

*Savetier et le Financier*, in spite of the intelligent and sure direction of the Belgian conductor, André Souris, did not come off so well because of a last minute substitution in the singer. The *Ostinato for Orchestra* by the Swede, Lars Erik Larson would never lead one to guess that the composer had been a pupil of Alban Berg. It is well-sounding music, moving entirely in romantic channels, smooth, nicely instrumented, sweet in spots—an agreeable repertory piece. Great demands are made by the Rumanian, Marcel Mihalovici's composition, *Praeludium und Invention*, which derives from old classical models, at times from the baroque organ compositions of Johanna Sebastian Bach. This is music of pathos and it merits attention. Finally there were the *Symphonic Studies* of the thirty-four year old Englishman, Alan Rawsthorne. Here is absolute music, rich in content and emotion. The slow movements are especially interesting, dreamy and contemplative.

In addition to the festival proper, there were as usual several other programs. A concert of contemporary Polish church music included Szymanowski's powerful *Stabat Mater*, Wiechowicz's *Romantische Kantate*, and the premiere of Kondracki's interesting *Cantata ecclesiastica*. Contrasted with this was a concert of old-Polish church music in the marvelous ancient Mary's church in Cracow, excellently given by the chorus of the Poznan Cathedral. There was also a really joyful, colorful, native folklore exhibition by the peasants themselves; and a gala ballet evening in the Opera, presenting Palester's *Das Lied von der Erde*, Kondracki's *Eine Legende von der Stadt Krakow*, and Szymanowski's famous work, *Harnasie*.

Emilia Elsner

## SEASON OF HINDEMITH AND AMERICANS

PAUL HINDEMITH has burst like fireworks over New York scattering performances everywhere. At Carnegie he conducted the Philadelphia in the *Suite* from *Nobilissima Visione*; at the Juilliard Alumni Concerts his *Flute Sonata* and

*Hin und Zurück* (very well done) ; at the New School for Social Research the Galimir ensemble played his *Fourth Quartet*; finally he appeared both as violist and pianist at a Town Hall evening devoted entirely to his works. So we had plenty of chance to compare the Hindemith of before and after 1930, which date marks the great change in his development. It is beyond the limits of this brief review to make a comparative analysis. Hindemith's style since *Das Unaufhörliche* and the *Gebrauchsmusik* period has obviously crystallized. The texture is simpler, the rhythms and form begin to suggest Mozart and early Beethoven and the harmony and counterpoint are more systematized. He is now in command of a musical language which he uses as did the composers of the eighteenth century, to express a variety of thought and emotion, always with great imagination and flexibility. Unlike Mozart's style which was general to his time, Hindemith's is very personal. Melodically it is one of the richest and most original in contemporary music.

Of his recent works, the quartet for clarinet, violin, cello and piano is the most interesting. Like most of his newer music, it is best in the moderate and slow movements. (Exactly the opposite was true in the earlier period.) Here the first movement with its graceful, flowing eighths is in conventional sonata form; the peaceful coda reaches a point of exceptional beauty. The slow movement, with its typically Hindemithian floriture is untortured and smooth; while the last, made up of alternate moderate and fast rhythms is loveliest in those quieter moments which breathe the fresh romantic charm that is the most delightful characteristic of his newest music.



Roy Harris' *Third Symphony*, brought here by Koussevitsky, deserves a little more discussion than it has received. Harris also has undergone quite a change. There has been some yielding of his earlier awkward and jagged construction in favor of a more consolidated form and greater lucidity. This work lacks the new vistas of the first symphony, and those curiously broken phrases of the second, which, by the way, was performed at an All-American Concert given in Carnegie Hall by the Composer's Forum Laboratory and the Federal Symphony Orchestra under

Alexander Smallens' direction. The *Second Symphony* is a step in the direction of consolidation but is so economical in material that motifs are excessively repeated. The canonic slow movement has several excellent ideas but its course is too dense and awkward. Many have wondered whether this awkwardness resulted from intent, or technical disability. It has always seemed to me the effect of a personal if not thoroughly convincing attempt to solve problems in a new way. The present symphony is better tailored, and its direction clearer, but some of the odd originality is gone. The music still never for a moment could be mistaken for someone else's, but in the weaker parts Harris has come to depend on well-tried effects. Echoes of the romantic and heroic "Grand Symphony" of composers like Dvorak and Sibelius soften its bite. This is especially true of the clap-trap ending with its repeated tympani strokes. Perhaps the renunciation in favor of intelligibility may bring Harris back some day with the stirring inspiration of his earlier works re-captured, but better equipped to pour that into convincing musical shape. Then both he and all of us will have gained enormously. His *Soliloquy for Viola and Piano*, played by Primrose at a Juilliard Alumni concert was less interesting than the *Symphony*, though the almost impressionistic ending made the work arresting. But in every piece of music by Harris there are some wonderful moments; if only the whole were as good as some of the parts.

The all-American program mentioned above was devoted entirely to the works of Guggenheim Fellows. It included Aaron Copland's *An Outdoor Overture*, (reviewed in the last issue) for me the high point of the concert. William Piston was represented by his charming *Concertino* for piano and orchestra, an appealing work especially in the lyric sections and in the humorous bassoon passages of the finale. I regret that his more important *Symphony* was not selected; its elegance of craftsmanship and distinction would have added much to the program. Paul Nordoff's *Concerto* for two pianos showed a slight leaning toward Les Six; the slow movement gave us a seriously felt, delicate piece of impressionism. The noisy *Prologue* for chorus and orchestra by William Schuman seems to me an unfortunate step in the direction of pompous works like Gustav Holst's *Hymn of*

*Jesus*. It is less interesting than his *Symphony*, heard last year, though it seems to be the type of music approved by critics and audiences. The concert was apparently planned for "popular" appeal. Nevertheless I found it regrettable that selection was not made in favor of such interesting young recipients of the Guggenheim as David Diamond and Robert McBride. And on any representative program limited to these Fellows, certainly neither Roger Sessions nor Randall Thompson would have been out of place.

