

gift for creating an atmosphere with distinctly individual and new effects. The first represented the old Vauxhall Gardens in Spring, 1826, the second was an interior in blue and white with a perspective created by simple means, the third a charming picture of Malibran's apartment.

*Maria Malibran* is the third opera by American composers and librettists to be presented by Albert Stoessel and members of the opera department of the Juilliard Graduate School (the other two were Gruenberg's *Jack and the Beanstalk* and Antheil's *Helen Retires*). *Malibran*, however, is the first to deal with an American subject, and has an atmosphere which could have been created only by Americans.

*Marion Bauer*

### SPRING FESTIVAL, WASHINGTON, 1935

THE Library of Congress, in its biennial burst of enthusiasm, brought three new works to first hearing last April: Béla Bartók's *Quartet No. 5, in B $\flat$*  (commissioned by the Library); Malipiero's *Sonata à Cinque*, for flute, violin, viola, violoncello, and harp; and Werner Janssen's *Quintet No. 2, in E*. Other composers represented on the program, in some cases by first American performances, were Alban Berg, Albert Roussel, Jean Cras, Quincy Porter, John Alden Carpenter, and Igor Stravinsky.

The high spot of the festival was none of the brand-new works but rather the impassioned performance of Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite* by the Kolisch Quartet of Vienna. This notable group, playing from memory, presented the work with such glowing warmth, and yet with such perfect ensemble, that the occasion became an unforgettable one, calling to mind the enthusiasm aroused two years ago by the reading of *Verklärte Nacht* by the Kroll Sextet. It was good to realize that the finest playing of the present festival was devoted to a work which is, on its own merits, one of the landmarks of recent music. A part of the *Lyric Suite* was given several years ago in New York, by a string orchestra conducted by Erich Kleiber; this however, was the first complete American performance of the work in its original form.

Written in 1926, while Berg was even more than now under the influence of Schönberg, the *Lyric Suite* reveals, of course, many aspects of the typical Schönberg technic of the period. Unlike certain passages in *Wozzeck*, this later work shows no tendency to slip out of atonality into a more conventional idiom, except for a startling moment in the last movement when a quotation from *Tristan* appears suddenly and unheralded. The six movements of the *Lyric Suite* give the lie to the oft-repeated complaint that atonal music yields only one monotonous mood. While each movement bears a somewhat subjective tempo indication—such as *allegretto gioviale*, *presto delirando*, *largo desolato*—a wide range of feeling is apparent without the aid of such signposts. The work reaches its finest expressiveness in the second movement, which is surprisingly reminiscent of *Verklärte Nacht* with its high, finespun line for the first violin, and in the last movement, in which the frequent use of portamento and glissando are perhaps borrowed from the vocal treatment of *Pierrot Lunaire*. The treatment of the strings throughout is masterly and imaginative, and yet Berg does not merely substitute new effects of color for musical ideas, even in the eerie third movement with its novel combination of *pizzicato* and *sul ponticello* effects.

Berg's *Lyric Suite* is more convincing to me than any work by Schönberg since the *Five Pieces*; it does not hold up its idiomatic formulae as worthy of admiration for themselves alone. It is not *Augenmusik*; it is not even particularly intellectual.

The Library of Congress had commissioned Bartók to add a fifth quartet to his list, which proves to be one of the composer's best chamber works. If we may believe its evidence, Bartók has outlived his earlier tendency to create musical skeletons. This quartet has meat on its bones. The characteristic Bartók manner is there, of course, with its rhythmic abstraction, its emphasis at times upon uncompromisingly bare melodic line, its special intermixture of polytonality and modality. But the lyrical passages are less caustic, and less often interrupted by apologetic dissonances. The slow movement has much subdued beauty, a quiet melody in the first violin resting polytonally upon a modal accompaniment of slow-moving chords. The scherzo, *alla bul-*

*garese*, is especially successful.

In the *Sonata à Cinque*, for flute, violin, viola, violoncello, and harp, Malipiero has gone back to his more soothing neo-anti-quarian vein. While he is still inclined to remind us that he edited Monteverdi's madrigals, Malipiero was feeling quite virile when he wrote the *Sonata à Cinque*. It is not anemic, and the modality of the slow movement does not cloy, as it does, for instance, in the monumentally uninteresting *Last Supper*. Malipiero is what Constant Lambert calls a *petit maître*. But the good works of a *petit maître* are often satisfying, and the *Sonata à Cinque* is one of Malipiero's good works.

