

course, which leaves out of account the most characteristic parts of the novel with its long philosophical, meditative and scientific digressions). The music sounded its Americana note in the paraphrase of a New England hymn; the program added local color by a dedication to Charles Ives. The score was stern, vigorous and highly effective in the illustrative style, utilizing all the panoply of radio "background" effects – the roar of the sea, thunder, calm, etc. These punctuated choral shouts and recitatives. No great effort was made to work out big numbers, except in a few instances. The style was largely Honegger in the noisy places, Delius in the quiet ones. Since both novel and movie lead up to the great scene of Ahab's chase and fight with the whale, I expected Hermann would follow suit, especially as all the preceding numbers were either broken up or lightly orchestrated and seemed to demand a grand, vigorous finale, perhaps a big sea-terror number combining the best features of *Horace Victorieux* with *Sea Drift*. This need for a long overwhelming piece was not satisfied by a few violent exclamations and a choral scream. As for the music itself, effectiveness appeared the main consideration; style, depth, originality, invention, all the qualities of concert music were subordinated thereto.

However I must say that I enjoyed *Moby Dick* more than Prokofieff's *Cello Concerto* played by Piatagorsky at a Boston Symphony concert. This latter, lacking in the same qualities, was also pretty ineffective, so let's forget it.

Elliott Carter

MORE ON THE SPRING SEASON

THE last two weeks of April brought to hearing more new music than can be discussed within the limits of this review. Taking the events in chronological order, the first was the Fifth Annual Three-Choir Festival given at Temple Emanu-el under the leadership of Lazare Saminsky. These festivals have become known as a presentation medium for new choral works that might otherwise have long to wait. The opening program well bore out that reputation; it consisted largely of first-times. There was a short but interesting canon by Armando Carvajal of Chile, then an Ave Maria by Honorio Siccardi of Buenos Aires, an example of "medieval" style which as such offered little contemporary interest, and, still of South America, *Quenas*, a song for voice, lute and organ by Andres Sas of Peru,

which though charming, appeared rather slight. There was also a repeat of Elliott Carter's *Heart Not so Heavy as Mine*.

The more impressive works, by Saminsky, Jacopo Ficher of Buenos Aires, Bernard Rogers and Norman Lockwood came at the end. Ficher's prelude to the choral ballet, *Melchor*, was effective but hardly important. More interesting was the premiere of Lockwood's setting of *Psalm 123*, which has a free flowing counterpoint and rhythmic variety not always found in choral music. Mr. Saminsky's very skillful use of his medium was apparent in the setting for chorus, of Edward Arlington Robinson's poem *Luke Havergal*. It is one of the composer's most recent works and was one of the most effective on the program. An excerpt from Bernard Rogers' *Exodus* came at the end, a forceful movement although the material is not especially distinguished.

The Second Young Composers' Concert of the League of Composers took place on April 21st. It was interesting and generally well presented. With the exception of Conlon Nancarrow, the composers showed a disquieting tendency toward ultra-conservatism, but in spite of this, managed to keep most of their music reasonably alive. Burrill Phillips' *String Quartet* was well written and, if conventional, never dull. The first and third movements seemed to be the best on first hearing, although the former ended with disconcerting abruptness. The *String Quartet Number 4* by Richard A. S. Arnell, a young Englishman, while thoroughly imbued with romanticism and completely conventional, was well made; the third movement, a *Siciliana*, was the most expressive. David Van Vactor was represented by a *Suite for Two Flutes*, an expert piece, but much too long; its witty first movement was the most interesting, the material of the rest commonplace. The *Trio* for flute, viola and bassoon by John Colman is fluent, impersonal music, containing some good counterpoint.

The most promising work on the program was Nancarrow's *Septet*. Nancarrow does not share the present timidity about dissonance and, although the work is somewhat over-written and occasionally seems confused, these are an experimenter's mistakes which experience will doubtless correct. It was not too well played; a better performance might do much to clarify it. Contemporary composers, especially those not yet too well known, frequently have their works distorted by insufficient preparation.

III

On April 24th the League presented an evening in honor of Bela Bartok. Unfortunately, the program was made up chiefly of familiar music.

It would seem to have been the proper time and place to hear some of those recent works which are virtually unknown here. The first offering, *Quartet Number 1*, is to my mind the least interesting of the composer's five pieces in that medium; its rhapsodic character and considerable length were accentuated by the Philharmonic String Quartet. *Five Settings of Hungarian Folksongs* followed. Bartok's skill in this field has long been recognized and these were well chosen examples well sung by the contralto Enid Szanthy.

The only music on the program new to New York were the selections from *Mikrokosmos*, the collection of piano pieces designed to be used for instruction. Four of the eight performed were of outstanding interest: *Free Variation*, *From The Diary Of A Fly*, *Unisono* and *Ostinato*. All were brief and of varying degrees of difficulty for the listener as for the performer. The four others were *Minor Seconds and Major Sevenths*, which was a little too determinedly what it set out to be; *Syncopation*; *Bagpipe Music* and *On the Bali Island*, which leaned a little too far toward the obvious. The composer played them with his usual authority.

