

ling finale is one of the most light-fingered and daring technical accomplishments in American chamber music. Effinger's *Interlude*, a lyric expression of considerable warmth and sincerity, is formed of one broad sweeping curve.

William Schuman's *Symphony for Strings* was done by Robert Shaw and the NBC Orchestra. The athletic rigor of the first movement is unrelieved and culminates in a bombastic cadence. But the slow movement is one of the best pieces Schuman has done. Very simple in style, motion and melody, less so harmonically, it is eloquent and handled with expressive dignity. The same program also included Peter Mennin's *Folk Overture*, a conglomeration of noisy, unimpressive sounds which exposed little talent and no taste.

One of Benny Goodman's shows over NBC gave us a nice surprise, Alan Schulman's *Rendezvous with Benny* for clarinet and string quartet. The sonorities are sometimes over-rich, the harmonies too Delian, but the piece has a fluid style, clever rhythmic treatments with cello pizzicati and effective unison passages.

But another NBC broadcast tried to sell America's radio audience a bill-of-goods labeled *Cow Town Suite* by Don Gillis and *The Symphonic Story of Jerome Kern* by Robert Russell Bennett. The Gillis piece is stale and very dull, on a level with our poorest travelog movie music. Bennett's is merely a slightly dressed-up dance band arrangement of a medley of Kern's popular tunes.

WNYC gave us a piano recital by Vivien Harvey with an *Introduction and Toccata* by Arthur Shepherd and one of Samuel Barber's *Excursions*. Shepherd's work is a movement from his *Second Piano Sonata* which stands up very well alone. It is a strong and moving composition with interesting rhythms and tight thematic organization. This station also broadcast a program of violin and piano music from one of the Brooklyn Museum concerts. Tibor Zelig and Joan Slesinger played a *Sicilian Suite* by Herbert Haufrecht, an unpretentious score which is clear in tonality and simple in its materials. My own *Sonatine*, a short piece in four movements, was also given an excellent performance.

THE TORRID ZONE

—By COLIN McPHEE—

THE SUMMER has not been brilliant from the standpoint of recorded jazz or swing. Neither Victor nor Columbia nor Decca has released anything of the slightest significance. The few records of interest

have been produced, as usual, by small companies like Commodore, Blue Note, Dial and others still less familiar. It seems as though there were a tacit conspiracy on the part of the large ones to ignore if not an-

nihilate good jazz, although to continue to produce it, when there are so many remarkable musicians about, is as much a cultural obligation as to release recordings of works by our "serious" American composers. All over the world today there is keen interest in hot jazz; audiences listen eagerly, with intelligence and discrimination. All over the world there is also a resistance to jazz as a mere idea, since for so many radio listeners, jazz unfortunately means the strident, empty music of modern white swing bands. Following the modern principle of who can shout the loudest, these are the bands that are representing America today, and from Mexico City to Shanghai, from Stockholm to Singapore, importing agents will be swamped with grade C music as surely as they will be deluged with grade C movies.

Interesting as an indication of 1946 trends in jazz, if not especially satisfying as music, is the second album of *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, put out by Disc, under the direction of Norman Granz. This jam session recording was taken during one of the last season jazz concerts at the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles with an audience of three thousand, whose frantic applause is heard from time to time as one soloist concludes and another steps out to continue. The honors, for me, go to Lester Young and Howard McGhee. Young's saxophone is drier, has more bite than Coleman Hawkins's; his improvisations are more angular. McGhee's trumpet I prefer in his more tranquil moments, such as the opening of *I Can't Get Started*. But as you hear the different soloists, one after the

other, there is a curious monotony of style. All sedulously avoid a warm, musical tone that could possibly be interpreted as mellow. Instead, hard, dry tone is sought, that becomes at times unbearably harsh and coarse, flat, unexpressive and very much like a snake charmer's oboe. The variations are baroque, their opulent contours are empty loops of sound. As for the music itself, it seems less to progress than revolve. All notes are at the same tension, are equidistant from the center, and the final effect is static and hypnotic. A virtuoso in baroque and fantastic embellishment, of course, is Dizzie Gillespie, whose frantic trumpet is echoed in the trumpet of McGhee. He has the speed and agility of Hampton on vibes or piano, and indeed there is something closely related to Hampton's percussive and fleet performances in both the patterns and the short metallic tones Gillespie produces. He can be heard on two current releases by Dial, of which *Dynamo* (two sides) is a tour de force.

Heard after this flinty, up-to-the-minute music, the Decca album of so-called "Chicago" jazz based on Gershwin tunes and produced by Eddie Condon and the familiar group of men he assembles is like a copy of *Vogue* in the twenties. It requires some adjustment, some relaxing of the pulse, to turn back to the Dixieland beat. But after a few minutes you forget. The music takes hold, and you find yourself playing on and on, turning to other records these men have made in the past. The fine musicianship of Edmond Hall, Kaminsky, Teagarden, Stacy is undeniable — sympathetic and personal. There is both

unity and nice contrast in styles in their playing together; their tone is always expressive and interesting. There is nothing new in their playing here, yet it by no means lacks vigor. If these men have added nothing to their style with the years, they at least play with maturity and a fine disregard for superficial effect.

A new Billie Holiday – *What Is This Thing Called Love* – is in her best style (Decca). But the suave voice of Josh White sounds to me more false and obsequious than ever in *Back Water Blues* (Decca). This was one of Bessie Smith's great numbers, though I preferred the early Lonnie Johnson recording, which Josh so obviously copies. But the Johnson is sincere and deeply felt; this one is dished up for Café Society.

Of others – Miff Mole in *Peg O' My Heart* (Commodore) produces an incredibly beautiful, open tone on his trombone – restrained, noble, romantic, the kind of tone that the boys of the Philharmonic album would

blush to produce. The tempo drags, but the record is indeed worth listening to for this solo which is, moreover, recorded admirably. Then there is the full-bodied, almost grave saxophone of Ike Quebec in the new album released by Blue Note. Quebec is a gifted young man, a Blue Note find, and there is good modern jazz in the album which includes Buck Clayton and Jonah Jones, trumpet men with a solid tone that matches Quebec's. With the big bands there is a new Count Basie that has some of his old vitality – *The King* (Columbia) and Woody Herman's *Blowin' Up a Storm* (Columbia). Herman can certainly give lessons to Stravinsky when it comes to new sonority and fluid manipulation. Perhaps the band's greatest feat was to perform Stravinsky's absurd *Ebony Concerto*, an anachronism that had as much feeling for the sonorous material at disposal, as much swing or élan, as a rendition by a Salvation Army band.