

FORECAST AND REVIEW

PARK AND STADIUM, SUMMER SEASON

SUMMER music in metropolitan New York was considerably less interesting than in some of our country music centers which are once again active. But the Goldman Band vigorously carried out its policy of performing new compositions for this medium. At the opening concert Percy Grainger appeared as soloist in his own *Walking Tune* for winds and piano. We are likely to forget Grainger in thinking of modern music, though he has quite a prodigious record of adventure and experiment behind him. His best works contain some interesting and lithe music. I should also like to defend his perennial *Tune from County Derry* because of its finely designed polyphonies, sense of completion and able scoring. Grainger's policy of dishing up his pieces for every instrumental combination under the sun seems to me a most sensible application of the music-for-use idea.

Schönberg's *Variations*, Opus 43a, were given their first performance in the original band version by Richard Franko Goldman, who took over the ensemble for modern scores. The Brahmsian air of nobility that the piece had in its orchestral arrangement turned into a tense and more contrivedly public one. The scoring is brilliant and forceful. Schönberg obviously considered what will and won't go in a park, where band music is usually played: though the piece is typical of his lighter style, it is still pleasurable to a large common audience. Pleasing, too, for their swinging marchability were the two little Milhaud marches, *In Memoriam* and *Gloria Victoribus*. Pedro San Juan's *Caribbean Sketch*, rather geometric for my taste and too given to theatrical thunders, is nevertheless brightly scored and rhythmically vigorous.

Besides established modern works at the Lewisohn Stadium, where the New York Philharmonic held forth, we heard Paul Creston's *Frontiers* and George Antheil's *Over the Plains* — or Borodin over the steppes of central Texas . . . Frederick Jacobi's *Four Dances from "The Prodigal Son"* are pleasant and clear in instrumentation, and they dance well, though they seemed at this hearing to have no very special character. . . . A bright little *Concerto* for harmonica and orchestra by Jean Berger (Larry

Adler, soloist) gave us French showmanship stepped up to Gould proportions but with much better thematic material. The running use of the battery, which plays Afro-Cuban style, in combination with the heady and sonorous tone color of the harmonica, lends the piece a kind of "tropical night" sound . . . Strauss's excerpts from *The Woman Without a Shadow*, never before heard here, show clearly what happens to the composer who embraces technical recession, closes up shop and works for the opera or concert trade as it now stands — or sits.

Valerie Bettis, on one of the "Barbizon Tuesday" series, presented *Yerma*, a new ballet with music by Leo Smit, based on the Lorca play. The score, for flute, trumpet, bassoon and piano, is organized on a considerably more advanced level than Smit's works of last season. He explores a wide variety of dissonance, instrumental methods and expressive devices with quite exciting results. This was both danceable and listenable music.

Lou Harrison

REFLECTIONS AT A SPA

IT was quite clear from the series of six concerts presented by the Music Group of Yaddo this September, that the young are marching together in an almost solid phalanx of technical reaction and are conducting the battle on a low level of competence indeed. The stylistic devices invented at the beginning of the century are getting a workout now in the services of "expression," with the highest value placed on the personal elements in organization. The result is, of course, the exact reverse of the end imagined. For any evidence of personal integration in the works of the new talents is almost impossible to find. Several composers, however, have achieved a specious reality by virtue of the most elegant and precise imitation of some dead master, as, for instance, Louise Talma who is writing Ravel's posthumous work for us.

The technical cause of the weakness seems to be an indulgence in a veritable free-for-all of tone combinations. Harmonic complexes as well as the individual notes of melodic lines sound totally random. Simple diatonic scale tunes wander about in a mass of dissonant accompaniment; this is disturbing because either the scale or the accompaniment seems like a set of wrong notes. Composers will raise eyebrows at my quibble with their freedom, but I can defend this view by asking them to listen for three days to similar pieces and see if, at the end of that time, they do not agree that batches of definitely wrong notes could be quickly cleared up by some care about purely musical syntax instead of personal expression.

There were two exceptions to this general condition among the young, the string quartets by Miriam Gideon and Robert Palmer, performed by