

people seem to know. This was given publicly last spring at a concert of the Harvard Music Club, and again last month at a private hearing of the same group. It is a fine work, entirely in the "latest" Stravinsky style, "Greek" in its lines, "dry" in its temperament, "thin" in its harmony. The fugue at the end has a really smashing driving power.

Leonard Bernstein

NEW WORKS FOR THE MID-WEST

FOR the sake of the record I will make a clean sweep here and now of all that has happened in Chicago in the name of modern music between the first of last July and Christmas.

The series of twenty-six summer concerts at Ravinia Park provided a more stimulating diet of new music than we have been accustomed to. Five of the summer's six guest conductors of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented novelties; only one, Vladimir Golschmann, limited his repertoire wholly to music already familiar.

Ernest Ansermet, a musician who ought to be persuaded to spend more time in the United States, made out a series of four programs packed with tempting new items. In the end however he removed all but four novelties from his list, finding the amount of rehearsal time allotted inadequate to the orchestra's needs. He did, however, conduct Kodaly's *Dances of Galanta*, a beautifully unified and well scored work constructed upon some of the less bromidic rhythmic and melodic idioms of Hungarian folk music. This proved to be one of the freshest and most agreeable scores any avowedly "nationalist" composer has turned out in recent years. Mr. Ansermet also revealed to us Casella's jolly little diatonic overture to his opera *La Donna Serpente*, some of Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète* music (which had never been heard in Chicago) and his own attenuated orchestration of five of Debussy's feeble *Epigraphes Antiques*, originally written for piano duet.

Only a few of the twenty novelties of the Ravinia season seem important in retrospect. Hans Lange did both Quincy Porter and us a good turn in presenting that composer's sturdy and crafts-

manlike new *Dance in Three-Time*. Another of Mr. Lange's novelties was Holst's very British *St. Paul's Suite* for string orchestra, a piece written with the limitations of a school orchestra in mind, yet orchestrally brilliant enough to be worth the while of a professional group.

Among the other better novelties of the summer were Sir Ernest MacMillan's *Two Sketches for String Orchestra* on French-Canadian Airs, William Walton's *Facade*, and Leo Weiner's sparkling *Divertimento* after old Hungarian dances. Among the bad moments were Otto Cesana's *Negro Heaven*, R. Deane Shure's *Circles of Washington* (presented with due local pride by Hans Kindler), and an incredibly noisy and scrappy transcription of Bach's familiar *D-minor Toccata and Fugue* by Leonid Leonardi of Hollywood.

Not much can be said for the Chicago Symphony orchestra's championship of modern music during the fall. At the outset Dr. Frederick Stock published a list of twenty-six promised first performances. The first half of the season has brought to light exactly two of these, of which one, Tansman's *Four Polish Dances*, was heard at Ravinia. The other was John Alden Carpenter's new concerto for violin and orchestra, a work so prolix in form and lacking in freshness of thematic material that its principal favorable publicity in the Chicago papers was on the society pages.

Without advance fanfare, however, Dr. Stock did produce Toch's giddy, biting little *Pinocchio* overture. The orchestra played it without zest, however, and seemed much happier at other concerts when it was allowed to do Gliere's *Ilia Mourometz* symphony, or Reger's *Romantic* suite, or Hugo Wolf's incredible symphonic poem, *Penthesilea*.

Hans Lange, the orchestra's associate conductor, gave a good reading of Samuel Barber's symphony, already justly admired in these columns, and introduced the work of a Hungarian, Miklos Rosza, in a *Theme, Variations and Finale*, written in fairly conservative vein, but with immense orchestral craft.

The WPA, both through its composers' forums and in the concerts of the Illinois Symphony orchestra, has continued its active quest after new music, especially by American composers. The

summer series of forums—not continued this fall for want of worthy program material from local sources—brought to the fore again the conspicuous talents of David Van Vactor and Harrington Shortall, both Chicagoans. Mr. Van Vactor has already made his mark here with two excellent orchestral pieces, *Overture to a Comedy* and a concerto grosso for three flutes, harp and string orchestra. His *Nachtlied*, for soprano voice and string quartet, is a sensitive setting of a German text from Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. In it he attains a clearer definition of style and a more evocative mood than I have seen in the work of any other young Chicagoan.

Mr. Shortall's *Recitornelli*, for bass voice, flute and violin, a setting of a poem by Philip Freneau, employs a prose style for the voice alone, suggestive of plain song, and sets off strophes for the solo voice against chaste and exquisite instrumental ritornelli. While the audience appeal of Mr. Shortall's music is undoubtedly limited by his reticence of address, it should be warmly admired by many whose taste does not run to the flamboyant.

The Illinois Symphony orchestra concerts have not uncovered anything especially striking in the way of American novelties this fall. The slow movement of Roger Sessions' first symphony, however, was finally conducted here by Robert Sanders, and made a deep impression. Edgar Stillman Kelley's *Gulliver* symphony did not, and neither did a goodly list of pieces by Arthur Shepherd, Emerson Whithorne, Max Wald, Edward Burlingame Hill and others. Sibelius' third symphony was played, but so wretchedly that it made little difference.