

Among novelties not worth the trouble, to my way of thinking, were Prokofiev's *Russian Overture*, weaker than Prokofiev has any right to be; Samuel Barber's pale purple *Violin Concerto*, José Iturbi's trivial *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*, and a nauseating little item by William Reddick called *Espanbarlem* which Iturbi inflicted on us in the role of guest conductor. An all-American Young People's concert conducted by Rudolph Ganz (Hadley, MacDowell, Still, Sousa and Herbert Haufreucht's dreary imitation of *Peter and the Wolf* entitled *Ferdinand the Bull*) was a perfect example of how not to conduct an All-American Young People's concert.

New things scheduled for performance this season include Milhaud's *Opus Americanum Number 2*, an orchestral piece about to become a ballet; David Diamond's *First Symphony*; the *Fourth Symphony* of Vaughan Williams, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*; and a quartet by Jean Françaix.

Alfred Frankenstein

BARTOK'S LATEST; "AMERICAN REPERTORY"

THE most important of the novelties brought forward by The Cleveland Orchestra during the course of its twenty-fifth anniversary was the *Violin Concerto* of Béla Bartók. The soloist was the orchestra's new concertmaster, Tossy Spivakovsky. Its success at the regular concerts was so great that Rodzinski decided to repeat the performance with Spivakovsky in Pittsburgh, where it met the same enthusiasm. Bartók wrote the piece in Budapest between August 1937 and December 1938, dedicating it to the Hungarian violinist, Zoltan Székely who presented it on April 23, 1939, with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. The Cleveland performance, the first in America, was given January 21, 1943.

The *Concerto* is cast in the traditional three movements, but with a difference. The principal themes of the first movement re-appear in varied form in the last. Indeed, the final movement, in rondo form, is conceived as a free variation on the opening, and contains only one wholly new theme. The first movement is in sonata form, without an introductory orchestral exposition. The violin announces the broad and passionate main theme after six measures for harp and plucked strings. It immediately proceeds to develop the theme, introducing a canonic treatment of it by the whole orchestra. Violin and orchestra join in a vigorous presentation of the fugato-like transition. Bartók himself calls the legato second subject, "a kind of twelve-tone theme, yet with pronounced tonality." By "pronounced tonality" he undoubtedly refers to the fact that an internal pedal

and a moving base is maintained during the statements of the theme. The development and recapitulation of the sonata movement show the most expert handling of augmentation and inversion.

The slow movement is in the form of theme-and-variations and is based on a theme of great distinction and tenderness presented by the violin over a light accompaniment of the lower strings, punctuated by harp harmonics and strokes of the kettle-drums. As in the first and last movements, the main developments of the material are carried forward by the solo violin. Throughout the *Concerto*, the violin is more than a protagonist in the action. It attains equal stature with the orchestra, stating and working-out the material with the greatest independence.

Bartók's *Violin Concerto* is likely to stand in relation to the full body of his work much as Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* does to that composer's output. Bartók has here written music of technical resource, of the greatest sincerity and conviction, and of unique spiritual content. Like Hindemith's, Bartók's black notes on white paper have often seemed sterile and arbitrary. But each note of this concerto is significant; each note fits into a highly organized plan, and in finding its exact niche, acquires a special quality never conceived before. There is of course nothing new in such originality or such profound subtlety of construction. It has been exhibited by a dozen other composers; but one would have to go to the last quartets of Beethoven for precisely parallel examples.

Among the other new works heard during the season in Cleveland, several made a distinct impression. Paul Creston's slight but expert orchestral piece, *A Rumor*, proved attractive, and was enjoyed by the audience. The Cleveland composer, Herbert Elwell, contributed an *Introduction and Allegro for Orchestra*. The work, as its title implies, is in two brief movements which have no material in common, but are paired solely for purposes of contrast, a buoyant and frolicsome scherzo being introduced by a meditative prelude. Other new music heard for the first time in Cleveland were Toch's charming *Pinocchio*, *A Merry Overture*, and Copland's *Suite* from *Billy the Kid*. Both made distinct impressions. The *Oboe Concerto* of Eugene Goossens was performed by Philip Kirchner, of The Cleveland Orchestra. This is the one Goossens wrote for his brother Leon in 1938. Its brief one-movement form and ingeniously contrived scheme of auxiliary solos in the various choirs of the orchestra, proved effective for the development of a somewhat stylized music, and should prove grateful to oboists.

Among the revivals, none made a greater success than that of Charles Martin Loeffler's *A Pagan Poem*, produced under the baton of Rudolph Ringwall, associate conductor of The Cleveland Orchestra. Here is music representative of a period in American composition which has already become classic. Works such as this, the *Suite in E major* of Arthur Foote, and the symphonies of Edward Burlingame Hill, not to mention several distinguished scores of MacDowell, may well be revived, and will stand frequent hearings. For in such scores – and the list may easily be lengthened – lies the foundation of the "American repertory," which has been much sought but not yet established. Almost any one of the works on my short list is far more worthy of repetition than the uneven and unsymphonic *Seventh Symphony* of Shostakovitch, which received a loving performance from Dr. Rodzinski at the beginning of the season. The Shostakovitch *Quintet*, Opus 57, also introduced here by the Walden String Quartet, provided a far better organized and accomplished score.

George Henry Lovett Smith

INTER-AMERICAN REVIEWS THE CURSE OF VIRTUOSO ROUTINE

Lima

IN a city like Lima where musical life has been organized for but a few years it is not to be expected perhaps that contemporary music should appear frequently on concert programs. A public that has only just discovered the classical symphonies is now opening its avid ears to the whole world of concerti grossi, partitas, suites, symphonies, poems, of the classical and romantic masters. But beside the apparent need for chronological order in the auditory education of our public, there is another obstacle to esthetic innovations. It is a universal force that has found Lima propitious for its application: namely, the concert artist's incurable routine.

This is an evil for which no remedy has so far appeared. It continues and is borne without protest even from critics in the capitals of advanced musical culture. Magnificent executants, gifted with ability to adapt themselves to any technical gamut, who could make the most diverse styles palatable by the authority of their own prestige, prefer to go on harvesting cheap applause with works that have been played millions of times throughout the world. Yet for these gifted artists it would be extremely simple to incorporate into their repertoires new or unknown old works, even if only as a professional luxury to distinguish them from their colleagues. Since it appears impossible for the celebrated repeaters to get out of the rut of