

string quartet which, in our opinion, is the best work we have yet heard by this composer; all of these had been previously performed and discussed in America. Last, and probably least, was a *Concerto* for violin and wood wind orchestra by Kurt Weill, a young German. The less said about this very dull work, the better, particularly since there seems to be a certain tendency to regard his more recent one-act opera, *Der Protagonist*, as quite important.

Two extra concerts were given under the auspices of the Society: the Zurich Mixed Chorus sang Kodaly's *Psalmus Hungaricus* and Honegger's now famous *Roi David*, and the Swiss Marionette Theatre gave de Falla's charming *El Retablo*.

One leaves these festivals with the distinct impression that the music played is after all a secondary matter; but that an international meeting place is offered where the composers and other musicians of all countries may come together seems in itself invaluable.

Aaron Copland

STEP-CHILDREN OF MUSIC

THE most interesting feature of the festivals held at Donaueschingen for the last six summers, has been the practical policy of the executive committee to study special problems of contemporary music through the commission and performance of works to be written by selected composers. By means of this method an attempt is made to develop tendencies which the committee feels may have been neglected in the general tide of progress. Last year, 1925, the subject of inquiry was chamber-music in its relation to choral music. This year it was primarily music for mechanical instruments.

Mechanical music is old; even antiquity knew the clockwork of Heron the Alexandrian, and since the Jesuits of the seventeenth century, Athanasius Kircher and Kasper Scholt, built their musical automatons, mechanical instruments have shot up like mushrooms. Yet in spite of their incalculable number—the orchestrion, panharmonikon, accordion, aulodian—practically no music has been written for mechanical instruments ex-

clusively. Disregarding their peculiar qualities, the music of the opera house and of the concert hall has been indiscriminately transcribed for them.

Recognition is only now being accorded to the true nature of mechanical music, which is obviously unrelated to the romantic, the sentimental, the personal or subjective, and expresses, with perfect geometrical precision, only itself. To achieve proper effects, records must not attempt to reproduce the performance of an artist; they should be stamped directly from the score. Through the elimination of the personal equation and the perfection of modern technique, the revolving discs and perforated rolls attain a manifold dynamic differentiation impossible to the living player, and also a far richer tonal setting. The machine, unencumbered by the physical limitations of the artist, can reproduce at will the equivalent of many hands on the piano, many manuals and pedals on the organ.

The *raison d'être* of such an art, which makes no pretence to usurp the place of living music, but pursues its own impersonal goal, was best demonstrated by the *Triadic Ballet*, written for a small mechanical organ, with scene and costumes by Oscar Schlemmer. Only combinations of three were used: in the colors—red, blue and yellow; in the forms—spheres, cubes and pyramids; in the number of dances and costumes and in the music which Paul Hindemith had stamped on the records in a few days on the basis of some hasty sketches. The manifold and artfully led voices, the clever figures and passages, are woven in and out as in a complicated wheel-work; and if at times the machinery of Hindemith's youthful and exuberant invention seems to revolve emptily, one must remember that it is after all a first attempt. The grotesque, puppet-like quality of the little organ, similar in spirit to Busoni's *Arlecchino*, is perfectly suited to the soulless harlequinade on the stage. The dancers, like marionettes on a string, even perform a little love-scene without any apparent emotion.

On the other hand, Hindemith's pieces for mechanical piano, as well as those by Ernest Toch seemed altogether too cool and stiff. One missed the stage-pictures which had helped accustom the audience to the new sounds. And Gerhart Muench,

in his *Polyphonic Etudes for Electric Piano*, which were barbarically dissonant, and in his piano-concerto, succeeded only in estranging one's sympathy.

Another "step-child," at least of recent years, music, military and non-military, for wind instruments, was also brought forward at Donaueschingen last summer, in an attempt to break a new path back to the golden days of serenades and divertimenti. Hindemith wrote a racy concerto for winds, variations on the *Prince Eugene March*. Toch brought us a highly sophisticated *Idyl* and a *Buffo-Finale*. In his *Three Military Marches* Krenek combined jazz, satire on the usual sentimental type of military music, and Strawinsky. These varied works have certain points in common. They are not promenade and beer music for amateurs, easily comprehended, easily played, but extremely intellectualized, difficult pieces, animated by a spirit of parody, written for a large orchestra of wind instruments.

Ernst Pepping contributed a little *Serenade* for military band and a *Suite* for trumpet, trombone and saxophone, amusing but far too long for a joke. The *Suite* is an attempt to bring new honors to the old saxophone. (It is one of the aims of the Donaueschingen executive committee to renew interest in neglected instruments.) In a *Suite* for viola, Johann Mueller effectively utilized what Berlioz called the "sombre and passionate accent, the deep woe" of that instrument. There was also a *Trio* for flute, viola and contrabass, by Erwin Shulhoff, colorful in its Slavic folk-idiom but poor in its scanty development.

Erwin Felber

AN AMERICAN EVENING ABROAD

THE evening of American music which the Societé Musicale Indépendante hospitably presented in Paris last May brought together six young composers who, although anything but a homogeneous group, unquestionably form the most promising array of young American musicians yet presented together in public. The concert made evident once again the difficulty of generalizing about "tendencies" in American music.