

his concert suite a passacaglia, takes advantage of me because I have a weakness for things contrived in ancient forms. Possibly I keep a certain repute for studiousness that way. Right or wrong, too, I'll aver that the passacaglia is an episode to keep the *Visione* in the glow a while.

Last to mention is the Brazilian music of Camargo Guarnieri, *Abertura Concertante*, heard March 26th with the composer conducting. A charm of tune and rhythm that must be truly Brazilian, because so clean out of the ordinary run, inheres in it. Dignified enough for what we call a symphony orchestra, and ingratiating enough for a popular summertime assemblage of players.

Winthrop P. Tryon

WAR BOOM IN THE NORTHWEST

RAPID growth of musical activity in the Northwest has paralleled the recent expansion of population and industry in that region. The town of Vancouver, Washington, for instance, has mushroomed from 15,000 to 85,000 almost overnight. While the war is very much with us, it has had its musical compensations. The tremendous influx of population brings new promising elements and new organizations. Record shops are full of people buying symphonic discs and eager young players come up increasingly from the many school choruses and bands.

The advent of Sir Thomas Beecham as conductor of the Seattle Symphony has crowned this new sense of our musical growth with that special enthusiasm and joy which are his great gift. The concerts have been extraordinary events with a far-reaching and stimulating effect. His ideas and plans seem legion and he apparently likes the country. The "Standing room only" sign has been hung out at all his concerts, the audiences have been preponderantly young, soldiers, sailors, students. Under Sir Thomas, several works by Americans were played, including two by local composers — *Prelude to a Holiday* by the Australian composer Arthur Benjamin (living close by, in Vancouver, B. C.) and my own *Symphonic Miniature*. History was made when the conductor gave these pieces a painstaking and thorough preparation, robbing standard works of precious rehearsal time to do the new ones well.

The Portland Symphony is momentarily quiescent. But Oregon has a new organizational set-up which bears watching. Theodore Kratt, just elected dean of music at the University of Oregon, has now also been made state director, with control over not only the University music depart-

ment but the State College at Corvallis and the three Teachers' Colleges as well. This coordinated direction should result in large creative objectives.

However, in the Northwest, symphonic and concert artist activity is perhaps less significant than the development taking place in the young choruses, bands and orchestras in our schools and colleges. A group of young men, hampered in their conductorial ambitions by the traditional predilection for high-priced, foreign names, have built their own orchestras within the educational framework of new localities. There are eight such young conductors here and they are the life-blood of this part of the country. Any one of them could be the long-lost American conductor we are looking for. Performers of creative talents, wherever they go they develop enthusiasm for the best music. They are Louis Wersen, Supervisor of Music in Tacoma, and Chairman of the National High School Orchestra Association, a true conductorial temperament; Donald Bushell of Western Washington State Teachers' College, who puts up a glorious fight for musical standards; Frank Beezhold, conductor of the Walla Walla Symphony; Frank Anardi, Tacoma; Kenneth Hjelmervik, Aberdeen (Grays Harbor Symphony), who is also a most promising composer; Eric Koker, of Tacoma (champion of fine string orchestral music); Wallace Hannah of Vancouver, and finally Eugene Linden, conductor of the Tacoma Philharmonic. Linden who has played to audiences of six thousand, started from nowhere and came to Tacoma on a paper truck. His heroic story deserves telling in more detail. Schoolteachers they may be, but they are above all artists, and every year some new man arrives to join their ranks.

The Pacific Northwest has already given us Earl Robinson, composer of the amazingly popular *Ballad for Americans* and its heart-warming sequel *Abraham Lincoln Comes Home Again*. It will inevitably produce an increasing number of composing talents for the future. On the horizon at the moment there are several of growing importance. Carl Paige Wood, director of the music department at the University of Washington, is of course the pioneer force behind much that has developed here. Francis H. McKay, now living in Spokane, has made a unique contribution to the very special field of brass and woodwind ensemble. He has created a new literature full of polyphonic movement and a very beautiful and personal harmonic feeling that is new to brass music. Lockrem Johnson, now in the U. S. Navy, a young man still under twenty, is considered by all who know him a rising star. His music is astoundingly mature and inventive, new, fresh, but without the strain that characterizes so much recent Amer-

ican composition. Two other gifted composers are worth watching, Jan Kok, a young emigré of Dutch extraction and John Angus Campbell. Mention should also be made of Leroy Wren, who has drawn directly from the dance orchestra. In my opinion, he has produced the most interesting results from this source since Gershwin.

George Frederick McKay

ROBERT PALMER AND CHARLES MILLS

PALMER and Mills are fertile members of a group of composers bound to attract ever-increasing attention. It is the group of talented, sincere Americans now in their third decade who, having received lessons from Copland, or Harris, or Sessions, or from two or even all three of these, uncompromisingly are battling in behalf of civilized values, amid the billows of simplicism to the point of innocuousness and of passionateness for front-page publicity. What exactly the wave of simplicism betokens one doesn't quite know. But that of the hunger for publicity certainly represents an increase of the opportunism we have ever with us. Because of the proud attitude of the members of this young group, we look to it for the addition of stable and simultaneously expanding forms to all which already has been, is being contributed by their forerunners.

The two composers form a contrast. Palmer writes what really are suites: possibly for the reason that his awareness predominantly is extroverted. Mills on the contrary composes indubitable sonatas: one feels much more of the introvert and the subjectivist in him. The first is what the theosophists would call a "young" soul; the other what they would term an "old" one. They are a tiny replica of the heroic antithesis, Handel-Bach. Still they have traits in common, other than those of age, of idealism and a derivation mainly from Harris. One is their common possession of what without condescension must be called the "small-town" background. Palmer was born in Syracuse, N. Y. of parents hailing from Poughkeepsie and Newpaltz. Mills is a Carolinian, born at Asheville, reared at Spartanburg. Both moreover have been represented in former seasons, at concerts of the League, by pieces which now must be considered imperfectly characteristic of their output — Palmer by his *Piano Sonata*, Mills by his maiden *Sonata* for the instrument and his first *Piano and Violin Sonata*.

This year, both have enjoyed public performances of new, impressive, distinctive works. Palmer's took place February 22nd at the University of Kansas, where he teaches. The writer was not present but has played non-