

Except during the vigorous opening bars, one feels that he has heard all this before and consequently enjoys the pleasures of recognition. But it is a lukewarm experience, neither very stimulating nor rewarding.

Both Wallenstein and Janssen have played Kabalevsky's *Overture to Colas Breugnon*, which is more consideration than the piece merits on other than diplomatic grounds. An overture by Charles Jones was far more interesting. Gail Kubik's nine-minute score for *Paratroops*, an OWI short, made surprisingly good concert music (Janssen). It has continuity and shape, and is therefore valid even without the film. Finally, there has been a deluge of Villa-Lobos, the second and fifth of the *Bachianas*, *Uirapuru* and *Choros, Number Ten*. All were delightful in their evocation of the exotic side of Brazilian life. It is worth noting, I think, that once one has credited Villa-Lobos with a rather savage talent, and commented appreciatively on the fantastic, brilliant and tropical qualities of his music, there is surprisingly little to say. As a personality he is original, attractive, charming. But as an artist, as a conscious craftsman who seeks to cast his materials into enduring and meaningful forms, he is considerably less important to us. For if art implies anything, it implies a certain discipline; and discipline is a quality quite foreign to this music. We are happier for having heard it, but not, I think, any wiser.

Lawrence Morton

BOSTON GOES ALL OUT FOR PREMIERES

THE Boston Symphony Orchestra season has thus far been attended by a remarkable procession of novel music, much of it in first performance. Of the ten programs given before Christmas, only three have failed to contain a new work by a contemporary. Americans have fared well, five of the nine unfamiliar compositions having been written by natives. The signatories of two others – Nicolai Berezowsky and Lukas Foss – fit more readily into this category than into that of foreigners, since they have spent their formative years amid American influences.

Of the two aliens, both Russian, Stravinsky, living now in Hollywood, contributed a beautiful, characteristic, unmannered *Ode*; while the other, Aram Khatchaturian, writing in the Soviet Union, furnished a *Piano Concerto* combining the best and worst elements of the Russian school of the last century, as it might have been done by a commercial composer for the movies. Obviously an audience piece, the concerto is already making the rounds elsewhere.

Stravinsky's *Ode*, his latest work, is dedicated to the memory of Mme. Natalie Koussevitsky, and was appropriately given its first performances at the opening pair of concerts. Its three short movements, *Eulogy*, *Eclogue*, and *Epitaph*, waste no time on non-essentials. The *Eulogy* and, to a certain extent, the *Epitaph* have a fine lyrical expression. The liveliness of the *Eclogue*, which the composer calls a kind of *concert champêtre*, is kept in check, so that it is not out of character with the rest of the *Ode* or with the occasion for the composition. I heard several comments on the chamber-music character of the *Ode*, but I did not get that impression. What did impress me was its simplicity.

The Koussevitsky Music Foundation also commissioned Berezowsky's *Fourth Symphony* and William Schuman's *Symphony for Strings*. Both works indicate marked advances toward a mature style. Berezowsky's four-movement *Symphony* had excitement possessed by none of his previous works I have heard. Listening to this energetic music, energetically conducted by the composer, one found it possible to believe in a new Romanticism, period the present. Even the titles of the movements contributed to this impression: *Allegro non troppo, cantabile*; *Scherzo, vivace*; *Andante, molto sostenuto*; *Allegro commodo, ma bravura*.

Schuman's *Symphony*, a shorter, three-movement affair, seemed to me not only the clearest, best integrated and in many respects strongest of his larger works; it is, in addition, easily one of the best symphonies by any American to date. The writing for strings, while not particularly brilliant or original, is competent and varied. The moment the music gets started it is clear that the composer is busy saying things. The concentration of utterance, however, is not jerky. For despite what seemed momentary floundering in the slow movement the *Symphony* struck me as one of the most unified major orchestral works by a contemporary American. In this regard, it resembles the mature work of Walter Piston.

As it happened, Piston was also represented in these concerts with a *Prelude and Allegro* for organ and strings, written for the Harvard University Germanic Museum broadcast radio recitals, sponsored by Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, and first performed over C.B.S. some time ago. The Boston performance, first in a concert hall, revealed Piston's contrapuntal mastery anew. Even with the disadvantage of the Symphony Hall organ, as against the beautiful baroque instrument E. Power Biggs employs for broadcasts, the work sounded well.

Samuel Barber's *Commando March*, originally written for band, was

prepared for orchestra by the composer at the suggestion of Serge Koussevitzky. The orchestration was lavish but quite appropriate. And the piece was good and fat and spirited, as a march ought to be.

Howard Hanson led the first public performances of his *Fourth Symphony*. The titles of the four movements, Kyrie, Requiescat, Dies Irae and Lux Aeterna, scarcely fulfilled the expected associations with the ritual. More pertinently, perhaps, the music is based on an esthetic which seems to me quite outmoded and which has been more forcefully presented by Sibelius. Whether or not this esthetic represents a sincere approach is not here in question. What I do question is the worth-whileness of this approach in the concert-hall in the face of the powerful competition it gets in, let us say, the movies.

Gardner Read's *Second Symphony*, the first performances of which were presented under the direction of the composer, has also more than a modicum of this esthetic. But there is relief in the form of terrific energy, explosive in character, so that, despite the sombre quality of some of the music, it has an up-to-date, present-day character.

It remains to make mention of an essay by Lukas Foss. *Prairie* is an orchestral piece built on themes from his cantata of the same name. The themes are good, the workmanship talented, if a little immature. A genuine lyrical talent was at work.

Moses Smith

PHILADELPHIA TAKES A FLIER

FANFARED by a very pointed and rousing lecture by Roy Harris at the Art Alliance, the Philadelphia season opened with an incitation that jolted some music lovers and patrons out of their complacency. Before the newly convinced "pioneers" could get to their feet and have their fling at bringing more music of our time to the attention of the "masterwork" saturates, the city was swamped without warning by a flood of more contemporary music than it has heard in many a year.

Under the direction of Eugene Ormandy and the pressure of a United Nations Series, the Philadelphia Orchestra has offered Prokofiev's extremely diverting *Scythian Suite*, Leo Weiner's expertly contrived *Divertimento for String Orchestra*, Harl McDonald's feeble and shallow *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*, Ibert's *Escapes*; and the organization's first performances of the strikingly flamboyant *Suite Provençale* of Milhaud, Vaughan Williams' *Concerto Accademico for Violin and String Orchestra*.