

Music for The Theatre. Few modern American pieces have been played so often, and yet each time I hear it I like it better. For the purpose of the radio it might be somewhat curtailed, but not at the cost of those pages of a poignant, wistful, searching beauty which to me are more typical and more treasurous than the pages redolent of fox trot or blues.

Mr. Gruenberg, in his turn, was represented by a series of character sketches entitled *Nine Colors*. As they came through to the listener in the easy-chair it seemed as though, in spite of their cleverness and technical accomplishment, they were somewhat under-developed. I also felt here the lack of a program, or at least of explicit clues. Distinctly a hit of the evening was the *Atonal Fugue* for eighteen violins playing in nine groups of two each, by Mr. Dubensky, for this spirited and solidly written work proved to be particularly effective as a radio piece. The third part of Mr. Bennett's *Abraham Lincoln* symphony, entitled *His Humor*, unlike Mr. Gruenberg's pieces, suffered from too much clue. I believe I should have enjoyed it more as an anonymous symphonic scherzo without the attribution to the much debated Lincoln. A suite in three parts by Mr. Piston, the first swift and vigorous, the second a reverie, the last a thoroughly modern fugue, rounded out the exhibit in representative fashion.

The whole affair may unhesitatingly be described as eminently successful, thanks both to the choice of the works themselves and to the adroitness of the broadcast.

Pitts Sanborn

CHICAGO'S SEASON IN REVIEW

DURING the musical season 1931-1932 in Chicago, the contemporary works performed have, in a large part, impressed themselves as being made in, rather than of, the times; of looking backwards more than forwards; of revealing little that has particular artistic significance.

Among American composers, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Frederick Stock, has given excellent

performances of Mason's *Second Symphony*, Whithorne's *Concerto for Violin*, La Violette's *Dedications*, Collins' *Concert Piece for Piano and Orchestra*, Josten's *Jungle*, Hill's *First Symphony*, Bloch's *Schelomo*, also his *Helvetia*, Janssen's *New Year's Eve in New York*, Carpenter's *Song of Faith*, Sowerby's *Medieval Poem*, Mueller's *Two Symphonic Sketches*, *Enigma and Awakening*, Stock's *A Musical Self-Portrait*. Of European composers, Sibelius' *Concerto for Violin*, also his *Fourth Symphony*, Enesco's *Suite, No. 2*, Miascowsky's *Seventh Symphony*, Mossolow's *Soviet Iron Foundry*, Wladigeroff's *Piano Concerto*, Stravinsky's *L'Oiseau de Feu*, Wetzler's *Baskische Venus*, Trapp's *Fourth Symphony*, Zemachson's *Chorale and Fugue*, de Sabata's *Gethsemane*, Turina's *Danzas Fantasticas*, Lambert's *Rio Grande*, Delius' *Concerto for Piano*, Walton's *Portsmouth Point*.

One does not attempt in a few words to extend critical justice to such an array of works. Nor does this imply that they are devoid of excellence, or unworthy of presentation and attention. They revealed candles of various sizes, many indeed hidden under bushels. But a certain amount of disappointment wells up in recollection of the general paucity of musical ideas. Is there actually so little originality and need of utterance in this music, or has the listener simply failed to bring his contribution of receptivity? Such a question might more easily be answered if the programs had also included certain other American and European composers whose work is alive, skillful and outstanding, and whose music in 1932 is still practically if not entirely, unheard in Chicago.

That distinctly worthy band of student-professionals, the Civic Orchestra, conducted by Eric De Lamarter, has played this season two works of Chicago composers, Noelte's *Hasheverus* and Sanders' *Suite for Orchestra*. The latter, especially in the *Barn Dance*, shows adroitness in turning common material and common idiom into something refreshing and individual, and it is hoped that the composer will be able to develop his talents fully. It is also to be hoped that The Civic Orchestra will find itself more and more in a position where it can serve as interpreter to worthy, unplayed, contemporary scores.

Of visiting string quartets there have been few. Mention need only be made of The Budapest String Quartet, which gave Bela Bartok's *First Quartet* as it should be played. Though composed in 1908, this music is eminently Bartok. It is lamentable, in consideration of the several recognized string quartets belonging to Chicago and claiming spokesmanship for contemporary music, that twenty-five years since its composition should have elapsed before the city heard this work. Will we have to wait another twenty-five years to hear Bartok's important *Fourth Quartet*, and then by a visiting organization?

