

Here he has written music for the masses, and at the same time has discovered a new nobility of utterance.

William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, played, like the two works just mentioned, by the Chicago Symphony orchestra, proved to be a vigorous, earnest work, without thematic material of symphonic genre. Two members of the Northwestern University faculty recently submitted new works—Albert Noelte his *Four Symphonic Impressions*, a turgid, discursive endeavor in the Strauss-Mahler vein, and Felix Borowski his second symphony, a concise work with stirring rhythmic passages, marred by unimaginative development of fairly effective material. Other works, of less value, presented by the same orchestra are *Once Upon a Time*: five fairy tales for orchestra, by Bernard Rogers; *Five Miniatures*, by Paul White; and Stringham's *Nocturne No. 1*.

The Illinois Symphony orchestra, an energetic WPA outfit, has given competent performances of several American novelties drawn chiefly from the neo-romantic super-conservatory school of Middle Western composition. Among these may be mentioned a symphonic poem *Marco Polo*, by Irwin Fischer, a Chicagoan who may find himself in time; the *Tragic Overture* of Florence Grandland Galajikian, who never will; Radie Britain's *Overture to Pygmalion*; and Cecil Burleigh's second violin concerto. This same orchestra has also provided local premieres of Sibelius' *Fifth Symphony*, Milhaud's *First Symphony (Le Printemps)*, and the Shostakovitch *Piano Concerto*. Most recently Ernst Bacon of San Francisco conducted the slow movement of his *Symphony in D-Minor*.

*Cecil Michener Smith*

### PARISIAN NOVELTIES

THE Paris concert season has been marked by unusual activity favorable to contemporary music. The year already stands under the sign of the 1937 International Exposition, for which a whole series of musical preparations is anticipated. Milhaud, Honegger and Ibert are jointly preparing a work, to be produced in the setting of the Fêtes Populaires. Two orchestra concerts, two chamber music programs of the International So-

ciety for New Music, a series of presentations of the most important present-day compositions, form part of the main plan of music announced for the spring.

Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* and Bela Bartok's *Fifth Quartet* may be counted as outstanding productions. The *Quartet*, one of the most significant products of recent years, must be considered a landmark of the contemporary era. It exalts "freedom of logic" and "logic of freedom" to the highest degree, subordinates form to the musical events and, at the same time, musical events to form, and reveals new paths and contrapuntal possibilities. Especially noteworthy in this respect are the two slow movements; they are the best proof that all the possibilities of variations have not yet been exhausted.

Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*, the deeply melancholy, gripping work of an eminent musician, is probably the ripest effort of that not very prolific composer. In contrast to Bartok whose urge to compose arises out of a purely music-making impulse, the plan of Berg's *Violin Concerto* gives to the literary background an important role. This work marks the close of an epoch rather than a step forward; it is impossible to see where the further development of its technic of composition can lead. The sequence plays just as important a role in the formation of melodies as in *Tristan*. The muted trumpets and trombones, the utilization of percussion, which often recalls Mahler, produce an effect that in its totality is closer to opera than to concert music.

Jean Françaix' recent *Piano Concerto* revealed nothing really new in the output of this very gifted musician; the freshness and facility of his invention, his "charm," are exactly as we have always found them. The *Concertino for Violoncello* and the *Rhapsodie Flamande* for orchestra showed Albert Roussel at his best. The youthfulness of his music, its freshness and avoidance of the academic are becoming more and more appreciated.

The active Triton group, through whose efforts a series of chamber-music works by the younger composers is performed annually in Paris, dedicated its first concert to the memory of Pierre-Octave Ferroud and Philip Lazare, two members who died a short time ago. Ferroud's cello sonata left a very good impression; the first movement is especially successful.

Tibor Harsanyi's dazzlingly instrumentated *Hungarian Suite* for orchestra was conducted by Pierre Monteux; it is only regrettable that no use was made of trombones, which could have supported the accent of this strongly rhythmic music.

The Grand Opera has announced a series of interesting ballets. Lifar, who according to his new dance theory would free himself from music, regarding it merely as a rhythmic support for his choreography, has apparently already abandoned the most negative extreme of this experiment. Because of the complete blotting out of the music, the ballet *Icare*, despite the liveliness of its dance groups, was static in effect. He has now announced a new ballet, *David*, with music by Rieti. In this the percussion is expected as before to play an important part, but apart from the purely rhythmic elements, the dance action will be further supported by a melodic line.

Especially welcome at this time is radio activity in Paris. Only a few years ago we had a standing repertoire for morning, noon and evening of the *Tannhäuser* overture, generally followed by the *Danse Macabre*. Gradually, through the phonograph record of Ravel's *Bolero*, which was heard for months in every corner, a way to the new generation was found. Now almost daily the young and even the youngest composers are getting attention on the French radio. This situation has a certain danger; because the time for rehearsals is short the works often suffer from insufficient preparation. And with so much contemporary music being played, quite unimportant works appear casually beside more imposing ones. But the fact that the general public is growing to know the production of recent years is significant. Time, which has always been the best judge of art, will of itself bring order and a more careful selection into the concert programs.

Jerzy Fitelberg

## CHAVEZ ON MUSIC AND ELECTRICITY

IT is no event in the world of music if a scientist, however notable, points out that music may be produced by electrical means, as well as by the mechanical devices which are in current use. An engineer announcing such a thesis might be suspected of special pleading. The musical world would look askance at his analysis