

prepared for orchestra by the composer at the suggestion of Serge Koussevitzky. The orchestration was lavish but quite appropriate. And the piece was good and fat and spirited, as a march ought to be.

Howard Hanson led the first public performances of his *Fourth Symphony*. The titles of the four movements, Kyrie, Requiescat, Dies Irae and Lux Aeterna, scarcely fulfilled the expected associations with the ritual. More pertinently, perhaps, the music is based on an esthetic which seems to me quite outmoded and which has been more forcefully presented by Sibelius. Whether or not this esthetic represents a sincere approach is not here in question. What I do question is the worth-whileness of this approach in the concert-hall in the face of the powerful competition it gets in, let us say, the movies.

Gardner Read's *Second Symphony*, the first performances of which were presented under the direction of the composer, has also more than a modicum of this esthetic. But there is relief in the form of terrific energy, explosive in character, so that, despite the sombre quality of some of the music, it has an up-to-date, present-day character.

It remains to make mention of an essay by Lukas Foss. *Prairie* is an orchestral piece built on themes from his cantata of the same name. The themes are good, the workmanship talented, if a little immature. A genuine lyrical talent was at work.

Moses Smith

PHILADELPHIA TAKES A FLIER

FANFARED by a very pointed and rousing lecture by Roy Harris at the Art Alliance, the Philadelphia season opened with an incitation that jolted some music lovers and patrons out of their complacency. Before the newly convinced "pioneers" could get to their feet and have their fling at bringing more music of our time to the attention of the "masterwork" saturates, the city was swamped without warning by a flood of more contemporary music than it has heard in many a year.

Under the direction of Eugene Ormandy and the pressure of a United Nations Series, the Philadelphia Orchestra has offered Prokofiev's extremely diverting *Scythian Suite*, Leo Weiner's expertly contrived *Divertimento for String Orchestra*, Harl McDonald's feeble and shallow *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*, Ibert's *Escapes*; and the organization's first performances of the strikingly flamboyant *Suite Provençale* of Milhaud, Vaughan Williams' *Concerto Accademico for Violin and String Orchestra*.

Martinu's *Memorial to Lidice*, Walton's *Façade*, Berezowsky's *Symphony Number 1*, Bernard Hermann's *Suite* from "*The Devil and Daniel Webster*," Oscar Levant's *Piano Concerto in One Movement*, Robert Russell Bennett's symphony, *The Four Freedoms*, Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Opus 11, and Copland's *Billy the Kid*.

The *Suite from the Ballet "Billy the Kid"* should certainly have been given its first performance here before 1943. The reception by the uncompromising Friday afternoon audience and the lively Youth Concert crowd was one of deep admiration and acclaim.

It is surprising to find that his usual conflicts of style and vagueness of form are absent from the 1929 *Symphony* of Nicolai Berezowsky. There is something vital and healthy about the work. The unusual treatment of the first theme, announced by the flute, reveals a wealth of invention and imagination, and the composer's fresh melodic gift is evidenced in the third theme as stated in the adagio section. Here the line is never lost, for it excludes all intruding and unrelated counter material. Good craftsmanship and scoring technic are fully utilized through the development-scherzo section. There is a feeling of expectancy in most of the symphony that never really reaches its fulfillment. Had the climaxes been held longer this weakness might have been averted.

In "*The Devil and Daniel Webster*" *Suite* Bernard Hermann displayed his skill as conductor and clever orchestrator. The work employs folk tunes without treating them as the usual succession of unrelated episodes, and the result is a fresh and compact set of pieces that should be played often.

The Levant *Piano Concerto* wanders aimlessly, and the pretentious Bennett four movement affair is obvious and stale. In the Barber *Adagio for Strings* there is real mood and restraint, and a sincerity of expression.

Two disappointing world premieres were given, the Martinu *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* and Paul Hindemith's ballet overture, *Cupid and Psyche*. The deft synchronization and expert timing of the Luboshutz-Nemenoff team completely exposed the Martinu work. The writing is so fluent and massive that one cannot get far enough away from the swiftly moving block of sound to have a glimpse of any general direction. The Hindemith *Ballet Overture* is so brief that it ends before one can sort it out. The antiphonal use of full brass against solo violin is typical of the empty stage feeling of the composition.

Philadelphia is fortunate in having the straightforward and active Twentieth Century Music Group which is the most progressive organiza-

tion in the field of chamber music this city has yet produced. Under its leader, Madame Renée Longy Miquelle, the organization, hardly five years of age, has maintained a steady pace against difficult odds.

The first concert this year included Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Cello*, Bloch's sure-fire *Piano Quintet*, Hindemith's *Sonata for English Horn and Piano* and Copland's *Sextet for Clarinet, String Quartet and Piano*. The seldom heard Ravel *Sonata* was written with virtuosi in mind. The Allegro is closely knit, with an abundance of melodic flow, and is followed by the *Tres Vif* which displays a profusion of ingenious technical devices. The Lent movement is one of the most inventive and convincing contrapuntal forms to come from his pen, and fresh formal ideas are in the Finale. This work seems to hold the very essence of Ravel's entire art. The Hindemith *English Horn Sonata* is good Hindemith, ranking with the *Four-Hand Sonata* – and that's high. The Copland one-movement work was written in 1933 as the *Short Symphony*, and in 1937 as the *Sextet*. It is an extremely difficult piece for a chamber group to tackle, nevertheless the rhythmic complexities leave the listener undisturbed and an excitingly new and natural drive comes to the fore. The steel-like first section is lashingly percussive, intense and polished. The tremendous suspense in the slow middle part is held until the last section breaks in, forging ahead with cyclical thematic play incorporating a synthesis of jazz. Inventive rhythmic writing is supported by a fluid harmony; and the piece, unlike some other Copland music, never pauses to insist on relentless motive repetition.

The first two concerts of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association of American Composers and Conductors gave us the Samuel Barber *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, a work that held promise of really important things to come. Even though the sure-footed rhythmic personality of the first movement towers over the loosely constructed second and third, a certain romantic flow holds the sonata together. Mabel Daniels' *Pastoral Ode for Flute and Strings* starts out as a straightforward piece but proceeds to stretch until it reaches a snapping point which ushers in a sluggish coda. Nevertheless, the piece has mood and some grateful flute writing. Griffes' *Piano Sonata* takes its place as one of the high points in the development of American piano literature and unfolds poetry of intense passion, free from many of the barriers that imprisoned the composer's European parallel, Scriabine. My *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano*, which places the burden upon the violinist rather than the composer, was also played.

Vincent Persichetti