

three acts, *Donna Lombarda*, which won a recent contest, revealed a unique theatrical temperament among the composers, one may say the only one which has appeared in postwar Italy.

Guido Gatti

MID-SEASON IN NEW YORK

Ottorino Respighi, *Church Windows*, Walter, (Philharmonic Symphony, December 1).

More plundering from the Rimskyan orchestra; bland regurgitation, degradation of the medium as well. The pupil follows the master explicitly, but only the letter; Rimsky had taste, verve, grace. In this work color is laid on with a trowel. The brassy climaxes, sobbing English horn, mechanically recurring sumptuosity — all of it gaudy shell — when peeled off reveal precisely no music. The last movement is dedicated to San Gregorio Magno, a really apt recipient: recent research proves this to be the Gregory who invented no modes, compiled no Antiphonarium, founded no singing-school for priests. If anything, he had an actual distaste for music. He complained of the "reprehensible custom" of the choristers who spent their time in "cultivation of their voices, neglecting their office of preaching and of the distribution of alms." The logical patron-saint of Respighi's music.

Arnold Bax, *Summer Music* and *Overture to a Picaresque Comedy* (Philharmonic, November 24).

The *Overture* is the less interesting of the two works: comic in the Eulenspiegelish tradition, a reach of sorts for the generally somber Bax. But the *Summer Music* is something else. Here is one of the solidest, most unshakable of the Post-Romantics — in a state of change. Gone is the Grieg-Strauss substance. We are about to find out what Post-Romanticism really means, what reason it has for having persisted into our day, what unique content it has been nurturing all along, waiting to give it birth in its own good time, and against all fad, fashion, vogue. Horrors! We hear Debussy, the Faun, whole-tone scales, harp *glissandi* all over again!.. This is an object lesson. The Post-Romantics of 1933 advance to the same Impressionism the Post-

Romantics of 1890 advanced to. Not a single aspect is different. The diagnosis most obviously called for is one of arrested development.

Mr. Lange's selection was much better than Mr. Walter's. He performed with care and a distinct imagination works which are at least respectable. The Lopatnikoff *Symphony No. 1* (December 30) in less expert hands could easily have evaporated or disintegrated. It was given, especially in the *tuttis*, the tiny, bright-gemmed brilliance it needed. The work is successfully light, with a sound and elastic framework, and a good general air of serious workmanship. It is also too long, too thin, too much out of the teacher Toch (his modal Chinesey progressions, his quick-march tempi, his dependence upon an unceasing beat—in the plucked strings, or nods from the brass, or cheekily in the drums—giving the whole a ballet-like cast).

Ernest Bloch, *Hiver-Printemps* (same program).

Freshness and a certain urgency of delivery, in its way delightful. The idiom of the poems (composed in 1905) is naturally early Impressionism. One listens to the composer; through the idiom, almost as if it were not there. Worth doing, if only to regret a past which served as background for the recent pompous *America*, *Schelomo*, *Helvetia*.

All-Schönberg program (November 11) by the League of Composers.

Some facts appeared here which no single work could have made clear. Chiefly about Schönberg's evolution. The early music is of course Post-Wagner. But who remembered what a mine the *String Quartet*, Opus 10 was? It is disordered. But it is the work which proclaims unquestionably Schönberg's genius. Roots, seeds, directions, are in it. Introducing *Ach du Lieber Augustin* into the second movement is parody definitely in the Stravinsky esthetic—what Schönberg later called derisively the "Franco-Russian manner." One may guess that Schönberg at this point might have gone the way of the Primitives: through the satire-document-non-expression phases to the rebirth of the Classical approach. Instead, as is well-known, he proceeded to the pieces which culminated in *Pierrot Lunaire*, music of a

"revelation," going deeper into the peculiar tortured sensitivity of hyper-individualism. Thence, a need for a more rigorous, all-embracing discipline led to the cerebral, charted music of his latest period, with its *Zwölfton Reihe*, its *Zauberquadrat*, etc. The question at hand, the question raised by the new piano piece, Opus 33, and to a lesser extent by the *String Quartet*, Opus 30, (both were performed at the League's concert) is this: are these pieces to be taken as Schönberg's contribution to the new approach (there should be a better name for it than the offensive "Neo-Classicism"), and as such a manifestation (but with a widely divergent source and process) of the same impulse which produced the *Oedipus Rex*? Or is there a recurrence of the type of academic rule-making among Romantics (academic because inapposite and unavailing), to be found in the music of Mendelssohn, Brahms, Reger? ... The careers of Stravinsky and Schönberg bear an almost appalling resemblance to each other. Experiment, the "revelation," necessity. In Stravinsky, the revelation came unconsciously in the laconic *Symphonies pour Instruments à Vent*, consciously in the *Octuor* (*vide* the manifesto).

The League's December 17 concert.

