

a dud, written down hastily in three days to satisfy the Arts Club's thirst for a world premiere. Although it is full of devices to show the resources of the viola, its musical shape is amorphous and improvisatory. Short and fruitless figures are frequently repeated to the point of annoyance, but no impression of formal or expressive unity results from their use.

The occasion on which the viola sonata was presented is one of the few spots of contemporary interest in an otherwise generally blank calendar. The Mischakoff quartet and Rudolph Ganz played the beautiful *Quintet* of Bohuslav Martinu, a composer heretofore unknown in the Middle West. The Illinois Symphony Orchestra (WPA but competent) has introduced several interesting, though not invariably exciting pieces: Russell Bennett's *Abraham Lincoln* symphony; Ibert's *Impressions of Paris*; Anis Fuleihan's *Mediterranean* suite; Sibelius' *Pohjola's Daughter*; Leo Weiner's *Concertino* for piano and orchestra.

The novelties in the repertoire of the Chicago Symphony orchestra have been of a low water—and only three in number in the past two months! We had hoped for better things from Hans Lange than T. Tertius Noble's *Introduction and Passacaglia* and Arne Oldberg's *The Sea*. Otto Luening's *Two Symphonic Preludes* illustrate a more imaginative musical approach, but get nowhere in their development.

And so the Chicago season ends. The city needs someone to light a charge of dynamite in the midst of its musical life, as Mr. Koussevitzky did in Boston a dozen years ago.

Cecil Michener Smith

AMERICAN FESTIVAL AT ROCHESTER, 1937

SIX programs of music and ballet, preceded by a symposium of student works for orchestra, made up this year's festival of American music at Rochester held from April 26th to 30th under the leadership of Dr. Howard Hanson. It was not one of the most interesting of these annual events, which have done so much for the American composer, for there were some uncalled-for repetitions and few important new works. A wider range of selection and the inclusion of one or two more left-wing com-

posers in the front rank would have livened things up a bit. But it offered some stimulating performances.

To one who has heard all of these festivals, the stride in American composition is amazing. True, many young composers still splash about in the orchestra like a baby in its bath, but, on the other hand, every year brings an increasing number who can get down to the essentials of musical thought and feeling without delay. Two students in the Eastman School have won the Philharmonic prize and the Prix de Rome this year. From other parts of the country similar talent was represented.

The festival showed an interesting division into two general trends. The one follows the Wagner-Strauss-Debussy orchestral and harmonic tradition, applied to our lusty Western world and transformed through American naiveté and largesse of expression. This is music rich in sentiment, filled with adolescent self-confidence, unashamed. To its composers belong this year's prize-winners. The other, abhorring the flesh-pots of chromaticism, turns in the general direction of the later Stravinsky, Bartok and others, towards stricter forms and more austere styles of expression. To this latter group we might assign Mark Wessel, Bernard Wagenaar and a number of others.



On Monday night the festival opened, a little lamely, with a symphony band concert. Credit is due the band and its conductor for urging composers to write in an idiom rich in new sonorities. Nevertheless, most of the works played were still in the experimental stage. George McKay's *Symphonic Prelude in the American Idiom* for brass alone was a good example of what can be done. Tuesday's concert was full of woe. Loeffler's *La Bonne Chanson*, Dr. Hanson's transcription of the *Kyrie, Gloria and Credo* of the Pope Marcellus Mass for mixed chorus and orchestra and his *Lament for Beowulf* and Frederick Woltmann's *Symphony: Songs for Autumn* were excellently performed by the chorus and orchestra of the Eastman School of Music.

All of these works however, had been heard in Rochester and elsewhere before. *La Bonne Chanson* is mostly warmed-over Wagner. As to the transcription, to the writer its mass climaxes with sounding brass seemed utterly remote both from the char-

acter and intention of Palestrina's music. One missed the pure harmonic line, the nobility of a capella singing. The *Lament* however stands out as one of Hanson's best; it is powerfully wrought, passionately sincere, with very little of the facile or sentimental.

Woltmann's *Symphony* while exhibiting the characteristic adeptness at orchestration of this year's winner of the Prix de Rome, is, in the writer's opinion, inferior to some of his other compositions. The *Poem for Flute* is far more concise and emotionally mature.

On Wednesday afternoon Irene Gedney played American piano music from manuscripts selected by a committee of the Oberlaender Trust in an endeavor to stimulate composition and find material for publication. None of the works heard combined the qualities necessary for success in concert repertory. Had Mark Wessel's incisive *Sonatine* been more pianistic, or Bernard Wagenaar's *Sonata* kept uniformly to the level of its best pages of biting, closely-knit harmony, they would have had the best chance. The rest were diffuse and improvisational.

Ross Lee Finney, winner of the Guggenheim award in music for this year, contributed a string quartet to the concert of chamber music in the evening. It was smoothly written, without much harmonic or thematic interest. Herman Rudin's *Quartet in One Movement* was bright, ingenious and thoroughly entertaining. He might well revise some jazzy passages near the close which are out of keeping with the rest. Arthur Henderson's *Sonata* for violin and piano was a conventional work, utilizing Irish folk song, but popular with the audience and well put together.

Dr. Hanson conducted the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in the Thursday concert. After Charles Vardell's setting of *Joe Clark Steps Out*, came Bernard Rogers' tone poem on Rembrandt's etching of *The Supper at Emmaus*. Using harp and strings with weird intensity in the introduction and building to a complex, but integrated climax of barbaric splendor in the brasses which subsides into a quiet epilog, the composer has accomplished an orchestral tour de force. A first hearing leaves one wondering whether he has done any more than that. Out of

the dreary waste of measures in Wayne Barlow's oratorio, *Zion in Exile*, only a few arresting bits of orchestration and vocal effect call for comment. Gardner Read, winner of the Philharmonic Symphony prize, was represented by his *Prelude and Toccata for Orchestra* in which he is not at his best either in material or treatment. The Stock violin concerto is a work replete with all the tricks of the trade and immediate audience effectiveness.

Four ballets closed the festival on Friday evening. Burrill Phillips' *Courthouse Square* has the flavor of rural America, slight in itself but effective background for dance pantomime. Griffes' *White Peacock* done in traditional ballet style, cannot fail to charm audiences, Eric DeLamarter's *Betrothal Suite* provides just the right setting for Maeterlinck's appealing, if somewhat sugary, fairy tale. And William Grant Still's ballet on the legend of *La Guiablesse*, is excellent music of the theatre, dramatic and lyrical by turns, with luxuriant orchestral coloring.

Robert Sabin