

predicted that no Venus would answer his call. Anne sings Tom to sleep. Trulove leads her gently away. Tom wakes and raves of his Venus who was with him and has disappeared. The others will not believe that she was ever there, and he sinks back dead.

*EPILOGUE:* The curtain descends and in front of it step the five principal characters, Anne, Baba, Tom, Nick and Trulove, to sing an epilogue. The moral: For idle hands and hearts and minds, the Devil finds a work to do.

### STRAVINSKY, GOETHE AND MOZART

*The Rake's Progress*, compared with ninety-nine percent of other operatic libretti, is simplicity itself. Its love plot is the basic grand love story used by dramatists of varying epochs and talents from Shakespeare to Erich Segal. Hollywood jargon of the '40's might have the plot read: girl loves boy but he (overly ambitious) falls in with bad company and forgets girl; boy strikes it rich in the big city and soon finds whoring boring; he marries out of spite. Girl tries to save him through her great love when (enter Stravinsky and Auden in 1951) . . . love does NOT conquer all — and boy ends in Bedlam.

Until Tom Rakewell's madness these ploys figure in operas from *Fidelio* to *Faust*. *The Rake's Progress* may, in fact, be termed Stravinsky's *Faust* — but resembling Goethe not Gounod. Is not Anne Trulove a pure, innocent Gretchen, while Tom Rakewell is both lover and philosopher? The comparison, in Twentieth Century terms, is at least one-half correct: innocence is timeless, but the dual gifts of love and philosophy have, in our century, been heavily taxed by the past. Goethe's *Faust*, despite his pact with Mephistopheles, is eventually saved by God's angels and is borne off to Heaven. *Faust's* never-ending striving and will to good have earned him salvation. Tom Rakewell also concludes a Faustian pact and, at one point like Goethe's *Faust*, even aspires to immortality through good deeds. As *Faust* in Part II exhausts himself reclaiming land which will feed millions, so Tom dreams of a machine which turns "stones to bread/whereby peoples were for nothing fed." When Nick Shadow wheels in such a fraudulent contraption, Tom nevertheless elatedly believes that "Thanks to this excellent device/Man shall re-enter paradise . . . secure from need, the cause of crime/The world shall for the second time/Be similar to Heaven."

If *Faust* is a vision of what Nineteenth century man thought Man could be, Tom is a cartoon of what Twentieth Century men all too often are. Tom is clever, opportunistic, mildly idealistic and passive. He hardly exists as a protagonist for Tom is more acted upon than he is a man of action; as Twentieth Century Everyman he is, at best, a non-heroic materialist. What makes him pitiable or believably sympathetic is that in his madness he seeks the solace of Venus and remembers love. "Weep for young Adonis whom Venus loved."

Such a reconstruction may put words in the composer's mouth. (Although with an assist from Auden, one suspects Stravinsky was not unaware of such parallels.) However the case, the libretto has inspired some very beautiful music from Stravinsky. *The Rake* is full of elegant lyricism and perhaps because of this, it has drawn some critical broadsides. A work composed in 1951, critics charge, has no right to be so Mozartean, so conservative. (But can Beauty be historically weighed?) *The Rake* does owe a debt to Mozart — for Stravinsky knew that Mozart's music has survival power.

Stravinsky's neo-classical art, by seeking to unify past and present, aspires to a double presence. Stravinsky's classical music, then, is an attempt to transcend time in the present.

from *Stravinsky, Goethe and Mozart*

(Lothar Klein)