

movement. What the concerto may lack in brilliance and vigor it makes up in clarity and development. Perhaps one might wish for a more complete fusion of piano and orchestra and an expansion of the piano part.

The three works on the second half of the program were repeated from the symposium held earlier in the year. Timothy Mather Spelman's *Symphony* is, explained Dr. Hanson, a splendid example of line scoring and strictly polyphonic treatment. That it well may be, but as music it does not hold the listener. Its thematic material is trivial and uninspired and the general effect negative. David Diamond's *Psalms for Orchestra* confirmed the impression of originality and emotional power which it created at the symposium. There are things to quarrel with in this work, but it is deeply stirring. The color of the brass passages near the close is alone worth a hearing.

Robert McBride's *Mexican Rhapsody* would be good, if not lasting theatre, were it not very much too long. It is true that modern music as a whole is short-winded; nevertheless the greatest danger still lies in repeating oneself.

Richard Sabin

CHICAGO NOVELTIES

MAKING good its promise of last summer, the management of the Chicago City Opera Company produced the Louis Gruenberg-John Erskine opera *Jack and the Beanstalk* at a Saturday matinee in November. The work was repeated at a special performance sponsored by the Board of Education, when it was coupled with *Pagliacci*, for reasons which elude me.

This premiere was better rehearsed than most things in Chicago; well cast with talented young Americans, it was quite a success. Having read the libretto in advance, I was surprised to see how well the text carried. For Mr. Erskine's humor is very special, and probably very difficult to project. But Mr. Gruenberg's recitative has a natural cadence; sometimes he resorts to outright speaking. This clarifying treatment and the remarkable English diction of the young singers brought about a happy intelligibility.

The score is interesting only a part of the time. I must confess that the conventional melodic soliloquies of the princess sounded better to me than anything else in the opera.

After announcing a full typewritten page of novelties "to be considered," the Chicago Symphony orchestra has fallen back into the lethargy in which it has rested for most of the past decade. The best lapse from a reactionary round of programs came when Frederick Stock repeated the fine Hindemith symphony, *Mathis der Maler*, which he had introduced last April. Other programs included a *Concerto for Orchestra*, Opus 32, by Max Trapp of Berlin, a work in three movements, of fervent lyricism, disturbed by a too great eclecticism of style; *Pyanepsion*, by Arthur Bliss; a horrid new *Suite Varié*, by Ernest Schelling; a boresome *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra, written by Suk in 1905 and fortunately never played here before. Early in January José Iturbi promises to conduct excerpts from Shostakovich's opera, *The Nose*, and Carlos Chavez' *Sinfonia Antigone*; while Prokofieff is to conduct a program of his own works.

The Illinois Symphony orchestra, a unit of the Federal Music Project (WPA), gives a competent concert every Sunday afternoon almost invariably including an American work. The best composition of the fall season seems to have been a symphony by Robert Whitney of Chicago, which I was unfortunately unable to hear. More recently the *American Concerto* by Michael Gusikoff and Benjamin Machan was played by Stefan Sopkin. This concerto, now seven years old, was an outgrowth of the "symphonic jazz" movement set under way by Gershwin. On the whole, it sounds surprisingly like the *Transatlantic Sonata* of Tansman, and is about equally clever. The sustained lyricism of the slower portions is of the nostalgic blues variety but it no longer sounds as fresh as it probably did when it was new.

Cecil Michener Smith