

out in public. The opening movement is completely trite and ineffective with unfortunate memoirs for themes followed by carefully worked out padding. When bridge transitions are inserted for the sole purpose of avoiding a composition problem, music ceases to be written. The *Bataan* movement begins with an interesting and provocative melodic line, but the fascinating germ implications are ignored while the piece is occupied with cheap harmonic formulas. In the following *Elegy*, McDonald tries again to work up, this time by means of tremolos, and everybody shakes but nothing happens. The last piece, *Hymn of the People*, had its growth stunted early by a repeated rhythmic device which proved to be a trap.

The Twentieth Century Music Group's initial concert of its sixth season presented Jacques de Menasce, a composer with good taste and discretion. He was best in two compact and concise songs for soprano, *Tulip* and *The Grey Squirrel*. He is able to create a single and concentrated mood with no loose ends. His *Piano Sonatina Number Two* is written with a careful, neat hand and it resembles needlepoint. One misses a certain push and bite and a sense of reality in de Menasce. *Five New Songs* by Paul Hindemith are refreshing and reassuring for they are abundant in ideas and the kind of force so prevalent in his writing of a few years back. Vittorio Rieti's *Sonata in A b for Piano* is too light and surfacey for serious intentions. Rieti's playful key shifts never fit the sterner moods. He *will* write a perpetual motion finale.

Vincent Persichetti

BIG NAMES IN CHICAGO

THE autumn musical season in Chicago, while by no means neglectful of music by living composers, has been dominated chiefly by Big Names. Indeed, the fall looks in retrospect something like a Stravinsky-Hindemith-Prokofiev festival.

Stravinsky was dealt with in terms of chronological extremes. From the library shelf Désiré Defauw and the Orchestra retrieved *Fireworks*, the youthful composition which first recommended the composer to the attention of Diaghilev; at the University of Chicago Celius Dougherty and Vincent Ruzicka played the *Sonata for Two Pianos*, a work so new that it had been publicly presented only once before, at the Library of Congress festival in honor of Mrs. Coolidge. In addition, at the University of Chicago, the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* was played for the first time in

the city by Hans Lange and an orchestra of Chicago Symphony men, and Joseph Szigeti and Harry Kaufman repeated the *Duo Concertant*.

The creative history of Stravinsky's mind and the fruits of an artistic life of the severest self-criticism were thus strikingly illustrated. *Fireworks* is, to all intents and purposes, a schoolboy piece, for it shows little more than a virtuoso mastery of the external task of writing a glittering and piquant orchestral score.

The *Sonata for Two Pianos*, on the other hand, is a mature and skillfully articulated composition. It is frequently assumed that works written in relatively small proportions for a small number of performers are not as significant as longer and louder works for full orchestra. The *Sonata for Two Pianos* furnishes one more good argument against such an assumption. A theme and variations as concise, as completely unified in form and style, and as searching emotionally, as the theme and variations which crown this sonata must be considered a major achievement.

Somewhat similar observations might be made about the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*. There is about the concerto, however, a stronger rhetorical element of persuasion, which results from a more complex development of thematic materials and the employment of more extended processes of building climaxes.

The creative progress of Prokofiev, if progress it may properly be called, was brought relatively up-to-date by Joseph Szigeti and Harry Kaufman, who presented the *Sonata in D* for violin and piano at the University of Chicago two days after they had given the American premiere in Carnegie Hall. It was impossible to listen to the third piano concerto (superbly played by Alexander Uninsky with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra) without recognizing the deep musical integrity and the admirable craftsmanship of Prokofiev. But the new sonata brought chiefly disappointment to its hearers. In the endeavor to write music which will be easy to take, Prokofiev nowadays often falls, in his less inspired moments, into a kind of banality which suggests that the memory of Glazounov may perhaps still be too green in Russia.

The early *Scythian Suite*, revived by Mr. Defauw in a loudly effective performance, is, however, still a work of lusty vitality, and the *Classical Symphony* does not fade with the passing of time. The *String Quartet*, played at the University of Chicago by The Pro Arte Quartet of the University of Wisconsin, remains an ingratiating work, though slight in stature.

