

London "Sunday Observer" Sunday Telegraph

I also worked for the London Times
September 19, 1965

MUSIC

JOHN WARRACK

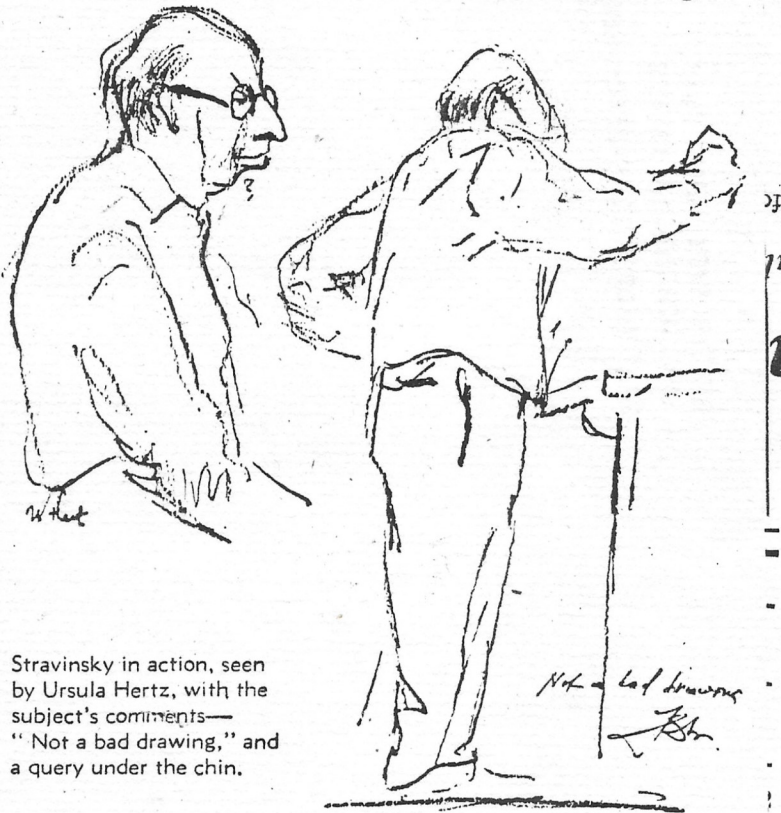
Heart-Beat for a Century

AS EVER, it was wonderfully moving to watch Stravinsky approaching the Festival Hall rostrum last Tuesday—slower of gait now, not a whit slower of intelligence or invention, as his new "Variations in Memory of Aldous Huxley" were to show.

A gnarled, diminutive piece of history, bowing deep courtesy, beaming a voracious smile, once again he was directing his own music with the precise gestures that have for so long measured the heart-beat of the 20th century.

I wish there could be unmixed gratitude for the chance of seeing him once more. As things turned out, it needed a piece of sharp rebellion from the audience, including a boomed "Encore!" from Stravinsky himself, to obtain full measure and reverse the peremptory announcement that by "a slight alteration" we should hear the new piece only once and not conducted by the composer. Robert Craft's acceptance of the general will for a repeat did him credit, as did his lucid exposition of the music; he handles this phase of Stravinsky's music well.

But by now we were in no mood to be further put upon. Throughout a sorry performance of "The Rite of Spring" by Craft, preparations for televising the second half were allowed to proceed unchecked. The house lights rose and fell while Stravinsky and Craft were actually conducting; but this



Stravinsky in action, seen by Ursula Hertz, with the subject's comments—"Not a bad drawing," and a query under the chin.

a bad performance of "The Rite." Why drop the originally announced Symphonies of Wind Instruments and "Pulcinella"? Why none of the great classical works, why no "Apollo" or "Orpheus" or, coming into recent times, "Agon," that entranc-

stripped for action: the "Rite" was already in his mind.

And, with the New Philharmonia in their element, the old master was securely at the helm. "Less makes more": it was fascinating to watch his sudden imperious glance fired at