It took Stokowski to import Shostakovitch's *Fifth Symphony*. This work is as big and popular, as curious a blend of the academic and modern as the Soviet Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. I had no score with which to follow it; but the orchestration of the *Magic Fire* music and *Night on Bald Mountain*, also on this program, were so doctored that I doubt whether the audience heard the Shostakovitch piece as he himself wrote it. The surprising thing about him is his sequence of musical ideas and thinness of texture. The composer of "schizophrenic mazurkas" has become in all other respects conventional. His themes, harmonies and rhythms resemble those of Tchaikowsky and Mahler, though his melodious moods (indirectly inspired by Mme. von Meck's railway shares) register the emotions of a very different social system than theirs.

A model in their performance and selection of contemporary music, the New School Concerts brought us Roger Sessions' *Quartet* and Schönberg's song cycle, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*. The quartet intensified impressions of sturdy, excellent workmanship made two years ago. It was this time interpreted more gently, and the beautiful, lyrical slow movement took on true interest. This is music to be heard many times; it is so meaty and thoroughly worked out that it leaves the hearer musically satisfied. The hysteria and poignant sadness of Schönberg's pre-war song cycle made me want to hear *Pierrot Lunaire* again. *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* is more fragmentary than the other work, also more sensitive. Like Debussy's *Proses Lyriques*, also sung on these programs, the Schönberg songs give us a taste of impressionism; though of the tortured, German variety they are just as beautiful.

The Juilliard Alumni Concerts introduced Frederick's Jacobi's *Ave Rota*, Three Pieces in Multiple Style, for small orchestra. The title as the score reveals, should be expanded to read, Hail to the Wheel of Fortune. It divides into three sections: the first, *La Balançoire* indicates the swing in styles between the eighteenth century concerto grosso and the modern rumba; the second, *The Merman* gives jazz treatment to a quotation from "Summer is a-cummin-in;" the third, is a *May Dance*, in popular syncopated time. The interesting instrumentation divides the ensemble into tutti and concertino, the latter consisting of clarinet trumpet, trombone and solo violin. The whole is neatly done and sounded well. A frankly programmatic piece, it depends for its humor largely on the juxtaposition of contradictory styles. This device has been exploited before and with more abandon by both Milhaud and Honegger. *Ave Rota* written with obvious command of his idiom, does not, I think, compare with Jacobi's more interesting and happily conceived pieces, as for example the *Second Quartet*.



The third League of Composers' concert dispelled any lingering impression that young Americans today show less promise than the preceding generation. It offered some delightful songs by Irving Feigen whose subsequent tragic and fatal accident ended a career that offered us much. Paul Bowles, in his best, gayest and most flippant manner, parodied old movie and dance music in his funny *Pieces for a Farce*. In view of his extreme youth the very Hindemith-like pieces that introduced Lukas Foss were indeed remarkable. Finally came Robert Palmer's *String Quartet*, the most hopeful piece of the whole series. Palmer, a hitherto unheard-from composer was the big surprise of the whole concert series. His music is firm and definite, its dissonance resembles that of younger Europeans like Henk Badings whom we never hear in this country. And though he has yet to learn how to construct on a broad line, his quartet showed an impressive seriousness and great musicality.

Mordecai Bauman's recital of Leftist songs, at the New Masses' Concert deserves mention because of its novelty and also the interesting problem it poses. Songs like these by Hanns Eisler, Marc



Blitzstein, Alex North, Goddard Lieberson and others seem more at home in a cabaret than in Town Hall where Bauman sang them. For one thing the cabaret provides a better "dramatic" setting for the interpretation that such songs need. Also it brings audience and performer into more intimate conspiracy. In Town Hall the music sounds a little overdone, and even, insincere. Its essence is theatre, left-wing theatre, with the intellectuals not toggled out in evening dress.

E. C.

#### FURTHER SEASONAL NOTE

The choir festival directed by Lazare Saminsky at Temple Emanuel, gave three programs of definite interest devoted purely to American music, colonial and modern. The early American hymns were surprisingly good, rather in the Purcell style, with none of the relished sanctimoniousness of the nineteenth century hymn. New choral music included works by Douglas Moore, Elliott Carter, Arthur Shepherd, Mabel Daniels, Mark Silver and Dorothy Westra. Unfortunately, the music of the last two was included in the service, together with much else that was unfamiliar, and it was impossible to tell just where they came in. Of the rest we need only mention Moore and Carter, whose choruses certainly deserve publication by the Arrow Press. Carter's *Heart not so heavy as mine* was especially fine in its effective and finished writing and the sincere, deeply felt mood of the music.

C. Mc Phee

#### BLOCH REVISITS BOSTON

THE musical spring in Boston uncovered a "first performance" worthy of remark: two interludes from Ernest Bloch's *Macbeth*, newly extracted from his opera for concert purposes, and conducted by himself. (*The Three Jewish Poems*, *Schelomo*, *Helvetia*, and *America* otherwise filled two programs on March 17-21.) Mr. Bloch had gone a long way since, in March, 1917, twenty-two years before almost to a day, he had come to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the "discovery"