

harmonized a lot of national anthems to introduce appearances by Mr. Davies (Walter Huston) in each of the European capitals, Madrid excluded. For once this technic seems justified, although the *Internationale* was adroitly dodged just at the point where you expected it.

It is curious that the makers of *Desert Victory* did not use one of their outstanding composers, William Walton, Vaughan Williams or even Benjamin Britten, instead of taking an English

counterpart to our Hollywood arrangers. The film itself shows the most careful and thoughtful preparation. Even the comment is well written and the plan of explaining the campaign strategy excellently devised. The score was effective enough, but it should have been as stirring as the picture. The one really fine place was when the music stopped and a bag-piper played as soldiers sat around in the night waiting for the big offensive to begin.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

C. B.S. has done itself proud again with the production of a weekly cycle of concerts devoted to the music of Charles Ives. Especially memorable was a fine performance by Bernard Herrmann and the Columbia Orchestra of the *Prelude and Fugue* from Ives' *Fourth Symphony*. Although this movement may lack distinction and freshness, it nevertheless projects genuine inspiration and conviction. The naively eloquent prelude, though slighter in content and energy than the fugue, achieves a tranquility, indolence and late-summer color found elsewhere only in the best of the transcendentalists. Probably the orchestration is simpler and clearer than the purely tonal craft, but there is an able blending of sound materials within the spirit of the dynamic design and a musicianly consideration of the motion and speed necessary to make certain harmonic densities sound effectively. The strength of the fugue lies in its natural rise and fall rather than in any textural beauty or contrapuntal intensity. In fact the counterpoint seems often to be no more than an attractive harmoni-

zation of plain melodic materials, which have been organized more with an ear to their vertical and harmonic coordination than to rhythmic independence of individual voices and the resulting tension and release of resolving suspensions.

Less successful than this fine movement by Ives, was an arrangement of his *Quartet in G*, also well managed under Herrmann's baton. This piece, based on provincial tunes and treated with much local color, seems a little slight and transient in charm, though as a radio miniature it amuses and entertains in a harmless way. John Kirkpatrick's work on the *Concord Sonata* was a wonderfully wrought projection of this curiously individual, often splendid composition whose tonal images are especially effective, both as formal delights and as gems of pianistic writing.

Alexander Nevsky, an epic cantata by Serge Prokofiev, was given its first Western Hemisphere performance by the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under the fine direction of Leopold Stokowski. This is an expanded and reorganized version of the incidental music to the

Russian film of the same name. As a whole, the cantata is a clear and positive programmatic suite of pieces, variously designed in motion and form, predominantly dramatic in spirit. But an aggressive delivery of materials is no guarantee of emotional impact. The work quite often sounds bombastic, even weak; the terrific dynamic explosions are more like furious frustrations and dogmatic insistence than genuinely heroic passion. The harmonic idiom, largely dark in color and somehow well unified in style, fortifies the epic quality to some extent, but the stale and undistinguished melodic materials and the lack of contrapuntal strength are a definite weakness. Most grateful feature of the cantata is its powerful and undeniably brilliant scoring both for chorus and orchestra; regrettably it failed to disguise an uncouthness of content.

Stokowski deserves credit too for the production of many other contemporary scores, among which were works by Paul Hindemith, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Darius Milhaud. The Hindemith *Symphony in E_b* is a very competent achievement, musically forceful, solid in craftsmanship. A second radio hearing, however, still fails to convince me of its importance. Of course we all respect Hindemith as an honest, even a noble craftsman, and as an artist of rugged mind and deep intuition. Many have found this tightly compact and concentrated score worthy of the highest praise; it may indeed have elements which fail to come through in a radio broadcast, but, over the air it's a dull tale for a long winter evening. In spite of its up-to-the minute language and streamlined orchestration, the chief characteristic seems to be a lusty old romanticism, couched in very German accents. The fine performance of Vaughan Williams' *Symphony in F Minor* made an

interesting radio experience. Its severely scored and dissonant first movement seemed very fine to me, but a moody and somewhat sentimental slow movement seemed impressive to me, but a moody and somewhat sentimental slow movement failed to sustain the level. The wonderful treatment of the scherzo and fugal finale sections command respect, but the conclusion seemed somehow psychologically unpleasant, neither tragic nor heroic. Milhaud's short but colorfully complex symphony gave us excellent entertainment. The fast movements were brilliant, the slow section with its deliberately mellifluous and over-ripe coloring somewhat more sophisticated than sincere.

