

that side of the musical picture that Chavez wished us to see. But since the program has been recently recorded, I'll reserve comment for the department of scores and records.

Colin McPhee

## MILHAUD, CARPENTER, HARRIS IN CHICAGO

SINCE the sonorous *Festival Fanfare* for over-large orchestra plus Schellenbaum, which Frederick Stock himself wrote for the opening of the Chicago Symphony Jubilee, the city has heard, consecutively, world premieres of symphonies by Darius Milhaud, John Alden Carpenter and Roy Harris. Writing under the stress of war, Milhaud finished his score at Aix-en-Provence shortly before he took refuge in this country. In fact, he admitted that at its outbreak he remained for two months without composing any music, and that the commission provided the incentive to save himself from the intellectual and physical chaos around him. This influence, however, in the *Symphony*, though easily injected into it by the listener, is not otherwise apparent. But then, one means of depriving an influence of greater definiteness is by way of antagonism and reaction and this fact is of singular significance when considering a career that began as buoyantly indocile as Mr. Milhaud's.

The first movement, *Pastorale*, opens with a quiet and very impressive theme in the flutes and violins, reminiscent of a Provençal folksong. Strangely enough, it appears some thirty bars later as a canon in the octave for the harp, with the trumpet playing the lower part an octave higher and the flute the upper part, also up an octave. As a composition, the second movement, *très vif*, is perhaps a better illustration of the composer's maturity. But there, too, we look in vain for an evolution towards greater clarity and economy. A chorale-like theme alternates with a more expressive one throughout the next movement, which contains some of the best and some of the poorest orchestral moments; and the finale, beginning vigorously, builds its simple thematic materials into a very brilliant contrapuntal close.

It is a weakness in Darius Milhaud that he persists in subordinating his inherent feeling for simplicity when he attempts a larger form, and in failing his climaxes when he has but finished their preparation. Still, the symphony has a certain validity and dramatic sweep, and though details are obscure at times and very irritating, in its source and motive the whole is, as might be expected, of a dynamic quality. These considerations need not unduly debar us from pondering on a musical development, the kernel

of which was, without a doubt, of no common substance. Himself so striking an instance of mobile spirit, Milhaud still might pass as a very seductive and interesting member of the *avant-garde* of the twenties. The truth of this charge might be exemplified by almost any one of his recent works; but the symphony, his first for large orchestra, discloses the aims, the weaknesses and the achievements of this very distinguished figure, in a more concise way than any of the things I heard in France before the war.

The *Symphony* of John Alden Carpenter does not invite very close attention as a portent in our 1940. It might, with a change here and there, have been uttered twenty and some odd years ago. In fact it is based on a previous symphony of greater length (1917). Whatever else, however, may be held about it, it is certain that Mr. Carpenter has, in truth, a legitimate standing-ground; he has a consciousness of esthetic requirements, the lack of which is so prodigiously cultivated in some quarters today.

The leviathan subject that Roy Harris has undertaken in his new piece, *The American Creed*, is presented in two succinct movements: *Free to Dream*, a fantasy, and *Free to Build*, "a double fugue in which," Harris says, "the first subject, formed on Whitman's sentence, 'The Modern Man I Sing,' is treated in an extended stretto style to serve as an introduction to the second subject." Let me not be presumed to think slightly of Mr. Harris' achievement; but in the double fugue, as in the fugal section of his *Symphony No. 3*, he again baffles our homespun efforts. A sketchy fugato is by no stretch of the imagination a fugue, and a double fugue only makes matters that much worse. I feel that there is more truth in the verisimilarities of his programs than in the structural significance of the musical result. But perhaps this is what Walter Piston meant when he wrote: "If these characteristics are due, as some think, to a lack of technic, let us hope the man can in some way be prevented from acquiring a technic which would rob his musical language of some of its most valuable attributes." No doubt the full blossoming time of Harris the composer has not yet arrived, though press and public have encouraged a legend to the contrary. In listening to his treatment of so exalted a theme as the credo of Americans, I do not find that a new work of *Eroica* stature has been successfully delivered. Truly expressive qualities in art rest, perhaps, on such humble origins as adroit transitions and organic developments. And the more we become aware of such definite anatomical details, the more, it might be said from the listeners' point of view, have they been denied.