

Style ranged from the most primitive kind of folk manifestations to the blatantly circumspect devices of metropolitan swing. All participants, with the exception of Goodman and two of his men, were Negroes. It was fun to see, in the flesh, blues singers, whose records one had been hearing for years; to watch, for instance, a typical male blues singer vocalize while accompanying himself on the guitar. This kind of bard is well represented in recordings, but opportunities to hear direct performances of such music are rare in the North. Leadbelly we know, but he is a very personal artist. The three well-publicized Boogie-Woogie pianists, Ammons, Lewis and Johnson, performed together and separately. Boogie-Woogie as a pianistic style by itself is poor entertainment; at its worst it is a virtuoso trick, at its best, accompaniment music of considerable charm. The same passages which, played alone, are devoid of any but a rhythmical interest that grows progressively fainter as one listens, acquire new significance when a melody appears to relieve the reiterated pattern of unchanging I, IV and V chords.

Benny Goodman's Sextet, in whose performance rhythmical precision and technical mastery reach a new high, drew the greatest applause of the evening. But probably the one really astonishing number of the entire program was a strange little piece for harmonica called *The Fox Hunt* by "Sonny" Terry. His instrument provided the horns while his falsetto voice made fox-calls and hound-bayings. This miniature of tortured reed-sounds and human-animal cries was sinister and unforgettable.

We need more opportunities to hear music of this sort. There are magnificent folk-artists in our country. Let John Hammond find Blind Blake, Rube Lacy, Dobby Bragg, Peetie Wheatstraw, Iva Smith, Elzadie Robinson, Blind Percy and his Blind Band, Cow Cow Davenport and Blind Lemon Jefferson (if they have not died of starvation!), and ship them here for another concert next December, or preferably sooner.

*Paul Bowles*

## CLEVELAND'S FIRST-TIMES

THE Cleveland Orchestra's conductor, Dr. Artur Rodzinski, is eager to perform new works, and although this ambition frequently clashes with the conservative resistance of well-cushioned subscribers, he has managed to strike an average close to one first-time in Cleveland for each

of the first nine programs of the current season. One of the novelties was the world premiere of the *Violin Concerto* which the British composer, William Walton, wrote for Heifetz.

This composition leaves one with an amiable if somewhat troubled impression of sweetness and obscurity. The sweetness springs from tenderly expressive lyricism combined with optimistic whimsicality in the subject matter. The obscurity results from crowding detail and, one suspects, from a conflict between virtuosic and purely musical ideals. There is a laudable effort to avoid rhetorical heroics common to showpieces. The style is intimate and delicately pointillé. At the same time it aims at being a brilliant vehicle for the soloist, leaving no stone unturned in its exhaustive exploitation of technical resources. Some of the brilliance of the solo part is buried under the intricacies of the orchestral background. And some of the musical significance is lost by its not being cast in a frame compatible with the broad externalized nature of solo display. Hence it suffers from the frustrations characteristic of dual personality, but it has the psychological interest which results from the expression of complex motives.

Subtle transformations of subjects in the first movement retard rather than promote a sense of development. For the full flowering of the opening theme one has to wait until the middle of the last movement, and there it is somewhat overexpanded. The faster portions are dotted with metrical irregularities that convey nervous agitation rather than strong rhythmic outline. One wishes the general plan had been larger and sturdier, even at the probable risk of being more conventional. The first and last movements are bridged by a scherzo, tarantella alla napoletana, whose saccharine sixths and commonplace canzonetta provide a moment of relaxation functionally comparable to the English week-end. Despite its weaknesses, however, this music has a fresh attractive impulse that reaches its goal with tenacity if not always with clarity of purpose. If the tendency to compression ill accords with the elaborately ornamental and flowery character inherent in much of the material, it is none the less indicative of a lively talent subjecting itself to a kind of discipline bound to produce even more interesting results in the future. The reception was enthusiastic, but later returns showed the vote was for Heifetz.

Other first-times at Severance Hall included the laconic but elegantly finished *Concerto for Orchestra*, by Walter Piston, the excellent youthful *Symphony in D-major* of David Van Vactor and Poulenc's captivating *Concerto* for two pianos and orchestra. Mentionable in the same list but

not on the same level are *Chmielek*, a noisy Polish wedding dance by Stanislaw Wiechowicz, Weinberger's flashy variations on *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*, and Tansman's feeble jazz piece, *Sonatine Transatlantique*. Hardly mentionable at all was a *Suite* which Michel Brusselmans built around the *Twenty-four Caprices* of Paganini. I suggest it be given back to the Indians or possibly the violinists.

Herbert Elwell

## BOSTON LOOKS WEST

NEWS from this city centers around the recent announcement by the Boston Symphony Orchestra of the Berkshire Music Center which is to have its first season this summer in connection with the nine concerts of the Festival at "Tanglewood," between Stockbridge and Lenox, Massachusetts. The Music Center will be in operation for six weeks beginning the early part of July, and is to have its culmination in the three final weeks when the full personnel of the Boston Symphony will be on the grounds rehearsing and presenting the festival concerts. An orchestra made up of advanced students of instrumental technic, assisted by thirty members of the Boston Symphony, will be available during the entire six week term for Dr. Koussevitzky's students in the art of conducting as well as for the preparation of new scores submitted by students in the composition and theatrical courses to be given by Aaron Copland and Paul Hindemith. The meetings of the orchestra, of these courses and one in "opera dramatics" under Dr. Herbert Graf of the Metropolitan, will make up the major activities of the "Institute for Advanced Study." There will also be an "Academy" for general students who will either sing in the chorus which will perform Bach's Mass in B-minor with the Orchestra during the final week of the Festival, or play in a practice orchestra.

In looking beyond the Connecticut River into country unknown by many Bostonians, the Orchestra takes a bold step. It is not weakening its case by encroaching on the field of any existing institutions. I doubt if a similar one can be found in the United States or even abroad. The proximity of the great ensemble, its conductor and members, will of course be an advantage to the students, but the principal point, I think, is that here will be an opportunity for students of instruments to devote a reasonably brief, concentrated term to the study of actual orchestral works in performance under the guidance of practical and experienced orchestral musicians. Dr.