

I know of this composer, is full of vigorous and beautiful dissonance. He succeeds in domesticating the twelve-tone system and avoids the special rhetoric of the Viennese. The music is straightforward; tone clusters are hammered out, yet the texture remains transparent. Emotional balance and formal clarity are always maintained. Robert Palmer's *First String Quartet* loses some of its impressive somberness and expressive consistency by the inclusion of an additional movement, but it still has his stamp. The cross-accented counterpoint is a bit more comprehensible than that of some of his more recent works.

William Bergsma's *Second Quartet* is most effective, though the relation of one movement to another is not entirely convincing. It explores the moods and manners of the "middle modern" style with such innate musicality that one is attentive even though no personal adventure or experience seems to emerge. Yet saying what has often been said, only more skilfully, seems to be the goal of many members of the new generation. Frederick Jacobi's familiar *Second Quartet* and Robert Russell Bennett's cutely clever *Water Music* were performed. An oboe was added to the Walden strings for two rather similar pieces, Robert McBride's *Quintet* and Alvin Etler's *Six From Ohio*, both of which provided some sedate comedy.

Elliott Carter

SYMPHONIC WORKS AND FAURÉ ANNIVERSARY

PERFORMANCES of new works on the Boston Symphony Orchestra programs this season have been restricted to the first forty-five minutes of the concert. The hour after intermission is broadcast on Saturday nights and the orchestra's sponsor apparently feels that Bartok's *Violin Concerto*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* or Martinu's *Third Symphony* may drive away prospective purchasers of tractors. This occasionally makes for a curiously unbalanced program or rather two separate programs: one for the subscribers and the other for the radio audience and the subscribers. Local critics have been quiescent about the development thus far, but there are now signs of rising protest.

Advance notices of the Prokofiev *Fifth Symphony* were sufficiently glowing to convince the sponsor that it was a safe work to broadcast. It is an attractive, often exhilarating, if not completely achieved composition. Most of the themes – blatantly optimistic in the heroic Soviet manner – are loose, yet powerful, and calculated to provide ample opportunity for development. The touching lyricism of the *Second Violin Concerto* becomes at the same time more unashamedly romantic and less individual. The influence of Shostakovich obtrudes in the first movement especially; but the quality of the inspiration seems finer, if less truly symphonic in char-

acter. It is particularly striking that in the Scherzo, which is the most brilliantly successful individual movement and the most typical of its composer, the symphonic quality is most lacking. The first movement, formally the most compact, is in the traditional sonata-form. Its texture is more polyphonic than is usual with Prokofiev, and the manner in which the brass instruments participate in the contrapuntal proceedings often brings to mind the music of that late post-romantic, Max Steiner. Harmonically the entire work is in the composer's more restrained recent style. Here and there a transitional modulation between sections cuts a sharp corner. The typical predilection for modulatory thematic material persists.

Martinu's *Third Symphony* is a serious work often noble in expression and with greater transparency of orchestral sonority than is usual in the composer's recent work. Among the fine details that come to mind are the remarkably sustained beginning and, in the second movement, the charming duet between flute and piano (Gracie Allen style). Less admirable are the perfunctory recapitulations and the Martinu tricks that are fast becoming mannerisms—the constant asymmetrical shiftings of long and short in the rhythm, the Brahmsian doublings in thirds and sixths, the shimmering sequences. But although the music says little that we have not heard before, it manages to move along convincingly.

Two Interludes from Gian-Carlo Menotti's opera, *The Island God*, had a specious sort of competence, and rich, satisfying orchestration, if you like that kind of lushness. One minded the Puccinian conventionality less than the pretentiousness of the music. After these pieces the same composer's *Piano Concerto* came as a surprise. Tending in the direction of a hedonistic sort of neo-classicism, this cute and unpretentious work possesses a *chanson populaire* flavor which should endear it to devotees of light summer concerts. The program notes mentioned the influence of Domenico Scarlatti; one was also reminded of the Poulenc *Concert Champêtre*. The texture is simple, for the most part homophonic, and there is much writing in two parts. The piano figuration is not particularly imaginative — scales and more scales, repeated chord patterns and modulating sequences — yet on the whole this was a colorful if rather mixed-up affair.

Vladimir Dukelsky's *Cello Concerto* (Piatigorsky, soloist) is a brilliantly written piece with promising thematic material, a solid first movement, a romantic second and a finale of infectious gayety. The performance was first-rate, yet all these fine things failed to fuse into a unified impression. Reminiscences of Hindemith, Piston and others contributed to the general bewilderment.

Morton Gould's solitary appearance with the B.S.O. was something of a dud. Despite his highly competent conducting, the orchestra seemed

out of its element in the jazzy *Concerto* for orchestra. No more satisfying were the vague ramblings and atmosphere of his tone poem *Harvest*.

During its annual visit to Boston the Ballet Theatre introduced two novelties, *The Gift of the Magi*, with music by Lukas Foss, and *On Stage*, the score by Norman Dello Joio. These, announced as world premieres, had been rehearsed with the usual inadequacy. *On Stage* impressed one as amiable and aimless. Its themes lack distinction and tonally it seems both static and meandering, though it is not without a certain charm. The inventiveness and tuneful appeal of Foss's music were obscured by the hit-or-miss quality of the orchestration. This only served to emphasize the seeming shortwindedness of various sections, a fault not so apparent in the piano reduction.

III

A festival commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Gabriel Fauré was held in Cambridge under the auspices of the Music Department of Harvard University. The programs included such large works as the *Messe de Requiem* and the opera *Pénélope* (in concert version); excerpts from the incidental music to *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Shylock* and from the opera *Prométhée* (orchestrated by Walter Piston); most of the later songs and some of the earlier ones; and the late chamber music.

Possibly the proselytizing fervor of Mlle. Boulanger won new converts to Fauré; when she was conducting or playing one was convinced that he was no minor master, no miniaturist, but a major composer with breadth of style and variety of expression. The most stirring events of the week-long festival were the performances of the *Requiem* and *Pénélope*. The latter, considerably cut, was done with narrator, thus mitigating the frequent absurdity of the libretto. It is an extraordinarily attractive concert piece.

More objective appraisal of Fauré's music, discounting the glamor of the festival, confirms his pre-eminence as a song writer. The chamber music comes off less well. Formally it is often diffuse and the melodic style, so admirable in the songs, seems spun out here and lacking in contrast. His instinct for instrumental effect is not strong, and the qualities of understatement and restraint that are virtues in works inspired by a text or possessing literary implications tend to devitalize his abstract music. The length of individual movements in these works is frequently disproportionate to the dynamic range and tessitura of the instrumental writing. Yet some sections are of surpassing beauty, such as the slow movements of the *Violin Sonata in E* and the *Quintet in C minor*. The festival seemed one of the most worthwhile educational ventures that Harvard's music department has sponsored in years.