Hindemith's *Sonata for Two Pianos*, also played by Dougherty and

Ruzicka, is a hard nut to crack. It shows two poles of its composer's musical thinking: The major movements are elaborated with such relentless determination to set aside all polyphonic obstacles that even the *Ludus Tonalis*, in comparison, almost sounds like a Hanan finger exercise; yet the lyric movements, smaller in scope and less presumptuous in structural implications, are imbued with the new and almost Romantic warmth of sentiment which seems to impel the latter-day Hindemith toward passages of recitative-like impetuosity. As yet I have not been able to add the sonata up into one whole piece of music. Elsewhere in the Chicago season were heard repetitions of the noble *Mathis der Maler*, the *Overture to Cupid and Psyche*, *Ragtime* (played by Rudolph Reuter in a recital which also included a revival of Busoni's curious *Sonatine*), and the still zestful, if plainly dated, *Kammermusik Number 1* of 1922.

Early in November Samuel Barber came to the University of Chicago to conduct the Chicago premiere of his *Capricorn Concerto*. Advance fears that it might be damaged by the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*, which immediately preceded it, were effectively laid to rest. While there can be no doubt that Barber has observed closely much that Stravinsky has to show younger composers, he nevertheless invents his own themes, maintains them by his own special kind of rhythmic urgency, and orchestrates them with his own pointed economy. More than most of his contemporaries, Mr. Barber understands the difference between beginning, middle, and end. He evolves movements out of his material which are reasonable, consecutive, and cumulative, and he does not disdain to be friendly and communicative along the way.

Certainly the Barber concerto seemed more worth writing than the Jean Françaix *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra*, of which Rudolph Gans gaily performed the piano part in the same program. Granting that any adept composer has a right to be trifling if he chooses, we may still fairly ask how trifling a trifle can be before we are justified in refusing to listen to it.

A birthday celebration planned for Arnold Schönberg at the University of Chicago fell by the wayside when the composer found that his health could not permit an eastern trip, but one residual portion of the original program was retained in the substitute concert. The Pro Arte Quartet, whose first violinist is now Rudolph Kolisch, played the *Third String Quartet*. Without joining those on the bandwagon who find that the aural aspects of the work fulfil its visual promises, I can confidently

say that Mr. Kolisch and his colleagues are, beyond all comparison, the ones into whose understanding care the playing of the Schönberg quartets should be delivered henceforth.

The remaining items of the Chicago autumn may be disposed of as addenda. Rieti's somewhat stolid *Second Avenue Waltzes* were made known by Dougherty and Ruzicka before Ballet Theatre brought them along in orchestral dress. Mischa Elman played the garish Martinu *Violin Concerto*. And that is about all. Outside of Mr. Barber, American composers hopeful of recognition in the nation's second city were allowed to sulk in their tents, except when the ballet companies visited the city.

Cecil Michener Smith

CLEVELAND COMMISSIONS POEM BY STILL

THE first of three works commissioned for the Cleveland Orchestra by The Fynette H. Kulas American Composers' Fund received its premiere at a concert of The Cleveland Orchestra under Rudolph Ringwall in early December — William Grant Still's short *Poem for Orchestra*. In February we will hear the *Concerto for Orchestra* recently completed by Morton Gould, and next season a new overture of Randall Thompson.

Still's score is based on a poem by Verna Arvey which evokes a soul-sick world reborn through faith. There are three short, joined sections. The slow opening part, in the composer's own words, gives us "the desolation of the world;" the energetic second section tells of "building for the future;" and the final part suggests "an exultant spirit and a growing spiritual consciousness." The very naïveté of the program is an indication of Mr. Still's sincerity, and he has written music of originality and intensity. The idea of sub-dividing a short piece into as many as three sections, all of about equal importance, seems to me questionable. Many such works fail to make their points in each section and, as a result, in the work as a whole. Mr. Still, however, is an individual voice, and the depth of his feeling goes a long way toward making his work convincing. He is to be congratulated, too, for writing a practical work which should prove effective for opening symphony programs.

Dr. Ringwall also gave a hearing to the work of an amateur — Lionel Barrymore. His *In Memoriam* was received by the Cleveland audience as an attractive curiosity. Dr. Ringwall's other contributions included a revival of the Suite from Walter Piston's Ballet, *The Incredible Flutist*, and the first performance of *Three Songs for Orchestra* by Herbert Elwell,