

present general fear and lack of leadership in every phase of music is the gift of Prosperity, let us then welcome home that prodigal, Depression, even though there is no fatted calf for the feast.

*Harrington Shortall*

### PROGRESS AT ROCHESTER

IT is extremely gratifying in this seventh season of the American composers' concerts at the Eastman School, to note the increased audience that attends the concerts. The audience is naturally one of composite elements, and the layman is no small quantity. If there is to be a future for American music it is not idle to assume that Dr. Hanson's fruitful work in Rochester will have a great share in making it possible.

At the date of this writing there have been this year three concerts devoted to American compositions. Most of the works received their premieres in Rochester, and were written by musicians whose names are not yet widely known. Others by established American composers had already received performances, except the *Second Symphony* by Randall Thompson, of which I shall have more to say later.

The first concert of the season, in October, included five compositions. Bernard Wagenaar was represented by the rondo from his suite, *Divertimento*; Arthur Farwell, by his *Gods of the Mountain*, a suite in five parts; Harold Gleason, by his *Prelude on a Gregorian Theme*, for organ and orchestra; Sowerby, by his prelude to the suite *Ironics*; William Grant Still, by an *Afro-American Symphony*.

Wagenaar's rondo was an amusing trifle, well scored, containing the sardonic humor which characterizes much of his work. Farwell's *Gods of the Mountain* is a descriptive bit of writing which shows the mature hand of a composer in full command of his means of expression. It is, however, music of no great moment. Gleason's *Prelude on a Gregorian Theme* is an interesting piece of contrapuntal writing, not lacking in poetry. It could be improved immeasurably by judicious pruning; it is rather modern harmonically, and possesses an interesting use of

discords. The prelude to the suite *Ironics* by Sowerby is extremely chromatic and sentimental without being maudlin. It is an early work and "Graingerish." Here Sowerby uses the orchestra with his customary gift for sonority.

William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* would be more acceptable had he called it a suite. It is not cyclical nor symphonic in the accepted sense. Rather does it make use of dance forms. It has neither the power and subtlety of this composer's *Darkest Africa*, nor does it approach his ballet *Sadji*, for general musical worth. The work is quite simple harmonically; in instrumental color typical of Still at his best. He derives extraordinary color with the scantiest of means, color that is essentially racial. Sincerity and naiveté are among the most important elements in his work.

The second concert of the series on March 3 opened with an *Heroic Poem* by Radie Britain, whose inspiration was the transatlantic flight of Colonel Lindbergh. According to the program notes it does not attempt to suggest circumstances, but is not without musical allusions of some realistic intent, which in itself suggests the circumstances. Miss Britain's attempt at heroism in this music did not quite come off. The subject requires a composer of broader vision and command of orchestral color.

Martha Alter Douglas, though she possesses ample talent, has not yet the technic to synchronize the realism of the poem, *Bill George*, to music. However, this first composition for orchestra has many virtues. The *Cathedral Prelude* of David Stanley Smith is a scholarly well written effort of Neo-Germanic influence. It is not particularly inspired; was it a twentieth century cathedral? As to the *Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* by Charles Griffes, also on this program, too much has been said and written about its merits to warrant discussion here.

The third and last concert took place on March 24. The overture, *Comes Autumn Time*, of Leo Sowerby was welcome by virtue of its sprightliness, humor, and jovialness. It has a popular appeal, is none the less well constructed and richly orchestrated in the best Sowerby manner. Edward Kurtz's scherzo from his *First Symphony* is too conventional and too reminiscent to warrant detailed comment.

The *Second Symphony* of Randall Thompson evidences the ripening of his powers. A better constructed work is hard to find. Thompson uses jazz rhythms with the utmost refinement of style. He is one of our best craftsmen. This is essentially an American work, and, to the writer, one of the best symphonies written in a long time.

The first movement of Henry Cowell's *Concerto* for piano is an interesting study in sonorities, but its value as music is debatable. The *Symphonic Fragments—Proem, Threnody, Persiflage*, by Dorothy James, are as illusive as their sub-titles. However, Miss James has talent and youth; with maturity comes discretion. *Natchez on the Hill*, the work of John Powell, is a well orchestrated piece, rhythmically pulsating, in which Virginian fiddle tunes are used. With this number the last concert of the season came to an end.

The second annual festival, May 3, 4, 5, and 6, was scheduled to include the following "first times": *Concerto* for oboe and orchestra by Irvine McHose, *Prelude and Fugue* for piano and orchestra by Daniel Gregory Mason, and the *First Symphony* of Herbert Inch. Also on the first program of this festival were two choral numbers, *The Raising of Lazarus* of Bernard Rogers, an emotionally inspired cantata which has a decided spiritual element all too rare in these days, and *Exultate Deo* by Mabel Daniels. Other works were more or less familiar and have received many performances. Of particular interest were the ballets, *The Happy Hypocrite* of Herbert Elwell, and *Skyscrapers* of John Alden Carpenter. Owing to the pressure of time a review of the festival could not be written for this issue.

*Emanuel Balaban*

## MORE AMERICANS AND KURT WEILL IN BERLIN

THE current concert season in Berlin was under the zodiac sign of American music. In December the Berlin section of the International Society for Contemporary Music presented works by Copland, Gruenberg, Ruggles and Sessions under the direction of Ansermet. Early in March, two Berlin concerts were sponsored by the Pan-American Association of Composers;