

suggests the sentimental American ballad, affectionately remembered. The weakest spot seems, to this reviewer, to be the scherzo, which for all its ingenuity in orchestration and its inventive treatment of the thematic material, has a strangely static affect. One cannot, however, go all out for this symphony. Granting its virtues – and they are uncommon enough – there is something rather cold and uninviting about a lot of it. The very orderliness of its plan and structure often seems to negate the spontaneity which the character of the music requires. And the luscious apotheosis at the close is oddly out of character with all that has gone before. The symphony can hardly be called academic or pedantic. There is too much life and invention in it for that; but at the same time it does appear to be ordered rather than fired by artistic imagination.

The performance served, in a sense, as an official welcome to Mr. Thompson in his new position as director of the Curtis Institute of Music. All in all, it was a welcome quite as successful as it was appropriate.

Henry Pleasants

MUSICOLOGY STEPS OUT

THE musicologist – by one popular definition a person interested in music from any angle except the musical – is among those unfortunates who must endure an avalanche of lectures at annual scientific meetings. Undoubtedly the International Congress of the American Musicological Society, held in New York City in September, attempted to lighten his load. There was considerable sugar-coating (though not always up to Consumers Research standards of grade A), the gathering shifting about New York, to acquaint distinguished foreigners with Harlem and Billy Rose's Aquacade, as well as points of musical interest. Among the unexplored areas was that of debate; and meetings which have no time for that element are in some danger of becoming mere displays. As for contemporary music that territory was hardly invaded at all by the speakers, though there was one notable exception in Francisco Curt Lange's discussion of "Americanismo Musical." Despite inevitable qualifications, however, this child of an American society and of crumbling international good-will shone by contrast with all previous affairs.

The musical performances, which were many, included a concert of American chamber music, two of nineteenth and twentieth century Amer-

ican music, and a demonstration by the electronic orchestra of NBC, Radio City. Old music was humanized – in Ives Tynaire's irresistibly warm rendering of medieval music perhaps too much so – and unpublished music by Handel unearthed. The concert of Hispanic music did not offer the strongest selection; its contemporary material was feeble notwithstanding the two items by Villa-Lobos. The delightful program of the Old Harp Singers of Nashville, a group active in preserving our old hymnody and White spirituals, was interesting because results of purist efforts were presented in a not-quite-pure fashion, like most Negro spirituals that are touched up to meet concert hall standards of the near-past and the present. There were also authentic demonstrations by native singers of Americana ranging from Indian songs of Arizona and Nebraska to ballads and fiddle tunes from the South and from New Jersey. Much of this music will be a surprise on the rare occasions when it can be heard, so long as radio and especially the recording companies continue to feel that the authentic ring does not invite the ring of money. The Indian melodies still suggest how far the efforts of our composers fall short of exploiting the possibilities of the material; at the same time we may question whether these possibilities can ever attain full development within music conceived harmonically.

A departure from strictly historical subjects was also noticeable in many of the papers read at the conference. Otto Ortmann and Dayton C. Miller reported on interesting experiments that strip tone-color or timbre of the mystical connotations generally given them by the practicing musician; Ortmann's studies suggest for instance that fluctuations of timbre on the piano depend entirely on speed and weight in striking the keys. Davidson Taylor's survey of works written for broadcasting gave exhaustive information on "radiogenic" music in this country and abroad, his enthusiasm being in contrast to the scepticism of many musicians, especially in Europe. No serious new genre appears to have been created, as yet, by music especially written for the radio, and we still need a clarification of radio trends as they affect the contemporary composer. Charles Seeger in his talk on Government and Music did not commit himself as to whether the Government should do more in music than it already does chiefly through the relief activities. His plea for Applied Musicology seems well on the way toward fulfillment, since practical needs make such application automatic; acoustics and music testing will thrive, whether good or bad, so long as concert halls are built or remodeled, and children are graded.

Primitive and folkmusic were considered at a special morning session.

Those who think of folkmusic as "untrammelled" folk expression, may have been shocked by Roy Lamson's demonstration of the connections between our folksongs and printed sources – the English "broadsides," which are miniature lyric tabloids of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of particular interest was Samuel P. Bayard's discussion of versions and variants in folkmusic; today respectable music clings to the fixed form of the composition, while popular dance music preserves the rights of improvisation, treating form as something fluid and revampable. The moot question of African survivals in Negro spirituals was touched upon in my own report that African influence is more apparent in the Indian music of the Southeast than in the spirituals and secular songs of the Negro in this country. Abstruse problems of Oriental music too have provocative implications. Curt Sachs illuminated some of the mysteries of the "so-called Babylonian musical notation," and Manfred Bukofzer in his talk on Javanese music made it clear that paucity of tones in the scale is not necessarily an indication of great age, as we are apt to assume.

All in all, variety made this congress a far more stimulating occasion than are the usual discussions limited to Occidental musical history. The contemporary composer may very properly feel that his interests and problems are still slighted by the musicologist; but the spirit of the congress suggests that this was a matter of immediate circumstance rather than of unawareness.

George Herzog