistant at the Bartók Archives in New York, where he is at present engaged in preparing for the press Bartók's vast collection of Rumanian folk music, and has also taken advantage of the unique opportunity that the Archives provide of making a close study of Bartók's manuscripts. I am indebted both to him and to Dr. Victor Bator, the trustee of Bartók's estate and the founder of the Archives, for providing the photographs of the sketches from *Mikrokosmos* and the Third Piano Concerto reproduced in this issue, and also for the photograph of Bartók travelling with Dohnányi, recently published by Dr. Bator in his account of the Archives (*The Béla Bartók Archives: History and Catalogue*, New York 1963). This handsomely produced 50-page booklet contains much valuable information and some interesting documentary and pictorial material. The Archives have long been open to scholars, but shortage of space has prevented their being made accessible to the general public. It is good to learn that more spacious quarters have now been found and that an official opening is planned in September.