Nabokoff's *Goeur de Don Quichotte* is lyrical and Russian, a good deal like the sedate singer Prokofieff (of late). Written with talent, not quite with character. A strange discrepancy between the natural-sounding slow music and the forced quick.

Paul Bowles' *Sonatina*: what is called "damned clever." The up-to-date facetious Parisian mood, whiter even than the White Russians who dispense it in Paris. A really striking first movement (the mood is possibly authentic in Bowles). The others are not so poised; the second pallid, the third on the voluble side. Citkowitz's songs have purity of technic, miniature loveliness. A small range is fully and deftly exploited.

A new song of Sessions shows this composer on the move, but not yet landed. The text is almost too thoroughly set-in music which has solid form, but an un-referably mixed idiom. A certain Germanic texture (part-fluid, part turgid) would seem to be sought and learned, as against Sessions' more familiar designed, transparent "Latin" *matière*.

I am sorry to have missed the works of Donovan, Piston, Weiss, Cowell, on recent New School programs. Of the December 11 evening, I thought the best work Isadore Freed's *Piano Sonata*. It suffered from a bombastic and uneven delivery. But it is a definite advance over his vague Pre-Paris music. (In Freed's case, "Pre-Paris" is more than a date; while there, he managed to absorb some current devices in large quantities.)

The music played at the New Masses benefit (December 10) is luckily not entirely representative of the Soviet output. The best of it was the *Chor* of Popoff, and the choruses of Davidenko and Scheinin. But why play only an excerpt (the worst movement, too) of Popoff's *Grosse Klaviersuite*? And why perform a quartet of the Soviet composer Miaskowsky which gives off the heavy salon smell of the Czarist composer Miaskowsky,

Paul Whiteman's resounding "Sixth Experiment in Modern American Music" was nothing of the sort. The only number bordering on experiment was a terrible combination of a torch-singer elocuting beyond her depth and a dancer executing misunderstood Wigmanisms. Of jazz—that crisp and slangy, wonderful sound, the staccato "hot" blues, and the early whining ecstatic sweet ones—almost not a trace. It is buried in something called "concert arrangements" done by an orchestra studded with strings, a harp—a celesta, my God! Still's *Suite* is tame, the orchestrations of Huxley, Deutsch et al. have gone woolly trying to be the *Bolero*. (They finish, every one, with a *pp* \leftarrow *ff* spurt, which gets to sound like an abdominal explosion after six of them). Miss Suesse is a pianist with remarkable elfin charm, but her *Valses* are scraps out of *La Valse*. This concert is bastardization to please capitalist trade, with a vengeance. *Les domestiques s'amuse*nt. Dolled-up, lisping Frenchy polysyllables, the music is at any moment likely to let out a "soitlnly," a "goil-friend," and a "terlet-water."

The outstanding piece of the New Chamber Orchestra's December 3 program was Milhaud's *Création du Monde*, performed (not very spiritedly or even correctly) whole and with the original scoring for the first time in New York. This extraordinary ballet appeared in 1923, one year before the *Rhapsody*

in *Blue*, and just as Stravinsky was making his first "absolute" essays. Yet it is already an amalgam and a resolution of the two styles (jazz-primitive and classic), in its way, prophetic. There is, besides, the typical sensuous and subtle Milhaud personality, and unique sense of shape and color. There is a moment or two when a dragged-in counterpoint simply doesn't sound; otherwise the work holds together. When all the compositions, fusing and resolving our various approaches to a single style, start rolling in, the *Création* will be remembered as their ancestor.



The Monte Carlo Ballet Russe has provided us with the first large-sized troupe which from the professional angle needs no apology. Every part of it is in its way first-rate—dancers, orchestra, décors, costumes, choreography (count out *Présages*). The new discovery is Toumanova; also Massine himself, who is what Escudero failed to be, a mature male dancer of snap and fire. Lichine may one day grow up to his uncanny beauty. He is as yet too stuck on imitating that spiritual carried-away pose of Lifar's; his technic is very good. *Le Beau Danube* is unexpectedly lovely; autumn-brown, healthy and animal as a horse. *Concurrence* is Balanchine and slapstick; an excellent combination. It is light, giddy, and tart, with an unexplained inserted formal ballet which might just as well be there as not. *Présages* is of course the flop; it is pretty bad. No ballet has the right to ask its dancers to be Action, a couple of Temptations, Fate, Frivolity, and the Destinies (boy-Destinies and girl-Destinies). They dance to some of the most adaptable ballet-music ever written (Tschaikowsky's *Fifth Symphony*), on an excruciating set which is the *surréalisme* of a dyspeptic cartoonist (stars, swirls marking the line of descent, actual *plops!* !, etc.); wearing costumes ill-proportioned and hideous in color. Mentally the ballet is childish. All one can say for it is that it does break away from the usual cut-up procedure of the other works.

Marc Blitzstein

CHICAGO PREMIERES

FOR once the name of Frederick Stock does not lead all the rest in the list of new music played in Chicago in October,