

Ethel Hier's impressionistic *Asolo Bells* and a promising *Horn Concerto* by Gunther Schuller. This gifted nineteen-year old, first horn player of the orchestra, displayed a command of colorful instrumentation, a real melodic and harmonic invention, and a blissful ignorance of current trends in structure, rhythmic flexibility and contrapuntal style.

Robert Tangeman

## ROCHESTER TWENTY YEARS AFTER

THE festival of American compositions held at the Eastman School of Music the end of April, under the direction of Howard Hanson, marked the twentieth anniversary of this series, and for that reason had more than usual brilliance. The passing of two decades has worked curious changes in our musical scene, and we now observe it with an attitude unlike that of our past. This fact was underlined at a broadcast of several works originally produced at the first Rochester festival in 1925.

Copland's youthful *Cortège Macabre* and Porter's *Ukrainian Suite* show that both composers possessed precise technical equipment at that time. The traditional trappings used by Copland to evoke necromancy have lost their terrors, and Porter has long finished with folksong. But on the whole, both have travelled the paths indicated by these early works and have fulfilled the hopes they raised, though today their fantasy has a different substance.

As an anniversary, the festival took on a retrospective character. Many familiar works from earlier programs returned: Thompson's *Second Symphony*, Hanson's *Romantic Symphony* and *Drum Taps*, Bennett's *Sketches from an American Theatre*, Carpenter's *Adventures in a Perambulator*, Elwell's *Happy Hypocrite* and Still's *Sahdji*.

The five programs embraced some thirty works but most of the new scores appeared on the Gordon Quartet's program. Otto Luening's *Second Quartet* offers no enticements to the crowd. It is a work of considerable sinew, built in craggy fashion. It avoids the usual formal platitudes, sometimes to its disadvantage. The structural conception, one in which tiny motives play in a kind of dance of atoms, is hard to grasp. But Luening prefers to blaze his own trails, with all the usual hazards, through a gaunt and cold landscape.

Leo Sowerby was represented by a new *Violin Sonata*, finely played by Jacques Gordon and José Echaniz. This Chicago composer is musical,

fertile, and a supple manipulator of material. His sonata is not quite to my own taste, with its general submission to French habits. The harmonies are over-ripe, and there are echoes of the choir loft. Another Chicagoan, Eric Delamarter, contributed a quartet designed for young players, a facile, clear score reminiscent of Dvorak. A light quartet by Richard Bales was succeeded by a brilliant, diverting score, *Three Conversations*, by Herbert Inch. This has beautiful texture and a subtle, kindly wit.

Commissions from Rochester's station WHAM for brief radio scores were an innovation this year. They were tendered to Hanson, whose work is in preparation, Paul White and myself. White's *Idyl* was introduced at his own concert with the Eastman Little Symphony. It is a compact work of charm and color, presenting few problems. My own *Characters from Hans Christian Andersen* was given a broadcast performance by Hanson and the symphony, on a program including David Diamond's *Rounds for String Orchestra*, which is vivacious and penetrating in its technic. Robert Sanders' *Violin Concerto* was brilliantly played by Gordon under Hanson's baton, and Roy Harris conducted his own *Chorale for Orchestra*.

Hanson has reason for pride in the growth of this cherished project. Three post-festival broadcasts of works drawn from these programs will be given during May over the N.B.C. network.

Bernard Rogers

## GOULD PREMIERE IN CLEVELAND

THE only new score of substantial proportions during the latter part of the season in Cleveland was the *Concerto for Orchestra* by Morton Gould, commissioned for the Cleveland Orchestra by the Fynette Kulas American Composers Fund. Vladimir Golschmann conducted energetically, but the work shows little beyond a facile craftsman's effort to fill the broad form of the modern orchestral concerto, of the Piston or Bartok type. The conventional three movements are there, and the very large orchestra, with saxophones, is handled with skill but little subtlety. Undistinguished themes duly evolve from the germinating motives. There are fine moments of the sort that occur in Gould's more expert *Spirituals*, in whose smaller dimensions he is far better equipped to work. The flat landscape of the concerto is only occasionally relieved by a glacial knob of no particular distinction.