

But Dafora's dancing showed that the West African tradition has developed all sorts of variations in the expression of this carriage; and highly diversified gestures, especially in the arms and hands. Whatever the historical process, Dafora's dancing presented a homogeneous style. It is a theatrical rather than a communal or folk form. As he said, not every African can dance, some just like to look and clap their hands. And he did a very attractive number with a stick, explaining that it had been invented by a great dancer of the past as a gesture of thanks for the gift of a very handsome stick.

All this was interesting, but the joy of the performance was the way Dafora danced. He has of course the verve that makes Negro dancing such a pleasure. But he has, too, the precision and freedom of rhythm, the differentiation of gesture, the impetus of movement, and a modesty and sweetness of expression that are all of them the qualities of a great dancer. There is no showing off about it. He, his partners, and his two drummers Coco and Aubucha created the kind of atmosphere a dance lover is happy to be in. I understand he will appear toward the end of the month in a Negro dance program organized by

Wilson Williams in New York Times Hall, in which Belle Rosette, Pearl Primus, and Randolph Scott will also be included.

Dafora's costumes made by Mrs. Dafora were authentic. I especially admired a blue skirt he wore showing dive bombers and a pennant inscribed "Victory."

The Russian short film *A Nation Dances* presented a series of Russian folk dances performed at a dance festival at the beginning of the war. The numbers seemed to have been tidied up a bit for the sake of superficial musical precision; but even so they were danced with the wonderful impetuosity Russian dancers have. Interesting were the counter-rhythms in the Ukrainian dance. But best of all I liked the three male dancers from Astrakhan who vibrated their outstretched arms in a gesture that had a passionate formalization, a haughtiness that was strikingly Asiatic. Even seen in a movie it was terrifyingly in earnest.

In a color short about southern Mexico, I was happy to find the Las Plumas dance of Oaxaca, with its enormous headdresses set with feathers and mirrors, and its beautiful swimming movement, a dance of leaps and crouching turns in 3-4 time to a tune in 4-4.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ROY HARRIS' new *Fifth Symphony*, dedicated to the Soviet Union, was given an important world premiere over N.B.C. by Koussevitzky and the Boston orchestra. It is a challenging work and easily the best war piece this country has yet produced.

Comparison with the Shostakovich *Seventh* is inevitable. In my opinion, the Shostakovich runs a very poor second. The three movements of the Harris symphony are completely different in character and content, but strongly related in style and texture,

perhaps too much so. One weakness, which broadcasting exposes, is a too consistent use of forte dynamics; this gives a quality of unrelieved tension to an otherwise soaring motion in the line structure. A flaw of this kind however is relatively unimportant when weighed against the compactness of the work as a whole. The content of the music is always alive and moving, strengthened in color by what I think is the best orchestration Harris has yet achieved. Although for my taste the scoring is violently extravagant and over-heavy with brass and percussion, it has a marvelously happy kinship with the spirit of the piece. And there are no long empty patches, which sometimes slow down the sweeping flow of Harris' *Third Symphony*. A minimum of slushy colorings makes this new score an infinite improvement on the *Folksong* opus. As a whole, the *Fifth* offers no obvious concession to popular appeal, but sings with all the naive eloquence that has become justly associated with Harris.

Stokowski and the N.B.C. orchestra gave a wonderful performance of Stravinsky's *Symphony in C*. This strong and finely chiseled work exhibits all the unmistakable touches of a master craftsman. Its sensitive and exciting scoring is surpassed only by Haydn and Mozart in their most imaginative moments of pure elegance. The great sobriety, dignity and charm of this score combine to make it one of the most brilliant achievements of his phenomenally colorful career. As a radio piece it is superb. It seems tragic that such really fine music should remain comparatively unpopular, and so be infrequently performed by conductors with an eye to mass appeal. Stokowski rates praise for his courage

and he got it in the enormous applause of the studio audience.

Another contemporary symphony, Shostakovich's disappointing *Sixth*, was played by Koussevitzky and the Boston over N.B.C. On repeated hearings under various batons this score sounds weaker and less convincing than ever. Koussevitzky and his men gave it a most wonderful workout technically, but even brilliant players can't make a thin, loose piece sound convincing. The form of this composition is so rhapsodic and slight that the title "symphony" becomes a pure pretension. True, there are charming moments and amusing passages, but fragments are cheap. To create a full blown structure, which includes mosaics as integral parts of a convincing whole, should be the objective of such a long score as this; apparently it is not easy to reach. My strongest impression of the work is one of great ambition surpassed only by a greater impatience.

