

either texture or matter interesting. With the title *Accompaniment to an Imaginary Song*, this movement might find reason for being. As absolute music, hardly. But the ingenuity of his attempts to conquer the unconquerable leads one to suspect him of an inherent talent above the ordinary.

Something of the same attempt at summoning plain, unvaried, insistent moods was also to be found in the *String Quartet* of Israel Citkowitz. He was less persistent, less systematic in this than Blitzstein and he showed less technical mastery, but is also undoubtedly talented. The second *String Quartet* of the Mexican, Silvestre Revueltas, was cacophonous in the extreme, hardly stylistically unified nor technically consistent. Once more an inherently strong nature needs more skill and more judgment.

Oscar Levant's agilely rhythmed *Sonatina for Piano* was a success even though it is the first work he has ever written. He will justify watching in the future. The two embryos are Vivian Fine, with her Schönbergian *Four Polyphonic Pieces*, and Henry Brant with his *Suite for Flute and Piano*. Both are said to be about eighteen years old. Both have natural inventiveness. Both need more skill, more definiteness of purpose, more awareness of just what it is they are about.

The festival was most happy in the choice of its performers. Mrs. Ada MacLeish sings with precision and finesse, warmth and understanding. The musicianship of Messrs. Laurent and Sanroma is too well known to be the subject of repeated mention and the other interpreters were more than competent. Only the medium of such outstanding performance makes it possible to arrive at clear judgments about the music.

Alfred H. Meyer

ALL-AMERICA ON THE AIR

THAT great imagined audience which takes its music from the air has been treated by the tireless Leopold Stokowski and his valiant Philadelphians to an exhibit of modern American composing. This exhilarating parade occurred on the evening of April 2, when listeners-in via the almighty "mike" were invited to consider works by the late Charles Tomlinson Griffes

and the living Henry Cowell, John Powell, Aaron Copland, Louis Gruenberg, Arcady Dubensky, Russell Bennett, and Walter Piston. The broadcast proceeded without casualties: no mountain came to Mahomet, nor were other alarming signs and portents recorded, though it is true that a thick darkness covered much of the land. Thus millions who had supposed that American music of today was either jazz or else something confided to them by the crooners had a real chance to find out what is afoot in the tonal life of our manifold people.

As Griffes' *Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan* reared its iridescent structure upon the boundless foundation of silence, the hearer occupying the inevitable easy-chair could not help reaffirming his belief that poor Griffes, though he died untimely, had left behind one orchestral work of substance and dimension, which stands out definitely today as a monument of modern American music. True, Griffes has been dead for twelve years; still the *Pleasure-Dome* is distinctly of our century in its idiom (the prevailing influences are easy to trace), and it is a work for whose facture no apologies need be made or indulgences asked. As Loge says of the rainbow bridge, though it looks lightly built, it is fast and firm. Indeed, it is very palpably there, and that is a quality which in a composition by an American particularly needs stressing. Oftener than is comfortable our writers of music, for all their equipment and good will, have somehow missed doing what they have set out to do. If a European composer aims to write an opera, he writes an opera. It may be a poor one, but at least it is not a tin Lizzie or a corn-cob pipe. Griffes, saturated with Coleridge's fragment, composed a tone poem that has imagination, color, atmosphere, beauty in the accepted sense.

After the *Pleasure-Dome*, which may bravely rank as a young American classic, we were treated to a *Synchrony* in which that able experimenter, Henry Cowell, first revealed separately his thematic strands and then combined them. Mr. Cowell always wins our respect through his keen intellectuality and never fails to be interesting. Some of us on this occasion got sly amusement from the fact that the distinguished modernist had not forgotten his *Tristan*. Mr. Powell's pleasant *Virginia Reel*, the next disclosure, need not detain us. There followed Mr. Copland's

Music for The Theatre. Few modern American pieces have been played so often, and yet each time I hear it I like it better. For the purpose of the radio it might be somewhat curtailed, but not at the cost of those pages of a poignant, wistful, searching beauty which to me are more typical and more treasurous than the pages redolent of fox trot or blues.

Mr. Gruenberg, in his turn, was represented by a series of character sketches entitled *Nine Colors*. As they came through to the listener in the easy-chair it seemed as though, in spite of their cleverness and technical accomplishment, they were somewhat under-developed. I also felt here the lack of a program, or at least of explicit clues. Distinctly a hit of the evening was the *Atonal Fugue* for eighteen violins playing in nine groups of two each, by Mr. Dubensky, for this spirited and solidly written work proved to be particularly effective as a radio piece. The third part of Mr. Bennett's *Abraham Lincoln* symphony, entitled *His Humor*, unlike Mr. Gruenberg's pieces, suffered from too much clue. I believe I should have enjoyed it more as an anonymous symphonic scherzo without the attribution to the much debated Lincoln. A suite in three parts by Mr. Piston, the first swift and vigorous, the second a reverie, the last a thoroughly modern fugue, rounded out the exhibit in representative fashion.

The whole affair may unhesitatingly be described as eminently successful, thanks both to the choice of the works themselves and to the adroitness of the broadcast.

Pitts Sanborn

CHICAGO'S SEASON IN REVIEW

DURING the musical season 1931-1932 in Chicago, the contemporary works performed have, in a large part, impressed themselves as being made in, rather than of, the times; of looking backwards more than forwards; of revealing little that has particular artistic significance.

Among American composers, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Frederick Stock, has given excellent