

Symphony Orchestra gave a performance over WNYC of Samuel Barber's *Concerto For Violin And Orchestra*. The slight, innocuous materials of this piece and their subsequent treatment, naive and politely cute at best, hardly make up a concerto in any normal sense of the word. The work seems more like a three part bagatelle, neatly scored throughout with intelligent musicianship in a conventional sort of way, and especially well managed in the slow movement which has a fine cadence, suave in sonority and comparatively fresh in quality.

It was interesting to hear the radio premiere (N.B.C.) of Lionel Barrymore's *Praeludium and Fugue*, performed by the Indianapolis Orchestra under Fabien Sevitsky, to whom the work is dedicated. It is better than a mere academic and conventional exercise, and has many moments of real harmonic and contrapuntal beauty. I've heard much weaker music by men like Hadley and Cadman.

WNYC is currently presenting an entertaining series called "Behind the

Scenes in Music." The programs, under the auspices of the National Orchestral Association, are actual broadcasts of unprepared rehearsals of contemporary works. Leon Barzin conducts and succeeds in maintaining an amusing line of chatter with both the orchestra and composer guests who are often present to discuss their compositions. Already represented have been Arthur Kreutz, Frederick Hart, Victor Young, Irwin Heilner, Joseph Wagner, Henry Cowell and Quincy Porter, whose *Music For Strings* was by far the best piece done on the series to date.

WQXR offered an unusually attractive program of songs for tenor voice and piano, featuring the gifted singer Romolo De Spirito. Arthur Berger's *Crazy Jane At The Day Of Judgment* is a sensitive and apt setting for the Yeats poem and a musically gratifying piece of rare distinction. Theodore Chanler was represented by his *I Rise When You Enter*. This light piece has an undeniable charm, but hardly exposes that fine composer's best gifts.

THE TORRID ZONE

By MERCURE

WHAT with the list of patrons for *View's* concert of "the new jazz" including Mrs. Vincent Astor and the Marquis de Cuevas, and the sponsors (a subtle distinction) including Kirk Askew, Marcel Duchamp and Gypsy Rose Lee, this reporter rushed over to Times Hall to see what was simmering. The lights were already low, the music mellow; for Barney

Bigard and his four-piece band were in the mood, a familiar one, it is true, and seemed ideal musicians for the intimate hall. But soon it became clear that something was wrong, for after Bigard left the stage the program went to pieces. The new jazz apparently had caught up with Debussy, for that was as far as the heavy-handed and formless "mood-pictures" of Errol Garner,

new piano "find," went. We were then given samples of current night-club styles. Stuff Smith's fiddle sounded very much the way it did ten years ago. His tight little tone, produced by short bows, on top of the strings, is pleasant enough but limited, especially if you shut your eyes and can't see Stuff's funny faces when he makes a glissando. Also an act is Pearl Bailey, who puts her songs over with her hands instead, with nonchalant gestures that are amusing and give a new sophistication to the melody. After the intermission came the feature, improvisations by Robert Crum and Stuff to demonstrate the happy marriage of a classical style with jazz. Mr. Crum, the pianist "with a classical background" sat down at the piano, looking like a young and disgruntled Beethoven and led off with thirty-six bars of the purest Handel, and was then joined by Stuff, whose fiddle had unaccountably gone Zigeuner on him. The bright spot in the improvisation was a bitonal clash of personalities, for towards the end Mr. Crum seemed to prefer the dominant, while Stuff got stuck somehow in the tonic. But neither would yield, and so the piece ended in a most peculiar way. I would not be going on at such length about this concert were it not for the pretense and fancy program notes. "Fugue in swing . . . a series of deliberations, first canonic, then less rigorously formal . . . offer a provocative answer as they extend the resources of the improviser to those of all music." However, the audience (in which patrons were conspicuously absent) seemed to love it all. Why not? But I was not the only one to wish for something a little more intense. *View's* conception

of the "new jazz," as demonstrated by this concert, is a return to Victorian salon-music.

Whenever I get ruffled over jazz downtown, on 52nd Street, Carnegie Hall or the Village, I make straight for the Apollo Theatre or the Savoy Ballroom, just to convince myself once more that there is some connection between jazz and motor-impulse. It is true that you can hear some pretty empty-sounding bands at the Apollo, and that at times famous stars don't seem to show to best advantage. But the audience response is natural and terrific, and the whole dubious and chichi esthetics of jazz is forgotten in the witnessing of what gets across and what doesn't. People stood in line in the rain for the length of two blocks waiting to get in to hear the King Cole Trio, superb and up-to-the-minute young musicians who really know what jazz is all about. Lips Page, whose trumpet I would go far to hear, appeared with his new band, which, alas, seemed to have little quality. But then I heard it in the afternoon, and the difference between day and evening performances in this theatre can be surprising. It has been a bright season at the Apollo, with Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Jimmie Lunceford following one after the other.

Josh White's plaintive voice, his clear diction, and his beautiful and restrained guitar playing combine to make the Asch album of songs by this folk-blues artist one of the events of the season. The success of one song, *One Meat Ball*, has been a sensation. Here White gives a tricky intonation to the sad little verse about the little man with a menu in his hand and only fifteen cents.

. . . He read the menu through
and through

To see what fifteen cents would do.

. . . The waiter hollered down the
hall,

"You get's no bread with one meat
ball!"

One meat ball, one meat ball . . .

But if you want an object-lesson in the degradation of a Negro tune, once it falls into the hands of white musicians, listen to two subsequent recordings rushed out to cash in on the success — the Bay Ridge interpretation by Louis Prima and his band, and the sexy and goonlike voices of the Andrews Sisters, those Rhine maidens of the juke-box.

Another album by Asch which is a knockout is made by that veteran of colored jazz pianists, James P. Johnson, with four men almost as celebrated, Frank Newton, "Pops" Foster, Al Casey and Eddie Dougherty. The three twelve-inch discs give a synopsis of Johnson's jazz career from New Orleans days in the ragtime solo, *Euphonic Sounds*, to late Harlem, in the *Boogie Dream*. Newton's trumpet, the one melodic instrument in the combination, is perfect for these pieces, nostalgic,

relaxed, never sensational. The album has a sort of permanent quality about it, and is an excellent addition to Asch's new but growing catalogue of jazz by top musicians.

Victor celebrated the Petrillo peace-treaty by leading off with a recording the next day (Sunday) of *Clang, Clang, Clang, Went the Trolley* with Vaughn Munroe's band. Within twenty-four hours the discs were on the counters. Columbia began with Harry James. Nothing that promises to be a collector's item appears on the horizon at present. Recently released, though recorded before the feud, are Ellington's pleasant enough *I Don't Mind* (Victor), and the Goodman Sextet with Cootie Williams playing in a charming way *I Can't Give You Anything But Love* (Columbia). I can't think of a more agreeable way of having certain old tunes preserved, although a Goodman little ensemble can turn out at times some pretty cold numbers. What we are waiting for at the moment is to see whether Decca is going to give us any more recordings to talk about and play a second time, or whether they have gone all-out for Broadway shows and Hollywood productions.

RECENT BOOKS

A GOOD-WILL OFFERING

WITH great good-will, Gerald Abraham, in his *Eight Soviet Composers* (Oxford University Press, 1943), has supplied a much-needed study, clarifying developments in recent Russian music. In spite of the

number of Soviet pieces which have deluged our recital programs, one could only draw general conclusions about trends. Few of us have been sufficiently acquainted with the facts about any one composer (except Shostakovitch) to see