III

It is impossible in this column to cover the whole WNYC American Music Festival, but the station and participating artists deserve credit for a splendid attempt to give us a picture of our national music. If not wholly complete and representative of our best, it was at any rate a stimulating and interesting venture. Only through such projects can radio really begin to function as a cultural medium. Among the large orchestral works performed, Walter Piston's *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* showed up to best advantage. Quincy Porter's *Poem and Dance for Orchestra* is an effective light work and should eventually become popular in the American orchestral repertory. David Diamond's *Concerto For Chamber Or-*

chestra won't, but its facile scoring should interest musicians. A *Concerto For Two Pianos and Orchestra* by Norman Dello Joio proved somewhat disappointing, coming as it did from a usually distinctive talent. Virgil Thomson's poorly made and tritely scored *Filling Station* sounded just as bad as it did on a first hearing, and I'm convinced that it's undoubtedly the most insignificant inconsequentiality that he's ever put on paper. Robert McBride's *Stuff in G* was a cute cleverism, sounding like a tame jazz improvisation doctored up with a little orchestration, not so well scored as Morton Gould's *Marches for China and Russia*. However, the musical content of Gould's pieces was so slight that the effectiveness of his clean writing for the instruments was almost nullified.

As a whole the festival fared better in the chamber music department, especially in works for piano solo. Aaron Copland's *Sonata* was the most striking and fresh of the many piano works heard. His *Variations* also had an interesting performance by Beveridge Webster. This interpretation was somewhat more heavy and thick than the brittle, secco nature of the score, which calls for a dry, stinging execution with a minimum of rich pedal effects. Harold Morris played his *Fourth Sonata* in a presumably authentic version. This is an extremely light piece with some poetic charm and thematic invention. But stale conventionalities and utterly outmoded whole-tone scale effects too often cancelled a feeling of freshness. The Gail Kubik *Piano Sonatine* is distinguished by neat, attractive and unpretentious fast movements but the slow section unfortunately lacks content. Completely objective in approach, it makes a too obvious use of dull canonic dia-

logue. Quincy Porter's piano sonata runs along glibly, and with pianistic grace, but the slight materials never really get worked up into any excitement or development. Roy Harris' *Little Suite* and a set of three pieces titled *Work, Contemplation* and *Recreation* were beautifully performed by Johana Harris. The suite is a distinctive miniature of charm and naiveté. Entertaining over the radio were the slight but clever effects produced by Henry Cowell in his piano pieces, *Wind Harp* and *Cosmic Harp*, utilizing plucked and swept strings without keyboard and a forearm technic for rumbling bass clusters. Richard Franko Goldman's *Piano Sonatine* presents amusing dissonance and curious stop-and-go effects in the first movement, a fanciful arabesque in the second, and an obvious but attractive Copland influence in the third.

One of the best of the chamber works heard on the festival broadcasts was Nicolai Berezowsky's *Duo for Viola and Clarinet*. This is a wonderful piece for radio, distinguished by clarity and elegance. The two instruments are treated with professional skill. Amazingly brilliant technical maneuvers are achieved without any disturbing hints at virtuosity for its own sake. Harrison Kerr's *Trio for Clarinet, Violoncello and Piano* is also distinguished and though somewhat severe in certain moments, it has real musical quality and imaginative power. An excellent *Sonatine for Violoncello and Piano* by Norman Dello Joio shows this young talent in a more happy medium than in some of his larger essays. The sonatine is marred by a somewhat overworked use of pizzicato, but extravagances in color fail to affect its charm and flow. Two successful works of more serious nature were Frederick

Jacobi's *Fantasy for Viola and Piano*, and Henry Cowell's *Suite for Violin and Piano*. The Jacobi piece is a strong, noble expression in one movement of a dramatically subjective experience. The scoring is appropriate, effective but rather heavy for instrumental distinction. The Cowell suite is notable for wonderfully well chosen notes, especially in the movements of religious character, and for a restrained, handling of the instruments.

The festival offering of William Schuman's choral works presented some interesting effects over the air. From a purely musical standpoint they do not show this composer at his best. A choral etude, in particular, amusingly fresh in an experimental way, sounded like a weak vocal arrangement of sound effects which even in a more natural, instrumental medium would probably seem capricious rather than inspired. The most convincing and musical piece was a lyric and dramatic setting of Thomas Wolfe's "a stone, a leaf, an unfound door." Though weakened by tricky effects, it reveals a genuine feeling for the loneliness so poignantly expressed in the prologue to *Look Homeward Angel*.

