

Sanders' *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* with Jacques Gordon as soloist. This delightfully scored work, though not a potential war-horse for fiddlers, is a sincere lyric expression. Hanson's own *Songs from "Drum Taps"* (after Walt Whitman) and Bernard Rogers' *Drawings After Hans Christian Andersen* were also heard. The former presents a direct, familiar martial figure, introduced by solo snare drum, which develops into a rather effective medley of tunes for chorus and orchestra. This is hardly distinguished for originality or freshness of sound, but gratifyingly competent, healthy and positive in effect. Rogers' more elusive score, a miniature set of fanciful characterizations, indicated again his fine sense of orchestration.

III

Walter Piston's *Prelude and Allegro for Organ and Strings*, performed over the Blue by the Boston Symphony with E. Power Biggs as soloist, presented a bristling set of acoustical problems for radio. Heavy, majestic sonorities demand a technic for reproduction that radio has at present not perfected. The difficulty of controlling mass resonances is formidable enough in the best concert halls, theatres, stadiums and cathedrals.

The problem is especially great when that most gigantic of all wind instruments, the modern organ, is involved. Piston's work is intelligently scored, using normal registration and skillfully balancing the dynamic volumes of solo instrument and strings. It is more intellectual than spiritual, more sophisticated in its secular dignity than mystic with simple universality.

General Motors Symphony of the Air showed jazz at a really low point in Hans Spialek's *The Tall City*. In comparison, the Gershwin *Piano Concerto in F*, which followed, sounded like a monument of lofty beauty. Bernard Herrmann and the Columbia Orchestra and Chorus offered Richard Arnell's setting of Stephen Spender's poem, *The War God*, a clumsy and bombastic attempt to achieve sustained dramatic effect by sheer instrumental aggression. Ernst Lévy's *Ninth Symphony*, broadcast from a National Orchestral Association concert, was even more pretentious and obvious, with its incessant howl and clamor by choir, soloists, and orchestra. A happy contrast was made by Leonard Bernstein's *Seven Anniversaries for Piano*, an amusing little collection performed by Max Kotlarsky over WNYC.

THE TORRID ZONE

By COLIN McPHEE

THE recent Hampton concert at Carnegie Hall was one of those terrific affairs with dancing in the aisles, harassed-looking ushers and delirious applause after each number. Hampton's band not only has unbelievable energy

and drive, but bodied resonance at the same time, for his musicians are all aces. But after two or three pieces this energy began to seem slightly suspect, a matter of tested formulas and showmanship, set as the masklike smile of undying

exuberance on Hampton's face. Youthful ecstasy, it would seem, can surely be induced and whipped to a frenzy through a series of riffs that slowly rise, step by step, increasing in dynamics all the way from *fff* to *ffff* and stopping only at the point where the plaster begins to fall. The shouts from the audience at the entrance of each new riff in the final *Vive Boogie* were like the shouts you hear from the roller-coaster.

I was sorry not to have more of Hampton as soloist, for he is, of course, one of the great men of swing. As a drummer he is superb. His two-fingered, xylophone-like piano can be breath-taking in its attack and virtuosity. His vibraphone can be filled with tender nostalgia or ring with the most delightful of arabesques. His lyricism is charming for its taste in choice of notes and suppleness of delivery; florid passages have the logic of Czerny. Hampton's manner recalls certain Oriental styles, refined and elegantly baroque and at the same time taut – the percussive solos performed in India on bowls filled with water, or on the Indonesian trompong, a horizontal row of little gongs.

III

All this is to be heard in the new Hampton album of re-issues of records made in 1937 and '38, one of Victor's recent Hot Jazz "educational" series. Each of these discs is a masterpiece. The personnel includes such shining names as Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Jess Stacy and Cozy Cole. High spots in this exciting set are *Stompology*, *Ring Dem Bells*, *Buzzin' Round with the Bee*. My one wish would be for the inclusion of *Jack the Bellboy* or *Central Avenue Breakdown* with the incredible King Cole Trio. Hampton is heard

again in the more intimate Benny Goodman album (same series.) The first four sides are re-issues of the Goodman trio with Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa – three musicians temperamentally united by a nervous, fugitive style. Hampton's vibraphone is added on the other recordings, to flood this trio of subtly contrasting timbres with a wash of liquid sound. These records date back to 1935-37; they still hold up beautifully and probably will continue to do so.

The Louis Armstrong album is made up of recordings from 1932-33. The band and arrangements are indifferent, but this is of little matter, since it is Louis' warm voice and matchless trumpet that we listen for in each record. The set includes the famous *I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues* and *Sleepy Time Down South*, both precious collectors' items, although the latter can't compare with the sensitive and dreamy Okeh recording.

Jelly Roll Morton takes us back to pure Dixieland. The recordings in this album were made in the late twenties by Morton and his Red Hot Peppers. Born in New Orleans in 1885, Morton is acknowledged one of the true pioneers of jazz. His musicians on these discs are New Orleans veterans born around the turn of the century. The result is an album of exceptional interest both musically and historically. A point in time is fixed; a golden age is evoked. The band retains a certain primitive folk quality, rural, innocent, especially refreshing when heard after a few streamlined recordings of today. The permanent value of such records is unquestionable. I can't feel the same about the McKinney's Cotton Pickers set which, in spite of the famous musicians – Coleman

Hawkins, Fats Waller, Sidney De Paris, Benny Carter and others – sounds frightfully dated after fifteen years. As for the Hot Club of France Quintet – you simply can't take this hybrid European stuff seriously. It is neither jazz nor good café music; the mere thought of it is depressing. But the new series of Victor begins brilliantly. We hope there is more to follow soon – Count Basie, those famous Muggsy Spaniers, promised and withheld, more Ellingtons – carefully chosen – more Fats Waller. The back catalogues are very rich.

III

Among current records to be recommended with enthusiasm are *When Your*

Lover Has Gone, by Eddie Condon and band (Decca); *I Wonder*, with Louis Armstrong and band, although the tune is putrid (Decca); *Two Little Fishes and Five Loaves of Bread* by Sister Tharpe (Decca); *I'm Beginning to See the Light* with Cootie Williams and his band. But the record I play over and over at present is *Big "D" Blues* by Hot Lips Page and his orchestra (Continental). It is hard to describe the compelling quality of Page's playing. It lies partly in the simple, unadorned style, the marvellous intonation, the purity and lazy strength of his tone, for when he blows it is with the ease and power of Atlas.

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