In the early winter the Amy Neill String Quartet gave an able performance of Szymanowski's *Quartet, Opus 37*, composed in 1917—its premiere in Chicago. Later the Philharmonic String Quartet did well to repeat it and enable the public to hear it again, especially the last movement. The latter organization also played Sowerby's *Serenade in G*, an early work which is of greater interest instrumentally than musically. At their concert on April 20th they gave the first performance in Chicago of Prokofieff's *Quartet, Opus 50*. This is a beautiful and varied work, of suppler architecture than much of Prokofieff, in spite of a recurrent and unaccounted for heaviness in the last movement.

The Chicago String Quartet, whose playing becomes more acceptable each year, gave a good performance of Sanders' *Quartet in A minor*, a later work than the *Suite* and of greater breadth and technical maturity, and of Jean Cras' *Quintet for Harp and Strings*.

On April 10th the International Society for Contemporary Music presented a program of six (all but one first performances in Chicago) works of living composers for chamber orchestra and soloists, conducted by Rudolph Ganz. First on the program, Roussel's *Concert pour Petit Orchestre, Opus 34*, rather impressed one as being a hybrid of Paris-Bangkok influences, of neat workmanship, as would be expected, and fine sonorities. It was followed by Hindemith's *Die Junge Magd*, sung well, though cautiously, by Mrs. Margaret Gent. This cycle of six songs contains moments of supreme beauty and much melodic, rhythmic, and instrumental invention. The whole seems to suffer

from a sort of formal inelasticity in the individual songs and from a lack of contrast between them. But the composition has some of the qualities of a masterpiece.

Miaskowsky's *Concertino Lirico, Opus 32, No. 3*, was next, a singularly unoriginal, uneventful, sequential work, reminding one in musical material of peasant scenes in nineteenth century opera, and in procedure of The Five Year Plan.

The second half of the program began with Sowerby's *Rhapsody for Chamber Orchestra*. This is an early work of the composer, and it is undoubtedly a more important step in the development of the man than in the progress of modern music. Toch's *Die Chinesische Flöte* followed. A certain percussive and rhythmic charm in the composition was not enough to make up for the slightness of the musical material, which tended to suggest "Chinese" designs on occidental china. As for Ibert's *Diversissement for Chamber Orchestra*, which ended the program, it was something of a relief to break into involuntary guffaws at the obvious musical horseplay.

With misgivings, hopes, fears and clashing opinions, the season has ended. For the first time in years there is no prospect of summer opera at Ravinia. The Civic Opera has contributed nothing beyond *Tristan, Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*, not to mention a happy revival or two. Little more can be expected under present control, in present quarters, and at the present time. Would that a second Julius Rosenwald might appear and re-foundation and re-condition the old Auditorium! There is no hall in two continents acoustically more perfectly adapted to every musical combination, nor more conducive to the spirit of anticipation in the audience.

At the North Shore Music Festival Carpenter's *Song of Faith* and Mossolow's *Soviet Iron Foundry* will be repeated. It is regrettable that Chicago must wait longer for Stravinsky's *Symphonie des Psaumes*, which is receiving its first performance in the Middle West, with a new work by Holst, at the coming festival in Ann Arbor.

Is it not time for the star-system, the union, the patron, and the public, to consider their reliance upon each other and their unpaid debt to each other, as well as to the composer? If the

present general fear and lack of leadership in every phase of music is the gift of Prosperity, let us then welcome home that prodigal, Depression, even though there is no fatted calf for the feast.

Harrington Shortall

PROGRESS AT ROCHESTER

IT is extremely gratifying in this seventh season of the American composers' concerts at the Eastman School, to note the increased audience that attends the concerts. The audience is naturally one of composite elements, and the layman is no small quantity. If there is to be a future for American music it is not idle to assume that Dr. Hanson's fruitful work in Rochester will have a great share in making it possible.

At the date of this writing there have been this year three concerts devoted to American compositions. Most of the works received their premieres in Rochester, and were written by musicians whose names are not yet widely known. Others by established American composers had already received performances, except the *Second Symphony* by Randall Thompson, of which I shall have more to say later.

The first concert of the season, in October, included five compositions. Bernard Wagenaar was represented by the rondo from his suite, *Divertimento*; Arthur Farwell, by his *Gods of the Mountain*, a suite in five parts; Harold Gleason, by his *Prelude on a Gregorian Theme*, for organ and orchestra; Sowerby, by his prelude to the suite *Ironics*; William Grant Still, by an *Afro-American Symphony*.

Wagenaar's rondo was an amusing trifle, well scored, containing the sardonic humor which characterizes much of his work. Farwell's *Gods of the Mountain* is a descriptive bit of writing which shows the mature hand of a composer in full command of his means of expression. It is, however, music of no great moment. Gleason's *Prelude on a Gregorian Theme* is an interesting piece of contrapuntal writing, not lacking in poetry. It could be improved immeasurably by judicious pruning; it is rather modern harmonically, and possesses an interesting use of