

have they to do with contemporary artistic experience? Or with America? *Serenade* was better; at least there was a directness and clarity about it, and little attempt to force a kind of false "expression" from the young dancers; *Reminiscence* also was forthright in its appeal, but each dance so purposefully called to mind something that we have seen more expertly done by the Russian ballets, that the result was unsatisfying.

The young Americans who have worked with Balanchine have demonstrated by their extraordinary accomplishment, what a brilliant ballet master he is. It is now time for the creation of ballets to which the dancers are suited, physically and temperamentally. Whether or not Mr. Balanchine is able to fill this choreographic need is another matter. There are plenty of American composers who are interested in the dance and in the theatre. If they are provided with suitable libretti, they should be available to the American Ballet. Given the freedom which their work demands, they will impart a greater vitality to the ballet than it now possesses.

Last year the Ballet Russe offered us the "American" ballet *Union Pacific*; it failed in every department. Now it might have succeeded in France. Did not Puccini's *Girl of the Golden West* have some appeal for Italian audiences? But *Union Pacific* was not authentic, despite Mr. MacLeish's scenario; when the choreographer and the dancers interpreted it to us they spoke with a ludicrous "accent" and so we could not tolerate it.

In *Alma Mater* the American Ballet proved that it had been born and reared at home. If it will, it can depart from the weak, the unhealthy, the unassimilative. Then let it seek here for its materials, from American artists. The American Ballet will become an extremely interesting institution to the native composers, if it follows the path that it must follow for its own survival.

*Lehman Engel*

### SYMPHONIC MUSIC; NEW YORK

THE effectiveness of Ernst Toch's *Big Ben*, Variation Fantasy on Westminster Chimes, given by Dr. Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony, was considerably diminished for me

by the contradictory elements that go to make up this ingenious work. In its essential inception it is a poetical fantasy. And the projection of this poetical element in the prolog and epilog makes for distinguished and finely-wrought music. But along with this, the typical *musik-macherei* of a Hindemithian manner makes a jarring contrast. In this latter vein Mr. Toch commands all manner of highly spiced tricks. He can set his music spinning to every device of contrapuntal motion and orchestral color. The idea is to whip things up the way a boy will a top. And like a top this kind of music will balance itself just as long as the purely external motion imparted to it lasts. Diminish the impetus of the tempo and the music begins to fall apart, because nothing inherent to its stuff has shaped its continuity. The verve of its movement is quite external. Its very existence hinges on the artifice that sets it in motion. We have come to think of the life of a piece of music as wholly organic. Its free movement we conceive to be as intimately its own as the motion of its wing is to the bird. A music motivated on the contrary by the most external means can only be characterized as mechanical.

The medium of the 'cello-concerto apparently tempts the composer to the very limits of "expressiveness." At least such seemed the case with the two concerti presented this season, in both of which Gregor Piatigorsky was the soloist. The Philharmonic presented one, by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, the Boston Symphony the other, the *Concerto Lirico* by Nicolai Berezowsky. In both works the insistence was entirely on expression, sheer and unadulterated. Each work has of course its own character, the Castelnuovo-Tedesco, expansive and lush, the Berezowsky more introspective and intense. In each however, this insistence on pure "expressiveness" ended by defeating its musical interest. I do not mean to imply that there is just so much room for emotional display and no more. But I would say that the interest of emotion *qua* emotion is almost impossible to maintain over a space of time; and that what tends to dissociate emotion as a factor apart from the complete design will tend to vitiate the entire structure. In the vast sphere of essentially musical thought there is no special domain of expressiveness. Every fact speaks, if only with its own degree of intensity. And the more defined a

fact the more real will be its hold on us. The true eloquence of music is therefore no attribute of mere emotion. It is present in every melodic curve and modulation of an organic design. Before the plenitude of this complete design, we realize the inadequacies of emotion as such. For emotion in itself is a formless thing. No limits contain it and every attempt to express it purely from its own grounds is doomed to amorphousness. This may seem a rather remote way to approach a composition but if we examine the actual textures of either of these works we will find evidence enough of a slack and unfulfilled design. Hearing this music, I had almost continually a sense of unformed substance spilling over, indifferent to bounds and to essential direction.

Aaron Copland's *First Symphony*, conducted by Dr. Koussevitzky, is a surprising mixture of maturity and indecisiveness. One of Copland's first fruits, it has the virtues and faults of a style that is not quite formed. All the elements of this work have real originality, but in the process of amplification they do not always find the authentic and complete expression to which their distinction would entitle them. A certain uniformity of mood, a constant dwelling on what has already been stated mars the beautiful first movement. If the scherzo just falls short of its effect, it is the finale which is the real surprise. The opening page of the movement is an astonishing piece of music. It starts with a simple triadic motif, slowly gathers weight, elaborating its texture, gaining more and more power with amazing sureness and freedom. The effect is one of extraordinary exhilaration. The whole process of accumulating strength has been so free of any merely mechanical accretion that one reacts to this music with the same joy with which one might witness some spontaneous and inevitable gathering of natural forces.

*Israel Citkowitz*

## BOSTON HEARS AMERICAN WORKS

THERE was a time when American composers contented themselves with organizing sectarian guilds to perform each other's works before limited but sympathetic audiences.