

It looks most interesting and is streamlined with a Shostakovitch-like rhythm. It has not yet been played nor has Bernard Rogers' *Fanfare for the Commandos* which sounds on paper like a brilliant flourish with no padding. Goossens has in preparation his own *Fanfare for the Merchant Marine*. Scores are also on the way from Randall Thompson, Ernest Bloch, and William Schuman; also Howard Hanson's *Fanfare for Signal Corps*, and a Stillman-Kelly *Salutation to Our Boys on Land and Sea*.

Howard Hess

## "TOUGH CONCERTS" IN LOS ANGELES

NO matter how often stated, it is still a bewildering fact that the city with perhaps the greatest number of important composers per square mile has a public musical "life" in inverse proportion to its resident and transient talent. Stimulated by the press and war-time patriotism, the Philharmonic Orchestra bravely puts one American piece on each program, but regardless of the nationality of the composer, the contemporary items of this season so far (Hovanness, Hageman, Langstroth, McDonald et al.) have been inadequate and of little service to culture.

To be heard at all, new music must find more private channels here. Of the many groups which came to life so vigorously (such as the Hollywood Theatre Alliance Music Council, the New Music Forum, Pro-Musica), most have petered out and are at the present, to put it euphemistically, dormant. A notable exception are the "Evenings on the Roof," originally started as house concerts but now moved to a concert hall, where a series of fourteen weekly programs of new and old chamber music is given to a discriminating and steadily increasing audience. These are non-sponsored, purely cooperative and inexpensive, the very excellent performers sharing whatever profits there may be at season's end. The programmatic statement of purpose announces that "these are tough concerts . . . requiring the utmost interest and musical ability of all participants."

This was put to the test on the opening program, where both Schönberg's imaginative and significant *Fünf Klavierstücke, Opus 23* and the clearly etched organization of Gerald Strang's eccentric *Sonatina for Clarinet Alone* seemed to be more than the listeners could digest. On the other hand, the expressive sonorities of Strang's *Mirrorrorrim* for piano proved such a "hit" that it had to be repeated. On the seventh program, I introduced Copland's new *Piano Sonata* and here as everywhere the great strength and

newness of its language made a deep impression, even though listening is not made easy by its introversion and ascetic economy of material. Other new music which I can mention in passing only, included Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto* and *Divertimento for Violin and Piano*, Roy Harris' *Soliloquy and Dance for Viola and Piano*, the brilliant and coloristic *Choros for Violin and Cello* by Villa-Lobos, the still amazingly fresh and vital Bartók *Piano Sonata* (1927) and two piano pieces by George Tremblay, *Prelude* and *Dance*, which to my mind are among the most exciting and personal keyboard expressions of recent date.

Tremblay, too, provided the highlight in a series of three open-air string quartet concerts sponsored by the University of California last fall. His *String Quartet* is a deeply moving piece even to those who do not know that the war has had a very direct and personal bearing upon it, as the words "In memoriam" on the title-page indicate. The precarious balance between program (expression) and musical form (system) is very beautifully achieved. Tremblay's own application of the twelve-tone technic deserves comment. He groups the material not so much in a linear row as in a harmonic scheme, and with strongly emphasized organ-points, pedal tones, ostinati and repeated chord complexes, succeeds in overcoming the harmonic aimlessness and vagaries of the traditional twelve-tone system. He "anchors" his music, as it were, on focal tones, intervals and chords and in this way achieves a high degree of audible organization and a new coherence and directness within the limits of Schönberg's chromaticism. His music has a strong, poignant face of its own and it will become known.

The two Hollywood rehearsal orchestras were of great incentive to composers and conductors while they lasted. They were made up of excellent performers who played for their pleasure only. One devoted itself entirely to new works by resident composers (who had to be members of the sponsoring American Society of Music Arrangers and were mostly from the "industry"). The public was not excluded but there was no publicity and one had to know the wheres and whens. We heard a suite from the film, *Storm Warning*, by David Raksin which is a vibrant and breezy piece, brilliantly orchestrated (if a bit on the "windy" side, the string body being degraded to a purely coloristic existence). Gilbert Grau's *Suite for Orchestra* and Arthur Morton's *Variations on a Theme by Vittoria* both showed expert handling of their material. It is not quite a material of their own as yet (the Hindemith influence being the most prominent) but it is music of sincerity, honesty and without any of that slush, sweep and false

front which one has come to expect in this city.

The Society of Native American Composers gave an opening program quite different from the badly ventilated concerts we have been used to from this society. It included Adolph Weiss' *Passacaglia for Horn and Viola* which, though obviously *Gelegenheitsmusik*, made skillful polyphonic use of the unusual sonority in a modal tonality. The *Woodwind Quartet* by Clifford Vaughan was a fresh little piece with charm, wit and an effortless fluency which managed to stay just this side of unobliging lighthandedness.

Ingolf Dahl

## FOR SAN FRANCISCO, ORCHESTRAL MODERNS

THEY are writing symphonies again, if not for the first time in their lives – witness Milhaud, Stravinsky and Hindemith among the recently created Americans, and Schuman and Harris of the native-born who have been at it for a long time. A distinguished new addition to their works is the *Fifth* by Alexander Tansman, which he conducted at recent concert of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and which has so far been heard elsewhere only in Cincinnati and Washington. This work is much in the character of the times. It is firmly and compactly built in the modern "classic" manner; the point of programming it immediately after Mozart's *Haffner Symphony* was well taken. In form and use of the orchestra as a plastic rather than a coloristic medium, the piece belongs to the 1940's; it belongs to Tansman by virtue of its restrained, finely drawn, reserved, but deftly telling and eloquent lyricism. In this, as in other recent works of the same composer, one may perceive that Tansman has finally made his escape from the fascinations of Stravinskyan rhythm.

At an earlier concert this season, Pierre Monteux put together a Pan American program, giving us the first North American performance of *Five Short Pieces for String Orchestra* by Domingo Santa Cruz and the first local performances of William Schuman's third symphony and Villa-Lobos' *Discovery of Brazil*, as well as the *Indian Symphony* by Chavez, which is no longer a novelty here or anywhere. The work by Santa Cruz, who is dean of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Chile, was brought to this country by Lincoln Kirstein, who wanted to use it for a Spanish-Colonial ballet called *The Noble Dancers of the Viceroy*. It should be admirably adapted to that purpose when conditions permit the ballet projects to continue, for it is very beautifully made, firm, luminous and sound in textures and rhythm.