

Stravinsky Strong

Influence at Age 83

By **LOTHAR KLEIN**

Igor Stravinsky is the man who broke musical tradition — a break that changed the course of music and opened new vistas to the world of music and art. Today, at the age of 83, Stravinsky still remains the most ingenious of modern composers. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Stravinsky, along with Richard Wagner and Arnold Schoenberg, is one of the three most influential composers of our western heritage.

Born in Russia, Stravinsky attended the University of St. Petersburg, studying law at the insistence of his father. Igor's real love, however, was music. He became a private student of Rimsky-Korsakoff and continued his musical studies along with jurisprudence. It was not long before law studies were abandoned and music received his full attention. Even at these early stages of his career, Stravinsky's work showed unusual harmonic combinations and startling sonorities as demonstrated in the Symphony of 1907.

The French impresario and ballet master Diaghilev, impressed with Stravinsky's style, commissioned the composer to write for the ballet. The relationship between these two men resulted in some of the greatest works of the ballet repertoire.

Stravinsky has never considered himself a revolutionary composer, even when he produced such works as "The Rite of Spring." Regarding "revolutionary" atonal music, Stravinsky has said, "I am not a modern. I am altogether incapable of understanding atonal music."

It was in 1925 that Igor Stravinsky visited the United States for the first time. He returned to this country several times before making it his permanent home, becoming an American citizen in 1945. Prior to that, during World I, Stravinsky lived in Switzerland and in 1919 settled in France, becoming a French citizen.

Throughout his change of nationalities, his music personality remained uniquely the same. Since 1955 most of Stravinsky's major works adopt a serial

technique modeled after the 12-tone idiom of the Viennese composer Anton von Webern. He has composed in all mediums — opera, ballet and orchestra, as well as chamber music. Almost 100 different works have been published and performed during his lifetime, and his enquiring mind has led him to explore new processes of construction as well as new instrumental combinations and tone colors.

At the present time a documentary film is being prepared which will review all the premieres of Stravinsky's early works. The film will depict the history of change in musical concepts and innovations, including the famous works composed for Diaghilev's French ballet.

Stravinsky has recently returned from Israel where his sacred ballad, "Abraham and Isaac," written and presented to the state by the composer, received its world premiere under the composer's direction. He has also fulfilled such commissions as a work celebrating the 1,000th anniversary of the City of Venice, and has held the Charles Eliot Norton Chair of Poetry at Harvard University.

Following his appearance here, Stravinsky plans to attend the premiere in Chicago of his latest work "Variations for Orchestra" to be conducted by Robert Craft with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Soon after he will leave on a two-month world tour which will include Paris, Rome, London, Hamburg and Budapest.

Stravinsky is coming to Austin to be the guest of The University of Texas at the Inter-American Symposium of Contemporary Music. The symposium will be devoted exclusively to the late works of Stravinsky. These works, as difficult for the performer as for the listener — strangely enough for the work of the world's greatest living composer — have had few performances by professional music organizations. This, it would seem, points out the unadventurous spirit of American musical life.

Today, only universities have remained relatively free of the choking complexities of the mu-

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sic business. A role of the university may be similar to that of universities in the Middle Ages which afforded artists and scholars an environment conducive to free thought. Specifically speaking, it may be the symposia for new music sponsored by various colleges and universities throughout the country which will be the most vital core of today's music scene. Universities must take the initiative. Only through efforts like symposiums can the life and growth of our creative musical culture be sustained.

Symposiums naturally pose a confrontation, a conflict between old and new, but we must not forget that conflict signifies life. Symposiums should mean contact with our century. Whatever our attitude toward new music may be, let us not be afraid of being part of our century by refusing to take an adventure of the spirit.

Lothar Klein, composer and theorist on the faculty of the UT department of music, was awarded a PhD degree from the University of Minnesota for his dissertation "Stravinsky and the Problems of New Music." Dr. Klein's work came to the attention of Stravinsky and a three-month correspondence concerning the problems of new music followed. A member of the music department's Inter-American Symposium for Contemporary Music committee, Dr. Klein is responsible for and negotiated the Stravinsky visit.

A composer in his own right, Dr. Klein's work was recently selected by the Rockefeller Foundation to appear on the Rockefeller orchestral music programs which the Foundation is sponsoring throughout the country.