

Kaufman's program also included conventional pieces by William Grant Still, an effective *Samba* by Harold Triggs (reminiscent of Milhaud's *Scaramouche*), and the exhilarating *Ukelele Serenade* by Aaron Copland.

Bohuslav Martinu's *Suite Concertante*, introduced by Dushkin, is a more subtle and less amorphous work than the early *Sonata* performed by Harold Kohon. But like so much of Martinu's music, the *Suite* is interesting more as an index of his facility, intensity, and textural ability, than as a demonstration of the distinction of which he is sometimes capable. Dushkin's transcription of the first aria of Stravinsky's *Mavra* made a deep impression. By means of expert rhythmic shifts and deliberate cutting to eliminate phrase-end pauses, Stravinsky has converted a simple folk tune with oom-pah accompaniment into an unusually lovely musical line which unfolds as smoothly and inevitably as the uninterrupted progress from the intake to the exhaling of breath. The *Rondo Giocoso* by Rudolfo Halffter made discreet application of modern instrumental effects.

Eda Rapoport, who with incredible optimism as to her capacities, sponsored a whole evening of her own music, would scarcely distinguish herself in a student recital. Her melodies are ordinary, and the harmonies in both her conservative and modern styles, are crude and often quite unrelated to the melodies . . . . The *Concerto in D major* for flute and chamber orchestra by Robert Casadesus (René Le Roy, soloist) is in a familiar playful French style and gratifyingly unconservative for a concert artist. The orchestration and themes are, however, rather unvaried, and the work often sinks back into a banal sweetness . . . . Norman Dello Joio's *Piano Sonata* (premiere by Sidney Foster) is weighted down, in the first and larger part of it, by two movements monotonously alike in their pseudo-modality; the first is particularly trying in its unimaginative variation of thematic repetitions in a self-consciously religious form which is, to start with, far too easy and commonplace. The finale is more vital and important despite traces of Copland and others; these would, however, be less objectionable if the composer integrated them, by following through in a fashion as interesting as the derivative elements themselves are.

Arthur Berger

## SOCIETY NOTES IN NEW YORK

OF the contemporary concert works performed on the Museum of Modern Art's series of Serenades, interest naturally centered on Stravinsky's recent *Danses Concertantes*, given its premiere here. There

is little of the *imprévu* in it, which means that for Stravinsky it is something of an unexpected offering. Reminders of *Jeu de Cartes* and the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* are frequent. The new piece extends a direct line. What would ordinarily be a strength, here seems a weakness. For Stravinsky's rather special outlook demands that he ring ever varied changes on that body of music which he regards as common property. A repetitive method risks appearing as a somewhat humorless comment on his own previous work. Yet it is easier to quibble about these re-lived experiences in retrospect than during the actual performance, where their effect is constantly brushed aside by some striking or especially subtle sound, or by some absolute justness of phrasing or proportion.

The five precise movements move in broad periods, rather than by many brief contrasted sections. There is one long-spanned spot, quite suggestive of the mood and sound of Coplandesque movie music. All this makes for a simplicity and directness, which, if implied before, never resulted in a so easily approachable work by Stravinsky. Emotionally the emphasis is on his recently-found tenderness and genuine good humor. I still find this somewhat parsimoniously meted out, so that there is never any more given than is actually demanded. I should like more exuberance, even excess, just as I might wish there were a less fascination for him in the ballet clichés and other influences, not quite up to par musically, upon which he bases such an inventive and distinguished discourse.

Very little of Stravinsky's loving care and tactile orchestral sense were evident in the Poulenc *Aubade*, concerto for piano and small orchestra. This is surely one of his poorer works, simply a cheap version of late Stravinsky, a bare statement of obvious imitations, without a *recherché*, inspired embroidery. Its "impressive" passages seem false, its charm too facile. But it is hard for Poulenc not to be ingratiating.

The fine Falla *Harpsichord Concerto* was given one of its infrequent hearings hereabouts on an earlier orchestral concert. Richard Arnell's *Divertimento Number 2* had its premiere, a less secure work than his previous ones. I find this a good thing: the composer no longer seems satisfied with a Hindemithian blueprint. Some of the slower, romantic sections are emotionally overblown, the rapid motion is still somewhat conventional, the technic less able, yet this is an inquisitive music, moving somewhere, seeking its own personality and a more fluid shape.

