

later of the sort one admires in Henry F. Gilbert. But surely Blitzstein's many years' intimacy with good source material could have produced something more striking in the way of rapid Negro fantasy.

Burrill Phillips' *Courthouse Square* managed to convey much of the fresh, homely feeling it aimed for, though it was weighted down with pretty banal progressions in its nostalgic sections. In the shuffle a tiny, naive *Jack in the Box* by Satie, in a Milhaud orchestration (no credit given on the program), was almost lost. More familiar items continue to stand up well. Virgil Thomson's *Filling Station*, Aaron Copland's *Billy the Kid* and *Our Town*, Leonard Bernstein's "Jeremiah" *Symphony*, and the William Schuman overtures are included here. The Ravel *Piano Concerto* had a hard time exerting its usual magic, what with a sloppy performance by the orchestra and Bernstein's too brash conception of the piano part.

Donald Fuller

## SUMMER MUSIC: THE PARKS

LARGE audiences enjoyed the music offered on the Mall in Central Park this summer. It is pleasant to report that the programs arranged for the twenty-seventh season of the Goldman Band and the second annual Festival of Folk and Contemporary Music presented by Associate Committee of the League of Composers (working with the Department of Parks and this time also the Common Council for American Unity) included some music written by composers of today, and that this music was well-received. However, judging both from the amiability of the audience and the interest in up-to-the-minuteness which characterizes both Edwin Franko Goldman and the League of Composers, there might have been more contemporary music played than there was. This failing was due perhaps chiefly to the exigencies of rehearsals, in some instances of musicians newly together and for only the summer.

The League Festival began with two programs strictly limited to songs and dances of various European countries. The third night gave us American music: *Devotion* and *Cindy* by Harry Wilson, *The Mother's Vow* by Arthur Farwell, a *Psalm* by Normand Lockwood, *Prayer of the Slavic Children* by W. Golde, *Alleluia* by Randall Thompson, and *The Soul of America* by T. C. Whitmer (all sung by the Teachers College Chorus under the direction of Harry Wilson). There were also Negro spirituals, performed by the Hall Johnson Choir, and squares and rounds danced by the Don Chambers Group. The fourth and last program, played

by the Juilliard Summer Orchestra under the direction of Peter Wilhouski, was mixed as to musical origin: a Haydn movement and several contradances by Beethoven preceded a performance of *Roots in the Earth* by Paul Bowles, *Melpomene*, an overture by G. W. Chadwick, Wayne Barlow's *Sarabande*, the *Country Dance* from a *Village Suite* by Douglas Moore, and an excerpt from Howard Hanson's *Romantic Symphony*.

Mr. Wilhouski often showed a clear sense of the grace and meaning in the music he played but he suffers alarmingly from what might be called "excerptitis." Though affected somewhat by this treatment, the Bowles work still managed to interest and excite me. Written for wind instruments and no strings but the double bass, a piano and augmented percussion, the piece suggests that Bowles could very advantageously write for the band. The music is simple and clearly etched, beginnings and ends of phrases being undisturbed by thick effects. The audience thoroughly enjoyed the work, especially those parts which seemed to take humorously the Central American folk material from which the composition (originally a film accompaniment) stems.

Robert L. Sanders' *Symphony in B $\flat$  for Concert Band* was performed early in the Goldman Band's season. This is an ambitious work in three movements. It is not always clear exactly what is going on, the music being contrived, for the most part, in an involute manner. If the ideas were more frequently presented straight, rather than pretentiously developed, they might give more pleasure. The work was conducted by the composer, without stint, bringing to mind the manner of Leonard Bernstein.

Henry Cowell's *Hymn and Fuguing Tune* was given its premiere by Mr. Goldman. The Cowell work is a straightforward piece with an effect of great sincerity. The Hymn, tantalizingly short, sings beautifully. I think the fine quality is achieved, in part, by remaining with the scale on which the music is based, instead of getting involved, as Mr. Sanders did, with the expressive interval.

The Band played Pasquale Mondrone's *Danza Campestra* and his *Pastel March*, which, at their first performance, pleased me so much that I made a point of hearing them a second time. Unfortunately, in spite of the charming tunes and simplicity of treatment which both pieces share, they seemed less pleasing than before. I did not at first realize the reason; for the first performance I was at the rear of the auditory space (near the ice-cream carts) and the music sounded like some merry-go-round in heaven; the second time I was on top of the music in the area

reserved for the critics. The first hearing had emphasized the delicacy inherent in the music; the second, close hearing was simply too loud to be delicate. It was also too harsh; this was probably due not entirely to amplitude, but to the fact that the Goldman Band plays in a concrete shell rather than in a sympathetic oldfashioned wooden one. This loudness and harshness is not objectionable in the case of the standard band repertory (e.g., Goldman's *Hail Brooklyn*), for it mobilizes the attendant ears, and the sedentary character of both band and audience is, for the music's duration, disregarded.

John Cage

## MRS. COOLIDGE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

THIS is an account of Mrs. Coolidge's eightieth Birthday Party. It lasted three days and ended in the presentation, by Archibald Mac Leish, of an impressive document expressing the gratitude of the President, the Cabinet and the Library of Congress for the gift of the Coolidge Auditorium and for the endowment to sustain it and to commission new works and to send the best chamber music into the farthest ends of our country, and for Mrs. Coolidge's enlightened and persevering care.

Saturday evening, October 28, offered no new works — two Bach sonatas, two Mozart sonatas, and a *concert, Ritratto dell'Amore*, by Couperin — but it did offer the technical highspot of the festival, with Ralph Kirkpatrick at the harpsichord, and Alexander Schneider, lately first violin of the Budapest quartet. Their ensemble was impeccable.

The afternoon of the second day brought forth a Mozart quintet (D major) — played by the Stradivarius Quartet and Mr. Albert S. Coolidge — and three works for two pianos, played by Messrs. Dougherty and Ruzicka. That noble work, Schubert's *Fantasy in F minor*, Opus 103, was played with transparent tone, solid rhythm, and the proper fervor.

There followed two "first performances in public:" Stravinsky's *Sonata* and Rieti's *Second Avenue Waltzes*. These last were the original compositions which Rieti turned into his ballet *Waltz Academy*, and they have about the intrinsic merit of a Godowsky arrangement of Mascagni. They slip by, like sulphur and molasses, in the trappings of three-four time; undoubtedly fun to play; totally without that decent vulgarity which alone would make them tolerable.

Whereas these waltzes were contrived, Stravinsky's *Sonata* was composed (1943-44) in the master's most knowing and searching style of