

art and might even quiet the audience down so one could hear what goes on up on the stage. I have an old-fashioned desire to listen to the music being played. In short, let's have concerts, not club meetings.

Muriel Kerr played, at Town Hall, the *Piano Sonata Number Two* by Anis Fuleihan. It was the strangest combination of musical events; a slight impressionistic touch, much Liszt, and the several "wrong notes" of neo-classicism all put together. I was able to hear the form of each movement clearly, however; and this saved it from completely falling apart. All-in-all it seemed like a bicycle ride through musical lands of the near-present. Four piano works of Theodore Chanler played by John Kirkpatrick at Times Hall I found very lovely, *Prelude and Fugue in D Major*, *Prelude In C Minor*, and *Toccata in E \flat Major*. These works were written at various times but all congeal to give a similar and stable impression of a sense of style. Each was clear and clean and imaginative. They are obviously the result of intense thinking about the polyphonic type of organization, and though absolutely uncompromising are beautiful achievements. What most impressed me was the refinement of detail. Each voice proceeds in a logical but unexpected manner; and for a change, the whole tessitura of the pieces lies rather high. I don't know whether or not it was due to Kirkpatrick's seraphic performance but I was sure that this was precisely what would happen if one should turn the crank on Paul Klee's fabulous *Twittering Machine*.

Lou Harrison

AMERICAN SYMPHONISTS IN LOS ANGELES

WITHIN the interval of a month, Los Angeles audiences have made the acquaintance of three American symphonies, which is something of a record for this community. Wallenstein played Paul Creston's *First* and Robert Russell Bennett's *Four Freedoms*; Janssen gave a hearing to William Schuman's *Third*. None of the three is a completely satisfying work, and all are marred by some degree of pretentiousness. There is pretension in Bennett's assumption that the framework of a stylish manner can encompass the idealism of the *Four Freedoms*, even when that idealism has been diluted and provincialized in the Norman Rockwell paintings which served as inspiration. There is pretension in Schuman's noisy insistence that we watch him contemplate himself in an epic role for four solemn movements. And there is pretension, though of a more subtle variety, in Creston's use of the symphony as a vehicle for ideas which lack the sub-

stance to fill the form.

By virtue of its bulk and austerity the Schuman work made the deepest mark. Its best assets are earnestness and energy; its greatest fault incompleteness, both structural and emotional, which I can explain for myself only by referring it to the preoccupation with a single aspect of the modern composer's craft – counterpoint, or more exactly, fugue, with its manipulation of but one theme. This is not to say that Schuman lacks skill as a contrapuntalist; on the contrary, he has an unusual competence, even facility. His first movement is acceptable (however unorthodox) as a passacaglia, his second movement is quite admirable as a fugue, etc. But the four movements together do not do for me what other symphonies do: they do not break through the frame of formal structure to evoke the diversity of emotion-patterns evoked by all good symphonies from Haydn's and Mozart's to Hindemith's and Stravinsky's. I am not referring to the absence of a sonata movement, for if a symphony is anything, it is elastic and tough, which attributes account for its survival as an art-form. I suspect that Schuman himself sensed the poverty of emotion resulting from the essential unity of thematic material in each of his movements and therefore linked them into two groups of two for the sake of the needed contrast. There is even a suggestion of cyclical form in the way the third and last movements are linked thematically, and in the repetition of a bit of first movement material toward the end of the whole work. (This last is more apparent to the eye than to the ear and escaped me completely in performance.) But even this is not adequately remedial. There remains a basic structural incompleteness: we have the façade of a symphony – the four-movement scheme, without any of the tensions and oppositions and conflict that we are entitled to expect.

Bennett's symphony sounded much better in the concert-hall than it did on the air. I am not at all tempted to dispose of it with the usual reference to slick orchestration, especially after observing the clumsiness of some of Creston's scoring and the naivete of much of Schuman's. What I regret most in Bennett's music is its constant wittiness, as if it were addressing itself mainly to the smart set. It covers every feeling with a bon mot, and one senses that he is missing something if he has not read the last issue of *The New Yorker*. Surely Bennett's talents and skill were intended for something more serious than this.

Creston's symphony stands somewhere between Schuman's and Bennett's. It is abundant in neither the virtues nor the faults of the others.

Except during the vigorous opening bars, one feels that he has heard all this before and consequently enjoys the pleasures of recognition. But it is a lukewarm experience, neither very stimulating nor rewarding.

Both Wallenstein and Janssen have played Kabalevsky's *Overture to Colas Breugnon*, which is more consideration than the piece merits on other than diplomatic grounds. An overture by Charles Jones was far more interesting. Gail Kubik's nine-minute score for *Paratroops*, an OWI short, made surprisingly good concert music (Janssen). It has continuity and shape, and is therefore valid even without the film. Finally, there has been a deluge of Villa-Lobos, the second and fifth of the *Bachianas*, *Uirapuru* and *Choros, Number Ten*. All were delightful in their evocation of the exotic side of Brazilian life. It is worth noting, I think, that once one has credited Villa-Lobos with a rather savage talent, and commented appreciatively on the fantastic, brilliant and tropical qualities of his music, there is surprisingly little to say. As a personality he is original, attractive, charming. But as an artist, as a conscious craftsman who seeks to cast his materials into enduring and meaningful forms, he is considerably less important to us. For if art implies anything, it implies a certain discipline; and discipline is a quality quite foreign to this music. We are happier for having heard it, but not, I think, any wiser.

Lawrence Morton

BOSTON GOES ALL OUT FOR PREMIERES

THE Boston Symphony Orchestra season has thus far been attended by a remarkable procession of novel music, much of it in first performance. Of the ten programs given before Christmas, only three have failed to contain a new work by a contemporary. Americans have fared well, five of the nine unfamiliar compositions having been written by natives. The signatories of two others — Nicolai Berezowsky and Lukas Foss — fit more readily into this category than into that of foreigners, since they have spent their formative years amid American influences.

Of the two aliens, both Russian, Stravinsky, living now in Hollywood, contributed a beautiful, characteristic, unmannered *Ode*; while the other, Aram Khatchaturian, writing in the Soviet Union, furnished a *Piano Concerto* combining the best and worst elements of the Russian school of the last century, as it might have been done by a commercial composer for the movies. Obviously an audience piece, the concerto is already making the rounds elsewhere.