An exciting premiere of William Schuman's *A Free Song, Secular Cantata Number 2 For Chorus and Orchestra* was put on by N.B.C. with the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky. This fresh and vigorous piece seemed rather too short for the emotional implications of its content. It has some wonderfully brilliant passages in Schuman's loud, almost bombastic style. What such a piece needs for more effective power is a more frequent use of relaxed moments. A work can be too tight, too concentrated in dynamics and color. The form of the score is episodic and sectional, with block-like transitions that are more abrupt than subtle; this creates a feeling of crowded intensity. Curiously enough the piece shows evidence of a trend toward the romantic.

Another Boston Symphony broadcast (N.B.C.) conducted by Richard Burgin, presented a *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* by Vladimir Dukelsky. This was one of the most disappointing features of the entire radio season. If anyone wants to hear a composer spin a glorified web of purple spaghetti around himself, this work provides the occasion.

A series of viola and piano recitals featuring William Primrose was offered by C.B.S. The most distinguished work heard here was Roy Harris' *Soliloquy and Dance*, beautifully performed with Johana Harris as pianist. Arthur Benjamin's *Sonata for Viola and Piano* is a brilliant, entertaining exposition of extremely slight and undistinguished material. From a purely instrumental standpoint, the viola writing is colorful and fascinating; a good use of the piano in strongly punctuated forte sections serves also to sustain a somewhat obvious excitement and energy; but the

total effect of the work remains negative and, for me, inconclusive. Primrose and Vladimir Sokoloff, whose musicianly accompaniments deserve credit, also gave us Hindemith's fine *Funeral Music*, appropriately grey in texture and grave in its awareness of mortality.

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WNYC presented the Roth Quartet in a splendid performance of Shostakovich's *String Quartet*, Opus 49. The work is a suave and neat little score and, for me, represents the most unpretentious and genuinely simple effort of this uneven composer.

THE TORRID ZONE

By MERCURE

AT Nick's down in the Village you can hear some of the best jazz in town. Brad Gowan's band of seven is hot and pure enough to satisfy the most exigent. Around the bar the fans trade rare records between numbers; they lean over the rail in front of the orchestra; they hang on every note. A youth sits transfixed, beneath the bell of Pee Wee Russell's clarinet, drinking in the stream of sound like a plant absorbing water. Styles are discussed, but, as a friend of mine says — he has been selling collector's items for years — there is more interest in the names of the performers than the music. Seems to me I've heard that song before. Jam sessions still have their following, and can be heard at Nick's, and at Jimmy Ryan's, too, on Sunday afternoons, and on Monday nights at the Village Vanguard. There is less talk and more reaction at Roxy's and the Paramount, of course, where the youngest generation has been making

news. A recent letter from a hep-cat to *PM* read ominously . . . "If you think the show when Harry James was at the Paramount was something, wait till you see what we do when Jimmy Dorsey opens at the Roxy."

Up in Harlem, at the Apollo, things are more orderly. Count Basie, Earl "Father" Hines, Louis Jordan and Charlie Barnet have all appeared in the past six weeks, and from time to time you can see a fine tap routine. Barnet's band is unusual, some of the players are colored, some white. Their playing is *ffff* throughout and brings down the house. Ethel Waters is at the Strand with Jan Savitt's band, but she is rather a disappointment to hear. Her performance is pale. Her style, though delicate and sensitive, is always on the sugary side; it only seems to come to life in those songs which are not to be sung at the Strand. Decca has just brought out an album of selections from past record-