

Elliott Carter's *Another Music* for women's voices and chamber orchestra. The choral writing was expert, the instrumental parts artfully sustained. Some lovely, still sleepy, matinal music later gave place to very wide-awake vigor. Carter is obviously among our best-equipped composers for significant choral works.

Donald Fuller

THE RICH AND VARIED NEW YORK SCENE

THE range of styles and technics to be heard during the present mid-season in New York has been extraordinary. Practically every known modern idiom, and at least one new one, were represented. It is possible to come out of the welter with a sensation that one is hearing Babylonian tongues and to heave a long Spenglerian sigh. On the other hand one may adopt the American athletic attitude and rejoice in the healthy variety of fighting teams at present battling their way towards the international cup.

The orchestral fare is an apt demonstration. I have heard a *Symphony* by Miaskovsky (his twenty-first) directed by Stokowski at the City Center that was in every way clear, expressive and unpretentious. In stylistic approach it was a high flown, even flowery outgrowth of the late romantic. But the idiom is so very constant in expressivity that it ceases to suggest specific emotions. The technic becomes neutral and valid for musical structure in itself. This is a fascinating achievement. It points the way, along which the musical practices of Schönberg, Berg, Ives and Ruggles tend, towards a conquest of their nineteenth century heritage by the simple device of going directly through it and coming out on the other side with once more purely musical matter.

On the other hand I also heard a *Piano Concerto* by Ernest Gold as played by Leon Barzin with the National Orchestral Association at Carnegie Hall that was a commercialized adaptation of all the most successful rabble-rousers known to the present century. The same program, however, had Barzin redeeming himself with Nicolai Berezowsky's *Violin Concerto*. This was a neat, not too grand, but most musical work, in the best of taste and having a central slow movement that is highly effective in its minimal subject matter and delicate workmanship. It is written in the half-way house of technical usage that is also the home of composers like Lopatnikoff and Nabokov. These men enjoy a community of style, situated dead center between Debussy and Hindemith, which almost points to the existence of a "school" that might have a name, perhaps

Russian impressionism, though the style is not "nature-loving" and does seem more contrapuntally inclined.

Berezowsky was also presented by the Philadelphia Orchestra, with Ormandy conducting his *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*, Opus 31, Edna Phillips as soloist. This work, though newer than the violin piece, is not so successful. It is so anxious to avoid the obvious that it misses fire entirely. Opening with the lovely statement of a Russian folk tune in simple octaves for the harp, it proceeds to labor over the presentation of large chords for the soloist and hesitant comments from the orchestra. The entire concerto contains nary a glissando, and just fancy, if you will, a horn concerto without a hunting call.

Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, which, as guest of the Philharmonic Society, he conducted in its first performance, is already eighteen years old. It was written in Paris between 1926 and 1927, slightly revised here in 1944, and is proof that a good idea will pop up anywhere in the world at the time it is needed and appear as an original thing to which no influences have contributed. The music sounds very much like the simpler works of Ives. It is composed on material that Ives makes frequent use of and applies similar constructive principles, though it never reaches the extreme tension of overlaid and multiple subjects one meets so often in the larger Ives works. Again its form is of greater extent and variety. The *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is perhaps Thomson's most high flown orchestral work in the idiom which has made him famous. It is warmly human and evocative.

Artur Rodzinski conducted at Carnegie Hall the first performance of Paul Creston's *Symphony Number 2*, Opus 35, which I found uninteresting in the extreme. It is a longish and full scored orchestral pomposity about nothing in the way of sentiments.

John Cage, our major figure in the exploratory field, presented a concert of his recent music written for the prepared piano, at the New School for Social Research. He played one of his last year's works, *the perilous night*, as a solo. The rest of the concert was given over to the first presentation of his new pieces for two prepared pianos, a *book of music for two pianos* and *three dances*, superbly played by Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale. The first of these is large, divided into two halves, each in turn subdivided into many shorter sections; the whole, however, sounds like a well-integrated single movement. Both pianos bear the same mutes in the same places and it is to Cage's credit that this extreme

limitation is not even noticeable in the work, so extraordinary are the tonal organization, the rhythmic life, the direct and impassioned expression. The tension and strength that a few quiet tones can convey in parts of this piece are the sign of a completely new and authentic creative power. The second work, the *three dances*, is on a less ambitious scale both formally and expressively. It is in the nature of a divertissement in which each piano bears independent motives and is carefully and cleverly woven into the other instrument's sound. Of a more immediate sensuous appeal, this fast-slow-fast shape of the whole is clear and exciting. The three works on this program, it seems to me, definitely establish Cage as the newest member of the great American independents, along with Ives, Ruggles, Cowell, and Varese.

Julius Goldstein-Herford played, over a series of concerts, the complete *Ludus Tonalis* by Hindemith, prefacing each performance with an analytic lecture. This work, a series of interludes and fugues connected by an interesting tonal plan, is very fine but slightly disappointing. Its grandeur of structure and neatness of organization are evident and pleasurable. It contains a few sections of great, if pallid, beauty, but the distinguishing features of a strong musical personality are missing. Not that it sounds in any way weak or derivative. On the contrary it has moments of force and is in accord with the kind of sound we have grown accustomed to expect from Hindemith. The question then is whether this is a fugal age, because surely Hindemith of all modern composers would be the one to do a second well-tempered set, if it could be done. The discrepancy lies somewhere in the gap between a well-mannered machination of the material and a genuine creative drive. It seems to me that Hindemith has succumbed in this work more to his gentlemanly scholarship than to his really forceful native musicality.

