

ratura doodles. Nervous trills, canons that get lost and conglomerated harmonies join in during this unprofessional and anti-musical venture.

On a Symphony Club Chamber Orchestra program, Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Three Symphonic Preludes* was the most attractive item. Its harmonies are poignant and the rhythm intrigues one, even though ambient phrases tend to weigh heavily on moving lines. . . . The Art Alliance presented the winning Eurydice Chorus Award work, Karl Ahrendt's *God be Merciful*, a more effective than meaty piece, an unsteady work for women's voices by Jane Kolb and my own *Piano Trio*. Also on the Alliance roster was a lecture by Walter Piston, who sees amazingly clearly into his fellow composers' music. His spicy and well co-ordinated *Flute Quintet* was played and sounded like a Piston spree with more open space and fresh air than usual. . . . The newly formed Guild for Contemporary Music is an organization of about twenty Philadelphia composers who give performances only of their own works. After two concerts the group has already found that it cannot bask solely in regionalism and so will soon take into its fold all contemporary music. Edmond de Luca's *Viola Sonata*, one of the best works so far, shows him pioneering with ideas current in the twenties, but his piece is serious and technically sound.

Vincent Persichetti

LOCAL GENIUS IN SAN FRANCISCO

A NEW composer made his appearance in San Francisco this season, and the town sat up and took notice. His name is Halsey Stevens and he was deposited with us by the United States Navy after some years of teaching at various schools in the East and Middle West. He is a pupil of William Berwald of Syracuse University and also had instruction from Ernest Bloch.

He is a very talented man, and if you haven't heard of him already, you are going to. His *First Symphony*, which he conducted at a concert of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, was one of the most dynamic, compactly meaningful and finely shaped scores of the year, while his *Second Trio*, introduced by the Music Lovers' Society, impressed one particularly for its lightness, deftness and sure brevity of touch. At present Stevens is teaching in the University of Redlands and working on a violin concerto.

Two other local boys had their fling with the San Francisco Symphony. Charles Jones directed the first performance of his *Five Melodies for Orchestra* – tuneful, adroitly rhythmical and subtly scored music for a ballet in search of a choreographer. William Bergsma's brief, atmospheric and elegant *Music on a Quiet Theme* completes the local list except for the Big Names.

Of the three Big Names of the San Francisco region – Milhaud, Bloch and Sessions – the first and second were on Monteux's list for the year. Milhaud's *Suite Française*, however, remains to be heard at the time of writing. Bloch's *Suite Symphonique* is in his neo-classical vein, like the famous *Concerto Grosso*, but it is bigger in sonority and drive. It is one of the most zestful, bright and stimulating works in Bloch's list, with little of his customary exoticism and not a trace of the pessimism that often speaks through this composer.

Bartok's *Second Piano Concerto*, though not a new work – it dates from 1930 – has not been much discussed. We were told that no one but Bartok himself had ever done it in this country until Maxim Schapiro played it with Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony. It, too, has much of the neo-classical about it in that for all its atonality, it is cast in the conventional forms, and it makes much use of extremely intricate and learned polyphonic devices. Its anthropological references are less obvious than is usual with Bartok. Some of its instrumental effects – like the complete absence of strings in the first movement, and their entrance at the beginning of the second, playing a chorale in fifths, muted and without vibrato – are magnificently telling. The impression of the whole was more profound than that made by any other new work of the season except the Stravinsky *Symphony* and Copland's *Appalachian Spring*.

The San Francisco String Quartet introduced the brand-new *Second Quartet* of Prokofiev, which slashes and sings in customary style, and for the first time so far as chamber music is concerned, exhibits that interest in folklore which has been so marked in Prokofiev's orchestral works of recent years. The San Francisco String Quartet will shortly perform the season's final novelty, the *Sixth Quartet* by Quincy Porter.

Alfred Frankenstein

BALTIMORE HEARS WORLD PREMIERES

THE phrase, "First time in Baltimore," is popping up on our symphony programs with a delightful frequency that is rapidly approaching regularity. The Washington monument still stands and, aside from a few ruffled feathers covering the Old Guard, the town seems to have survived successfully its brutal harmonic battering by Kabalevsky, Copland and Creston.

Of a trio of world premieres introduced by Reginald Stewart and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the most touching was the *Peace Overture* by the eighty-year-old Gustav Strube, conducted by the composer at the thirteenth anniversary of the Baltimore Symphony. This unpretentious work plumbs no depths but is well-made, expertly scored music that takes rank among the best of the many compositions by this first