

FORECAST AND REVIEW

O FAIR WORLD OF MUSIC!

THE first sound I heard at the New York World's Fair came out of the good old-fashioned calliope at the merry-go-round in the Children's World. It set the atmosphere of spring, of gaiety, in fact of a fair. Here was one of the few sounds whose barbaric note rising out of windy pipes was not aggrandized, nor was the keen edge of its tone slithered over by radio amplification. By comparison with the rest of the music in the World of Tomorrow it makes a small noise indeed, in deference perhaps to the size of children, and it is one of the few that catches a human freshness and charm, something which electrified music, no matter how well reproduced, never has. Adults are treated, as befits them, on a bigger scale. At every crossroads there is a loudspeaker dispensing, in the morning, selections from *Scheherezade*, then lots of gumdrops like *Kamenoi Ostrow*; in the late afternoon Strauss waltzes and in the evening selections from the *L'Arlesienne* suite. Such soupy, amplified music always evokes for me the image of some huge Walt Disney monster pouring out his weepy soul in a slightly inarticulate voice, a ludicrous but inevitable trumpet of doom. This sentimental Gargantua is what we now accept as the expression of jollity and merriment.

At present it is impossible to discover from the Fair announcements what music is being used in the exhibits. There is however quite a bit that is interesting which you can stumble on by poking about in the stucco and plaster. The loudest noises at the Fair are the terrifying wondrous bolts of man-made lightning at the General Electric Exhibit and the whistle of the locomotive of the future, speeding its furious pace on a treadmill. The strangest noises are in the Westinghouse exhibit which reproduces an old

city street lit by gas. Here there is an electrical sound track of katydids, bird twitters and the roar of illuminating gas, far louder than any modern traffic and just as persistent.

Digging further you will find an entire show at the Railroad Building, *Railroads on Parade*, complete with speakers, dancers, singers and—of all things—a most excellent score by Kurt Weill. The pageant has loads of charm with real steaming and smoking locomotives playing the prima-donnas' roles. When the famous halves of the Union Pacific meet, the iron horses sing little songs with toots between phrases. Weill has appropriately used all kinds of American tunes, including one of my favorites, *Fifteen Miles on the Erie Canal*, with fine taste, intelligence and showmanship. All this is played and sung by an orchestra of twenty-six and a chorus of eighteen who are below stage; the music is piped up and amplified to sound above the locomotives' roar.

At the Ford building, I found not the Symphony Orchestra which was at the exhibit in the Chicago Fair, but Ferde Grofé and three others at three Hammond Novachords and a Hammond organ, playing plushy arrangements of *Old Folks at Home*, and so on, with arpeggios, and sea-sick swellings and diminishings. They show just what the Novachord can do, how inhuman its breathless flutes and gutless violins can be.

Machines have a pathetic, ludicrous inadequacy when they try to be men. "Pedro, the Voder" at the A. T. and T. pavilion, with its keyboard of audible consonants and vowels, emits the most marvelous garbling of English I have ever heard. It is hilarious and provocative with a suggestion of Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*.

Various serious composers, besides Kurt Weill, have been approached by commercial organizations that have apparently learned something from using serious sculptors, architects, and mural painters. Hanns Eisler has done music for a film to be shown at the Petroleum exhibit. Vittorio Giannini wrote a short symphony commissioned by the International Business Machines for their opening program. William Grant Still was selected by a Fair jury to do the music for the show in the Perisphere. As in everything else here the "popular" note is stressed, the definition of what is popular being grandeur, expensiveness, overpowering, almost primitive emotional about the commonplace.

Giannini's score typified this spirit well. It was a kind of *Heldenleben* that worked in national anthems from every nation including Austria. Official ballyhoo hailed it as the most inspired commissioned work yet to come from a modern composer—with sublime disregard for practically all of Stravinsky's works (which have been ordered by Diaghilev, the Princesse de Polignac, the Boston Symphony, etc.) and many by Hindemith and plenty of other important composers.

What promises much in the way of *Gebrauchsmusik* ordered for these exhibits are two scores by Aaron Copland, one for Ralph Steiner's housing film *The City* which will be shown continuously at the Science and Education Building, and the second for Remo Bufano's marionette show at the Hall of Pharmacy. Other new works still unannounced may be offered by the exhibitors. It is a very important step for our music to have these commercial, industrial or public-building orders. All around the country at shows like New York's Hayden Planetarium and the Oceanarium in St. Augustine, Florida, there are permanent exhibits which have music as a background. At present works like Liszt's *Les Préludes* (for the fish at the Oceanarium) and Strauss Waltzes (for the stars) are constantly played. The Fair may stimulate special commissions of music which would considerably enhance their charm.

Among the more exotic exhibitions such as the Turkish pavilion, I was disappointed to hear only salon classics. A little native music would liven up the interest. Exotic atmosphere is always one of the chief attractions of a Fair.

