

fortified by the material itself. It seems to reflect, and certainly conveys, expectancy, determination, above all a festive sense of the joyous possibilities of life and a desire to be one with things in their festivity and acclaim them in music.

Hence it is that we look with keen anticipation to the second performance of the *Set of Three Pieces*. It is to take place at the March 26th of the three recitals presenting programs by young American composers, which the League is giving with the cooperation of the Society of Professional Musicians. Rumor has it the piece will also be repeated at a concert of the Beethoven Association. Plans to have it published also are under way. The young composer, meanwhile, is busied on an opera.

Paul Rosenfeld

THE LATEST FROM BOSTON

DR. KOUSSEVITZKY has had a great festival of brand new American works, right at the 50-yard line of the season. In the face of his uncompromising Friday afternoon audiences, he has brought out Carpenter's new *Violin Concerto*, the *Second Symphony* of William Schuman, and the *Third Symphony* of Roy Harris. And what with an all-Bloch concert on deck, we feel most grateful to him.

The Carpenter work started out as if it were going to be exciting, and got steadily drearier, cloudier, more involved, and fancier (bells, Oriental drum, vibraphone, et al.) until the pianissimo ending found several good friends of modern music asleep in their stalls. The fault lay, probably, in the lack of significant thematic material, which lack precluded any immediate recognition of thematic development. As the piece progressed (or as time progressed) one was conscious of many small sections which sounded mutually irrelevant, all plunged into a romantic bath perfumed with Debussyan orchestration. There were moments when one sat up, interested, desperately hoping for more of the same, to be rewarded only with some tone-row or other expertly dressed up with nowhere to go.

Zlatko Balokovic, the Yugoslavian violinist who has been more or less touring the country with this concerto, made an extraordinary parallel with the course of the music. He began

vigorously, promisingly, with the incisive attack of Szigeti playing Prokofieff, and declined in virility and technical proficiency right along with the declining interest of the music, until the final long-held harmonic on E began to run the octaves while quivering bells most appropriately pealed out what the program notes called the opening theme.

The Schuman symphony, on the other hand, was for the most part a joy to hear. A first impression is one of formidable, structure, direct, clear, unified, and innocent of padding. It is one movement, entirely worked out on a long stentorian theme started at the beginning against a C-pedal in the trumpets. The theme is angular in character, probably because of the abundance of tritonic figures. These tritones, in fact, used throughout the piece, give it its general melodic feeling. The first tonal relation heard is C against G- \flat . The theme undergoes augmentation, diminution, inversion, reharmonization (very effectively), fugato, canon, and all the rest. The total effect is one of accumulation of matter, building to a startling climax at the end.

Adverse criticism concerns the tempo (*larghissimo*). This is so slow that the connectivity of the melodic line is not apparent, especially in the opening where it is important to hear the line as a theme and not as a series of notes. And at that Koussevitzky was taking it faster than the metronomic indication allowed. Another point, stemming from the preceding one, is that there is not enough motion; one feels a lack of rhythmic vitality where it is psychologically necessary. But the work is fortunately short enough—seventeen minutes—so that this does not become uncomfortable.

The most important music heard, however, was the Harris *Symphony*. It is mature in every sense, beautifully proportioned, eloquent, restrained, and affecting. Generally in our haste to ask "Did you like it?" we forget that this question really connotes "Did it affect you?" I became keenly aware of this on suddenly experiencing a strong desire to hear the Harris again, because it greatly excited me. Especially a wonderfully mobile and engaging middle section, pastoral in character, where woodwinds charmingly molded lines over a shimmering arpeggiated figure

in the strings. These lines are separated by pauses made very impressive by the interpolation of a progression in the first desk strings and vibraphone. The sound is amazing—it seems to have no beginning, no attack; and one becomes suddenly conscious of it. (The good taste here involved is a far cry from Mr. Carpenter's use of vibraphone, which was reminiscent of a second-rate jazzband.) This whole section has been called overlong, and the weak part of the symphony; but I found the contrary true. It was just fleeting enough (in the intelligent Koussevitzky performance) to carry one right along with it.

One or two places do not quite come off. Chief of these is the ending, where for a short time the opening material returns, and the symphony suddenly ends in what impresses one as the wrong tonality. But this recapitulation seems to have no significance in its new form; it is, rather, anticlimactic after the vigorous bravura just preceding. The end—always so important psychologically—thereby weakens what might otherwise have sounded like a totally satisfying and exhilarating masterwork. The other weak place is the section just before the end, where strings and woodwinds have the principal material in canon, with sharp staccato punctuation in the brass. The effect would have been dazzling if only the brass had not from time to time eclipsed the rest of the orchestra.

I should like also to mention three songs on texts by Jacopo da Todi by Everett Helm, a young composer of Harvard extraction. They were performed at a recent Harvard concert, sharing the program with Stravinsky and Malipiero. They came through, in my opinion, as the best of the lot. There was a fine sensitivity to vocal line, and a genuine spirit that makes this young composer well worth watching.

Leonard Bernstein