

vide the religious awakening with German tunes. These he found notably among the new-come Moravians who were just then taking root in English soil. To selections of German Moravian tunes Wesley added airs by Handel, Giardini, Lampe, and other composers of the imported elite London musical circle, and it was this hodgepodge of everything but good old English song that made up his first tune book for the Methodists. *A Collection of Tunes, set to music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery*, London, 1742, set the pace for that upsurging group in its early stages of growth."

White and Negro Spirituals tells one of the most fascinating stories in the world, that of the secret, or nonofficial, musical life of this country. It would seem that this is all bound up with religious dissent. It includes as much dissent from official America as from official Europe. It is based on the privilege of every man to praise God, as well as to court a damsel, with songs of his own choosing. For two hundred years it has refused institutional mediation in culture, as it has denied the necessity of institutional mediation for salvation. As a result, we have a body of British song that has survived the efforts of churches, of states, and of schools — for all have tried — to kill it. As a further result, we have a musical life of high creative energy. It is characteristic of our history that that life should be still today more vigorous and more authentic in rural regions and among the economically submerged than among those of us who are constantly subjected to the standardizing influences of radio, of the public-school system, and of socialized religion.

MARCH 12, 1944

Equalized Expressivity

☞ ARTUR SCHNABEL, who played last night in Carnegie Hall the second of three recitals presented by the New Friends of Music and devoted to the piano music of Beethoven, has for some thirty or forty years made this composer the object of his especial attention. He passes, indeed, for an expert on the subject, by which is usually meant that his knowledge of it is extensive and that his judgments about it are respected. Any issue taken with him on details of tempo, of phraseology, of accent is risky and, at best, of minor import. Minor too are criticisms of his piano technique, which, though not first class, is adequate for the expression of his ideas. His ideas about Beethoven's piano music in general, whether or not one finds his readings convincing, are not to be dismissed lightly.

Neither need they, I think, be taken as the voice of authority. For all the consistency and logic of his musicianship, there is too large a modicum of late nineteenth-century Romanticism in Mr. Schnabel's own personality to make his Beethoven — who was, after all, a child of the late

eighteenth — wholly convincing to musicians of the mid-twentieth. No one wishes to deny the Romantic elements in Beethoven. But I do think that they are another kind of Romanticism from Schnabel's, which seems to be based on Richard Wagner's theories of expressivity.

Mr. Schnabel does not admit, or plays as if he did not admit, any difference between the expressive functions of melody and of passage work. The neutral material of music — scales, arpeggiated basses, accompanying figures, ostinato chordal backgrounds, formal cadences — he plays as if they were an intense communication, as if they were saying something as important as the main thematic material. They are important to Beethoven's composition, of course; but they are not directly expressive musical elements. They serve as amplification, as underpinning, frequently as mere acoustical brilliance. To execute them all with climactic emphasis is to rob the melodic material, the expressive phrases, of their singing power.

This equalized expressivity ends by making Beethoven sound sometimes a little meretricious as a composer. His large-scale forms include, of necessity, a large amount of material that has a structural rather than a directly expressive function. Emphasizing all this as if it were phrase by phrase of the deepest emotional portent not only reduces the emotional portent of the expressive material; it blows up the commonplaces of musical rhetoric and communication into a form of bombast that makes Beethoven's early sonatas, which have many formal observances in them, sound empty of meaning and the later ones, which sometimes skip formal transitions, sound like the improvisations of a talented youth.

The work that suffered least last night from the disproportionate emphasizing of secondary material was the Sonata, opus 111. Here Mr. Schnabel achieved in the first movement a more convincing relation than one currently hears between the declamatory and the lyrical subjects. And in the finale he produced for us that beatific tranquillity that was a characteristic part of Beethoven's mature expression and that had been noticeably wanting, though there were plenty of occasions for it, in the earlier part of the evening.

MARCH 28, 1944

Surrealism and Music

☞ THE SPRING number of *Modern Music* contains a reflective article on the place of music in modernist esthetics by a man who has admittedly little taste for the art and no precise knowledge about it. The author of this essay is André Breton, founder, defender of the faith, and for twenty years pope of the surrealist movement in French poetry, at present head of the surrealist government-in-exile in New York City.

Mr. Breton defends his own antagonistic attitude toward music on the