Martinu's name now appears on almost every chamber music concert. I heard the Le Roy-Foster-Scholz ensemble of flute, piano and cello play his *Trio in F major* for the first time. It is, as usual, charming and meditative. Martinu seems to work certain rhythmic and formal ideas directly out of Brahms into a French texture that includes wide chromatic harmonic shifts. The result is, to my way of thinking, definitely pre-Raphaelite; it creates warm relaxation, as well as doubts about its honest-to-goodness.

This same program gave us another performance of Norman Dello Joio's *Trio* as well as a first of Sidney Foster's *Trio*. The latter was a well made if very eclectic piece whose opening movement, an allegro, contains

the most interesting material and the best workmanship. It is modelled on the Beethoven-Borodin monothematic lines with constant hammering at a small motive, arriving at the same tight and dramatic structure, though the substance harped on is not so grand in itself.

Alexei Haieff was represented on Fredell Lack's violin recital by his *Three Pieces*, consisting of a Polka, Air and Ritornel. These are Stravinskian in style but a touch more romantic. The material is elusive and either reminiscent of former centuries or of semi-popular songs, as is fitting to the idiom, but it is worked out in a thoroughly adroit and comprehensible manner, giving off a delicate flavor of its own.

Henri Temianka, violinist, gave the first performance of Douglas Moore's "*Down East*" Suite and a *Romance from the Suite based on Themes by Donizetti* by Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Moore has written what I think to be one of his finest pieces, full of charm and brilliance. It does not stimulate the mind but depends on a familiarity with American folk patterns and their associations. It is broad and firm in outline, warm in expression. The slow movement seemed among the more successful attempts to write a continuously flowing lyric piece in the popularist manner around reminiscent material. It achieves this with a minimum of sentimentality and makes, on the way, a number of lovely sounds. The Castelnuovo-Tedesco work on the other hand was very dull to my ears.

Jean Carlton, soprano, who was presented at Town Hall under the auspices of the Naumburg Foundation, had the great good sense and courage to do a quite unconventional debut recital that billed, among other things, Henry Cowell's *Toccanta* for flute, 'cello, piano, and soprano vocalise. This is frankly eclectic in texture though each movement in itself is a strongly consistent whole. The opening allegro bears the strongest personal imprint and is very lovely to listen to. Slightly chromatic and curvacious of line, the voice and the three instruments sing sometimes in unison and sometimes in counterpoint a quite magical incantation. The third movement, a moderato, begins with the repetition of a single tone and then expands by wedge addition into a chordal texture, though the whole piece is curiously Schubertian in sound. The final allegro reveals a surprisingly Ravelian sophistication of harmony and style that one has not previously noted in his work. Doda Conrad sang, at Times Hall, three new songs by Paul Nordoff which I found suave and pleasurable. *Dirge for the Nameless*, *Pastoral*, and *Madrigal*, as they were called, all have a French harmonic style and a well designed if slightly distorted melodic

contour. Two more of his songs, *This is the Shape of the Leaf* and *There shall be More Joy* were sung by Catharine Latta at the Times Hall concert of the Chamber Music Guild. Miss Latta also gave us Charles Ives' adventurous and moving *Where The Eagle*, Marc Blitzstein's *Jimmie's Got a Gail*, Theodore Chanler's *These, My Ophelia*, Paul Bowles' delightful *Letter to Freddy* and a piece by Holst.

Lou Harrison

PHILADELPHIA'S LIVELY MID-SEASON

IGOR STRAVINSKY was presented in a lecture-recital by the Philadelphia Art Alliance. His subject, "Composing, Performing, Listening" was treated in the manner of a philosophical essay and was as carefully worked out as any sonata. It was my privilege to assist Stravinsky in presenting the music on the program. We played his *Sonata for Two Pianos* and arrangements for two pianos of *Scherzo à la Russe* and the *Circus Polka*. Much of the sonata, discussed in some detail in MODERN MUSIC's last issue, is constructed in easy flowing, vocal counterpoint, each piano taking two voices. The insistently rhythmic *Scherzo* was composed last year as an orchestral piece for Paul Whiteman's Blue Network series. The already well known *Circus Polka* is as good-humored as any elephant around.

The Twentieth Century Group gave a concert of refreshingly varied styles of chamber music. Debussy's excellent *Deux Chansons de Charles d'Orléans* for unaccompanied mixed voices was heard here six years ago and found a welcome return. *Chorale and Variations*, a short piano piece by Helen Weiss, is a happy combination of contrapuntal and harmonic writing. In a few variations she manages to cover the possibilities of the theme and move to a well rounded close. Leonard Bernstein's strident *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* is built on derivative but catchy tunes and is put together with such unchecked drive that everyone is caught in the excitement. Benjamin Britten's *First String Quartet* is by far the best work I have heard from this composer. It has youthful exuberance and punch and the themes are daring and energetic. It is surprising to find such an abundance of unison string writing used successfully. At times the parallel lines get tight and take too long to ease off. This want of contrapuntal freedom is particularly felt in the uneven first movement. Ernest Bloch's *Sonata for Violin and Piano* listed as a Philadelphia premiere was written over twenty years ago. Violinists give up a major