

(U. S. sector) is unquestionably the leader. The Charlottenburg Music Library (British sector) also eagerly promotes the contemporary. Little by little new Russian and French works have been doled out to Berliners. Also a few, unfortunately too few, English and American works have bobbed up, among them John Bitter's capricious *Quartet in 3/4 Time*, by turns perky and meditative. But it is Hindemith's name that most frequently appears at the chamber concerts. Berlin wants to atone for the unholy, art-hating National Socialist regime's crime against this composer.

Erwin Kroll

ISCM FESTIVAL; BRITTEN'S LUCRETIA

THERE was quite a party atmosphere about the twentieth ISCM Festival, held in London in the second week of July. It was pleasant to welcome back old friends who had not visited us since the 1938 Festival, though there were many sad gaps due to Nazi persecution. Above all there was a feeling that international contemporary music had at last been given a fresh organized basis in Europe.

But it is rather disappointing to admit that a good deal of the music played did not come up to our high expectations. The first orchestral concert, held in Covent Garden Opera House, began effectively enough with Richard Mohaupt's *Stadtpeifermusik*, an agreeably brassy piece with an overlong middle section. Elizabeth Lutyens's *Three Symphonic Preludes* (England) were original and sincere and showed more enterprise than many of the works heard. But then followed an appallingly dull *Piano Concerto* by Robert de Roos (Holland), written in the worst academic tradition. More original was the *Second Symphony* by Elsa Barraine (France), the only new composer who can be said to have made a hit at the festival. Though more of a ballet suite than a real symphony, it was effective and could well take its place in the regular orchestral repertory. Prokofiev's *Ode to the End of the War*, scored for four pianos, four harps and military band, was a mere pièce d'occasion and consisted of a series of loud, empty tunes surrounded by bangs and crashes.

The three chamber concerts, held in the beautiful Goldsmiths' Hall in the City, produced more real music. The first began with the rather over-intellectualized *Fifth Quartet* by Jerzy Fitelberg and an agreeable *Sonatina* for clarinet and piano by Albert Moeschinger (Switzerland). The *Second Quartet* by Sten Broman (Sweden) was a machine-made piece of music which moved busily without appearing to get anywhere.

On the other hand, the *Songs from Captivity* by Luigi Dallapiccola, scored for chorus, two pianos and a large assortment of percussion, showed a genuine originality and produced some remarkable sonorities. Dallapiccola

has evidently developed a good deal during the war. Stravinsky's *Two Piano Sonata* is not one of his greatest works, though certainly charming and effective. The concert ended with Hindemith's *Quartet in E \flat* , which made a great impression.

Krenek's *Seventh String Quartet* opened the second chamber concert. In this routine work he seemed uncertain of what style he wanted to adopt and what to say in it. The *Little Suite* by Joseph Zavadil (Czechoslovakia), a follower of Haba, though not a quarter-tone work, was well-made and produced some interesting sounds. Then followed a monstrosity in the shape of the *Quatour pour la fin du temps* by Olivier Messiaen. This eight-movement work, which lasts nearly an hour, is hardly a quartet, as the four instruments rarely play together; one section, for instance, is for clarinet solo. Apart from some beautiful sonorities, the work was intolerable to listen to and seemed thoroughly bogus and pretentious. After this it was a relief to hear Schönberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, which sounds more impressive with each hearing and is certainly clearer in the version for string quartet in place of string orchestra.

William Schuman's *Symphony for Strings*, on the chamber orchestra concert given by the Boyd Neel String Orchestra and the London Orchestral Players, started off well in the first movement. But the slow movement seemed hesitant and the work did not really make up lost ground in the finale. The *Five Folk tunes* for children's voices and wind instruments by Andrzej Panufnik (Poland) were simply but effectively written and contrasted well with the more intellectual music around them.

But the highlight of the whole concert, and perhaps of the whole festival, was the premiere of Webern's *First Cantata*, written in 1940. This is the first of the three works he completed during the war and shows his complete mastery of this medium. The mere sound is most beautiful and remarkable throughout; even those who normally dislike this kind of music were much impressed. By comparison the *Divertimento Number 2* by Tibor Harsanyi (Hungary-France) sounded rather flat, despite its good construction and originality.

At the final orchestral concert Alan Rawsthorne's *Overture, Cortèges*, showed skill in scoring and structure, yet seemed tame after some of the other music already heard. Raymond Loucheur's *Nocturne* (France) proved to be another essay in academicism, more competent than the de Roos concerto, but quite out of place in this festival. The chief novelty was Roman Palester's *Violin Concerto* (Poland). His *Second String Quartet* had been performed the previous day at a "side-show" concert given by the Polish section of the ISCM. The concerto, though an original work, is uneven and owes a good deal to Szymanowsky. It is cleverly but over-elaborately scored, more of a *sinfonia concertante*, since the soloist generally

enters between fairly long tuttis. The concert ended with Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, an admirable choice which made a fine climax to the festival.

