

Of the three Big Names of the San Francisco region – Milhaud, Bloch and Sessions – the first and second were on Monteux's list for the year. Milhaud's *Suite Française*, however, remains to be heard at the time of writing. Bloch's *Suite Symphonique* is in his neo-classical vein, like the famous *Concerto Grosso*, but it is bigger in sonority and drive. It is one of the most zestful, bright and stimulating works in Bloch's list, with little of his customary exoticism and not a trace of the pessimism that often speaks through this composer.

Bartok's *Second Piano Concerto*, though not a new work – it dates from 1930 – has not been much discussed. We were told that no one but Bartok himself had ever done it in this country until Maxim Schapiro played it with Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony. It, too, has much of the neo-classical about it in that for all its atonality, it is cast in the conventional forms, and it makes much use of extremely intricate and learned polyphonic devices. Its anthropological references are less obvious than is usual with Bartok. Some of its instrumental effects – like the complete absence of strings in the first movement, and their entrance at the beginning of the second, playing a chorale in fifths, muted and without vibrato – are magnificently telling. The impression of the whole was more profound than that made by any other new work of the season except the Stravinsky *Symphony* and Copland's *Appalachian Spring*.

The San Francisco String Quartet introduced the brand-new *Second Quartet* of Prokofiev, which slashes and sings in customary style, and for the first time so far as chamber music is concerned, exhibits that interest in folklore which has been so marked in Prokofiev's orchestral works of recent years. The San Francisco String Quartet will shortly perform the season's final novelty, the *Sixth Quartet* by Quincy Porter.

Alfred Frankenstein

BALTIMORE HEARS WORLD PREMIERES

THE phrase, "First time in Baltimore," is popping up on our symphony programs with a delightful frequency that is rapidly approaching regularity. The Washington monument still stands and, aside from a few ruffled feathers covering the Old Guard, the town seems to have survived successfully its brutal harmonic battering by Kabalevsky, Copland and Creston.

Of a trio of world premieres introduced by Reginald Stewart and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the most touching was the *Peace Overture* by the eighty-year-old Gustav Strube, conducted by the composer at the thirteenth anniversary of the Baltimore Symphony. This unpretentious work plumbs no depths but is well-made, expertly scored music that takes rank among the best of the many compositions by this first

conductor of the Baltimore orchestra. Louise Talma's *Toccata*, dedicated to Stewart, shows a certain facility for orchestral writing but is without the attendant capacity for saying something of musical moment. The Copland *Danzon Cubano* seems rhythmically stiff and, while effective, becomes slightly monotonous before its conclusion.

Stewart introduced to Baltimore Morton Gould's *Symphonette Number 4* (Latin American), a sketchy work which, despite its dazzling orchestral investiture, seemed to me rather synthetic in content and generally unconvincing. Stewart with Hans Heinz, tenor, also gave this city its long-overdue hearing of Vaughan Williams' exquisite cycle, *On Wenlock Edge*.

Hans Kindler and the National Symphony brought us, to start the season, Kabalevsky's *Second Symphony*, music that turned out to be well-formed, tuneful and limpidly beautiful at times. The shadow of Peter Ilyitch occasionally falls over the fully scored pages, especially in the last movement. The *Concierto del Sur* by Ponce, introduced here by Kindler with Segovia and his almost inaudible guitar, will have to be heard again in less cavernous surroundings than the Lyric to determine satisfactorily its musical content. What did emerge from the much too heavy enveloping orchestral blanket sounded none too promising to these straining ears. Later Kindler conducted a first performance of three dances from Khachaturian's ballet, *Gayaneh*, and, with Joseph Szigeti as soloist, the first performance in this country of Bartok's *Portrait*, Opus 5, Number 1, an early work, short but musically quite impressive.

The Milhaud *Suite* for violin and orchestra, played here for the first time by Francescatti and the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy, proved to be one of the season's most delightful new acquaintances. A showpiece for fiddle, it is by turns bawdy and brilliant, sentimental and satirical. The slow, melancholy *Sailor Song* (second movement) has all the elements of broad popularity and will in time probably be plundered by the restless denizens of Tin Pan Alley.

Two of the best numbers on Romolo de Spirito's program, one of the Peabody Friday afternoon series (celebrating their eightieth anniversary this season), were *The Doves* and *I Rise When You Enter* by Theodore Chanler who is new on the Peabody faculty this year. Joseph Battista selected four of Vincent Persichetti's musically interesting *Poems* for his first recital here. . . . Regina Resnik, in one of the season's better recitals, brought Baltimore three charming songs in French by Nicholas Nabokov: *L'Aubépine*, *La Lune* and *La Crise*. Shura Dvorine, at the Lyric, played from manuscript two choral preludes by Scott Watson, *So Fades the Blooming Flow'r* and *Weeping Mary* (from his set of *Early American Hymn Tunes*), *Saloia e Burrica* by Americo Chaves and *Passacaglia* by Copland.

Gustav Klemm