

Dett knows his job whether he happens to be writing for chorus or orchestra. The choral fugue on *Go Down, Moses* can hold its own with some of the best of them. And with a driving impact, the final chorus winds up a work that gathers steady momentum as it goes along.

Eugene Goossens conducted and the work scored a popular success unprecedented in the history of these festivals.

Frederick Yeiser

SCHÖNBERG, MAHLER, AND OTHERS IN LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES has heard a good deal of contemporary music since the first of the year, but most of it was not "modern," and most of what was "modern" was not new.

Really outstanding were the world premieres of Schönberg's *Fourth Quartet* and the first Los Angeles performances of his *Pelleas und Melisande* and of Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*.

The Schönberg *Fourth* has already been reviewed in these pages. There remains only to say that at its first performance it was excellently played by the Kolisch Quartet early in January at the University of California in Los Angeles, through the generosity of Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Its reception was respectful if not unduly comprehending. The Kolisch Quartet also recorded privately all four of the Schönberg quartets through the courtesy of Mr. Alfred Newman, musical director at United Artists Studios. The recordings are certainly among the finest ever made—far better than any commercial discs I know. It is to be hoped they will eventually be released through the regular channels.

The *Pelleas*, one of Schönberg's earlier works, was conducted by the composer at a concert of the Federal Music Project Symphony Orchestra on February 17. Well rehearsed, it was intelligently played to a degree exceptional with this orchestra. The richness and inventiveness of the work were fully revealed. It was repeated by request on April 14, at a concert of modern music given by the same orchestra.

Two world premieres and two Los Angeles premieres featured

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

AT 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