

MAN, MIND AND MUSIC. By Frank Howes. (Secker and Warburg; 12s.6d.)

This stimulating book provokes more questions than it answers. Its lack of conclusiveness may be partly due to the fact that it was not designed as a continuous argument, but grew out of papers and lectures given on different occasions; but it is also inherent in the range and depth of the problems discussed—the relation of music to anthropology, philosophy, psychology and sociology.

Under these four main headings the book opens fascinating lines of thought—for example, has music an ethical content, is there a musical counterpart to logical thinking, how far is the personality of a composer revealed in his music?—and challenges further study. And on two points the author makes no secret of his convictions—that music can throw light on other branches of knowledge and they in turn on music, and that music has a moral, emotional or philosophical content—in other words, a ‘meaning’—related to the rest of human experience, and is not a purely abstract and self-contained art: a view debated by professional musicians, but one which seems to accord with the age-long response to music of the human mind and heart.

ROSEMARY HUGHES

SERGEI RACHMANINOV. By John Culshaw. (Dobson; 8s.6d.)

Rachmaninov is one of the most problematical figures, both as a personality and a composer, amongst contemporary musicians. By this it is not intended to imply, as some purists have maintained about composers generally, that the relationship between the man and the musician is non-existent or unimportant: indeed, one of the chief merits of Mr Culshaw's book is its excellent balance and sanity, the admirable unity and synthesis which have been achieved in spite of the ‘life and works’ method. Such a method is very frequently the most satisfactory for the discussion of a composer, but it cannot be successful unless the writer has a very real familiarity and sympathy with his subject. These qualities, as his book undoubtedly proves, Mr Culshaw has in abundance; and he has at the same time preserved a lucid critical sense and detachment.

The account of the life of this almost Chekhovian character is fascinating, and one only regrets that more time was not spent in exploring in greater detail his early life as a uniformed student in Sverev's house, for example, or even more, the extraordinary collapse after the failure of the first symphony and the powerful influence of Dr Dahl. Rachmaninov's psychiatric condition suggests a comparison to that of his idol Tchaikovsky, though it was, of course, quite different and has not yet been satisfactorily explained. However, this task, as Mr Culshaw has tacitly and wisely admitted, awaits the doctor rather than the musician.

In his account of the music the author is rarely commonplace and often instructive, rarely untidy in expression and often penetrating in thought: and, unlike many writers, he does inspire one

to listen to more of the music itself. The book concludes with the usual and useful list of works, and a 'discography'. It has been excellently produced and printed, and deserves well.

ERIC TAYLOR.

THE NEW LONDON LETTER WRITER, CONTAINING THE COMPLETE ART OF CORRESPONDING WITH EASE, ELEGANCE AND PERSPICUITY AS NOW PRACTISED BY ALL PERSONS OF RESPECTABILITY. By Samuel Johnson, M.A. Foreword and Decorations by Averil Mackenzie-Grieve. (Golden Cockerell Press; £1 10s. 0d.)

The Foreword to this book of portentous title informs us that it is a reproduction (or rather an abridgement) of a manual, bound in marbled covers and costing but a shilling, which was first published in 1794 and bore upon its title-page the great name of Samuel Johnson. At first sight we were inclined to suspect a 'Fake', but apparently this is not so. The present Editor tells us that there is a copy of a seventh edition in the British Museum library; and conjectures that the author may have assumed a fictitious name as a draw for the public. The volume under review is, as its Colophon states, an *edition de luxe*, limited to 500 numbered copies, printed in Caslon type on mould-made paper and priced according to binding. The whimsical and grotesque 'decorations' (modern) are woodcuts quite in the baroque style of the period, although some of the modish ladies depicted are of an excruciating hideousness which hardly seems necessary.

The Letters give, it is claimed, a lively picture of eighteenth-century life, and much solid instruction in dealing with 'Trade, Affection, Courtship, Economy, Sickness, Death'. Their language is quaint, formal and stilted, with now and again some coarse humour after the fashion of Smollett and Sterne, and a modicum of Richardson-like sentiment underlying the whole. Just, as the modest producer claims, a *pot-pourri* of faded colours, musty fragrance, sweetness and tang. An elegant trifle not without interest and charm.

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

A CRAFTSMAN'S ANTHOLOGY. By A. Romney Green. (Allen and Unwin; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Romney Green is owed a debt of gratitude by craftsmen in wood in particular and by all who love good work in general. These will welcome the opportunity this anthology gives to learn from whence he drew inspiration and recreation, and gather if they can some clue to the philosophy which guided a master craftsman and reformer.

The object of this anthology, says the author in his introduction, is 'that of finding memorable expression for the best living tendencies of thought'. And again, 'I have not assumed that the "best" tendencies of thought need be mutually consistent'. It will be well for the reader to keep this latter in mind when appraising