

passioned lament accompanying the cortège in which the animals bear away the lifeless body of Eurydice.

In contrast to so choice a work as this, *The Bells* seems a little brash and extroverted. I should not want to apply the harsh term opportunism to Milhaud's attitude in composing the new score; let us rather say that he opened his mind to the possibility of turning out a piece to suit the broad purposes of the Ballet Russe, which has subsequently proved the wisdom of his attitude by purchasing the score – and also, of course, Ruth Page's resourceful and well calculated choreography.

The Bells' scenario is from Poe's familiar poem. Citing various lines about the golden, silver and iron bells, the plot (if that is the right word for it) traces the experience of a bride and bridegroom through a life cycle passing from initial happiness to disillusionment and destruction. The denouement is brought on by a retinue of demoniac figures headed by the King of the Ghouls, who seemed originally to be – whatever the Ballet Russe may make of him – a symbol of homosexuality, as he lures the Bridegroom away from the Bride. In a final chaotic episode the last aspect of stability disappears when a church, complete with steeple and bells, falls into a heap of rubble in the midst of the bacchanalian group.

If you trouble to reread the poem, you will find that Miss Page's scenario, apart from any literal interpretation of the symbolism, offers an excellent parallel to its emotional course. It serves furthermore as a good presentation of Poe's special brand of romantic melancholy, in which the greatest beauty is to be found in death. It is not often that a ballet based upon a literary theme so successfully avoids mere obvious translation into pantomime.

The trouble with Milhaud's score is not that it is bad music, for it is not. On the contrary, it is music of admirable invention, spirit and drive, handsomely conceived in terms of the needs of dancers. But it misses the quality of literary understanding which lifts *Les malheurs d'Orphée* to so high a level. Two possibilities were open – to catch and enhance the Poe mood of coldly passionless morbidity, or to oppose it effectively by some well planned musical counteragent. Milhaud followed neither of these courses, and consequently wrote no more than a resounding, energetic and interesting piece of utility music.

Cecil M. Smith

COMPOSERS' FELLOWSHIP MEETS IN DETROIT

THE first congress of the Fellowship of American Composers, Detroit, May 6-10, induced a mixed reaction. In general it was a success, but the faulty administration of musical and practical details left too much to be desired. Moreover the intent of the meeting seemed at this session un-

clear. Perhaps control and direction will be added to enthusiasm in the future. Much credit is due Roy Harris for originating the plan. The congress now needs wider support to make it less sectional in significance.

The week's climax, the Detroit Symphony concert, sent the audience home in a happy frame of mind. A trio of pieces by time-tested composers – Schuman's *Free Song*, the slow movement of Harris's *Fifth Symphony* and Hanson's *Drum Taps* – were followed by a like number of works by younger men. These three were Weldon Hart's *Overture*, the Finale from my own *First Symphony* and Ulysses Kay's *New Horizons*. Hart was completely competent in his use of the orchestra and the materials were meaty. Kay has done and will do better; *Horizons* is thematically pithy and over-preoccupied with color. It is the kind of stuff one commonly thinks of as being useful for background music.

Wednesday evening's concert made one long to hurry away after bad program-building with amateurs performing amateurishly. Detroit Cooley High School's choir sang, very much as any fine high school choir sings, an ill-chosen set of Kountz, Noble Cain, and O'Hara. Ann Arbor's high school choir sang listlessly an intelligently chosen group by Wayne Barlow, Halsey Stevens, Randall Thompson, and Normand Lockwood. *Go, Lovely Rose* (Stevens) was sensitive and perfect for the medium; *Song of the Fisherman* (Lockwood), worth mention. Wayne University ensembles acquitted themselves almost professionally in Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, a piece by Virgil Thomson, and Harris's really good *Blow the Man Down*. Quality of performance was again a harmful factor on Thursday night, when Michigan State College ensembles unmysteriously murdered everything from Bloch, Griffes and Hanson, down to the unknowns. Owen Reed's *Overture* is probably a cleverly concocted thing, but it was pretty hard to tell.

The typical small, faithful, select audience heard a program of piano music on Tuesday, dominated by Sam Raphling's *Sonata*. This was a first prize winner in one of the congress's contests; the athletic vigor of the first and third movements appealed to the experienced or average listener alike. Only the literalness and forced lyricism of the slow part keep this from being adequate for public exhibition. Harold Morris won a second prize for an abortive one-movement *Sonata*; and the listeners were depressed and offended as much by the twenty-four minutes of his music as by Mr. Morris's verbal explanation. Walter Huffman's *Sonatina* was better – fresh material concisely handled.

Band music by del Busto, Long, Cowell, Arnold, Grainger, Tuthill, Riegger and Effinger were all thrown in together on Monday's program. Effinger's *Prelude and Fugue* was a pleasant surprise from a comparative unknown; Riegger's *Passacaglia and Fugue* was a disappointment, dull

and cerebral. Even to list a thing like Angel del Busto's double fugue, *Homage to Bach*, was patently unforgivable.

Of the competition winners the Raphling was the most aptly chosen, the Kay and John Work's *The Singers* (choral competition winner) pretty fairly picked. The Morris *Sonata* and Francis Pyle's *Of Valleys and Cragged Peaks* (band competition winner) were miscarriages of justice.

All plans for introducing informal reading symposiums soon disintegrated, and the three open sessions of the Detroit Symphony wisely were turned into rehearsals for Friday's concert. Neither were the discussion periods organized before the event. Two or three, however, were saved by the experience and wit of such participants as Nicholas Slonimsky, Hanson, Gustave Reese, Quincy Porter, Raymond Kendall and Harris.

Edmund Haines

ENGLISH IN BOSTON; STRAVINSKY'S SYMPHONY

DURING the second half of the past season, the Boston Symphony Orchestra performed fourteen compositions supposedly new to local audiences and revived a few works that had not been heard here recently. On the face of it, this seems very impressive, but a glance at some of the items on the list provides less occasion for excitement. The revivals included such things as the Khachaturian *Piano Concerto* and Hanson's *Fourth Symphony*. Among the pieces heard here for the first time were Gretchaninov's *Elegy*, Opus 175, an agglomeration of the eclecticism of Glazunov and Rachmaninov, which, although completed in 1945, could have been written in 1880; John Ireland's *The Forgotten Rite*, written in 1913 and as pale and ineffective a piece of musical landscape as has been heard here in many a decade; Sir Arnold Bax's turgid, hybrid *Tintagel* of 1917 which Koussevitzky's good taste has spared us up till now; and Anthony Collins's *Threnody for a Soldier Killed in Action*, a hoax upon the public sympathies and a work whose musical substance is zero.

These last three numbers, along with a few other twentieth century English compositions, were conducted by Sir Adrian Boult during his three weeks stay in Boston. It can hardly be said that Sir Adrian or these compositions have appreciably advanced the cause of English music here. The most notable work was Vaughan Williams's *Job, A Masque for Dancing*, which possessed a fine sense of line, more vocal to be sure than instrumental in character, and which proved earnest, if at times clumsy and uninspired. William Walton's fat and Elgarian "*Scapino*," a *Comedy Overture*, also new to Boston, sparkled by comparison.

At a subsequent concert Koussevitzky conducted music by a British composer of the younger generation, a *Passacaglia* and *Four Sea Interludes*