

well-made; is thoroughly at home in the newer idioms; has for basis persuasive thematic matter; will stand comparison with the best of the new things from the other side of the Atlantic."

H. T. Parker

NEW MUSIC IN CHICAGO

AS USUAL, the significant novelties of the Chicago season were introduced by two agencies, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the local chapter of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Mr. Stock and the orchestra gave about twenty first performances. Of these twenty-odd works six remain strong in one's memory after the season is over. Of the six, five were by Russians—Stravinsky, Prokofieff, Schostakovitch, Dukelsky and Miaskowsky, and one by an American, DeLamarter. The most impressive was the least novel, the Stravinsky *Symphony of the Psalms*, which had been frequently played and broadcast before it received public performance in Chicago. This performance was not particularly good, but the music's enormous sincerity and deep ascetic expressiveness could not be smothered. It is possibly the greatest work Stravinsky has written since *The Rite of Spring*. If my judgment of it is correct it means that Stravinsky, as completely and thoroughly modern a man as one can find, has composed his two finest creations on religious themes.

The Prokofieff *Fifth Piano Concerto* was the composer's vehicle as soloist with most of the big orchestras of the country. Except for a certain Bach-like interlacing of counterpoint in the slow movement I found in it little that Prokofieff has not said before a thousand times. There were the same vigor and the same sparkle and sly edges of satire. Prokofieff also conducted a new suite from an old opera, *The Gambler*, based on Dostoievsky, which sounded like a mad noise when he played it in Chicago and like a totally different work when Koussevitzky broadcast it from Boston.

Dukelsky and Schostakovitch were represented by symphonies of radically different character. Dukelsky's work proved a very light, sophisticated, melodious and brief affair. The third sym-

phony of Schostakovitch, subtitled *May Day*, is a piece of Soviet propaganda music, and it proved that propaganda is the same the whole world over, whether it fly red flags or not. The *May Day* symphony is simply a Bolshevik *1812*, less blatant than its predecessor only because of a slightly more modern idiom.

Dukelsky and Schostakovitch represented the new generation in Russia. The older Russian school was exemplified in the *Twelfth Symphony* of Miaskowsky, which received one of those magnificent interpretations that the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is capable of, but has not given too often in recent years. The work seemed an amazing and fascinating study in orchestration, and was rather brusque and abrupt in its compact and powerful style.

Eric DeLamarter's *Third Symphony* is the most distinguished work by a Chicago composer that I have heard since the production of Carpenter's quartet in 1928. It conveys suggestions of the d'Indy school in the style and content of its first and third movements, and from d'Indy, also, comes its very interesting formal plan. It is a cyclic symphony, but the basic theme upon which the principal subjects are modeled is never played. This theme is written out on a fly-leaf of the score, but not in the score itself. The second movement of the symphony is a jazz scherzo, but its jazz is handled with great restraint and finesse, so that the movement does not jar at all; the jazz never blats and blares, but it stays hot jazz just the same.

The International Society for Contemporary Music was more active in Chicago than ever before. Under its auspices there was an orchestra concert and a concert of chamber music, and the society brought Tibbet to Chicago to sing *The Emperor Jones*. The Society's orchestral concert brought out only one real novelty of interest, a suite called *Paris*, by Jacques Ibert. Like other things of Ibert it proved to be movie music de luxe, inspired by a de luxe movie attitude toward the French capital. It is like a René Clair comedy, with a movement describing a subway station, another dealing with the appalling banalities of the dance halls, and so on. Ibert happened to have a funny little Oriental dance in his portfolio and so he put *that* in too, and called it *The Mosque of Paris*.

All the other interesting music of the International Society's orchestra concert dated back some years. There was a cycle of songs by Honegger, which I remember as something cold and white and clear, quite in contrast with another cycle on the same program, Stravinsky's *Pribaoutki*. *Pribaoutki* is one of the best examples of Stravinsky's war-time style. The songs are tiny things, little naive folk ditties, set to a queer little bubble and glisten of sound, the whole like some bright and vivacious costume plate for a Diaghilev ballet.

The same program also involved Aaron Copland's *Music for the Theater* and Paul Hindemith's *Kammermusik*. The Copland piece is, of course, well known, and its gay color and jazz verve and vigor scarcely call for comment. The Hindemith work is not so often played. It, too, is based on its composer's familiar formula—springy, dry, intellectual counterpoint, with the usual lunge and drive of Hindemith's rhythm. But it has one very unusual movement, a quartet for flute, clarinet, bassoon, and a solitary glockenspiel bell in F sharp—one of those strange hypnotic slow movements of Hindemith, rendered almost diabolical by the sharp colors of its interweaving lines and the bright and fateful interjections of its single bell.

The Society's chamber music concert brought out a very conventional *Cello Suite* by Edward Collins, Hindemith's old and widely played *Quartet*, opus 22, and Randall Thompson's *Americana*, this last done by a choral group from the University of Chicago under Cecil Michener Smith. *Americana* is a choral setting of five transcripts from the like named department in the *American Mercury*. It is a piece of expert and adroit kidding.

Outside the concerts of the Orchestra and the International Society perhaps the most important premiere of the season was that of Leo Sowerby's *Symphony for Organ*, a work which, my scouts inform me, is a rich fabric of counterpoint, sometimes suggesting the modern Englishmen, particularly Vaughan Williams, in whom Sowerby seems to be much interested.

A. F.