Choral and chamber music were well intertwined on other programs of the series. Practitioners of the former on whom we depend most seemed

least rewarding. Virgil Thomson's *Medea Choruses* have all his skill, yet they are too relaxed and tiny to suggest the passion and deep feeling of the text. The skeletonized percussion accompaniment is delicately embellishing, rather than bare and expressively stripped. Milhaud's *The Two Cities* has a tired, routine quality which enervates its dramatic virtues. The *Elegy* too often seemed pretty rather than elevated. Best were Aaron Copland's atmospheric and warming *Lark* and the *Six Chansons* by Hindemith, typical in style but somehow fresh, as if the clichés had not yet precipitated. The lovely, melodic *A la Musique* by Chabrier was a real find.

Bohuslav Martinu's new *Piano Quartet* stood out among the chamber works. It has the richness and size of his orchestral music, rarely falling into the precious, lacy manner which mars his smaller offerings. There is nevertheless a lack of real melodic interest, which I suspect a larger orchestral palette integrates better with other positive elements. His fancy seems not to profit by confinement. A vital performance of the Debussy *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp* pointed up the amazing fashion in which its line is handed over from one instrument to the other. Virgil Thomson's gracious *Serenade for Flute and Violin* traces a rather uneventful course, but its apt brevity was fruitlessly hoped for in the lengthy, involved *Trio for Flute, Violin, and Viola* by Carmela Mackenna, which was inconclusive and personally unrewarding. A stylish and knowing *String Quartet* by Marcelle de Manziarly emphasized manner so as to blur any very definite profile. The medium was expertly employed.

Earlier in the season The League of Composers brought its concert activities to a close with its second program devoted to young Americans and an evening in honor of the visiting Brazilian, Camargo Guarnieri. On the first of these Elliott Carter's *Pastoral for Viola and Piano* alone seemed a completely realized work, though a little complex for such an essentially simple mood. It had an integrated, characteristic style and personality. The rather gross and unsubtle songs of Beatrice Laufer possessed at least the knowledge that a song is just that, and not a piece of over-elaborate chamber music. Other composers, all very able technically, were too much under the influence of some passionate attachment to make a well-rounded impression. Vincent Persichetti's elegant *String Quartet*, caught in the orbit of early Bartok and Hindemith, showed the definite relationship which exists here. The *Duo for Cello and Piano* by Lukas Foss offered Hindemith with some romantic-impressionistic sidelines. Leonard Bernstein's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* kept its Hindemith

and Copland influences well differentiated in separate movements. It was very listenable, especially in its bright, brash moments.

The Guarnieri evening was surprisingly successful in view of the fact that all sizable works were written ten or more years ago. A near-complete picture was yet given, though it remains something of a mystery why the League could not have procured more recent indications of how the man has developed. The songs are among the best of their species. Few South Americans seem to fail here, and the established manner for this genre makes the later date of the songs themselves not very indicative. The *Third Sonatina for Piano* has been heard here before. It is a delightfully fresh piece, an expert synthesis of popular and formal elements. A wider emotional span is apparent in the more imposing chamber works. Guarnieri has passion, eloquence, energy, and tender sadness in addition to his vivacious light-heartedness. He is the first full-fledged South American composer we have known, a varied personality, articulate, with a fluid technic. It is not necessary to appreciate him for his implied abilities. He lacks the sudden, new-sounding flashes of a Villa-Lobos, but then it is not primarily for his coloristic, nationalist traits that we appreciate him. He moves in a more universal sphere, though he is completely of his country.

*Donald Fuller*

### FIRST IN BOSTON

**G**IVEN a public that will listen, the conductor of an orchestra may bring out all the new music he likes. Confronted with one that balks at strange sounds, he must restrain himself. This is not telling the world anything; but to observe how the matter affects Serge Koussevitzky in his planning of programs for the Boston Symphony concerts. Speaking of the regular Friday afternoon and Saturday evening pairs in Symphony Hall, his audiences will take more unknown and lately-written works than he himself can prepare for them. Unless Dr. Koussevitzky had at call an assistant conductor in his concert-master, Richard Burgin, a man competent to rehearse and present, unaided, almost anything a modern composer can fetch along, the Boston Symphony would make no such record as it does. Dr. Koussevitzky takes in hand, naturally enough, the most important of his novelties, or those at any rate that he thinks will most interest the subscribers on the route of his monthly tours; but even so, he finds himself compelled to pass along some pretty good things to his second in command. Occasionally he lets a composer do his own con-