that it is the "diamond in the rough"—that he has breath but not finish, content but not grasp of form. I see now that he is full of ideas about form: schemes of rhythm-displacement, phrase and passage-length, section-contrast. But the ideas stay theoretical, manipulated, for the most part recalcitrant to the stuff. Instead of a fusion of materials and means, the theorizing in recent years has got sharper, and its imposition more eccentric. Each work becomes a chaotic compilation; some sections satisfy perfectly, others seem the most inadmissible student-blundering; little gets fully realized. Even the breath, the long flowingness, the "go" of his music—and Harris still has them somewhere, in proportions unpossessed by any other American I can think of—have got clogged by misled and didactic ratiocination. Can Harris do nothing about it? And can he do nothing about the insistent mood of "Olympian" ostentation which has crept in? How often, when a real contour and "face" begins to appear in a movement, it becomes dimmed and blotted out by vague rhetorical repetitiousness and posturing, gloomy-grand, or American-sinewy, or what-not! Then there is his instrumentation; baffling. He seems not able to exteriorize his thought; it remains in an unknown limbo, defying any instrument or instruments to cope with it, except literally. This trio was never conceived for violin, cello and piano, this chorus never had actual voices as the basis of its creation; and yet one can find no other combination for these pieces . . . Harris' orchestral overture, *Johnny Comes Marching Home* (Philharmonic, Nov. 1) is at once more adept in its orchestration, and more trivial in its approach than his other music. There is even the smell about it of capitulation, of the "Olympian" striving for popular appeal. Nothing else can explain the latter-day Dvorák evocations.

Marc Blitzstein

A THOMSON SOIREE

VIRGIL THOMSON's music is written for an intimate theatre: the salon. Often it seems pretentious and frivolous, although it is intrisically honest and serious. The false impression is created by its untimeliness and minuteness (the very

existence of the salon today is artificial). On the program given at the New School on November 8th, the *Sonata* for violin and piano (1930) established the spirit and style of Thomson's work. It has the relaxed mood of a well-carpeted cocktail hour, fundamentally sanguine, with a few well-timed sighs. "Satiesfied," it neither puts itself forward nor belittles itself. Everything is discreet; and a personal neatness perfects this essentially social tact into punctilious clarity. A slight but graceful voice—the instrumental works too seem written vocally—carries on a melodic murmur with perfect breath-control and prosody. This ease is not merely facile but is based on a severe and fluent technic. The five brief sketches from the *Forty Portraits* (1935) titillate the company with non-musical comparisons (but the musical epigram "Henrie Waste, *tempo di polka*" for instance says itself in the title). *Stabat Mater* (1931) similarly, and more deeply, depends on associations—as emotional impact is outside Thomson's range or intention—to draw the listener into a ritual (another form of theatre). It is a great pity that the tradition invoked by Thomson's music in general is for most of his listeners dead; the evocation therefore gets a mournful response.

Eva Goldbeck

STRAVINSKY BEGINS HIS CHRONICLES

THE first volume of Igor Stravinsky's *Chroniques de ma Vie* recently published in French by Denoël and Stelle, does not materially add to our knowledge of the composer nor his works. The principal facts of his life as well as those related to his music have been well known before this; so, too, his changing esthetic creeds, which he has published in manifestoes from time to time, and so, too, contemporaneous comment and reaction. The present volume, starting with his birth in 1882 and continuing as far as 1918, when Stravinsky took up his residence in France, the period which covers his creative activity through the completion of *Pulcinella,* is slight in size and unpretentious in style. Yet it has the ring of something which is simple and true: something which will be illuminating in twenty or thirty years from now and which, with its air of unaffected veracity, may be sym-