

Howard Hanson conducted the orchestra in his *Fourth Symphony*. It is written of course in broad outlines with sombre harmonies, emotional outbursts and lush lyric spots familiar to all of us. Nevertheless, the symphony is sturdier and more direct than his former works in that medium. William Kapell's stirring performance of the Khatchaturian *Piano Concerto* was so dynamic and convincing that the concerto held together despite its many weaknesses. This post-graduate Borodin work is a long venture into improvisational Caucasian folk-lore and is packed with stock tricks, regularly interrupting cadenzas and romantic interludes; and the lavish subject material is almost strong enough to bear the repetitive thematic development given it. The revised *Symphony in One Movement* of Samuel Barber still has the kind of doubling in its scoring that deadens the bolder passages when they should have been projected. The opening is restless rather than forceful and calms down to a slow oboe stretch that lacks the lyric qualities promised. Two faults that Barber has since fought off are in full evidence throughout the scherzo section. He chances upon an attractive passage and presumes that his listening guests would like copies in their favorite colors; thus abruptly he spans the gaps between sections and disconcerts his critical followers. Behind these weaknesses is a wealth of creative talent, recently freed in the *Second Essay*.

The Philadelphia Orchestra was responsible for three discouraging encounters that really threw us off balance, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Overture, "The Taming of the Shrew,"* Dmitri Kabalevsky's *Overture to "Colas Breugnon, Master of Clamecy"* and Shostakovich's *"Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" - Three Fragments*. The Castelnuovo-Tedesco music offered no reason why the composer should have accepted the task of setting Shakespeare. The bright colors could not hide the shameful, falling chromatic droolings nor the saccharine fill-in pads. The Kabalevsky overture was better, but as yet the composer has not rid himself of those romantic sequences that bring a piece to a stop. It is otherwise rhythmically gay and humorous. Quinto Maganini is responsible for the dully chosen fragments from the Shostakovich opera, a poor selection that gives us nothing but the vulgar residue of the large stage work.

Vincent Persichetti

AMERICANA, NEW AND OLD

THE only "first performances anywhere" in recent weeks in Cleveland were the two prize winning works in the Cleveland Orchestra's

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Prize Competition. Nicolai Lopatnikoff's *Opus Sinfonicum*, which won the \$1,000 award, proved to be a scholarly and expertly contrived piece for orchestra. Unfortunately, it was no more than that. Mr. Lopatnikoff stated that it represented his endeavor to create a shorter work of symphonic content and texture that would be free in formal treatment – "a kind of abstract symphonic poem without program." The introduction contained some promising ideas, but the first allegro was too brief to develop its mood. This brevity was a failing in the quiet middle section and also in the following development. The work at no time grew into anything more arresting or moving than dry and accomplished pattern-making.

David Holden's *Rhapsody, Say Paw*, which received honorable mention in the contest, had much more to recommend it. Mr. Holden had chosen three charming Kentucky mountain folk-tunes and treated them with subtlety and originality. The rhapsody is well scored, and if it showed some immaturity, it also exhibited promise.

Among the other works heard at the Cleveland Orchestra concerts for the first time was the symphonic poem, *Four Churches*, by the Brazilian composer, Francisco Mignone. This bloated imitation of Respighi's Roman trilogy relied solely upon orchestral color for its effects. In musical ideas, it was undistinguished, and in development almost non-existent. So far our pre-occupation with the music of South America has contributed surprisingly few first class scores to the symphonic repertory. It is possible that conductors have not yet fully examined the possibilities, but yet one wonders about the accomplishment of our symphonic good neighbors.

Among the other works that Eric Leinsdorf introduced to Cleveland before his induction into the Army was the remarkably fine *Second Symphony* of Randall Thompson, which long ago established itself as part of the "American Repertory," and the effective and serviceable *Fantasia on Traditional Christmas Carols* by Vaughan Williams.

Rudolph Ringwall, the Orchestra's associate conductor, revived the stunning *Suite in E major for String Orchestra* of Arthur Foote, both in Cleveland and on a radio program which also included two other twentieth century works – Shostakovitch's masterpiece, his *First Symphony*, and the *Introduction and Wedding March* from that remarkable forerunner of the early Stravinsky, *The Golden Cockerel*. It is hard to realize that the miraculous dances from Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*, which Dr. Ringwall also restored to the active repertory of the Cleveland Or-

chestra, have become classics before even reaching the age of twenty-five.

Eugene Goossens as guest conductor in Cleveland produced the two middle movements of his *First Symphony*, conducting this well-made, even exciting music with great distinction. For all his skill, however, the slow movement refused to grow into a concentrated utterance. The scherzo had an agreeable wit and brilliance, a good omen for the first and last movements, which I have not yet heard. Mr. Goossens also conducted three of the series of fanfares he commissioned for use at the Cincinnati concerts, on a Cleveland Orchestra broadcast. The fanfares for *Paratroopers* and *The Common Man*, by Paul Creston and Aaron Copland, respectively, both proved arresting music. Mr. Goossens' own *Fanfare for the Merchant Marine* was weakened by its attempt to be over-picturesque.

Robert Russell Bennett's "*Four Freedoms*" *Symphony* has received such cordial panning in these pages that I need not add further commentary on its tasteless pomposities, which, after all, have no less to do with President Roosevelt's formulation of the "four essential human freedoms" than Norman Rockwell's obvious paintings that inspired them. Mr. Bennett's creative ability has not yet caught up with his great skill as an orchestrator and arranger.

George H. Lovett Smith

PISTON'S NEW SYMPHONY IN WASHINGTON

PRIORITY among Washington premieres – all of them American – presented by Hans Kindler with the National Orchestra this season belongs to Walter Piston's *Symphony Number 2* performed March 5. The time-gap between this work and the symphony first introduced by the Boston Orchestra in 1938 proves Piston's consistency in placing quality before quantity. The new work, in three movements, maintains his strict standard of neoclassic style. It has a masterly and logical catenation of ideas. The writing is terse and avoids ambient phrases that merely adorn. Every stroke of instrumentation makes its point. There are some pages of dissonant counterpoint; they are essential to the exposition of themes. Those who consider Piston more academic than emotional will be pleasantly surprised by the marked lyrical feeling in the adagio movement. The symphony is highly vitalized, lucid and persuasive, and was warmly applauded by the public.

Another premiere on Dr. Kindler's list was John Alden Carpenter's