

Gruenberg's *Jazz Suite* discloses nothing new of this composer, already well-known in Europe through his *Daniel Jazz*. It is a well-sounding work, but its external tonal development bears little relation to its inner substance. Jazz is about finished in modern European music, and certain tendencies show that it is gradually being supplanted in American "art-music."

*Nikolai Lopatnikoff*

### AMERICA IN LONDON

CONSIDERING that London knows so little of what America is contributing to modern composition, it was a great misfortune that the concert of contemporary American music (under the auspices of the London Contemporary Music Centre) on December 16, should have coincided with a symphony concert devoted mainly to modern British works. The few who attended, however, if not profoundly moved, were amply repaid, for the music gave us a new experience.

Aaron Copland opened by playing a very short *Sonatina* by the young Mexican, Carlos Chavez. Though it is simple both in its unsophisticated direct thought and diatonic contrapuntal texture it is not of the stuff that appeals at a first hearing in a concert room. To those who are temperamentally disinclined to the idiom it is definitely dull; to those who are able to appreciate the work it does not seem to say anything which has not been said better or with more interest before. But on acquaintance its peculiar kind of intimacy insinuates itself on one.

The *Sonata* for oboe and clarinet by Paul Bowles has an equally sure sense of style, but the workmanship is not yet accomplished enough to deal with such a combination and rather matches the immature and superficial mode of thought.

More interesting than either was the *Piano Variations* (1930) of Aaron Copland (with the composer at the piano). In much of the technic it is quite a development of the style of Stravinsky's *Symphonie pour Instruments à Vent*, but there is a passion for dissonance only equalled by Bartok. There is nothing of Schönbergism about it, but sometimes an equal difficulty for the listener in getting hold of the thought of this composer presents itself. So few, indeed, are the concessions made to the audience in the presentation of the thought, so bare is the statement, that

it would be surprising if a first performance could make the work intelligible. (And Mr. Copland's hardness of touch made the listeners' difficulty more acute.) Irritated, one suspects a craving after originality for its own sake, or retires completely bewildered. If all this is so, it is a real defect. I can find three reasons. First, it might seem that the composer wrote only for himself. Secondly, he may not have completely assimilated his material or completely ordered his thought. And thirdly, it comes as a surprise to find that what one had supposed to be designed in order to knock one down gives up its secret only when one allows it to persuade.

In Roger Sessions' *Piano Sonata* again the influences are very apparent, but they are assimilated and show only the foundations or admirations of a mature mind. The subtle Fauré-like nostalgia of the opening and slow movement with its long rhapsodic melodic line, as inevitable in its limpid flow as any since Berlioz; the lovely contrapuntal section of the same movement that could not have been written before Stravinsky's latest period, but which is quite unlike Stravinsky; the vigor of the first movement and splendid ingenuity in the management of rhythms and patterns in the last, both indirectly reminiscent of the present linear style of Bartok; this is a splendid achievement and could not fail to make an impression. Mrs. Irene Jacobi did the work full justice.

The *Five Songs* from *Chamber Music* by James Joyce set by Israel Citkowitz shows a talent promising in the highest degree. There is originality and spontaneity, unpretentiousness and lack of preciousity in the solution of the problems involved in the setting of words; if this gift can be applied to other things so successfully the composer will go far. I do not think, as many might, that Mr. Citkowitz has merely a miniature talent, for the composer whom he most resembles in this medium, Milhaud, has now shown us first rate music on a large plan.

Virgil Thomson's work, which finished the concert, is, on a simpler and smaller scale than his opera, a successful attempt to underline Miss Stein's poem by a variety of intonation. He certainly makes it more intelligible, but the criticism of it as a work of art should be relegated to the hands of the literary men.

*Henry Boys*