

Stravinsky *Elegy* at the American Ballet School recital in Carnegie Hall. It was a strange, disturbing tableau, with the twined arms of the girls half-lifting them up, until the larger figure seemed to pounce down and devour the one below her. On the

same program nothing could have been more gay than the *Circus Polka* with its masses of girls, all sizes, the smallest one wearing an elephant trunk. Quite without effort this scene took us directly to the heart of Midsummer Night's Dream.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

THE concerto form, generally speaking, has more chance to make a successful radio impression than other large musical mediums whose focus is often on mass resonance rather than on detailed effects. Star soloists are genuinely concerned with perfection and demand adequate rehearsals and painstaking preparations to obtain balance over the microphone. Several recent broadcasts have included concertos and four of these works were contemporary.

Most important was Berg's *Violin Concerto*, beautifully performed by Szigeti and the N.B.C. Orchestra under Mitropoulos. There are sincerity and inspiration in every page of this deeply poetic work. Arty sophistries and smug clichés are utterly lacking and, though the piece is somewhat esoteric in a highly personal way, its distinctive lyricism and clarity nonetheless make it fully communicative. The elegiac sadness is expressed with materials that are striking enough to permit developments even exciting in their nature. Though never diatonic or modal, except at the introduction of the Bach chorale in the second part, the work is certainly

tonal. The twelve-tone system is not a scale basis anyway, since tone rows are nearly always melodically disjunct rather than conjunct. This may not be our native tongue, but musical courtesy demands that we be on speaking terms with it.

In Vaughan Williams' *Oboe Concerto*, a C.B.S. presentation, the structural power transcends the special and limiting demands of particular thematic resources — which in this case are authentically British, of course, nationalist, but in the best sense of the word. The atavistic primitivism often heard in his symphonies and other more provincial pieces is avoided. The concerto is distinguished also for its orchestration and treatment of the solo instrument, though some of the scoring seemed a trifle thick for my taste.

Morton Gould's *Viola Concerto* was given its first performance by William Primrose and the N.B.C. Orchestra. By far the best of his attempts in a more-serious-than-jazz style, the work indicates a consciousness of the need to expand beyond the rigid little symmetries of 4-4 time and the thirty-two bar song pattern.

Gould has a real flair for orchestration, having learned it in daily rehearsals with skilled professional players, and in the relaxed, experimental, "revise if it doesn't sound" school, one of the more positive results of commercial radio dance music. But this concerto is better than a merely brilliant stunt piece for orchestra. It has integrity and clear expressive intent, and the melodic designs are appealing, if somewhat reminiscent of Harris. One regrets however the close of the finale, for it is a bit long-winded and more noisy than effective.

Samuel Barber's *Capricorn Concerto* (C.B.S.) uses a little concertante ensemble of trumpet, oboe, violin and flute. It exemplifies strikingly what a productive study of Copland will do for a young musician who has been brought up in the tradition of big, fat sounds and pompous effects. The title of this piece refers not to the zodiac sign but to Barber's summer house, called Capricorn, where the work was written. This delightfully clear and brilliant score is most adaptable to radio use.

III

N.B.C.'s "Story of Music" series presented, on a program devoted to the canon form, the third of David Diamond's *Rounds* for string orchestra. Stunningly effective on the radio, this allegro movement gets off to a racy start, with no let-up in excitement throughout the skilfully maneuvered contrapuntal flight. The end is abrupt, yet one feels the piece has gone somewhere and accomplished a purpose. The orchestration, very plain and simple, points up successfully the perpetual motion feeling of running

eighth notes, punctuated by striking rests and accents. On the program that discussed the madrigal there was a work by Elliott Carter for voices and strings. He handles this medium with authority and lyric grace, and obviously knows how to sustain a line, create tension and manage good timing of climaxes. The spirit of Carter's madrigal is one of pure joy, not childlike or innocent, but rather the exultation of a bold iconoclast.

Toscanini and the N.B.C. Orchestra whooped it up in a pair of cowboy and Indian pieces, all in one broadcast too. Paul Creston's *Frontiers* must be his weakest and cheapest score yet. Elie Siegmeister has done better too than his *Western Suite*. This music has about as much integrity as a crackpot politician on a beer barrel. Frank Black took over with the same orchestra for a world premiere of the *Fifth Symphony* by Don Gillis. The naive enthusiasm for quasi-jazz harmonies diminishes the value of his melodic and rhythmic gifts. The lyric passages in the slow movement, though sentimental, convince one by their sincerity. But the score is too mixed in style and derivative in content to project a clear personality.

III

Jacques de Menasce performed, over WNYC, Paul Bowles's distinctive *Sonatina* and two movements from the pianist's own *Sonatine*. Here delicate clarity and thematic charm appeared in a form notable for its transparency. This station also presented Arthur Lourié's elegant *The Piano in the Nursery* on a program by Alexandre Borowsky. This entertaining suite has wit and craftsmanship.