

hair-raising in the grandeur of its climax and coda.

We heard, in addition, Dai-Keong Lee's *Golden Gate Overture*, Normand Lockwood's *Mary, Who Stood in Sorrow*, Edmund Haines's *Symphony in Miniature*, Harold Morris's *Suite* for orchestra, Eldin Burton's *Nocturne, A Piece for Clara*, Alexei Haieff's *Divertimento*, Gail Kubik's *Camptown Races*, Peter Mennin's *Concertino* for flute, strings and percussion, William Bergsma's *Symphony* for chamber orchestra, Hunter Johnson's *Concerto* for small orchestra with piano obbligato, Aaron Bodenhorn's *Fantasy* for oboe and orchestra, Halsey Stevens's *Suite* for clarinet and piano, Eugene Weigel's *Quintet* for piano, clarinet and strings, Jack Frederick Kilpatrick's *Sonatina in E Minor in One Movement* for viola and piano, Quincy Porter's *Sonata* for horn and piano, Bernard Whitefield's *Texas Toccatas*, string quartets by Carl McKinley and Alvin Etler, violin and piano sonatas by Burrill Phillips and Ludwig Lenel, piano sonatas by Vincent Persichetti, Ross Lee Finney and John Lessard and songs by Irwin Heilner, Howard Boatwright, Ludwig Lenel, Jack Beeson, Godfrey Turner, Hector Tosar, Kent Kennan, Virgil Thomson, Douglas Moore and Marc Blitzstein.

III

A week before, at the opening concert of the Saratoga Spa Festival which also presented American Music, Frederick Jacobi's bright new *Concertino* for piano and strings was heard in its first performance, with Irene Jacobi as soloist and Charles Adler conducting. This charming piece makes no pretence to anything but diversion. It is of the clearest and easiest sonority, filled with fine neo-romantic tunes, a model of civilized musical life within the bounds of reflective evocation. The finale, a charming tarantella in the nineteenth century manner, is built on one of those indefinably catchy and, at first hearing, familiar sounding melodies that everyone wishes he could write.

Another premiere was Ernst Krenek's moving lamentation on the death of Anton von Webern, *Symphonic Elegy*. The scoring for strings had great warmth and variety. A twelve-tone work, it is extended both in its lines and in the form as a whole. A more touching tribute to Webern could scarcely have been written, for the *Symphonic Elegy* is concentrated and pure music.

L. H.

TANGLEWOOD IN RETROSPECT

THERE was only one premiere of a full orchestral work at the Berkshire Music Center — which came to life again for six weeks this summer with Koussevitzky as director and Aaron Copland as his assistant. The premiere was the Shostakovitch *Ninth Symphony*, and it was dis-

appointing. Like most of his music, it is expertly put together and formally clear, but the materials are neither new or distinguished. Even in a short work Shostakovitch is not selective enough. Harmonic and rhythmic mannerisms that were fresh in his first and sixth symphonies have now become clichés: the eighth and two sixteenth-note pattern; the inevitable bassoon solo. The work is in five movements, the last three of which are played without pause.

Four chamber music concerts sponsored by the Coolidge Foundation brought out several new pieces. The *Third Piano Sonata* by Harold Shapero was one of the best; it has a clear texture which shows a careful choice of sonorities and harmonic conviction. Perhaps least successful was the *Naissance de la Beauté* (a risky title at best) by Arthur Lourié, a cantata setting of a text by Jules Supervielle for soprano solo, twelve sopranos, clarinet, bassoon, harpsichord and small cymbals. Aside from a few pleasant bits in the solo part, the piece was little more than an experiment in the sonorous possibilities of this rare combination. A negative one, since the use of the harpsichord was primitive, the woodwinds were hardly employed, and the choral sopranos were only a dubious foil for the solo. A similar work by Malipiero was his setting for soprano and fourteen instruments of a text by Lorenzo de Medici, *Le Sette Allegresse d'Amore*. Though much like his other works in sound, this score was nevertheless warm, sensitive and skilfully written for the medium.

On the same program were two other works of interest, not new but seldom heard. The *Divertissement* for fifteen instruments by Ibert was bright, humorous and neatly turned, but suffered from at least one too many noisy movements: the fourth was such a good-natured and brilliant *Valse* that the *Parade* and *Finale* came as an anti-climax. The Copland *Sextet*, a version of his *Short Symphony*, has two very exciting outer movements, full of rhythmic difficulties which arise from cross accents. The middle movement contains some of his more moving slow music. But the final impression is that the piece needs the fulness of the orchestra; the sextet remains only an expedient.

Two other recent unfamiliar works performed during the festival were Martinu's gracious *Violin Concerto* with Elman as soloist, and the *Testament of Freedom* for male chorus and orchestra by Randall Thompson..

The undertaking which inevitably emerged as the focus of the whole summer at Tanglewood was the production of Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*. This seemed important not only for its own merits, but for what might be the far-reaching effects of this first successful grand opera in English to appear in many years. The three performances were well

sung and played under the deft direction of Leonard Bernstein, and the staging, which was ultimately shaped by Eric Crozier who did the London performances, was exciting and certainly definitive.

The characters and action of *Peter Grimes* were developed out of a poem by George Crabbe, parts of which appear in the text of the libretto. The story deals with a real problem, that of a man who cannot get along with the people around him. Perhaps a flaw in the libretto is that it never gives the cause for Grimes's original isolation from the community. But beyond that the piece has the quality of a Greek tragedy, wherein misfortune comes not from direct malfeasance on the part of the protagonist, but as a result of some failing in his character, in this case the arrogance which brings about his destruction. Most of the story is presented realistically, but there are also tableaux-like scenes in which the action almost stops and a mood is set and extended.

The vocal music matches the dramatic flow by being faithful to the outlines of speech in the realistic scenes and by becoming more stylized in the tableaux. This technique is consciously controlled by Britten and implemented by the distinction he makes between informative text, which must be understood, and non-informative text, whose meaning he is willing to subordinate to its function as a vehicle for the melodic line. Examples of this latter usage are several of the loveliest parts of the opera: Ellen's first aria, the female quartet in the first act and Ellen's embroidery aria.

Britten's scoring is brilliant and imaginative, if occasionally a little heavy. The orchestral interludes, whose function is to bridge the changes of scenery, are long and of slight musical interest. The vocal parts are not easy, and the title role especially has a very high tessitura, which may limit the currency of the work. But *Peter Grimes* is certainly exciting theatre and proves that opera in English can sound natural.

Some new music had more intimate hearings at the weekly composers' gatherings under Copland's direction. Those studying at Tanglewood, as well as visitors, met each Sunday evening for informal programs of works recently written. Occasionally there was discussion: one afternoon meeting with Britten was devoted to an exchange of ideas on opera. The final Sunday evening provided a program of music by several of the many South American composers attending the summer session.

Jacob Avshalamoff

FIRST MIDDLEBURY CONFERENCE

THE modern musician as a functioning unit of modern society was the general theme of the first annual Composers' Conference and Chamber Music Center held at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Ver-