

like movement of much charm.

Bloch's new *Violin Concerto*, which was given its first performances in the East with the assistance of Mr. Szigeti, proved to be one of the most rewarding new scores the season has produced to date. Let it be said at once that it is of the best Bloch. Here is music to stand beside *Schelomo* and the *Three Jewish Poems*; in spite of its length and difficulty it should find its way swiftly to a general recognition. It is based, as the composer asserts, on a motive of American-Indian suggestions which is interestingly enough never at variance with the Hebraic character of the work as a whole. More extensive comment appears elsewhere in this issue of MODERN MUSIC.

George Henry Lovett Smith

BRITISH PICK-UP

London, January 5

THOUGH musical activity here has greatly increased during the last two months, one can hardly say it is back to normal. That strictly new development, the short, lunch-time concerts for those who will not venture out during the black-out, has had curious results. Inaugurated by Myra Hess at the National Gallery (now almost completely emptied of pictures) they present well-known chamber music performers who appear there daily except Saturdays and Sundays, facing an audience at a shilling a ticket. But leisured people, arriving early, buy up all the seats; and the office workers for whom the scheme was primarily intended, are kept out. The programs have been strictly classical and popular so far; practically nothing modern has been included. Many other similar schemes have been launched in different parts of London, but most have died prematurely because of lack of support. The Incorporated Society of Musicians, however has organized a fairly ambitious program of chamber concerts at various times and places, which at any rate provide employment for musicians. In fact there are almost too many such concerts of a rather stereotyped character. Artists seem to be making up for cut fees by crowding in as many engagements as possible.

Orchestrally there have been practically no novelties of importance. Beecham, who has now returned to the concert platform, brought out Weinberger's not very exciting *Variations and Fugue on "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree"* (the work has also just been recorded by Constant Lambert and the London Philharmonic, with Louis Kestner playing

the piano part). Otherwise there has been nothing more modern than Delius and Sibelius.

The Contemporary Music Center, however, which cancelled its autumn concerts, will give three programs of modern music this season. The first is scheduled for the end of January with the Boyd Neel String Orchestra presenting the premieres of Britten's *Les Illuminations* (complete), Lennox Berkeley's *Serenade*, and an *Adagio, Variations and Hornpipe* by Lord Berners, as well as Herbert Howells' *Concerto* and Roussel's *Sinfonietta*. Eight English works have also been submitted to the central jury for the Budapest I.S.C.M. festival for 1940; these are Vaughan Williams' *Symphony in F-minor*, Arthur Benjamin's *Overture to an Italian Comedy*, Lennox Berkeley's *Introduction and Allegro* for two pianos and orchestra, Bliss' *Piano Concerto*, new string quartets by Frank Bridge and Herbert Murrill, and Eugene Goossens' *Three Pictures* for flute, strings and percussion.

One return to normal may be noted. Though there is still only a single wave length, BBC programs are by now almost where they were before the war. Nearly every well-known English artist has broadcast in the last three months. A certain amount of modern music has also been played, including some Roussel and Milhaud and Ravel's *Concerto for the Left Hand*. Among novelties there were E. J. Moeran's choral suite *Phyllida and Corydon*, a very charming set of madrigals to Elizabethan words, and Vaughan Williams' *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus*, which Sir Adrian Boult brought out at the New York World's Fair last May.

An interesting series of concerts in Oxford is projected by the Charles Brill Orchestra, a well-known broadcasting combination. They plan to play a number of unfamiliar works, such as Beethoven's *Rittersballet*, Schubert's *Divertissement a l'Hongroise*, and excerpts from Offenbach and Johann Strauss operettas, as well as first performances in England of Leo Weiner's *Concertino* for piano and orchestra and of an early work of Debussy, *Le Triomphe de Bacchus*, done very much in the Russian style; also an *Ouverture burlesque* by Méhul, written for a very curious combination of instruments including three reed-pipes.

Several small English ballet companies are also performing in London at present, perhaps as an attempt to make up for the cancelled Russian ballet season of last September. One of these is under the musical direction of Stanley Bate, a young English composer who studied with Nadia Boulanger and has written several short ballets.

Humphrey Searle