In the Lagoon of Nations, some splendid fountains extraordinarily lit erupt nightly. They are very like the illuminated fountains at the recent Paris exposition. The music here is not however by such originals as Auric and Milhaud but by that king of Broadway arrangers, Robert Russell Bennett. Perhaps it was the problem of making music loud enough to be heard above the rush of waters, that determined the choice of this clever orchestrator. As a matter of fact the noise is itself no great problem; even the buzzing of the clavichord can, by modern amplification, be made to sound as loud as a brass band. Bennett has very wisely used a concert band, for when it is amplified it does not sound

unnatural; the score is audible through the torrents. I only deplore the conscious writing down to popular taste which has led him in his *George Washington* piece (with red, white and blue jets of water) to do up all the national anthems including *Yankee Doodle* in Wagnerian style, as if the World of Tomorrow were the Dusk of the Gods. Fountains are gay, strong, surprising and beautiful spectacles like fireworks and not either pompous, or heroic. Later in the evening in the large Fountain Lake, I saw a less pretentious play of water while the ubiquitous loudspeakers played the Carillon number from the *L'Arlésienne* suite. This seemed to me suitable in spirit at any rate.

One night during the magniloquent fountain display, I saw a large group of people assemble on a platform not far away. Soon they took form as chorus and orchestra. Since the loudspeakers were blaring the Bennett music and later the Strauss waltzes, I couldn't make out what was happening. Nobody ever went over to them; a few strollers walked across their platform taking a short-cut to somewhere else. Finally I edged my way next to the bassoon and discovered that this many-peopled group, lost out in the open air was rendering a Haydn Symphony! A few feet from the heart of the orchestra not a note they played could be heard. A phantom concert about which I have never succeeded in finding out anything. This large and sadly futile group of performers—classical music in a modern world—disturbed me. If, dear reader, there is ever a concert of American music at the Fair, it will probably be by this ghostly troupe.

There are however, lots of real people making sounds at the Fair. The management in the second week decided to introduce an even more popular note (as if lowering the prices would not be the most popular thing.) Wandering musicians, comics and musical clowns are now to be met giving little impromptu shows everywhere. These do indeed relieve the dreary oppressiveness of the loudspeakers. I remember a particularly funny man with a toy trombone like the angelic instrument in Italian primitive paintings; he played this brilliantly with all the finesse and humor of the best musical clowns.

The Coldstream Guards' Band at the British pavilion does very straight-forward and precise arrangements, and its lusty

playing is cheery. Band music in the open air is always charming and theirs is most expert. The carillon at the Dutch pavilion is gay and fresh too. All this music is so much more suited to out-of-doors than the gushy electrical yawps that fill the air over Flushing meadows.

For concerts, by far the best place that I have found is the WPA open-air auditorium which, incidentally also has the best murals. I heard Juanita Hall's Negro Melody Singers in a delightful program of spirituals in this garden-like place, and under excellent acoustical conditions. The chorus sounded as fresh and brilliant as music should under ideal conditions. I hope there will be lots going on here all summer long. WPA "Pops" would be welcome; no one else seems to be giving a regular series of symphonic concerts and no one else has such facilities.

A tremendous range of programs has been announced for the Temple of Religion which, try as I will, I haven't yet been able to locate. As for television you can witness its primitive beginnings at the RCA and General Electric buildings. So far, newsreels of forest fires and other visually over-active subjects are being shown.

AT THE HALL OF MUSIC

So much for the unofficial music at the Fair. On the whole it is perhaps more varied and progressive than what goes on inside the World's Fair Music Hall, which is in the Amusement Area along with many other attractions—the Hunting Lodge, the Cuban Village, the Artists' Colony, and Victoria Falls—that face more to the world of yesterday than do the great commercial and national exhibits on the other side of the Fair.

But for those who still like music in concert halls, new, interesting works have come to light here. The Polish Concert gave us the late Karol Szymanowski's *Symphonie Concertante*, Opus 60, one of his finest works. Wiechowicz's *Polish Wedding Dance* from *Chmiel* was a lively piece of folk-lore. The Rumanian Concert under Enesco presented all the academic numbers familiar to Philharmonic audiences, plus a more interesting, modern sounding piece, *Variations on an Original Theme* by Jonel Perlea; in spite of its longwindedness this had a first, second and last variation of surprising originality.

The Brazilian evenings with their showy torrid pieces were the most fun of all. We don't hear much Villa Lobos in this country and here was a chance at two of his most astounding works, *Choros No. 8* and *Choros No. 10*. The verve and originality of these savagely primitive scores with their remarkable instrumental and percussive effects, their dense almost tropical textures and their curious form, inspire much far-reaching speculation about the music of our hemisphere. I was familiar with several short works by this fiery composer, some uninteresting or unconvincing, and only one, a song *Xango*, which gives any hint of what is contained in these big *Choros*.

There is also scheduled a Swiss concert with Honegger and the less known Frank Martin whose works deserve more consideration than they have had here. And speaking of what is to come—where, in all this foreign pageant, are Mexico and Carlos Chavez?

A word about the highly acclaimed acoustics of the Music Hall. They are, to any impartial ear, neither excellent nor bad enough to mar one's enjoyment of the music. By being in the Fair they seem to have taken on that curious metallic and inexpressive quality which I heard all about me from the loudspeakers.

These concerts have made one important contribution. They prove that outside the traditional repertory of our symphony orchestras there are lots of scores worth hearing, both old and new. Never again will we believe our conductors when they return from summer vacations abroad with news that no works of any interest are being written. Every foreign concert at the Fair has proved just the opposite.

Elliott Carter

TROUBLED WARSAW IS HOST TO THE NATIONS

THE hazardous political situation in Europe had an unprecedented effect on the seventeenth music festival which the International Society for Contemporary Music held late in April at Warsaw. Many performers were forced to cancel their engagements at the last minute and could not be replaced. A whole chamber music evening was thus called off because the Czechs, who were to present works by Jerzy Fitelberg, Milan