

DANCE MEMORIAL TO REVUELTAS

ANNA SOKOLOW'S evening of dance dedicated to Revueltas turned out to contain only three pieces by the Mexican composer. Then, although *Homenaje a Garcia Lorca* was played the way it should have been, by the orchestra hired for the purpose, *El Renacuajo Paseador* turned out to be Alex North playing the piano alone, with the rest of the men sitting around watching. That, for a final number, sent me away disappointed. I had been looking forward with enormous interest to hearing *El Renacuajo*. I still hope to hear it some day. *Homenaje a Garcia Lorca* is a daintily passionate piece. I think it comes off musically, but I wonder if it does so in any way Revueltas imagined. The line is florid and makes for a kind of sensuous decoration. The timbres are rich-sounding and on the "exotic" side; figures get going in a hard-to-stop fashion which he himself once called *estilo ruso*. The themes (to refute Virgil Thomson's statement that there are no Indians around in Revueltas's music) borrow in good measure from mestizo-influenced indigenous material. Conscious Mexicanisms are particularly noticeable in the rhythmic structure of the melodies. The title gives me pause. Is this charming little piece meant to be a hymn in praise of the murdered poet? Or an elegy lamenting the fact of his death? Or a musical summation of his character and works? Or is it just a Mexican suite Revueltas was writing at the moment, and which he suddenly desired to dedicate to Lorca's memory? I vote for the last. In any case, the literary reference obscures the complete and immediate comprehension of the music which could be had if the listener were handed a more noncommittal title. Not very well played. The *Canciones para niñas* are what you might expect from the title, that is not for little girls at all although they have considerable charm. Like most chamber music these songs for piano and voice are not very danceable. Miss Sokolow is to be congratulated however on having brought even this much Revueltas to New York.

Paul Bowles

OPERA AND ORCHESTRA IN PHILADELPHIA

IN Philadelphia there has been activity; little of it of any lasting account, but at least activity, which is hardly characteristic where the music of contemporaries is concerned. There seems to have been no special reason for the deluge. One would, indeed, have expected the opposite, for

Mr. Stokowski has been devoting his adventurous spirit to the reinstrumentation of Army bands, leaving the direction of the Philadelphia Orchestra to Mr. Ormandy who is commonly circumspect, to say the least, in the fashioning of his programs. Yet from Mr. Ormandy in the space of a few weeks came Bartok's *Divertimento for Strings*; Rosario Scalero's *Divine Forest*; Franz Schmidt's *Symphony in Eb*; Robert Russell Bennett's *Eight Etudes for Orchestra*; Rachmaninoff's *Three Symphonic Dances* and Samuel Barber's *Violin Concerto*. In addition to these there have been some novelties in the lyric drama. Paul Nordoff's *The Masterpiece*, a one-act opera, was given its premiere by the students of the Academy of Vocal Arts, and the Philadelphia Opera Company offered the American premiere of Reznicek's *Spiel oder Ernst* and the first stage performance of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief* on the date originally set aside for the production of an American opera to be selected in a contest which was finally judged to be no contest.

Of this whole assortment Bartok's *Divertimento* is the only composition of the slightest importance, although some of the others have moments of passing interest. The *Divertimento* is the essence of the later Bartok reduced to a form which should prove assimilable for the main body of American concert-goers if conductors will only exhibit courage enough to repeat it a few times. Simple as it is, this work is so compact and logical and so devoid of any of the obvious tricks of public ear-tickling that a certain delay may be anticipated for the popularity it is bound to achieve eventually. American audiences are not accustomed to this sort of thing. They have been brought up on Brahms, Wagner and Strauss, and it is hardly surprising that a public which accepts Mozart as an approved classic rather than as a divine genius does not take too readily to Bartok. In neither Mozart nor Bartok is there any disposition to lay things on thickly. What is said is said, and when it is said it is said. That's all there is to it, and while contemporary audiences wait for the oratory, the philosophy, the apotheosis and the opening of the gates of heaven, the composition comes to an end.

The moral was well pointed in the reception of Franz Schmidt's symphony. The composer was a colleague and disciple of Bruckner, as is apparent in every page of this work, written about a quarter of a century ago. It hasn't a melody worthy of the name, nor a chord which isn't a smear. But the orchestration is still lush and thick, even with half of it necessarily removed, and the audiences took it placidly and even with

some demonstration of pleasure. It was a triumph of musical degradation.

There is something of the same element in Barber's *Violin Concerto*, which is a sight better than the Schmidt symphony but still an orchestral and harmonic cushion. Barber is a better craftsman than Schmidt, and a man of livelier imagination than his teacher, Scalero, but both his imagination and his craftsmanship are of a conventional order, without significant distinction. It is music of talent, but hardly of fibre, and will probably continue to win prizes and general approbation.

The other orchestral works were all miniatures save the Rachmaninoff dances. These also would have been miniatures had they been cut as severely as they might have been, were Rachmaninoff not the composer. Bennett's etudes, urbane and witty, were skillfully made and adroitly scored. Scalero's tone poem was luscious orchestration and a wistful mood ad infinitum.

The stage works were hardly superior. Menotti's one-acter, originally written as a radio opera, is bright and clever, but not in a way one reasonably expects of a composer already wearing long pants. The juvenile character of Menotti's humor, both as librettist and as composer, suggests rather the precocious child than the mature composer of comic operas. He is still a talent. His orchestra moves with agility and sparkle, and it is spontaneous and natural. His stagecraft reveals a native feeling for theatrical forms; but he conceives as humorous the spectacle of an old spinster of ultimate respectability breaking into a liquor store in the dead of night to steal a drink for the young man she is presumably determined to win as a companion for her declining years.

Nordoff's *The Masterpiece* is not so naive, but what it makes up in sophistication of a sort, it lacks in lightness and humor of execution. Thickly scored and beset with an awkward and angular melodic line, it gave the singers plenty of trouble and discomfort, and not much pleasure to the listeners. Reznicek's one-acter is an ordinary comedy of back-stage intrigue couched in a vein accepted as funny in the Vienna of a decade ago. Professional enough, but localized and dated, even at the age of ten.

Henry Pleasants

CHICAGO STILL IN THE JUBILEE

THE mid-season in Chicago has been saved only by minor works from the Symphony Orchestra's imposing list specially written for its Golden Jubilee, such as Zoltan Kodaly's unimportant *Concerto for Orches-*