

music to compose during his ten-reel career. Herrmann's concerto is a bona fide concerto, even though it is brief. It is written in a frankly romantic vein, with plenty of showy passages and broad melodies which the left hand can set off with arpeggios and runs. But it also has the kind of musical integrity which comes from honest tunes skillfully developed. The general scheme of the piece is ternary: a pair of tunes are first set forth, both of them rather *appas-*

sionata; then a 6/8 allegro develops the first tune at length; and there is a coda-like recapitulation. Roughly, the over-all manner is Shostakovitch's, but without the Russian's grotesqueness and verbosity. Musicians will respect the piece for its structure, its authority and its vitality. Audiences should like it for its tunes and its style. As Hollywood would say, "It's not only good, it's commercial."

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

THE Boston Orchestra under Koussevitsky gave a beautiful performance over the Blue of Bela Bartok's *Concerto For Orchestra*. This was a successful radio premiere, fresh, exciting and possibly the most attractive work, from the standpoint of wide appeal, that Bartok has yet done. The strong, lyric first movement, often severe and even stern in sound, is far from compromising in attitude, but in spiritual essence it has real integrity, and communicates an imaginative, almost exotic form of folk mood, free of banality and chauvinism. There is some wonderful brass writing in this movement; stark naked, fierce and bleak, its positive rhythms have symmetry. Melodic writing based on intervals of fourths can be as trite and obvious as twelve-tone scale abuses if badly managed, but Bartok has created passages that have a strong, cantando-like breath and grandeur in a very personal and original way. The second movement is a delightful little joke, scored with fantastic instrumental

color, handled throughout with a light finger and sparkling wit. A certain extravagance is inevitable in such a mixed and varied palette, employing all orchestral colors most of the time. Happily the effect here is right for the spirited exuberance of the piece. The third movement, which Bartok calls a "lugubrious death-song," is a shimmering poem, lit by exact, highly crystallized harmonies, their quiet stillness periodically broken by vague, melodic stirrings and certain fragmentary curiosities of motion and color. It is a masterpiece of delicate reticence. The fourth movement, a kind of miniature Hungarian rhapsody, is composed of striking dance-like materials whose energy and zest are only surpassed in the fifth and final part, a brilliant peasant festival that utilizes every available orchestral source. The concerto, cast in a classic mold, is more or less a structural descendant of the Brandenburg forms, but the net result is a kind of expressionistic, neo-romantic impressionism.

The world premiere by C.B.S. of the Lukas Foss *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* made a delightful broadcast. A youthful wit and dry lyricism pervade this well-made score, which is attractive, capricious and amusing throughout. Even the reflective slow movement, unpretentious and objective in character, has modest charm and epicurean manners. Stylistic frills, ornamental gestures and embellishments do weaken the composition, but the work has the fantasy of an arabesque.

Columbia's Philharmonic broadcast of Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon* was a striking exposure of the many negative features that burden this over-written curiosity. Chiefly spotlighted over the air was a fundamental incongruity. I think the accoustical problems of balance, clarity and projection would apply in concert as well. Anyway, as radio music it doesn't come off. Schönberg's best pieces fall into two main streams, either they are painful but lovely mysteries, or hardboiled master strokes of logic. This composition missed fire in its initial concept. A solo voice part, which has a complicated rhythmic pattern designed with vague pitch suggestions, is matched against a web of very complicated string writing, bristling with tonal difficulties, and a piano part which in itself is engaging enough to demand astute listening. The work is not disappointing because of Schönberg's idiom. The twelve-tone system is truly his own natural language; it is evolved of inner necessity and faithfully developed throughout a long musical life. It is a single handed creation, a romantic tongue, individual and expressive of things personal. As a method of composition it is no more or less arti-

ficial than similar infractions of classic tradition by artists like Scriabine and Debussy. Berg, for instance, could never have written a piece like the *Ode* because he could only communicate lyric experience.

Another C.B.S. Philharmonic broadcast offered Vaughan Williams' *Fifth Symphony* and William Walton's *Beshazzar's Feast*. The Williams work has many long sustained eloquent passages that are very effective over the air. Like most of Williams' purely instrumental writing, it is marked by a very authentic nostalgia and is most convincing when least dramatic. I don't feel that this music is ever insincere but it is often disappointing and quite frequently dull as well. It is a peculiar kind of impressionism, distinctly nationalistic, but no more provincial than Kodaly, Sibelius or De Falla. I think Williams pounds the pavements of London all right, but I believe he mistakes them for the soil beneath. The brilliant Walton score was not too effective by radio (nor is it in concert either, for that matter); and it was obviously poorly rehearsed.

The Blue Network offered Gould's *Spirituals*, excitingly played by the Boston players under guest-conductor Mitropoulos in what I hope is its final bid for applause. There is some slick and clever stuff in this cunning arrangement of materials borrowed from a deep and noble source, but the stylistic treatment, which is slightly better in taste than Robert Russell Bennett, somewhat lower in level than the more sincere William Grant Still, is far removed indeed from the Copland plane which it so obviously aspires to.

Stokowski and his New York City

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,