

*Le Quatorze Juillet*, which brought together the finest creative contemporary French artists. Here I shall mention only the incidental music which earned the collaboration of Jacques Ibert, Georges Auric, Darius Milhaud, Albert Roussel, Charles Koechlin, Arthur Honegger and Daniel Lazarus.

Jacques Ibert's overture was typical of his best writing. A fine sense of the form he was utilizing plus brilliant orchestration made a superb introduction to the spirit of the play; Georges Auric's prelude to the first act was a brilliant and truly exciting curtain-raiser, while the finale by Darius Milhaud proved to be the most skillful piece of choral writing this composer has done, much in the spirit of the choruses in his Greek operas. The choral recitation, combined with a sonorous orchestral background and full stage action, brought the first act to a thrilling climax.

The most deeply felt and personal music was Albert Roussel's overture to the second act. Here was a passage truly prophetic of the eventual storming of the Bastille; there was an almost supernatural feeling in this subdued, tender music. Thematic material of a popular nature deftly orchestrated and skillfully constructed, made up the choral and orchestral music for the end of the second act, capably and successfully written by Charles Koechlin.

Typically the work of Arthur Honegger, was the overture to Act Three. The well known muted fanfares and contrapuntal devices added marvelously to the dramatic intensity of the whole spirit of the play, perhaps more successfully than did the other pieces. The finale, by Daniel Lazarus, seemed less fortunate. It was not good theatre music, especially for so stirring an end as Romain Rolland has written.

Roger Désormières conducted with deep respect for the music by these seven men as well as for the message the play made felt. And I cannot resist giving my word of praise to the magnificent curtain painted for the occasion by Picasso, its subject bearing a close affinity to some of Goya's war illustrations.

*David Diamond*

#### FORUM PORTRAITS: SAMINSKY, JOSTEN, FINNEY

THE Composer's Forum Laboratory of the W.P.A. opened its second season with Lazare Saminsky as the invited guest

composer-conductor. This concert gave us an opportunity to know the personality of Saminsky much more intimately than we have known it before. The program was almost equally divided between early and mature works; thus we found Opus 1, Opus 2 and Opus 4 sharing honors with such brilliantly achieved music as *Litanies of Women*, and the *Sonnet of Michelangelo*.

It was a courageous gesture to bring one's student work into the light and to parade it for all to see. Composers' early efforts, like skeletons in the closet, are usually kept hidden in dark, musty places. One speaks of them no more than of the family black sheep. And yet these early attempts reveal much of the basic, native equipment with which the young composer begins his creative life.

Despite the strong scholastic influences felt in Saminsky's *Overture*, Opus 1, written twenty-eight years ago, one finds in this music the same admirable sense of sonority and dramatic line that later orders the creation of so arresting a work as *By the Rivers of Babylon* with its noble melancholy, and the vibrant *Newfoundland Air* with its luminous resonance.

*Distant Airs*, Opus 2, the fruit of the composer's sojourn in the Caucasus, revealed a definite breaking away from class-room formulas. Here was music, modal and arhythmic, which clearly pointed the way to such later works as the impressive *Dirge* and the vivid *Ritual Dance*, both played with sensitive understanding by that superb pianist, Nadia Reisenberg. The remaining early work, *Sea Waves*, for orchestra, seemed rather out of place at the very end of the program. I should have preferred to finish on a more challenging note—the *Sonnet of Michelangelo*.

During the forum that followed the concert, Mr. Saminsky very aptly explained, with Hegel's terse formula, Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis, that a composer goes through three distinct periods of development: the thesis stage, where he absorbs everything that he comes in contact with; the antithesis stage, where he revolts against the strictures of his earlier training, mostly because he finds that the materials at his command fetter him. In revolt he strikes out into new paths and writes what may be sincere, but is nevertheless voluble and vociferous music of protest rather than music of ripened conviction. The last period, the

synthesis stage, is when the composer, mellowed by time and experience, finds a language that is expressive, restrained, subtle and personal.

The concert amply illustrated that Mr. Saminsky has arrived at the third stage by having traveled this tempestuous, inevitable road in traditional fashion. If today his music is sincere, virile, strongly purposeful and relentlessly honest, it is because he has no need for sham or banality. He says what he has to say directly, simply, spontaneously, with masterly craftsmanship and a sense of exaltation.



Music by Werner Josten, with the composer conducting, was performed at a later concert. Mr. Josten revealed a spiritual personality with strongly mystical leanings. The ballet *Endymion* (1933), which had its first performance on this program, is diatonic music, clean, refreshing, and of remarkably clear outline. The mood is idyllic, the coloring pastoral, the style definitely impersonal—yet one felt a real sense of drama underlying the whole.

The *Concerto Sacro*, Number 2, for strings and piano, a sort of concerto grosso, proved to be an earnest, sombre composition leaning somewhat on the archaic patterns of a Pergolesi. The *Lament* especially, rises to truly majestic proportions and sustains a pathetic mood that never loses dignity.

In the ballet *Joseph and his Brethren*, written in 1932, the composer was less happily successful than with the rest of the program. This had not the abstract musical qualities of the first two works; moreover it was imbued with a pseudo-orientalism that savored of the Saint-Saens we know in *Samson and Delila*. While the score of *Joseph* has the same crystalline clarity that characterizes Mr. Josten's other music, and although at times the harmonic flavor is even more pungent, as in the admirable pedal point of the fugue near the close of the work, yet here the flavor was definitely that of the ballet, whereas in the other works one always heard sheer, lofty music. However, for balletomanes this is perhaps more of a virtue than a fault.

One thing was certain, the concert definitely proved that Mr. Josten has an important place among the group of composers

which is making so real a contribution to the music culture of America.



The fourth program was devoted to compositions by that gifted member of the younger generation of American composers—Ross Lee Finney. The three works presented—*Piano Sonata*, 1933, *Violin and Piano Sonata*, 1934, and *String Quartet*, 1935, showed decided chronological growth toward less formalistic and more personal expression.

His talent lies definitely in the direction of solid construction and logical, orderly mass. The rather motoristic rhythmic scheme of 1933 becomes, in 1935, an ardent forward thrust that moves much more convincingly. In 1933 his slow movements do successfully establish a mood; but in 1935 the wistfully beautiful *Andante* sustains real lyrical power. The non-programmatic, wilful music that I heard at this concert inspired in me a strong interest in the future work of Mr. Finney.

*Isadore Freed*

#### RECORDING PREMIERES AT ROCHESTER

THE symposium of new American orchestral music held in Kilbourn Hall, Rochester, during the week of October twenty-fifth, brought thirteen new works before the public and inaugurated a new idea which should be of inestimable service to composers. Dr. Howard Hanson, the guiding spirit of the American Composers' Concerts since their beginning over ten years ago, conducted the augmented Rochester Civic Orchestra in informal programs. The compositions were all recorded, and copies of the recordings will be sent to the composers.

None of the works presented proved to be sensational discoveries, but several were well-written, original and worth hearing. George F. McKay's *Sinfonietta No. 2*, Opus 22 was solid, unified, concise and with good thematic ideas. Erik Leidzen's *Fugue with Chorale* can stand comparison with almost any of the orchestral transcriptions heard of late; he does not try to change the pattern he sets for himself. David Diamond's *Psalm for Orchestra* was brilliantly scored and at moments really moving. It could bear some revision and pruning. Other works