I wish it were possible likewise to dismiss Werner Janssen's new quartet (No. 2, in E) with a smile and wave of the hand. But Mr. Janssen has risen to such national prominence in the last year that his quartet must be submitted to a rigorous judgment. Shall we say, first off, that there is not a great deal of Sibelius about it? Nearly everyone expected to find traces of a fine Finnish hand, but aside from a dramatic pizzicato passage in the first movement, there is not much to justify the expectation. Instead, the prevailing texture is that of jazz—in melody, in harmony, in rhythm. Jazz has had much to answer for, from the lamentable "symphonic jazz" of the Paul Whiteman-Ferde Grofe era, to the gentleman's jazz of Mr. Carpenter. Mr. Janssen's jazz is better than either of these extremes, but, really, it is monotonous, for it permeates three of the four movements with an impression of sameness. The slow movement, in contrast, is of the perfumed moonlight-and-honeysuckle school. Perhaps after all this time there is nothing *neo* left except neo-Carrie Jacobs Bond. The quicker movements, on the other hand, have vitality and brilliant string writing to recommend them. The last, *Ritmico*, seemed very much alive indeed, until an inconsequential academic fugato was unable to explain why it was there, in the midst of material so unacademic.

Besides Mr. Janssen's *Quartet*, the Gordon String Quartet, playing as never before, presented Quincy Porter's *Quartet No. 3* (written in 1930) and, with the assistance of Frank Sheridan at the piano, John Alden Carpenter's *Quintet*, (the latter reviewed after its first performance at Pittsfield last autumn.) Mr.

Porter's quartet proved to be the dark horse of the Festival. Composed with breadth of musical horizon and devotion to sheer musicality, it never seeks to substitute effects of color for effects of music. In a series of programs in which coloristic and fantastic treatment of the strings was unduly emphasized, the immediate sincerity and warmth of this work were distinctly appealing. The style is one of free dissonance without mannerism and with a fine sense for development and structural solidarity.

The Paris Instrumental Quintet, which did not play as well as I hoped it would, presented in addition to Malipiero's sonata two other unfamiliar works. The Roussel *Sérénade*, Opus 30, for flute, violin, viola, violoncello, and harp (composed in 1925) is a potpourri of musical devices which are usually pleasant but never quite fresh. Neo-classicism, orientalism, polytonality, music-hall tunes, short episodes of color, longer lines of graceful melody, the Ravel of *Daphnis et Chloé*, Rabaud, Massenet: all these things are thrown together with great craft and little point. It is interesting to observe that the chord of the added sixth still seemed piquant a decade ago, and that it was still smart to end a closing movement by emerging from a polytonal passage to an abrupt C-major chord. And for Jean Cras, whose *Trio* for strings (1926) was also played, the most humane treatment is silence. Like Rimsky-Korsakoff, Cras was a marine officer. Unlike Rimsky-Korsakoff, he did not have a flair for making a little bit of musical inspiration go a long way.

The closing all-Stravinsky program sent Mr. and Mrs. Crosby Adams home at the intermission, with much head-shaking. The rest of the audience stayed, but I was amazed to discover how unfamiliar Stravinsky's music seemed to at least half the listeners. The *Three Pieces* for String Quartet were played amid an uproar of merriment; a general restlessness frequently took possession of the audience. The program ranged from such early songs as the Gorodetsky *Melodies* of 1907 and 1908, through a not too successful transcription of the suite from *L'Histoire du Soldat* for piano, violin and clarinet, to the *Duo Concertant* (1932) and a piano-violin arrangement of the *Divertimento* from *Le Baiser de la Fée* (1934). As a profile of Stravinsky's varied career, the program was enlightening as far as it went,

though a comprehensive survey naturally cannot limit itself to chamber music, since too many phases of his work remain unrepresented. I was pleased to find the two newest pieces also the two best.

*Cecil Michener Smith*

## AMERICANS IN CHICAGO

THE dim spark of interest in modern music in Chicago has had little to fan it into flame this season. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, afraid as always of losing its hold upon the public, has pursued a typically reactionary course. There have been a good many novelties, but most of them have been cautious. The much-advertised All-American program of April fourth was a case in point. It simply was not a fair representation of the present achievements of American composers. Only one piece was undebatably good, a *Concerto Grosso* for three flutes, harp, and orchestra, by young David Van Vactor, the second flutist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Although at times too literally Bachian in flavor, the *Concerto Grosso* speaks a fresher and more moving language than any other Chicago work I have heard in ten years.

On the same program was played Louis Gruenberg's new *Serenade to a Beauteous Lady*, (commissioned by the League of Composers.) An attempt to capitalize upon the salon music of the nineteenth century, it is a suite consisting of a polonaise, a galop, a sentimental waltz, a light allegretto, and a march. I did not think it successful, in that the various salon mannerisms are treated too literally and heavily, and with insufficient wit or actual novelty.

The symphony, *A Year's Chronicle*, by Normand Lockwood of Oberlin, Ohio, was advertised as *pièce de résistance*. Swift and Company awarded their thousand dollar prize in this case to a work of sporadic enthusiasm and spasmodic workmanship, but one which gives promise of interesting future accomplishments, if Mr. Lockwood can learn to think in longer periods, can overcome his inability to handle more than one rhythmic pattern at a time, and can stop letting the deliberate ugliness of his har-