

Copland's *El Salón México*, new to most of the members of the Cleveland public, sounded particularly fresh and engaging in a brilliant performance by Erich Leinsdorf. Fritz Reiner introduced William Schuman's *Side Show* to a public that was slow to realize its rowdy good humor.

George Henry Lovett Smith

MODERN CLASSICS REACH THE COAST

OLD works by well-known contemporaries dominated the picture so far as the bulk of the San Francisco Symphony season was concerned. However, with the exception of the Bloch *Violin Concerto*, which had been given before with piano in several recitals, all these pieces were new to audiences here.

The second suite from the music to *Protée* was one of Milhaud's first big works to be introduced to this country. Frederick Stock gave it in Chicago in 1921, at the height of the furor over the Six. He handled it rather gingerly, playing only three of the five movements. They were received by the audience with blank silence broken by occasional titters and guffaws. Twenty-three years later, in San Francisco, it was one of the major hits of the season. Milhaud's music has changed in significant ways since *Protée*, though he is still delighted with cool, shapely, pastoral tunes, with big, sonorous orchestral devices, and with polytonal textures. He is no longer so much concerned with the esthetic of sheer pleasure, of which *Protée* is one of this century's most delectable expressions. The work is also one of the most perfect examples of Milhaud's command of "style," a highly inadequate term, used here to suggest qualities of cohesion and congruity.

Carlos Chavez' *Concerto for Four Horns* is a rather amazing example of emotional and atmospheric effect in a form – a kind of *sinfonia concertante* – whose style is usually entirely devoid of such associations. The music somehow evokes ancient ceremonials, the curious, almost totally static slow movement suggesting a "pagan night" of a kind Stravinsky knew nothing about. Afterward Chavez told me he had composed the piece under the spell of one of those hysterical mass religious observances during which thousands of Mexicans make long pilgrimages to Christian shrines set up where Aztec shrines once stood.

Virgil Thomson's suite from *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, which

remains one of the best evocations of American historical atmosphere, and Schönberg's *Second Chamber Symphony* were also played. Recent works included the Shostakovitch *Sixth Symphony* and Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Weber*. The latter is immensely clever, learned and effective stuff, which restores the leaven of humor missing in many of Hindemith's recent achievements. Nevertheless I much preferred his *Quartet* for clarinet, strings and piano (introduced here by the Music Lovers' Society), which is simply colossal in its energy, breadth, size and grand seriousness.

Howard Brubeck's *California Suite*, a strong American piece, is perhaps the only orchestral work about California without a mission bell, but its virtues are not simply negative. It is *sec* with a fine, clear sonority, and it is beautifully modeled. Brubeck, like Milhaud, knows the value of a tune.

Another young composers' event of the late season was a concert devoted almost entirely to songs by the San Franciscan, John Edmunds. These are at their best when they deal with nostalgia and whimsical moods. Though a little like some twilit English songs, they have a firm, crisp harmonic texture and real rhythmic propulsion. Their major defect is a tendency toward excessive brevity. There is, after all, a difference between subtle suggestiveness and the throttling of an idea before it has really been stated.

Alfred Frankenstein

ONE-MAN WEEK IN PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA this spring season paid honor to a native son with two world premieres and one first performance of works by Vincent Persichetti. These revealed a personality of great energy. Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra presented for the first time the *Fables for Narrator and Orchestra*, with six of Aesop's fables for texts. Persichetti provides a musical parallel to the tales, an emotional equivalent to their underlying meaning. The mood is never broken by imitative sound effects. He has dealt well with the problem of narrator and orchestra. The speaking voice is treated as an instrument; it is part of the orchestra but also clearly in contrast to it. Especially successful were *A Raven and a Swan*, the tender tale of a raven's death, and *The Fox and the Grapes*, where the desires and frustration of the fox are portrayed by