

might say that the *Deux Images* were written about thirty years ahead of their time. Whether Bartok's latest works are thirty years ahead of them is another matter. In any case it is devoutly to be hoped that it will not be thirty years before they attain some sort of general circulation. It would do no harm if conductors would now and then give their audiences a peek into the future.

Mr. Hill's *Sinfonietta* is an expansion of a string quartet, Opus 40, written some five years ago. It is neither very substantial nor very adventurous, but it is at least orderly and concise. One suspects that in transit from quartet to orchestra it rather outgrew itself.

Henry Pleasants

MORE ABOUT MUSIC IN BRITAIN

London, February 27

THE London Contemporary Music Centre's first concert since the war was not really a great success. The only music of importance was Britten's *Les Illuminations* for soprano and string orchestra. Though rather mixed in style (from Schubert to Stravinsky by way of Fauré) this is a sensitive and sincere work and one of Britten's best so far. It was also excellently performed by Sophie Wyss with the Boyd Neel orchestra. But it hardly conveyed the full meaning of Rimbaud's works — a task no French composer has as yet even dared attempt. The rest of the program was hardly on the same level. Herbert Howell's *Concerto* was an uninspiring piece of post-Elgarian stodge, and Lennox Berkeley's *Serenade*, though effective and well written, was not of great moment. Lord Berners' *Adagio, Variations and Hornpipe* seemed to be a rehash of pieces from his Diaghilev ballet, *The Triumph of Neptune*, but would be effective and amusing if well played, which it was not on this occasion. It's a pity the Roussel *Sinfonietta* was omitted as this would have tautened up a diffuse and not very distinguished program.

It seems in fact as if the C.M.C. has recently become subject to reactionary influences. None of the works chosen by them for the 1940 I. S. C. M. festival, now scheduled for New York (originally for Budapest) can be called progressive. Vaughan Williams' *F-minor Symphony*, for instance, is now four years old and has had over two hundred performances. The best of the bag is Herbert Murrill's *Quartet* which, though unpretentious, has a definite character and interest of its own. No further

concerts in London have so far been announced, and one can only wait in hopes that the C.M.C. will come back later on to its proper function as the English branch of the I. S. C. M.

Orchestral concerts in London are even more plentiful than before, but very little modern music is being done. However Alan Bush is bringing out a *Toccata* for string orchestra by Willy Burkhard, whose *Vision of Isaiah* caused something of a sensation at the London I. S. C. M. festival in 1938; and he is also performing Berg's *Three Movements from the Lyric Suite*. The BBC is still doing a modicum of contemporary music, including some motets by Edmund Rubbra, and will probably be able to extend this activity still further when the new alternative program for the Forces, consisting mostly of light music and variety, comes into full operation. The home program will then be left freer for serious music. They have however been giving public symphony concerts in Bristol, and the programs include Walton's *Symphony* under the composer's direction, as well as Berlioz' *Harold in Italy* with Sir Hamilton Harty and Lionel Tertis, who has recently left his voluntary retirement. The first distinguished foreign conductor to visit England since the war, is coming shortly in the person of Weingartner, who will conduct several programs, presumably of classical music. Altogether we have more music than a few months ago, even if the outlook for anything contemporary is still poor.

Humphrey Searle

SWISS WAR - SEASON

THE war-season in Switzerland, though surprisingly abundant in music, has been marked by an increase of conservatism on the part of the symphonic associations and similar organizations. Outstanding, therefore, is the activity of those forward-looking groups who keep interest in contemporary men alive. The Basle Section of the I.S.C.M., presided over by Paul Sacher, opened a series of five concerts with a chamber music soirée at which were heard Stravinsky's *Duo concertant*, *Duos* for two violins by Alan Rawsthorne and by Robert Blum, and the *Second Suite* for piano by A. Marescotti. A second soirée was devoted to new works for the organ, two *Sonatinas* by Walther Geiser, a pupil of Busoni, and by Willy Burkhard, one of the most gifted and earnest among Swiss musicians; a *Sonata* for organ and viola da gamba by Conrad Beck and a *Sonata* for organ and viola d'amore by Frank Martin. The Zurich section, known as Pro-Musica, at its first concert gave a program of present-day Swiss music,