III

C.B.S. offered three American orchestral works, in a fairly good performance by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the best of which was David Van Vactor's *Credo*. This score is a very large attempt in a kind of modern "grand manner." It is not completely unsuccessful. The orchestration for choir, contralto soloist and orchestra is well managed, considering the complexity of so large a structural plan. Van Vactor appears to have more of a flair for drama and epic than for the wit and comedy which he has previously attempted with less success. George

McKay's *Pastorale Soliloquy for Oboe and Orchestra* is a fanciful lyric arabesque for the solo instrument with fairly neat and effective accompaniment. Ferdinand Schaefer's *Introduction and Scherzo* was the most disappointing of the three offerings. It seemed an experimental exercise in outmoded conventionalities, à la Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn.

Rodzinski and the Cleveland (C.B.S.) offered a fine *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* by Eugene Goossens. Though eclectic, it is nevertheless beautifully scored and wonderfully written for the solo instrument. The same program presented Paul Creston's *A Rumor*. A second hearing fails to convince me of its worth even as a light, cute score, though it has a well defined, flowing motion.

Interesting piano music was heard in three broadcasts by C.B.S. Darius Milhaud played his own *Second Piano Concerto* with Bernard Herrmann and the Columbia Orchestra. This is in many ways a very charming piece, somewhat uneven in quality and rather slight in size and content. It is more like a concertino or miniature suite. The first movement has some excellent piano writing, a mixture of running toccata style and heavy chordal treatment. The nostalgic charm and rich, heavy texture of the second are somewhat too thick for radio success. Interesting polyrhythms in the last movement produce a strikingly uneven motion without creating a static effect; this part, however, is too brief and destroys the balance in the formal design of the concerto as a whole. Alexander Semmler's *Second Piano Sonata* is inventive but loosely organized; amusing, facile, slight, pretty and cute, it fails to sound like a sonata, except in the literal meaning of sounding piece for an instru-

ment. A far weaker work than this was Stanley Bate's *Fourth Sonatine For Piano*.

A C.B.S. offering of wind instrument music included Hindemith's *Quintet for Woodwinds*, Number 2, Opus 24. This is a marvelous little work and exhibits all the virtues of that composer's adroit professional technic. But in spite of its excellent writing a definite dryness clings to the music. Unashamedly corny is Leo Sowerby's *Pop Goes the Weasel* for wind quintet; though unpretentious in purpose, it is embarrassingly insignificant and provincial in effect. A dull *Wind Quintet* by William Bergsma must surely be one of this young composer's weakest works.

Mutual offered Wallenstein and his *Symphonic Strings* in performances of two modern works that by now have lost most of their flavor. Tansman's *Triptych for Strings*, apparently one of Wallenstein's pet pieces, wears thinner with every hearing. Its rich, harmonic texture sounds brilliant enough, but the progressions seem arbitrary, often quite artificial. Turina's *Escena Andaluza*, for piano and strings, is a sentimental Spanish affair with an atmospheric quality best suited to a mild film travelogue. Another *Symphonic Strings* broadcast offered Samuel Barber's *Serenade for Strings*, Opus 1. This obviously early work, originally scored for quartet, was probably better in that version. It is essentially lyric in character and not unattractive, but still sounds woefully conventional and romantic in a lukewarm way.

III

WQXR gave a performance of Bohuslav Martinu's *Madrigal Sonata for Flute, Violin and Piano*. It is facile and inconsequential in melodic and harmonic materials, but manages to effect a kind

of pseudo-sobriety. It has, as a whole, an exceptionally good flow. The formal indentations are clearly defined, and the design throughout is good, but the total effect is one of excessive objectivity and sterile content. This station also presented the premiere broadcast of Roy Harris' new *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, in a superb performance by William Kroll and Johana Harris. Its four movements are marked by distinctive melody and fine instrumental treatments. The tonal layout is perhaps too consistently consonant and sometimes static in key centers, but pure consonance is one of the chief purposes of this composer. The great breadth and flow of melody in the slow movement can almost stand without harmonic interest. The last movement, which is charming in its wonderful running motion, has some of the most ingenious string writing Harris has yet given us.

Of this station's series "The Composer and His Music," the most interesting were the programs featuring Walter Piston and Douglas Moore. Piston was represented by his *Suite for Oboe and Piano* and two movements from his conservative but lyric *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. These are good examples of his splendid technical equipment, sure-fingered craftsmanship and sensitive feeling for tonality. Moore's *Three Songs for Soprano Voice and Piano*, from the divine sonnets of John Donne, were surprisingly serious and distinguished; they serve to demonstrate what to me is his best musical gift — a convincing ability to handle concentrated dramatic material in an equally compact form. Two excerpts from his *Devil and Daniel Webster*, which make a rather obvious bid for popular appeal, failed to weaken the impression made by the Donne settings.