

and cerebral. Even to list a thing like Angel del Busto's double fugue, *Homage to Bach*, was patently unforgivable.

Of the competition winners the Raphling was the most aptly chosen, the Kay and John Work's *The Singers* (choral competition winner) pretty fairly picked. The Morris *Sonata* and Francis Pyle's *Of Valleys and Cragged Peaks* (band competition winner) were miscarriages of justice.

All plans for introducing informal reading symposiums soon disintegrated, and the three open sessions of the Detroit Symphony wisely were turned into rehearsals for Friday's concert. Neither were the discussion periods organized before the event. Two or three, however, were saved by the experience and wit of such participants as Nicholas Slonimsky, Hanson, Gustave Reese, Quincy Porter, Raymond Kendall and Harris.

Edmund Haines

ENGLISH IN BOSTON; STRAVINSKY'S SYMPHONY

DURING the second half of the past season, the Boston Symphony Orchestra performed fourteen compositions supposedly new to local audiences and revived a few works that had not been heard here recently. On the face of it, this seems very impressive, but a glance at some of the items on the list provides less occasion for excitement. The revivals included such things as the Khachaturian *Piano Concerto* and Hanson's *Fourth Symphony*. Among the pieces heard here for the first time were Gretchaninov's *Elegy*, Opus 175, an agglomeration of the eclecticism of Glazunov and Rachmaninov, which, although completed in 1945, could have been written in 1880; John Ireland's *The Forgotten Rite*, written in 1913 and as pale and ineffective a piece of musical landscape as has been heard here in many a decade; Sir Arnold Bax's turgid, hybrid *Tintagel* of 1917 which Koussevitzky's good taste has spared us up till now; and Anthony Collins's *Threnody for a Soldier Killed in Action*, a hoax upon the public sympathies and a work whose musical substance is zero.

These last three numbers, along with a few other twentieth century English compositions, were conducted by Sir Adrian Boult during his three weeks stay in Boston. It can hardly be said that Sir Adrian or these compositions have appreciably advanced the cause of English music here. The most notable work was Vaughan Williams's *Job, A Masque for Dancing*, which possessed a fine sense of line, more vocal to be sure than instrumental in character, and which proved earnest, if at times clumsy and uninspired. William Walton's fat and Elgarian "*Scapino*," a *Comedy Overture*, also new to Boston, sparkled by comparison.

At a subsequent concert Koussevitzky conducted music by a British composer of the younger generation, a *Passacaglia* and *Four Sea Interludes*

from the opera *Peter Grimes* by Benjamin Britten. I was unable to attend, but my representative reports theatrical music of good effect (although heterogeneous in style) with brilliant scoring reminiscent of Prokofiev. He also states that with the exception of the *Passacaglia* the excerpts have no validity in the concert hall.

The most impressive and exhilarating new work of the season was undoubtedly Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*, conducted by the composer. Of the three movements, the toccata-like first seems the most completely satisfying formally. The rococo lyricism of the second appears incongruous to this writer after the dynamic propulsiveness of the first movement. The third is the least convincing; the fugue emerging as a clearly defined section in the course of the movement demands a more extended treatment and here as in the ending, which seems anticlimactic, Stravinsky's fear of overstatement leads to a miscalculation of proportion. The appropriateness of the title is questionable. While it is true that the term "symphony" has been used to describe anything from a prelude or overture to concerted vocal music, the general expectancy is that a large work in several movements and called "symphony" will be closely allied to classical symphonic procedure. Some kind of modifying adjective might have clarified the special nature of the form of this piece. While in many ways this score can be characterized as an uncommonly successful regression (perhaps that is why it has met with a more cordial reception than has been the case with the composer's more recent works), Stravinsky achieves in the synthesis of old and more recent idioms something that is new. In his search for new sonorities and new forms of expression, he is still a young composer, the most youthful and forward-looking of them all.

Samuel Barber's *Cello Concerto*, Opus 22 was one of the two world premieres during the period under review (the other the Gretchaninov *Elegy*). This was an effective and attractive piece, the difficult medium handled with skill. I liked best of all the siciliano-like second movement. Tonally it was clear; arrivals at new keys were treated as events; and while it was closer to Barber's more conservative earlier music, it seemed purer in style than the first and last movements. Here Barber is still in the process of evolving a more contemporary style and the stylistic inconsistencies are marked by a certain formal diffuseness, especially in the last movement.

In addition to first performances of works familiar elsewhere — David Diamond's *Rounds* for string orchestra, Cowell's *Hymn and Fuguing Tune*, Copland's *Danzon Cubano* — and productions at Harvard of Kodaly's *Te Deum*, Martinu's *Fantasia* for theremin, oboe, piano and strings, Stravinsky's *Perséphone* and Ives's *Concord Sonata*, Boston also heard a program of contemporary music for organ and strings presented by the Columbia Broadcasting System at Harvard's Memorial Church. This in-

cluded Quincy Porter's *Fantasy on a Pastoral Theme* – a romantic and almost frenetic work with some appeal; Howard Hanson's *Concerto* for organ, strings and harp (which seemed even more inflated and awkward than is usual with him); Francis Poulenc's *Concerto* for organ, strings and kettledrum – a disappointingly mixed-up affair; Walter Piston's *Prelude and Allegro* and Leo Sowerby's "Classic" *Concerto*. The excellence of Piston's work, its clarity and nobility of expression distinguished it from all the others. It was undoubtedly the only genuinely successful piece on a program of untidy and (excepting the Poulenc) humorless compositions.

At Jordan Hall in Boston, a premiere of Daniel Pinkham's ballet, *Narragansett Bay*, revealed very little in the way of invention, an overall amateurishness, and an unfortunate tendency to quote directly from *Billy the Kid* and *The Incredible Flutist*. The absurdity of the choreography by Jan Veen and the ineptness of the dancing only made matters worse.

Irving Fine

VIGOR AND FRESHNESS AT ROCHESTER

DIVERSITY is the aim of the annual Rochester Festivals of American Music. Forty compositions by thirty composers were presented in the festival at the Eastman School this spring. The seven sessions ranged from a string-quartet evening to a concert given by the Eastman School Senior Symphony and an ensemble of women's voices. Also included were programs by the Symphony Band, the Ballet Company and the Chamber Orchestra, as well as a new experiment billed as "Concert Music in the Jazz Idiom." Somehow, in spite of limited rehearsal time and related impediments, the performances had a freshness and vigor, if not always a high polish, that made for a feeling of youth and sincerity. This was true whether the work performed was the *Pagan Poem* of Loeffler or something written in 1946.

The experimental jazz concert, conducted by Jack End and featuring Paul Nero's *Prelude and Allegro* and his hot fiddle, failed to sustain much interest because of the conservative commercialism of most of the ideas. The Symphony Band, under Frederick Fennell, played a program of similar music. Both concerts seemed to prove that it has all been said before and should be said better, but this time it wasn't.

The Thelma Biracree Ballet danced to seven musical scores. Most of these were not written specifically for choreography; some were almost classics in their own field, like Barber's *Overture to "The School for Scandal,"* the Andante from Hanson's *Romantic Symphony* and Gershwin's *American in Paris*.

Works by William Schuman, Normand Lockwood and Walter Piston