

in his *Polyphonic Etudes for Electric Piano*, which were barbarically dissonant, and in his piano-concerto, succeeded only in estranging one's sympathy.

Another "step-child," at least of recent years, music, military and non-military, for wind instruments, was also brought forward at Donaueschingen last summer, in an attempt to break a new path back to the golden days of serenades and divertimenti. Hindemith wrote a racy concerto for winds, variations on the *Prince Eugene March*. Toch brought us a highly sophisticated *Idyl* and a *Buffo-Finale*. In his *Three Military Marches* Krenek combined jazz, satire on the usual sentimental type of military music, and Strawinsky. These varied works have certain points in common. They are not promenade and beer music for amateurs, easily comprehended, easily played, but extremely intellectualized, difficult pieces, animated by a spirit of parody, written for a large orchestra of wind instruments.

Ernst Pepping contributed a little *Serenade* for military band and a *Suite* for trumpet, trombone and saxophone, amusing but far too long for a joke. The *Suite* is an attempt to bring new honors to the old saxophone. (It is one of the aims of the Donaueschingen executive committee to renew interest in neglected instruments.) In a *Suite* for viola, Johann Mueller effectively utilized what Berlioz called the "sombre and passionate accent, the deep woe" of that instrument. There was also a *Trio* for flute, viola and contrabass, by Erwin Shulhoff, colorful in its Slavic folk-idiom but poor in its scanty development.

Erwin Felber

AN AMERICAN EVENING ABROAD

THE evening of American music which the Societé Musicale Indépendante hospitably presented in Paris last May brought together six young composers who, although anything but a homogeneous group, unquestionably form the most promising array of young American musicians yet presented together in public. The concert made evident once again the difficulty of generalizing about "tendencies" in American music.

Differences in race, in background, in cultural experience were reflected in differences of artistic direction ranging from the rather academic style of Walter Piston to the conscious modernism of Virgil Thomson. One thinks of the occasion as an assembly of widely separated personalities rather than as an announcement by any self-conscious group or school, and this perhaps was one of its most encouraging features, especially since among these personalities were three of great promise, and two who, although somewhat less individual, obviously knew what they were about.

Aaron Copland is artistically the most mature of the group, although here he was represented by small works. Of the two violin pieces, *Nocturne* was the lesser accomplishment, not too interesting in material, and over long; *Serenade*, a decidedly *genre* piece, is perfect of its kind, brilliant and sympathetic. In work of this scope, Copland's response to the influence of jazz is particularly well suited. *As It Fell Upon a Day*, for soprano, flute and clarinet, has great charm and clarity. If Copland's talent is not discussed at length here, it is because it is too authentic and sufficiently recognized to need further exposition. One need only signal the appearance of these new works from a composer of whom one has every reason to expect distinguished things. In passing, it was interesting to note the occasional Jewish character of Copland's music, approaching in this respect the spirit of Bloch and even of Mahler, though with his own idiom and feeling.

The *String Quartet* of George Antheil was neither so revolutionary nor so original as might have been expected from his enormous publicity. Both the matter and the manner, or rather mannerisms, of other composers are to be found, as in the opening theme, which comes obviously, with slight alteration, from *Petrouchka*. Antheil's rhythmic sense, one of the strongest elements of his great natural endowment, has also suffered from contact with Strawinsky. Where rhythm with Strawinsky is molded into plastic form, in Antheil's derivative style it too often becomes mechanical whether the device used is that of repetition or development of rhythmic pattern. One could easily pardon lack of "originality," which in its superficial sense is a much

over-rated virtue and often means nothing but mannerism, were Antheil's own splendid gifts used to better advantage. Lack of cohesion, absence of structural unity, are almost absolute. His wonderful ear, his rhythmic gift, his fine sense of the sonorities of the string quartet, where his instrumentation is much better than in those of his orchestral works which we have heard, deserve to be used with greater skill. But Antheil is young, his magnificent abilities as yet uncoordinated and his development, one hopes, still before him.

The sonata for violin and piano of Theodore Chanler, whose name has as yet been little heard in America, marked the debut of a talent of peculiar promise. Chanler's background is a cosmopolitan one, the influence of jazz being notably absent from his work. His music, wholly unpretentious, has at its best a freshness and authenticity quite his own. Though he is not yet completely articulate, his innate sense of form being somewhat undeveloped or rather untried, he undoubtedly has rare possibilities. The second movement of the sonata is typical of a spontaneous and exquisite sensibility, music of charm in the deepest sense of the word. With Chanler one has the anxious sense of assisting at a precarious dawn. His gift is unquestionable, so clear and delicate that one holds one's breath for fear its full emergence may be in some way compromised.

Virgil Thomson contributed a *Sonate d'Église* in three movements: chorale, tango, and fugue, for clarinet, trumpet, viola, horn and trombone. The music is in some ways sympathetic in feeling, especially in the chorale, with certain agreeable instrumental and harmonic sonorities, but on the whole seems decidedly *mal réussi*. There is intellectualism, lack of clarity, diffuseness, an uncomfortable sense of strain. Here again appeared the influence of Stravinsky, the Stravinsky of the *Octuor* and the *Symphonies for Wind Instruments*. The Russian's knowledge of this very difficult medium, however, is prodigious and not to be imitated light-heartedly. The viola in Thomson's handling seems superfluous, and succeeds only in muddying the clearer tones of the wind instruments, as does also the horn. One feels that he is by no means at home with his materials, and that the sonata has the air of an all too unsuccessful experiment.

The work of the two remaining composers, G. Herbert Elwell and Walter Piston, revealed less pronounced individuality, but excellent musicianship. Elwell's group of piano pieces is not among his most significant work, and should not be considered fully representative, but it does show him possessed of a fastidious and reticent quality that is admirable, as well as of a fine sense of color and of form. Piston's piano sonata, romantic and grandiose in mood, has excellent technical mastery, especially in the closing fugue.

On the basis of this concert one would not be justified in announcing the birth of a new American school. As we have said above, its significance is rather that an encouraging number of interesting individualities have begun to emerge, owning the American background as common starting point. To be sure, they have there undergone different formative influences, and have not all responded to or reacted against the same elements. They consequently reflect the diversified character of our national life in a far more healthy manner than would a more unified group based upon elaborate theories before the fact.

Roger Sessions

LAST SPRING IN PARIS

IF the Paris winter season afforded none of the sensational revelations the press awaits each year, the succeeding months were distinguished by the number, diversity and excellence of the concerts. First honors went to Walther Straram for his series of twelve evenings with many premieres, neglected works of the past and seldom performed recent ones. It was refreshing to hear the *Horace Victorieux* and *Pacific 231* of Honegger; the Roumanian Mihalovici's *Introduction et Mouvement Symphonique*, whose vehement measures seemed to express the heavy rhythms of natural forces; *Au Parc Monceau*, brilliant example of Ferroud's work and lastly, excerpts from *L'Arche de Noé*, in which Rieti gives us a very delicate version of the biblical tale. It is the gentle and ceaseless patter of the rain that the young Italian has chosen to translate, avoiding tempestuous drama.