The chief impression left by this week of music was of the widening gulf between the older revolutionaries and the younger generation, which aims at simpler and more agreeable means of expression. Bartok and Hindemith seem to occupy independent positions. Which school of thought is likely to have most influence on the future of music is of course impossible to say, but this year, as at the 1938 Festival, the most impressive contributions were by the old guard – Schönberg, Webern, Bartok and Hindemith.

III

Britten's second opera, *The Rape of Lucretia*, opened at the Glyndebourne in July and, after touring the provinces, has come to London for a short season. Though a very interesting and skilful work, it hardly merits the exaggerated praise that has been showered on it. The libretto by Ronald Duncan contains many phrases which sound gauche when sung and spins out the action far too much with long symbolical commentaries by the two singer-narrators who take no part in the drama. In any case the story itself is not capable of sustaining a full-length opera. The music, though brilliantly written and full of ingenious devices, does not always make up for this lack of dramatic interest. Only in the rape scene and the final one of Lucretia's confession does it really get across to the audience. Here Britten makes more use of normal operatic elements than in the first two scenes. Even the celebrated interlude depicting Tarquinius's ride to Rome seems to stop short and lose its impetus after a promising beginning. Nevertheless the work is far in advance of anything produced by other English operatic composers to date. If in his future operas Britten concentrates more on dramatic interest and less on formal aspects he can doubtless produce the long-awaited English operatic masterpiece.

III

The annual season of London's Promenade Concerts is now in full swing. Since the death of Sir Henry Wood two years ago the conducting has been shared by Sir Adrian Boult, Basil Cameron and Constant Lambert. The new works so far have been chiefly Russian and English. Shostakovich's *Ninth Symphony*, given on the opening night, turned out to be a pleasant and quite amusing work of only twenty-five minutes' duration. It was a welcome relief after the "monumental" style of the fifth and seventh symphonies. On the second night came Leighton Lucas's *Litany*, notable for its scoring and construction. Since then we have had Stravinsky's *Scherzo à la russe* and a revised version of Benjamin Britten's *Piano Concerto*. More recently Prokofiev's *Fifth Symphony* was given for the

first time in this country. Though scored with all Prokofiev's old skill, the sense of direction is lacking. The first and third movements kept going continuously but never seemed to get anywhere. More attractive were the quicker second and fourth movements, which hark back to Prokofiev's witty style, but its fine edge seems to have become blunted in recent years. Interesting works still to come include John Ireland's *Overture, "Satyricon"* and the *Oboe Concerto* by Richard Strauss, whose *Metamorphoses* for string orchestra was recently performed, without arousing any great enthusiasm.

Humphrey Searle

BALLET OLYMPIC IN LONDON

WITH four British and five foreign companies dancing here this year, London is surely the world's most ballet-minded capital. Of the organizations on view its own Sadler's Wells offers the best all around standards. No company that I have seen in Europe or America attains so high a level in purely classical dancing and production. Revivals of its first post-war Covent Garden season were the full length *Sleeping Beauty*, with spectacular new sets by Oliver Messel, and *Giselle* with a new and perfect period setting by the nineteen-year old prodigy James Bailey. Frederick Ashton's new *Symphonic Variations* (to César Franck) was a fine work, but it will perhaps seem less breathtaking to the British when they have seen some of Balanchine's American ballets of the past five years. Helpmann in his new *Adam Zero* did not repeat the deserved success of *Miracle in the Gorbals* (both with music by Arthur Bliss) or *Hamlet*. It was good theatre, slightly above average ballet and commonplace philosophy, an honorable failure worth seeing and doing . . . As to the company's personnel, in Margot Fonteyn it has one great ballerina. There are four exceptional female soloists – May, Shearer, Grey and Lynne, and a dozen more who are never less than competent. The corps de ballet is remarkable as an ensemble. Of the classical males, none is first rank, some are good, others promising. Harold Turner is now past his prime, though he, Helpmann and Paltenghi are brilliant in character.

The new French Ballets des Champs Elysées showed us thirty dancers, all fresh and talented. The men were noteworthy. If Roland Petit (*maître de ballet*, chief dancer and choreographer), Paul Gnatt and Jean Babilé do not kill themselves by overwork they could develop to the stature of a Massine, Youskevitch or Franklin. The most charming of their ballets is Petit's *Les Forains* to captivating music by Henri Sauguet and gay décor by Christian Bérard; the most original is *Les Amours de Jupiter* (Petit, Ibert, Hugo) which found five different, acceptable and poetical ways to