

mentions a moment of this mystical fellowship in which "Thoreau—that reassuring and true friend—stood by him one 'low' day when the sun had gone down, long, long before sunset"; and *Thoreau* is the title of the sonata's concluding movement, and *Emerson, Hawthorne* and *The Alcotts* those of the other three. For just the frequency of states of sympathy with Nature when "the whole body is one sense," of conditions of "liberty in Nature" when man is a part of her and the self and all which limits it are divinely acceptable, and humblest clay "instinct with celestial fire" smites upon the infinite: precisely the frequency of these states was the essence of Concord an hundred years since, the genius of the prophetic Emerson, the fantastic Hawthorne, the homely earth-fast Alcotts, the deeply-earth-submissive hermit of Walden Pond, and is the source of the American and democratic idea. But in moving us towards the transcendentalists and their fount, the music moved us towards Ives himself. He seemed the "Hesper of their throng," a seer and surely one of the most exquisitely sentient of American artists.

*Paul Rosenfeld*

## TRIUMPH OF REACTION, BELGIUM, 1938

**A**BOUT four years ago under the leadership of Richard Strauss a number of representatives from various countries united in a "Conseil Permanent pour la Coopération Internationale des Compositeurs." Nineteen nations joined and their delegates now meet twice a year. These sessions are made the occasion for large international music festivals. The recent meeting held in both Brussels and Antwerp was combined with a music week of operatic, orchestral, choral and chamber music performances. Works of more than forty-five composers were included, ranging from piano pieces to symphonies, from solo songs to operas.

Anyone hoping to get a picture of present-day creation from this assembly was doomed to disappointment. All contemporary expression of the newer music was studiously avoided, the names of leading modern musicians were sought in vain. Most of the delegates came from strictly academic spheres, and they pre-

sented chiefly their own works or those of friends and pupils, which proved to be essentially old, "out-dated" compositions. What they demonstrated was the senility of post-romantic, epigonal music, the staleness of the tone-poems ground out in such quantity according to formula at the turn of the century.

Works of yesterday and the day-before-yesterday passed in parade, often under the baton of their own creators; two symphonic entr'actes of Wagnerian color from the *Don Quixote* (1898) of Wilhelm Kienzl; the clever but well-worn overture from *Donna Diana* (1894) by E. N. von Reznicek; the opera *Andrea Chénier* (1896) by Umberto Giordano given in Flemish at Antwerp; Sibelius' *Third Symphony* and two orchestral pieces by the Belgian conservatory directors, Joseph Jongen and Flor Alpaerts whose *Scherzo* and *Uilenspiegel* evoked familiar memories of Dukas and Strauss; two violin sonatas by Janacek and Szymanowski, rich in lovely traits but no longer representative of their creators, and smaller piano pieces by Albeniz and Granados which have been played everywhere. Doubtless these and other musicians have been nourished at the fount of folklore, but that, as a general source serves only too bountifully as a blind for lack of original ideas or as a supply for colorful decoration. After all it is so easy to hand a folksong from instrument to instrument, or to use it as a theme for contrapuntal exercises.

Among newer orchestral works there was one piece of distinction—*Fantasy on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, a tribute by Vaughan Williams to the famous sacred composer of the sixteenth century. Guillaume Landré of Holland again proved himself a serious and gifted musician in a series of four orchestral pieces. The superficial prestissimo of *Minutes Symphoniques* by Dohnanyi of Hungary was clever in its brevity, and the third piano concerto by Panscho Wladigeroff of Bulgaria, full of temperament in the end sections but unfortunately not very even, proved a bravura piece as played by the virtuoso composer. Also noteworthy was the fresh but rather facile comedy overture by talented, twenty-seven year-old Jacopo Napoli of Italy, and the prelude to *Grand Meaulnes* by A. F. Marescotti of Switzerland, who has, however, given us stronger works. Among the better chamber music pieces were the concise *Stücke für Streich-*

quartet of Albert Moeschinger, also a Swiss, the *Klavierquartet* of Jef von Durme of Belgium and the well-worked out *Klavierfuge* by Piet Ketting of Holland. The *Bläserquintet* by Jean Absil proved his talent although he has created better works.

Honegger and Ibert were poorly represented by their opera *L'Aiglon*. This unsuccessful joint effort bears little evidence of its parentage. A performance of Wagnerian excerpts was given and also a presentation of the romantic historical oratorio *Die Schelde*, by the Flemish nationalist composer Peter Benoit, a work monumentally conceived but quite antiquated.

As compensation the festival offered an impressive display of Belgium's artistic achievements. Musical life in that country has enjoyed an unusual upswing in the last decade. Excellent ensembles were available, and special praise is due the Belgian Radio's symphony orchestra and its conductor, Franz André, the Flemish Philharmonic, the great Brussels and Antwerp choruses and the many distinguished quartets, ensembles and soloists.

Future meetings of the Conseil will be held June 1939 at Frankfort, the next one at Naples, and then another at Edinburgh. But unless this council of composers completely transforms itself, it will remain without life or real power. What musical value can reside in conferences made up exclusively of academicians and reactionaries? What can be the justification for the existence of such a society? Programs of "contemporary music" that continue to echo the music of yesteryear are decidedly open to question.

*Arno Huth*

### BOSTON NEWS

**P**AUL HINDEMITH has provided the sensation of the Boston season to date, chalking up no less than four performances of one work in six days. His new *Symphonic Dances*, heard by some ten thousand people over the Christmas week-end, were received with exceptional warmth by orchestra and public, and deservedly so. Few scores of as much distinction have appeared in recent years.

Following the course of spiritual development revealed in such works as the *Marienleben*, the mystical *Mathis der Maler* and the