

the latter concert. Oscar Levant conducted the first performance of his own *Nocturne*, a difficult piece containing a mixture of original and derivative ideas, somewhat too heavily scored. Written under Schönberg's supervision, it shows a considerable, if somewhat undisciplined, talent.

The remainder of the program, conducted by the writer, included Anton von Webern's beautifully scored *Passacaglia*, Opus 1; Adolph Weiss' *American Life*; and a movement from the writer's unfinished *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*.

Klemperer's presentation of Mahler's *Song of the Earth* on March 18 and 19 was beyond reproach. The Philharmonic Orchestra outdid itself in quality and nuance, making this one of the outstanding performances of the season.

Stravinsky's appearance, March 12 and 13, at the Shrine Auditorium, with the Philharmonic Orchestra and ballet under the direction of Theodore Kosloff, was marred by routine playing of the unimportant *Divertimento* from *The Fairy Kiss* and the *Suite* from *The Fire Bird*. The ballet's version of *Petrouchka* proved amateurish and formless. Done in the Hollywood manner, with two hundred and fifty lavishly costumed dancers clattering up the huge stage, the pointedness and irony of the score were lost in tasteless vulgarity. The affair unfortunately added nothing to Stravinsky's stature as composer or conductor.

In many smaller events, various local composers had their innings. Outstanding was the foretaste of William Grant Still's opera, *Blue Steel*, given by the singers of the Hall Johnson Choir.

Gerald Strang

WHAT CHICAGO NEEDS

A T a recent private concert in the Arts Club of Chicago, Paul Hindemith gave the world premiere of his newest solo viola sonata, his third work in this form. The same program included the first local hearing of *Der Schwanendreher* and an incredibly fine performance of the third string quartet by the Mischakoff string quartet.

The new viola sonata is the feeblest work of its composer I have heard. To be blunt, the audience universally regarded it as

a dud, written down hastily in three days to satisfy the Arts Club's thirst for a world premiere. Although it is full of devices to show the resources of the viola, its musical shape is amorphous and improvisatory. Short and fruitless figures are frequently repeated to the point of annoyance, but no impression of formal or expressive unity results from their use.

The occasion on which the viola sonata was presented is one of the few spots of contemporary interest in an otherwise generally blank calendar. The Mischakoff quartet and Rudolph Ganz played the beautiful *Quintet* of Bohuslav Martinu, a composer heretofore unknown in the Middle West. The Illinois Symphony Orchestra (WPA but competent) has introduced several interesting, though not invariably exciting pieces: Russell Bennett's *Abraham Lincoln* symphony; Ibert's *Impressions of Paris*; Anis Fuleihan's *Mediterranean* suite; Sibelius' *Pohjola's Daughter*; Leo Weiner's *Concertino* for piano and orchestra.

The novelties in the repertoire of the Chicago Symphony orchestra have been of a low water—and only three in number in the past two months! We had hoped for better things from Hans Lange than T. Tertius Noble's *Introduction and Passacaglia* and Arne Oldberg's *The Sea*. Otto Luening's *Two Symphonic Preludes* illustrate a more imaginative musical approach, but get nowhere in their development.

And so the Chicago season ends. The city needs someone to light a charge of dynamite in the midst of its musical life, as Mr. Koussevitzky did in Boston a dozen years ago.

Cecil Michener Smith

AMERICAN FESTIVAL AT ROCHESTER, 1937

SIX programs of music and ballet, preceded by a symposium of student works for orchestra, made up this year's festival of American music at Rochester held from April 26th to 30th under the leadership of Dr. Howard Hanson. It was not one of the most interesting of these annual events, which have done so much for the American composer, for there were some uncalled-for repetitions and few important new works. A wider range of selection and the inclusion of one or two more left-wing com-