

Cadman's cohorts, which had turned out in force, were at best apathetic, if not outright hostile, to the unromantic and clear-headed music of Harrison. On another evening Sol Babitz and Ingolf Dahl played the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Harold Shapero. Here an exceptional talent and a fine organizing intellect were united to create music that is excessively nervous and ungracious. Its first movement, in classical sonata form, is so completely compounded of emotional tensions that its thematic material, whether exposed, developed or recapitulated, seems never to grow, never to be presented in a new light, but to be constantly climactic. The second movement has the tempo of a slow movement but neither the repose nor the lyricism that the tempo appears to postulate. The finale seemed to me to be the best of the three movements, but I was warned by the performers that in admitting that, I acknowledged my sensitivity only to the obvious. So be it: if a certain symmetry and drive of rhythm make for intelligibility, let us not prostrate ourselves before the asymmetrical.

Lawrence Morton

## STRAVINSKY MEETS THE BOSTON CENSOR

TWO Russian composers provided first performances at concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra during the two weeks following Christmas. Local concert-goers (as well as the millions who heard the broadcasts) were reminded how strikingly the face of music has changed within relatively recent memory.

Alexander Gretchaninov, who is in his eightieth year, and whose *Missa Oecumenica* Serge Koussevitsky introduced on February 25 and 26, was scarcely expected to produce anything new or provocative though the work was completed during the past year. He has long been an established composer, known particularly for much religious music, and smaller secular works and songs which exhibit an ingratiating lyrical gift. But one was quite unprepared for the shock of this new work, the harmonic and melodic flavor of which was not even as "modern" as the language of Rimsky-Korsakov and the rest of the Five, or even, one is tempted to say, of Tchaikovsky. The vocabulary was rather that of Gounod and Liszt; it wasn't especially Russian, anyhow. Outside of that the work was not unpleasant, it was tuneful and well written as to the voices.

Stravinsky, the other Russian, who directed a program of his own music on January 14 and 15, has also been established for some time, but

what a difference! True, he's almost twenty years the junior of Gretchaninov, but the difference in the music seems to be a century wide. The entire program, as it happened, came from the later period; the *C-major Symphony*, the *Pulcinella Suite*, *Jeu de Cartes*, *Four Norwegian Moods* in first performances, and the *Circus Polka* heard for the first time in concert. The *Polka* sounded fine in its orchestral dress, and will make, as many were quick to point out, an excellent addition to the Pops repertory. So will the four *Moods*, labelled "Intrada," "Song," "Wedding Dance" and "Cortège," scored for smallish orchestra (winds mostly in twos). If they are Norwegian, it missed the ear.

But it was good to hear a whole program of Stravinsky, without the usual concession of *Petrouchka* or *Fire-Bird*, and to be made aware of the master's wonderful conciseness of statement, wonderful orchestration and other assorted virtues. It was also a little sad to realize that Stravinsky's later mode of making music, original and striking as it has been, is a dead end and is not going to survive him.

His arrangement of *The Star-spangled Banner*, which was the occasion of an incident, was played at the first of the two concerts. The orchestration is brilliant but the changes from the familiar harmony sound a little like a poor joke. All the same, it was scandalous to prevent a repetition at the broadcast concert. The eye-brow-lifting at the matinee performance was in the best Boston taste, and the nationally published account of the proceedings a little exaggerated – to employ an understatement. The entire business would have gone practically unnoticed but for this exaggeration and subsequent meddling citizenry, ignorant police officers, and supine officials of the orchestra management and the radio network.

Leonard Bernstein conducted the first local performances of his *Jeremiah* symphony on February 18 and 19. Both his conducting and his score revealed faults – the faults of youth; and they also revealed his great talent. The music itself is manifestly Jewish. And it is a pleasure to report that despite this consideration – perhaps because of it – it was a pronounced local success all around.

Martinu, whose *Second Violin Concerto* received its first performances on December 31 and January 1, with Mischa Elman as exceptional soloist, is also true to his birthright. Whether the work, in three movements and scored for an economical orchestra, is a masterpiece I have no idea. But most of it is tuneful and unrepetitious, and makes good listening. Perhaps

the most significant part of the business was that it served to bring Mischa Elman into the company of contemporary music and that, as I have indicated, he behaved very well in his new surroundings.

The only other novelty was Paul Crestor's *Pastorale* and *Tarantelle*, performed at the concerts of January 24 and 25, while Vladimir Golschmann was guest conductor. Unable to hear the performance, I can only report at second hand that the music was well received.

Moses Smith

## REVIVING HENRY F. GILBERT

AN interesting and important commentary on the progress of American music was provided in a recent San Francisco Symphony concert when Pierre Monteux presented Henry F. Gilbert's *The Dance in Place Congo* along with Morton Gould's *Spirituals for String Choir and Orchestra*.

Gilbert's tone poem created a considerable stir when Monteux played it for the first time in 1918. In the intervening years it has had very few performances, but while it is scarcely a masterpiece, it remains far and away the best American folk piece of its period.

Gilbert was a man of exceptional talent. He had a remarkably keen and perceptive knowledge of what was essential and significant in American life, but he had the misfortune to live at a time when a symphonic composer in the United States had about as much chance as a symphonic composer in Afghanistan. Consequently his list of works is very small, and *The Dance in Place Congo* is, in some spots, lopsided and confused. It is based upon four Creole tunes taken from an essay by the once-celebrated New Orleans novelist, George Washington Cable, and one is amazed to read in Gilbert's notes that he had attempted to develop this material "in the manner of Grieg or Tchaikovsky." Fortunately, much of the piece would make Grieg and Tchaikovsky writhe in their tombs. In profoundly prophetic moments Gilbert indulges in a direct, free, barbed and telling use of rhythm, a pungency of harmonic effect, and a powerful brilliance of orchestration that directly predict the contemporary American folk works of a Copland or a Chávez. After hearing *The Dance in Place Congo* one has the feeling that Gilbert would have made a great American composer if the circumstances of his life had permitted his gifts to develop as they should have developed.

In striking contrast was the little work by Gould, who, at thirty,