

Keyboard music: Virgil Thomson's *Ten Etudes* for piano, a premiere by E. Robert Schmitz. These explore an amazing set of technical problems which have probably never before been examined so conscientiously. Though difficult and eminently practicable they are most engaging. . . . John Lessard's *Second Sonata*, on John Kirkpatrick's recital, a neo-classic work with an admirable first movement. Later the excitement becomes submerged under formulas. . . . Joseph Achron's *Concerto for Piano Alone*, performed by Jakob Gimpel, very eclectic in style but often quite powerful. *Two Etudes* by Ernst Toch, on the same program, finely-spun and directly expressive. . . . A group of *Etudes and Polkas* of Martinu, presented by Rudolf Firkusny, quite elegant and sensitive little pieces which often communicate more than his larger chamber music works.

For strings: Martinu again, with a *Third Violin Sonata* given a first hearing by Angel Reyes. Elaborate orchestration really seems needed now for his extended pieces. *Three Hebrew Melodies* by Jacques de Menasce reveal very original ways of treating such material. The music is lithe, with expressive simplicity and no overblown dramas. Fuleihan's *Four Preludes*, another premiere here, are very brief, but nevertheless manage to convey an expanded outlook. . . . At Ruth's Posselt's recital a clever *Capriccio* by Oscar Levant, a lyrical *Arietta* by Lopatnikoff and short pieces by Hindemith and Prokofiev stood out. . . . Two concerti with small orchestra, especially written for Andres Segovia, appeared on his guitar program. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's is far from outstanding, but its simplicity, expressive nicety and rather neo-classic turn give it considerably more charm than his other works can exert. Manuel Ponce's *Concerto del Sud* is slight and pleasant, certainly not of this age, but somehow appealing for its old-fashioned orientation.

Donald Fuller

NEW MUSIC IN RECITALS AND SYMPOSIUMS

ALL the soloists and chamber groups now have the idea that a first performance after intermission will assure the presence of the critics, and for that purpose either a minor work by a major master or any work by a minor master will do.

A first audition of Elsie Siegmeister's *American Sonata*, by Rose Goldblatt, pianist, so introduced, proved to be a rather lengthy and tiresome travel tale about the composer's discoveries among the folk of North America. Similar in intent but more sophisticated in approach was George Antheil's slick and spoofing *Violin Sonatina*, premiere by Werner Gebauer. Antheil's talent seems to me of the monkey-see, monkey-do kind. He is a whiz at it, but frankly avoids making up anything — just patches together bits from the work of his superiors, in a word, passes the buck.

Darius Milhaud's *La Libertadora*, a set of five piano pieces, was a first by Maxim Shapiro. These were deft, extremely light in idea and execution, though somewhat fancy and difficult as performing problems. They would do well at an elegant nightclub or at home, when something cheering and bubbling is needed. Vittorio Rieti's sunny *Rondo Variato* was presented by Leon Temerson, violinist. His music pleases for its open, fluid Italianate spirit. It is absolutely civilized, cleanly executed and has intriguing personal charm. All the triadic Italian specialities are there, loosened and latticed a bit, so that more streams of running thirds can blow through.

A violin program, almost entirely modern, was given by Carmela Ippolito. Included were the Respighi *Gregorian Concerto* and Honegger's *First Sonata*. Eda Rapaport's *American Scenes*, for violin alone, was a premiere. The instrument was effectively written for, the motives, suggestive of the announced subjects, well handled. Miss Ippolito also presented three pieces of her own invention which she called *Miss Puffy Green* (*Caprice*), *The White Carnation* (*Rhapsody*) and *Tickitock* (*Humoresque*). There was madness in her method, for the group formed a perfectly respectable and serious violin sonata in the Bloch idiom.

Guarnieri's *Third Sonatina* for piano and Arthur Berger's *Capriccio* were heard on Reah Sadowsky's program. The latter two-movement work is detailed and ornate. Its thematic structure is limited to two-note groupings for the most part. These are put through the mill with thoroughness, tonally and rhythmically. The *Allegro Vivace*, though extremely nervous and dismembered, had a broader formal plan than the less communicative *Arioso* which followed. Berger appears somewhat embarrassed by the prospect of melodic continuity, which perhaps restricts the full exercise of his gift.

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Under the general title "This Is Our Music" Walter Hendl presented a series of Friday afternoon lectures at Town Hall. He chatted in a high-school rally-leader manner about national music as he sees it. As illustrations there were performances by himself, Tom Scott, Susan Reed, Josh White, Joan Field, the Hargail Chorus and a jazz group under Eddie Condon. Hendl seems new to American music, deluded as well by notions of art music's folksong origins. He was often misinformed about special composers. (Ives came in for severe misrepresentation.) While the professional may be entertained by the enthusiastic antics of the discovering novice, these are misleading to the layman. Joan Field's stunning reading of the slow movement of Ives's *First Violin Sonata* touched me deeply. This extended, free and entirely noble piece, of rich melodic invention and contrapuntal texture, is finely organized. I can think of no other slow movement for this medium in American music quite so grandly achieved.

