

concerts in London have so far been announced, and one can only wait in hopes that the C.M.C. will come back later on to its proper function as the English branch of the I. S. C. M.

Orchestral concerts in London are even more plentiful than before, but very little modern music is being done. However Alan Bush is bringing out a *Toccata* for string orchestra by Willy Burkhard, whose *Vision of Isaiah* caused something of a sensation at the London I. S. C. M. festival in 1938; and he is also performing Berg's *Three Movements from the Lyric Suite*. The BBC is still doing a modicum of contemporary music, including some motets by Edmund Rubbra, and will probably be able to extend this activity still further when the new alternative program for the Forces, consisting mostly of light music and variety, comes into full operation. The home program will then be left freer for serious music. They have however been giving public symphony concerts in Bristol, and the programs include Walton's *Symphony* under the composer's direction, as well as Berlioz' *Harold in Italy* with Sir Hamilton Harty and Lionel Tertis, who has recently left his voluntary retirement. The first distinguished foreign conductor to visit England since the war, is coming shortly in the person of Weingartner, who will conduct several programs, presumably of classical music. Altogether we have more music than a few months ago, even if the outlook for anything contemporary is still poor.

Humphrey Searle

SWISS WAR - SEASON

THE war-season in Switzerland, though surprisingly abundant in music, has been marked by an increase of conservatism on the part of the symphonic associations and similar organizations. Outstanding, therefore, is the activity of those forward-looking groups who keep interest in contemporary men alive. The Basle Section of the I.S.C.M., presided over by Paul Sacher, opened a series of five concerts with a chamber music soirée at which were heard Stravinsky's *Duo concertant*, *Duos* for two violins by Alan Rawsthorne and by Robert Blum, and the *Second Suite* for piano by A. Marescotti. A second soirée was devoted to new works for the organ, two *Sonatinas* by Walther Geiser, a pupil of Busoni, and by Willy Burkhard, one of the most gifted and earnest among Swiss musicians; a *Sonata* for organ and viola da gamba by Conrad Beck and a *Sonata* for organ and viola d'amore by Frank Martin. The Zurich section, known as Pro-Musica, at its first concert gave a program of present-day Swiss music,

going from a *Sonata* for two violins and piano by Emil Frey to a *Kammermusik* for seven instruments by a young composer, Franz Brenn, of Lucerne, and several pieces for solo flute by Honegger and Martin. Thirty contemporary works are scheduled for the series, most of them in premiere performances; besides the Swiss musicians, the names of Stravinsky, Ibert and Hindemith are included. The Zurich chamber orchestra, under the direction of Alexander Schaichet, recently gave works by Luc Balmer and Ernest Hess.

Principal interest, however, focusses on the concerts at Geneva and Lausanne of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, established and directed by Ernest Ansermet. They present a wealth of interesting new scores. A *Deuxième Suite* by the Genevese, Roger Vuataz, cleverly sketches and colors five tableaux whose themes derive from French, Swiss and Finnish folklore. Noteworthy too was the *Scherzo* of Robert Oboussier's symphony. Of Vaudois origin, Oboussier after studying in Zurich, spent several years in France and in Germany where he distinguished himself with a sacred trilogy on a text by Rainer Maria Rilke. He returned to his own country a year ago. The *Scherzo* reveals both good and bad qualities; there is ample knowledge of his art, a definite sense of form and architectonics, and genuine fervor; but also present are a certain dependence on foreign influences and an eclecticism which could become dangerous. Conceived on modern lines, the composition is somewhat overpowered by great orchestral pomp; the rhythmic sweep of this *Scherzo* is occasionally weakened by the length of this movement. Frank Martin's *Ballade* for flute and orchestra, an entry in the Geneva 1939 international music competition for a work of seven-minute length and rigid tonal and technical requirements, had real musical and personal values. Ansermet who, as is well-known, handles the instrument palette masterfully, orchestrated this ballad, giving the solo a brilliantly colored relief.

French music had the place of honor at the concert of Charles Münch, director of the Orchestre du Conservatoire de Paris, who presented for the first time in Geneva the *Préludes* of Henry Barraud, secretary of the Triton and one of the present-day pioneers of the French front. It is a suite made up of four brief sketches, a sincere work, occasionally appearing a bit recherché, forced in language and monochordic in asperity. Another novelty on the programs of the Orchestre Romande, the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, by the Swiss American Ernest Bloch, was interpreted here, as in America, by Joseph Szigeti.

No less fruitful is Ansermet's radio activity. Recently, over the Geneva station, his orchestra gave a new *Concerto* for violoncello and orchestra by Henri Gagnebin. Simple and unpretentious music, this score can hardly be called "modern," but its natural and popular style is pleasing, especially in the humorous finale. The same evening we heard a *Divertissement sur un choral* for orchestra and chamber orchestra by Pierre Wissmer, a young Swiss composer developed in Paris as a student of Dukas. Although the piece is based on a religious theme, the music takes on (except in the second part, which is a choral for four voices) a rather popular character, with dance rhythms that make us forget the original motive. The orchestra of eleven instruments is treated as an ensemble of soloists, each with a rather difficult and virtuosic part. This score is the affirmation of an extremely gifted musician with an excellent technic, who is able to handle the orchestra with clarity and skill. It will be interesting to hear his other works, which include a ballet, a symphony, a piece for string orchestra and several chamber music scores.

Ansermet also tried an extremely interesting experiment on the radio – a union of Stravinsky's choreographic poem, *Le Rossignol* with a spoken version of the famous fairy-tale by Andersen which inspired it. The gifted Russian and Parisian comedienne, Ludmilla Pitoeff, recited the text with charming naiveté. Each episode was followed by the corresponding pages of the score. This work was of course originally conceived as an opera; only in 1917 was it given in ballet form. In this interpretation the music, gracious, scintillating, lit by a thousand lights, with parody turns and Oriental color, appeared transparent and at the same time deftly and finely shaded. Perhaps not ideal for the concert hall, on the radio the experiment was completely justified. It suggests a means of acquainting the mass of listeners with unfamiliar contemporary production. Even in Geneva *Le Rossignol* was welcomed at its first hearing with furious whistles. An extension of this treatment to other modern choreographic scores which are linked to literary works, is now being considered.

The Clarinette of Lausanne will hardly be able to carry out its splendid plans for most of its collaborators have now been mobilized. Two lecture series are being given for La Suisse Romande by Igor Markevich, who – as he did at Brussels with Beethoven, Wagner and Moussorgsky – has begun to state his own ideas about the art of music. One series takes place in Montreux and the other on the radio. Markevich is now preparing a work of great scope in new form, *L'Oraison Musicale*. His collaborator is Ramuz, who, by a coincidence, performed the same function during another war, for another Igor.