

These two orchestras do not naturally, hold a monopoly upon novelties. A few other premieres have been worthy of notice: Pizzetti's *Canti della Stagione Alta*, for piano and orchestra (Woman's Symphony Orchestra, Izler Solomon, conductor, with the late Alexander Kelberine as soloist); Weinberger's *Variations and Fugue on an Old English Theme* (Mr. Barbirolli and the Philharmonic-Symphony orchestra; later repeated by Dr. Stock); Bernard Rogers' *The Supper at Emmaus* and Otto Luening's *Prelude on a Hymn Tune by William Billings* (both by the Civic Orchestra, Hans Lange, conductor); Leo Sowerby's *Sinfonietta for String Orchestra*, decidedly one of his best conceived recent works (Saidenberg Sinfonietta, Daniel Saidenberg, conductor); Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's frothy and disappointing *Four Movements for Piano and Strings* (played by the composer with the Saidenberg Sinfonietta). Also for purposes of record, it should be noted that the Chicago Symphony orchestra gave the first Chicago performances of Bruckner's *First Symphony* and Busoni's *Concerto for Piano and Male Chorus*, with Egon Petri assisting brilliantly in the latter.

Cecil Michener Smith

VILLA-LOBOS IN WASHINGTON

OF the few new works presented to Washington this season, most notable perhaps was Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Momo Precoce* for piano and orchestra given its first North American performance by Guiomar Novaes and the National Symphony Orchestra. This brilliant and engaging fantasy, built upon themes from a previous piano suite, is a series of short tone-pictures connected by ingenious cadenzas for the solo instrument which also has a highly important part in the texture of timbres. The music describes a typical Brazilian festival, the Carnival of Children, which lasts for three days in Rio de Janeiro and other centers under the auspices of Momus, the god of merrymakers. Taking advantage of the license of his subject, the composer disports himself with humorous instrumentation. The work displays, as outstanding characteristics, an amalgam of naivete (in theme and rhythms) and sophistication (in harmony and scoring); also a very original treatment of the piano. This remarkable pianistic writing demands virtuosic qualities. Although *Momo Precoce* pleased with its breeziness and scintillance, it did not leave so deep a musical impression as did Villa-Lobos' *Third String Quartet* which had an invitation performance at Dumbarton Oaks, the home of Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss. To

mention Debussy in connection with this quartet is perhaps unfair to both composers, yet the comparison is the only one at hand; this nostalgic music might well have been written by a Claude Achille born in Rio.

Hans Kindler, who frequently lends a hand to resident composers, recently gave the premiere of La Salle Spier's *Symphonic Visions* at a National Symphony Orchestra concert. In this introspective and emotionally cogent score Mr. Spier has taken a long step forward from the facility he has shown in descriptive music. The work is cast in the difficult cyclic form, and the theme upon which it is built has a germinative force excellently displayed in proliferation. While speaking of resident composers, I must not forget Mary Howe's ballet, *It's Hell on Women*. The music, even in its present two-piano scoring, is clever and witty, in a style which takes side-glances at Poulenc and Françaix.

Ray Brown

PHILADELPHIA PREMIERE OF BARTOK WORK

PHILADELPHIA continues to be something less than a hotbed of modern music, but recent weeks have at least seen the local premieres of Bela Bartok's *Deux Images* and a *Sinfonietta for String Orchestra* by Edward Burlingame Hill. Both works were presented on the same program by the Philadelphia Orchestra with Mr. Ormandy conducting.

The *Deux Images* were written in 1910 and are thus exactly thirty years old. The amazing thing about them is that they sound very much like brand new music. At the age of twenty-nine Bartok was already going his own way and these pictures — one is a "pastoral," the other a "village dance" — are hardly reminiscent even of music written since 1910. The composer's handling of orchestration and of thematic materials is peculiarly his own, and apparently has not lent itself easily to imitation. Or possibly the blank record of previous performances of the *Deux Images* in Philadelphia is duplicated generally in the other musical capitals of the world outside Hungary.

At all events it is hard to understand why the *Deux Images* are not comfortably established in the general repertory. The melodies have a striking vitality, and they are exploited skilfully and colorfully in the orchestra. The development is more original and individual than radical. It has a simplicity and directness which may have been perhaps a little surprising in 1910 but which are not far removed from what seem to be contemporary tendencies. At the risk of generalizing dangerously, one