

In the broadcasting field, the B.B.C. continues to display a conscientious regard for modern music, although there is an admitted policy of not performing, under present conditions, works of an extreme, radical nature. Carpenter's *Violin Concerto* and Copland's *Quiet City* have recently been broadcast, as have quite a number of Soviet works. After strong parliamentary censure, there has been no recurrence of the unfortunate musico-political incidents which, early last year, temporarily damaged the B.B.C.'s reputation for impartiality.

Examples of Soviet music have been similarly frequent at public concerts since the Nazi invasion of Russia: Shostakovitch's *Piano Quintet* and *String Quartet*; Khachaturian's *Piano Concerto* and *Clarinet Trio*; and Shebalin's *Second Quartet* have all been heard recently.

Ernest Chapman

ARTISTS FIND A WAY—MINNEAPOLIS M.T.N.A.

IN the past few years the annual convention of the Music Teacher's National Association has shown a genuine interest in the activities of the American composer, yet a composer attending one is not always able to see where he fits into the general musical picture as it is there represented. Some composers would rather be shot than caught in the near vicinity of these meetings; others hover around the fringes, half hoping, I am suspicious, that they can land a job and still somehow avoid the hateful stigma of the academic world; and then there are those lost souls who have given hostages to fortune and now extend the glad-hand as a matter of duty.

Several meetings of the "creative brethren" which are often stimulating do take place, however, but usually on the side and surreptitiously. There is the whisper, "Junior Ballroom, 2 P.M.," and when you get there Robert Palmer is ready to show his new *Concerto* for orchestra in its early stages. It sounds as though it's going to be a step forward in his work. Then John Kirkpatrick plays the Hunter Johnson *Piano Sonata* on a piano admirably adjusted to the Boogy-Woogy, while from the convention program next door come asthmatic wails that one associates with the twelve-tone "lyric."

This December the concerts of the official schedule were very serious if a little less glamorous. Three were made up entirely of the music of the United States; and there was a commonly expressed delight in their variety and interest. The first program was piano music presented by Kirkpatrick,

finely organized and beautifully performed. Several new works were included: *Three Preludes* by Palmer, of which the first two seemed particularly lovely; a *Fantasy* by this reviewer; an austere *Evocation* by Carl Ruggles; and a spirited and unusually effective *Second Navajo War Dance* by Arthur Farwell. Many people found the *Piano Sonata* by Hunter Johnson the most provocative work; it has an angular profile that makes its organization very clear. The finest performance, beyond doubt, was that given the Roger Sessions' *Piano Sonata*. This piece has been much reviewed in these pages and I hardly need to add my criticism. I deeply admire the work, and it gives me great pleasure to hear it, especially when the performer creates the impression that it is no more difficult than a sonatina.

The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Howard Hanson gave the third program of United States music, the pièce de résistance of which was Hanson's *Third Symphony*. This eminent musician did a good job both as composer and as conductor. We heard a sincere work, and the cause of our modern music was well championed. Several small works introduced the program. Two songs by Donald Ferguson, Professor of Composition of the University of Minnesota, invite special mention. The composers who have come from the Minnesota environment owe a special debt to Ferguson. There is a sincerity in the emotional intent of his music, even though one did not always feel that the fabric was exactly right for that intent.

Orchestral works of young American composers were presented in a second program by the Minnesota WPA and the University Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Dr. Abe Pepinsky. It is hardly justifiable even to review the concert, since it was so poorly presented. The performers seemed to feel that a few bad notes more or less were to be expected in the performance of a modern score. It was not, however, the bad notes so much as the complete lack of understanding that made everything so dull. The program was not particularly well-chosen, yet most of the music was characteristically American in its magnificent orchestration. There was something heroic in the way Robert Ward's *First Symphony* and William Bergsma's *Happy Dance* stood up before the audience to be shot full of holes, and, after the broadside, amazing to find them still on their feet though badly tattered.

Beyond these official programs there were isolated performances of works and papers on modern music that were of interest. Herbert Elwell's *Violin Sonata* was given during the meetings on chamber music. This work

shows again Elwell's inclination toward a natural romantic idiom. Kirkpatrick delivered a paper on *United States Piano Music* which was held within bounds and revealed this pianist's fine knowledge of his subject. Ferguson's talk on *What is a Musical Idea?* and William Treat Upton's *Some American Instrumental Music 150 Years Ago* were of special interest in the meetings of the American Musicological Society.

It seems to me that one of the proper functions of these conventions is to show what sort of creative activity characterizes the locality that has been chosen for the meeting. And over a period of years the M.T.N.A., aware of its opportunity, has managed to open up the panorama of our country. But it was clear this time that the music of composers (with the exception of Donald Ferguson) who make Minneapolis their home, was absent from all the programs, and this is unfortunate since Minneapolis is not poverty-stricken in the matter of living music. Both John Verrall and John Becker should have been represented. One concert, by the use it made of a purely local musical organization, somewhat redeemed this lack. The Hamline University Choir under the direction of John Kuypers presented a program of vocal music that the musicians who came to the convention will not forget for a long time. This ranged all the way from William Billings to Roy Harris and en route included Bach and Kodaly. These college children sang like angels under the truly musical guidance of their director.

Ross Lee Finney

NEW WORKS IN CHICAGO

THE season in Chicago up to Christmas gave us just an average amount of new music. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the leadership of Frederick Stock has as usual presented the best works so far as quality is concerned. First performances were heard of Arthur Benjamin's *Overture to an Italian Comedy*, a very light piece, but directly appealing and well made, and *Three Symphonic Dances* by Sergei Rachmaninov. The latter composition is pleasant music and certainly bears the characteristics of its author, who, although called outmoded by many, in the opinion of others organizes his musical ideas in a more masterly fashion than most of his younger contemporaries. Critics have often confused method and matter; Rachmaninov's method has long since been proved good; whether or not one likes his matter is a question of taste.