Janet Fairbank's annual recital was especially well arranged this year. The first half included Ernst Bacon's *Six Songs of a Lonesome People*, six songs by William Bergsma to Cummings' poems, and Poulenc's nine songs on texts of Eluard, *Tel Jour, Telle Nuit*. Bergsma's songs have high Byronic impulse and vitality. Sometimes they fly off the deep end out of sheer exuberance, but under control the romantic gift is authentic and stimulating. He makes interesting use of extremes of register, duration, volume and expression. Bacon's set, from *Along Unpaved Roads*, was neatly done and quaint but rather coy melodically.

Poulenc's just pre-war songs are lovely, with their primer-like and delicate homophony. Coming after the genuine polyphony of the Bergsma, they showed how little the French understand counterpoint. Also how well they avoid its use. Several of the songs were reserved but powerful; the lyrical ones were quite veiled and evocative. Miss Fairbank also gave first performances to music by Herbert Elwell, Julian Gardiner and John Duke.

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At the auditorium of the Engineering Societies Building I heard firsts of two arias and a duet from Prokofiev's opera, *War and Peace*. This is real paper music, with its up-and-down scales in real keys, its triads and sevenths, repeated rhythmic patterns, in short the whole paraphernalia of European music in a babble of nonsense. The occasion was the First Conference on American-Soviet Co-operation. One suspects that something equally bad will get sent over there to represent American music. I think the critics of our two countries should simply call a truce until the politicians have had their frightful way with the art and we can get back on some civilized intellectual level.

Samuel Barber's *A Stop Watch and an Ordnance Map* for men's voices, brass and timpani was presented on the Collegiate Chorale's program. This quite moving work is rich in chromatic voice movements, sudden silences, tense timpani solos and a general atmosphere of the terrible. Schönberg's a cappella *Friede auf Erden* for mixed voices, an early work, was a delight. The choral writing is extremely sensitive, the music itself masterful, especially in the final rise and fall of the whole body of sound. The vocabulary is about that of the *Second String Quartet*, the shape of utmost clarity, and the expression high in tone. It is one of the finest modern works for chorus that I know of.

Schönberg's own special brand of neo-classicism was displayed in the *Theme and Variations* (Philharmonic) that he originally wrote for the Goldman band. Of moderate length, the piece is distinctly consonant in immediate harmony but completely chromatic in syntax. One is reminded of the superficial aspects of Max Reger's music. Schönberg is a particularly happy writer of variations. This set is a fine one: seven in all, with a finale

of labyrinthine polyphonies. Even in so consonant an idiom the magic hand appears; in the peculiar rhythmic balance and the poised ends of phrases, as well as in the personal melodic design.

In Kabalevsky's *Second Piano Concerto* (Philharmonic, with Nadia Reisenberg, soloist) one sees another Soviet composer wandering like Alice into the bourgeois wonderland. He seems destined for Hollywood. Nightclub stylisms and lush atmosphere, delicately stitched together with transoceanic cable, make our own glamor composers seem like vestal virgins.

Glamor boy Antheil, however, must be wooing a Russian contract. His *Fourth Symphony* (New York City Symphony) sounds like one of the big Shostakovitch pieces. His incorrigibly bouncy humors resound throughout this fancy collage of everything ever heard in a symphony. Antheil's disposition gets frightening – in the distinctly martial manner – but never morosely so. He claims temporal priority on a theme which sounds exactly like one in the Russian's *Fifth Symphony*. Neither version is worth the debate. The piece is very long and loud and coarse and rough and discouraging.

Lou Harrison

SCORES FOR GRAHAM; FESTIVAL AT COLUMBIA

COPLAND'S *Appalachian Spring* and Hindemith's *Hérodiade*, to which Martha Graham presented dances in her recent New York season, are the most completely integrated and carefully conceived scores that have yet been written for her. Both can stand alone in concert performances, yet they add to the dances themselves an atmosphere of certainty and directness. The music has a sure sense of the theatre and measures out the steps and timing of the dance patterns with great effect. By calling the tune for the dance with such imperiousness, these works put a limitation on the dancer which she meets with many imaginative touches.

In *Dark Meadow*, to a Chavez score commissioned, like the Hindemith and Copland pieces, by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the musical and choreographic approach contrasts markedly with those of the two other pieces. The central part of the score consists of several extensively developed string quartet movements, in style like the composer's *Piano Concerto*. This would go very well in a chamber music concert; it offers very few clues as to what sort of dancing might accompany it. Introductory and closing woodwind sections, however, set the austere, Indian ritual character represented on the stage by that interesting combination of primitive and Christian symbols found in Mexican religious folk art. The music is almost continuously danced *against* rather than *with*, and this greatly heightens the subjective tension. Coming after Miss Graham's discoveries in many new directions, *Dark Meadow* returns to the older modern dance idiom