

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

the Walden String Quartet. Miss Gideon's work showed that she is one of the most accomplished woman composers in our midst. Her line is short and tends to detailed repetition in the various parts. The texture of this quartet is consistently dissonant, the string writing effective and sound. Palmer's quartet, though very long, is not disagreeably so, for the material, the long lyric sort that can well endure extension, is exquisitely worked. The pure style recalls Renaissance polyphony. Despite the generally alabaster tone, there is a warmth in the singing quality that is human and noble. The sonorities are middling consonant, the rhythm subtle and variegated.

A finely-wrought work, composed sixteen years ago but given its first performance in fourteen years, was Wallingford Riegger's *Dichotomy*, with the orchestra under Frederick Fennell's direction. The sonorities resemble those of Varese and the shape is clear and striking. The piece absolutely killed everything around it by its power and imagination. Riegger is surely among our most cruelly neglected composers.

Without reaching the highest level of musical integration but commanding respect for their fine workmanship and beautiful sound were Richard Donovan's movement from a *Suite* for oboe and strings, Otto Luening's *Two Pieces* for chamber orchestra, Arthur Kreutz's *American Dances*, Elliott Carter's *Warble for Lilac Time* and Roger Goeb's *Woodwind Suite*. Donovan's piece runs busily along in the concerto grosso style, but has melodic charm and a genuine sense of movement. Luening's work sounded somewhat surrealist in the first movement but the second, especially bright in instrumentation, was as sweet and truly naive a *Pilgrims' Hymn* as I've ever heard. Kreutz has really solved the problem of basing a style on the commonplaces of folk and popular music. His extended *Jig Time* finishes with a brilliantly whirling reminder of the conclusion of a long square dance. He sticks to the material and builds a big pattern out of it. Carter, in his charming picture of spring blooming, uses the little "warble" motive from the *Triumph of Oriana* series of Elizabethan madrigals. The texture suggests Milhaud, though the piece is more ecstatic and more complex in organization. Goeb's pleasant and cheerful little work moves very smoothly in the diatonic Hindemith style and bubbles along in a diverting way.

Carl Ruggles's *Evocation* and Charles Ives's *Second String Quartet*, which concluded the festival, were of course expected pleasures. The *Quartet* is the high point of American chamber music so far. The elaborate chromatic dissonance makes for difficult listening at first, but rehearsals impress us with an extraordinary subtlety and intensity; there is also the fantastic range of Ives's technical equipment. The first two movements are entertaining and contain some superbly amusing quotes, but the last one is

hair-raising in the grandeur of its climax and coda.

We heard, in addition, Dai-Keong Lee's *Golden Gate Overture*, Normand Lockwood's *Mary, Who Stood in Sorrow*, Edmund Haines's *Symphony in Miniature*, Harold Morris's *Suite* for orchestra, Eldin Burton's *Nocturne, A Piece for Clara*, Alexei Haieff's *Divertimento*, Gail Kubik's *Camptown Races*, Peter Mennin's *Concertino* for flute, strings and percussion, William Bergsma's *Symphony* for chamber orchestra, Hunter Johnson's *Concerto* for small orchestra with piano obbligato, Aaron Bodenhorn's *Fantasy* for oboe and orchestra, Halsey Stevens's *Suite* for clarinet and piano, Eugene Weigel's *Quintet* for piano, clarinet and strings, Jack Frederick Kilpatrick's *Sonatina in E Minor in One Movement* for viola and piano, Quincy Porter's *Sonata* for horn and piano, Bernard Whitefield's *Texas Toccatas*, string quartets by Carl McKinley and Alvin Etler, violin and piano sonatas by Burrill Phillips and Ludwig Lenel, piano sonatas by Vincent Persichetti, Ross Lee Finney and John Lessard and songs by Irwin Heilner, Howard Boatwright, Ludwig Lenel, Jack Beeson, Godfrey Turner, Hector Tosar, Kent Kennan, Virgil Thomson, Douglas Moore and Marc Blitzstein.

III

A week before, at the opening concert of the Saratoga Spa Festival which also presented American Music, Frederick Jacobi's bright new *Concertino* for piano and strings was heard in its first performance, with Irene Jacobi as soloist and Charles Adler conducting. This charming piece makes no pretence to anything but diversion. It is of the clearest and easiest sonority, filled with fine neo-romantic tunes, a model of civilized musical life within the bounds of reflective evocation. The finale, a charming tarantella in the nineteenth century manner, is built on one of those indefinably catchy and, at first hearing, familiar sounding melodies that everyone wishes he could write.

Another premiere was Ernst Krenek's moving lamentation on the death of Anton von Webern, *Symphonic Elegy*. The scoring for strings had great warmth and variety. A twelve-tone work, it is extended both in its lines and in the form as a whole. A more touching tribute to Webern could scarcely have been written, for the *Symphonic Elegy* is concentrated and pure music.

L. H.

TANGLEWOOD IN RETROSPECT

THERE was only one premiere of a full orchestral work at the Berkshire Music Center — which came to life again for six weeks this summer with Koussevitzky as director and Aaron Copland as his assistant. The premiere was the Shostakovitch *Ninth Symphony*, and it was dis-