

in *Blue*, and just as Stravinsky was making his first "absolute" essays. Yet it is already an amalgam and a resolution of the two styles (jazz-primitive and classic), in its way, prophetic. There is, besides, the typical sensuous and subtle Milhaud personality, and unique sense of shape and color. There is a moment or two when a dragged-in counterpoint simply doesn't sound; otherwise the work holds together. When all the compositions, fusing and resolving our various approaches to a single style, start rolling in, the *Création* will be remembered as their ancestor.

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The Monte Carlo Ballet Russe has provided us with the first large-sized troupe which from the professional angle needs no apology. Every part of it is in its way first-rate—dancers, orchestra, décors, costumes, choreography (count out *Présages*). The new discovery is Toumanova; also Massine himself, who is what Escudero failed to be, a mature male dancer of snap and fire. Lichine may one day grow up to his uncanny beauty. He is as yet too stuck on imitating that spiritual carried-away pose of Lifar's; his technic is very good. *Le Beau Danube* is unexpectedly lovely; autumn-brown, healthy and animal as a horse. *Concurrence* is Balanchine and slapstick; an excellent combination. It is light, giddy, and tart, with an unexplained inserted formal ballet which might just as well be there as not. *Présages* is of course the flop; it is pretty bad. No ballet has the right to ask its dancers to be Action, a couple of Temptations, Fate, Frivolity, and the Destinies (boy-Destinies and girl-Destinies). They dance to some of the most adaptable ballet-music ever written (Tschaikowsky's *Fifth Symphony*), on an excruciating set which is the *surréalisme* of a dyspeptic cartoonist (stars, swirls marking the line of descent, actual *plops!*!, etc.); wearing costumes ill-proportioned and hideous in color. Mentally the ballet is childish. All one can say for it is that it does break away from the usual cut-up procedure of the other works.

Marc Blitzstein

CHICAGO PREMIERES

FOR once the name of Frederick Stock does not lead all the rest in the list of new music played in Chicago in October,

November and December. Mr. Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played only one novelty by a composer of distinction, *Sea Drift* by John Alden Carpenter. As the title indicates, the work is a tone poem suggested by Walt Whitman. From the point of view of orchestral technic Carpenter has probably never written a better score. Some there were who complained of a certain monotony in its coloring, but since the composer was not aiming at diversity of mood this criticism may be beside the point. For one person who heard the work it was completely satisfying in instrumental texture, and distressingly reminiscent in musical content. Whitman's sea pieces sent Carpenter musing down the same melancholy lanes in which Frederick Delius has been wandering these many years, and the quartet remains to date Carpenter's most individual and distinctive work.

In the last concert in December Mr. Stock gave the first Chicago performance of the dances from *Das Nusch-Nusch*, by Hindemith. They were an interesting reminder of the fact that Hindemith can and does write for the full orchestra. In recent seasons we have heard endless sonatas, quartets and "chamber musics" for small orchestra, all in highly abstract patterns. Here we had Hindemith not in the accustomed vein, but writing music of illustration and decoration. *Das Nusch-Nusch* was described in the program-book as a satirical play for Burmese marionettes, which probably accounts for the amazing display of bells, gongs, and xylophones in Hindemith's orchestration. The dances are pert, brief, lively and tuneful little things, orchestrated in a riot of gay splashes and instrumental stunts. They scored a great popular success.

The season opened with a kind of miniature Coolidge festival. Mrs. Coolidge brought the Pro Arte quartet to Chicago for three concerts in which there was one new work of great interest, a *Variations for String Quartet* by Roy Harris. The composition was written this year and had its world premiere on this occasion. It was also the first big work of Harris to be heard in Chicago, and it proved to be something of a disappointment. Howard Talley discovered that its theme was based upon the initials of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, a circumstance which

gives a clue to the character of the quartet as a whole. On first hearing it seemed a kind of academic exercise. It belongs to the academy of the left, the academy of dissonance and atonality, which can be just as rigid and hieratical in its formalism as the academy of the common chord, the bust of Brahms, and the textbook. The new quartet seemed to lack totally that monumental virility and magnificent terseness which are the memorable characteristics of Harris' recently recorded concerto.

The Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago gave the first local performance of Poulenc's amusing *Aubade*, subtitled "choreographic concerto for piano and orchestra." Poulenc had the misfortune to make his reputation as a wild man fifteen years ago, with the result that so disarmingly simple and melodious a composition as the *Aubade* is likely to be laughed at. The composer of the *Sonata for Two Clarinets*, once performed in New York as an example of modern music at its worst, has been pigeon-holed as a childish noise-maker, and so Poulenc remains in the public mind as someone to be greeted with a patronizing smile. As a matter of fact, the Poulenc of the *Aubade* and the *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano*, is a natural melodist. He makes no effort at profound or original structure, but is content with a persistent, beautifully balanced flow of grave little tunes. The *Aubade* is like a well-chosen album of folk songs collected among the more simple-minded strata of the French peasantry.

Perhaps the most interesting performances being given in Chicago this season are the series of "intimate operas" presented by a conductor from Kansas City with singers, dancers and orchestra players who live in Chicago, and which is therefore announced as a trilogy of productions by the "New York Music Guild." The conductor is Karl Krueger, who is presumably responsible for the choice of works. On the first program we heard Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Mozart and Salieri*, and a little vaudeville by Gluck entitled *The Cadi Deceived*. Neither of these works had been publicly performed in America before, and while far from novel, they were interesting as a relief from the standard opera routine. The Rimsky-Korsakoff work, based on a play by Pushkin, is his only opera outside the Russian nationalistic vein. It has a rich, sober, Mozartian score, but it suffers

from a libretto which is more a philosophic dissertation than a play.

The second program of "intimate opera" brought forth Debussy's *Enfant Prodigue* and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. The Stravinsky ballet, although composed in 1919, had not been presented in this country before. As is well known, its score, to use a phrase of Beethoven's, was "zusammen gestohlen aus diesem und jenem" among the forgotten operas of Pergolesi. Its story, too, goes back to Pergolesi's place and time—Naples in the early eighteenth century. It is like one of Pergolesi's own *intermezzi*, spirited, and rather bawdy even in its music. The older composer's forthright tunes, so bound to formula and yet so close to Italian folk melody, lead their own life in Stravinsky's version, but the Russian composer's mastery of the small orchestra and his unfailing sense of ballet rhythms has added vigor and vividness to what would otherwise be a rather dismal exercise of penmanship in a library. *Pulcinella* is in some ways like Kurt Weill's *Dreigroschenoper*. In it the gay, brawling, crooked, proletarian, and lecherous life of a day that is gone lives again, not because it has been revived, but because it has been recreated in a thoroughly modern mind.

Alfred V. Frankenstein

ON THE PACIFIC COAST

MOST of the modern music heard on the Pacific Coast this spring, summer and fall has been presented through the efforts of Nicolas Slonimsky, the New Music Society of California, and the Pro Arte Quartet. The single outstanding exception was the Western premiere in Los Angeles of Gruenberg's *The Emperor Jones*.

Slonimsky's experience at Hollywood Bowl this summer was the reverse of his Harris-Ives triumph at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium six months earlier. Besides having a less responsive audience, he had a decidedly unobliging orchestra. Varese's *Ionization*, Rudhyar's *Towards Reality*, Cowell's *Reel*, Schönberg's *Three Cinematographic Scenes* and Roldan's *Rebambaramaba* ballet pieces were among the presentations. Slonimsky's own *Conjectured Version of a Choral Fragment from*