The *Rhapsody Number 1* for violin and piano which, performed by Szigeti and the composer, closed the program was of greater interest to me than any other item. It is more closely knit than is common in rhapsodies and although it is akin to the composer's earlier idiom, it is, nevertheless incontrovertibly Bartok. The program was thus comparatively unadventurous, but it was not therefore uninteresting or unimportant. That could not be true of any evening devoted to the works of Bartok. As in the case of Schönberg, too much lip-service has been given his reputation, too little of his music has actually been performed.

The important series of Contemporary Concerts organized and presented by Mark Brunswick, Roger Sessions and Edward Steuermann, came to a close, for this season, on Friday evening, April 26th. The program opened with the *Quintet for Piano and Strings* by Roy Harris. This is one of the more popular of the composer's chamber music works and has been presented some half a dozen times in New York City. It received one of the best performances I have heard, with Johanna Harris, who always plays this composition with great eloquence, at the piano, assisted by the Galimir Quartet.

Five songs by Hector Berlioz with Ivan Ivantzoff singing followed. At least three of these — *Absence*, *Au Cimetière* and *L'Ile Inconnue* proved to be music of far greater consequence than one expects from this composer.

What may have been an American first performance, and what was certainly an important one, brought the program to a close — Schönberg's *Suite for Piano, String Quartet, Eb Clarinet, Clarinet and Bass Clarinet*, Opus 29. It is impossible to completely grasp a work of this nature at one hearing. At best only first impressions can be registered. These were, briefly, that the *Ouverture*, while interesting, was overlong for the material and occasionally, for short passages, curiously ineffective. The second movement *Tanzschritte*, likewise did not carry quite full conviction, but from that point, the work was of outstanding merit. The *Thema mit Variationen* (on *Annchen von Tharau*) was incontestable evidence of the composer's mastery of the form. A high degree of inspiration made itself felt in this movement, as also in the last, the *Gigue*. This latter had an unexpected scintillant charm. The scoring of the suite is transparent and this presents one difficulty to the listener. Any real sonority or sense of tonal mass, is, of course, precluded; the clarinets tend to be isolated from the ensemble. This might not matter were it not for the frequent employment of the somewhat flatulent low tones of the bass clarinet. When these were used, as they frequently were, with the higher register of the smaller clarinets, I found myself wishing for a basset horn to fill in the uncomfortable gap. Possibly the difficulty would adjust itself once the ear had become more accustomed to the idiom.

The work deserves careful analysis and evaluation; even one hearing leaves the conviction that it is of outstanding importance. Only unforgivable indifference on the part of performers and public allows so many works of Schönberg to go so long unheard. The performance was excellent.

The Orchestrette Classique, conducted by Fredrique Petrides, devoted nearly half its April 29th concert to contemporary music. Whether John Barbiroli's *Concerto for Oboe and Strings on Themes of Pergolesi* comes under the head of new music is a question I'll leave to Mr. Barbiroli. The seven familiar *Roumanian Folk Dances* of Bela Bartok followed. If most of these were not too brief to be entirely effective in orchestral performance, they would, doubtless, soon take their place with Brahms' *Hungarian* and Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*. The "event" of the evening was the premiere of Paul Creston's especially commissioned *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra*, Opus 21, announced as the first work "in serious form" for this instrument. About as good as might be expected under the circumstances, it proved conclusively that no one can write a "serious" work for the mar-

imba. Hearing that instrument's treacley tone irresistibly calls to mind Hawaiian nights under a Hollywood spotlight.

Harrison Kerr

SOUTH AMERICA ONCE MORE

LEAVING Carnegie Hall after the Schola Cantorum's South American evening, one had the feeling of emerging from a jungle of tangled vines and fantastic foliage. Here was a confusion of bright and unbelievable birds, poisonous flowers, muffled cries, wild chatterings, hints of sinister animal life. The atmosphere, torrid and suffocating, was too much for many people. Undoubtedly it was a fascinating, exotic experience. Extravagant and original orchestral colors were lavishly applied, melodic contours derived from Gregorian modes, pentatonic scales, Portuguese folk-song, Indian incantations, even animal and bird-calls.

Approaching each piece separately one finds the result less exhilarating. More control, concentration and stronger structure are needed. The *Sinfonía Bíblica* of Juan José Castro began promisingly; it was severe and archaic in mood, with a beautiful orchestral sonority; long before the work was finished it grew weak, over-dramatic, automatically pictorial. The chorus receded to the background to give way to the orchestra, which apparently had little further aim than to slavishly illustrate the text with brilliant but unpredictable episodes. The *Pater Noster* of Burle Marx, a symphonic essay in the Gregorian style, was far better organized. The choral writing, which included a boys' chorus, was beautifully done. Many found this work false and operatic, but in spite of the rich and at times over-sweet quality I myself enjoyed the music for its finish, the unfamiliar charm of the afore-mentioned chorus and the ecclesiastical modes.

Maracatu de Chico Rei, by Francisco Mignone, was a suite of gay and festive episodes from a work recounting the history of an African tribe shipped to Brazil as slaves and finally liberated. Here for much of the time, the orchestra seemed to have the percussive jitters and triangle, xylophone and company created a glitter not inappropriate to the naive, and rather pleasant noisiness of the music.

But it was the *Choros No. 10* of Villa-Lobos which made one definitely conscious that something vital was lacking, some real point of gravity. Let us see what happens in this work. The opening and following section for orchestra alone are really marvelous, new, strange, evocative. The second part especially, with its brooding, animal mutterings, is like nothing one