

FORECAST AND REVIEW

SPRING FINALE IN NEW YORK

STAGE WORKS

HINDEMITH'S *Wir Bauen eine Stadt* and Weill's *Der Jasager* given by the children of the Henry Street Settlement, illustrated the right and wrong ways of reacting to an identical problem. Both were confronted with the delicate task of composing a music so simple in texture as to make it entirely accessible to children and young students. Hindemith's was the direct, the imaginatively direct approach. Simplicity was at first hand. It proceeded from a complete identification with his object. This purity of intent guaranteed the slightness of the music against all suspicions of triviality. Weill's procedure on the other hand was disingenuous. One was very conscious of the children having been written down to. It was distasteful to consider the disparity between the apparent directness of the music and the grotesque effrontery at the bottom of it all. Is it anything else than brassy to dish up these trumped-up, borrowed emotions as fresh fare? It is true that Weill has the so-called sense for the theatre, but this talent, effective as it is in keeping things on the go, has about the same relation to real dramatic instinct as oleomargarine has to butter.

If the stage performance of *Pierrot Lunaire* (League of Composers' gala concert) was intrinsically ineffective it could be so through no fault of staging or directing. In other words the work itself is its most serious obstacle to a dramatic presentation. Stepan Trofimovitch could make a standing protest lying down. But he was only a comic figure in the *Possessed*. Now *Pierrot* is the sole figure "solely singular for its single-

ness." Presented to us on the stage he claims our attention as a dramatic figure. If as such he insists on making his standing protest lying down, what of it? At most he succeeds only in cruelly exposing himself. All this may seem highly irrelevant to the music. But what we mean to convey is that the stage performance, mistaken as it was, served to focus attention on the spiritual immobility of the music, its inability to afford a moment of real dramatic gesture.

L'Amfiparnasso, sixteenth century opera by Orazio Vecchi, was presented only by a chorus of mixed voices (the Dessoff Choir). Strangely enough, it was completely satisfying as a dramatic work. This was mostly because of the real movement and interplay of its musical characterizations. The drama was a complex of differentiated starting-points, each superbly developed in spite of the limited means at Vecchi's disposal. This afforded a continual freshness that the *in sich selbst erstickend* nature of Pierrot's moods never attains in spite of its plethora of instrumental and contrapuntal detail.

CHAMBER WORKS

Chavez' *Quartet* for wind instruments (at the League of Composers' anniversary program) was his usual bright self. Its line has all the appeal of the *imprévu*. It is concise in color and rhythm. It is also concise in its melodic motives and harmonies. In fact, so far as concision goes, it leaves nothing to desire—except possibly that most admirable concision of all, a concision of form, of relation of idea to idea. Prokofieff's *Sonata* (on the same program) for two violins was delightful to follow. It is an astonishingly effective bit of writing, and made one wonder whether a series of chamber works might not reveal a superior Prokofieff. Copland's *Elegies* for violin and viola (another anniversary work), though its poetry and distinction of mood were evident from the first few notes, was the only work on the program that refused to surrender its entire secret at first hearing. In striking contrast to the chatter-chatter of most of the other works, Copland's mood was characteristically austere, though not at the expense of direct appeal. This work illustrated one other of Copland's outstanding qualities: his ability to pre-

sent his matter in a striking way, so that no matter how much of it may elude our grasp at first hearing, its saliency of manner, its novelty as sheer *Klang* impresses itself retentively on our minds.

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Weprík's *Songs and Dances of the Ghetto* (at the Philharmonic) were mildly pleasing, though they hardly possessed the tang that the subject matter might have afforded them. Dukelsky's *First Symphony*, (given by the National Symphony) written when he was still a youth, revealed a natural fluency. The limpid elegance of the middle movement had a character of its own, but the other movements seemed to lack a certain sharpness of line. Or perhaps it was the noisiness of the orchestra that gave one this impression. Markevitch's *Rébus* (at the Boston Symphony) showed him as a musician with real flair for his metier. While the work is distinctly unequal in quality, the freshness of the opening lifting it above the conventional Hindemithian approach of the other movements, a real inventiveness comes through even the dull sections. At moments when our young friend seemed hopelessly bogged in contrapuntal aridities these bright flashes of spirit would lift him by his boot-straps, as it were. And then his handling of the orchestra was nothing less than admirable. It was hard and clear without those inadvertent descents into the bare and noisy that usually accompany such attempts.

Israel Citkowitz

DANCE PREMIERE AND SEASON'S END

HERE are no foreigners. They have taken their varying glories and departed, leaving the natives to finish a precarious season—who, having finished it, have achieved in the general sum a pleasantly weighty balance in their favor. And that despite several unexpected duds.

To conclude disagreeable business first, Gluck-Sandor adds to his list *Phobias*, the most lamentable piece of choreography he has yet achieved, and reveals again his narrow technical range—a jiggly-jerking, admirable for *Petrouchka* but of dubious value elsewhere. . . . Ruth St. Denis, to be just, is of