

great expressive warmth results. Other European works included those by Holland's Henk Badings, a solid neo-romantic, and Piet Ketting, whose Shakespearean settings were most unsuitable; slight but graceful and spirited pieces by Poland's Antoni Szalowski and Roman Palester; the flat and ponderous *Hymnus* of Willy Burkhard (Switzerland); and a dull quartet opus by Edmund Partos (Palestine). Rodolfo Halffter's (Spain via Mexico) synthesis of folk and neo-classic material needs much refinement before it can approach Falla's perfection. A sensitive piece of textual setting was the very French *Les Illuminations* of Benjamin Britten (Great Britain); smooth and suave, its subservience to the words however allows little space for the personality of this usually original composer.

American music fared better on the radio than in the concert hall. However neither Bernard Wagenaar nor Aaron Copland appeared at his best. Wagenaar's *Triple Concerto* is typical of his distinguished recent manner, but the cadenza style necessitated by the nature of the *concertante* damages the smooth formal lines. Copland's *Music for Radio* achieves a simple direct style but not without sacrifice of the strong personal flavor of his later more popular works. Charles Naginski's *Sinfonietta*, despite the confused mirroring of the composer's complex personality, the occasional emotional incongruities which obscure the direction of the music, was more like what the general representation of Young America should have been.

Blas Galindo's pieces brought us more open-air Mexicana. Indeed if the native selections to be heard in Mexico City at next year's festival are as good as their offerings this time, we may expect some new life for the I. S. C. M. The Society's all-time high for doling out decadence must have boomeranged. There seems now to be some understanding of the need for an immediate and definite change in policy. The jury for next year has been announced; it reveals a group of composers of quite different outlook.

Donald Fuller

LETTER FROM MEXICO

Mexico City, November 1.

THE composer's opportunity to live solely from the music he writes, rare enough in the United States, is reduced to all but zero here in Mexico. Due to the absence of any royalty-collecting organization, even

famous song writers like Augustin Lara, Dominguez, Tata Nacho, Ruiz and Marroquin are compelled to be constantly on the lookout for small radio jobs of arranging programs and accompanying singers. Lara receives a monthly stipend from XEW, the most important station, for writing and playing whatever music is required, but it can't matter very much to him if a song is a hit here, or in Cuba or the United States since in any case he won't receive a centavo beyond his salary and those infinitesimal publisher's rights. (Practically all the serious composers are given pittances by the government for teaching classes or playing in the Orquesta Sinfonica.) During the past few months a local ASCAP, called the Sindicato de Autores, Compositores, y Editores de Música, has been formed, with the object of trying to persuade the officials of film and radio (even more commercial here than in the United States) that the inauguration of the system of *pequeño derecho* would not be amiss. Of course the officials scream injustice and regimentation. The composers have yet to receive their first royalty check, but they seem confident of success. The Sindicato would also make obligatory the drawing up of contracts for film and popular music, a procedure which might tend to protect the composers' interests, although not necessarily, as some of the film-companies are fly-by-night outfits with which a contract is perfectly useless, since it has on occasion proven impossible for composers to collect even with names on dotted lines.

The Mexican radio is of such a technical and esthetic poverty as to make practically any American program, commercial or sustaining, seem the acme of good taste and talent. There are no professional arrangers anywhere, and the job is taken on in spare time by instrumentalists who know enough about how to put notes on paper to be able to make some parts. Scores are not bothered with. An arrangement costs from two to three dollars. Rehearsals are often considered superfluous, and when a one-hour commercial program is given a two-hour maximum rehearsal period, half the musicians are likely not to appear. Naturally composers want to have as little as possible to do with the radio.

So far there have been practically no cinema composers in Mexico who have turned out actual scores. The norm has consisted of untalented arrangements of standard tripe. Only two Mexicans have substantial lists of integrated film-scores to their credit. One is Revueltas, who began with *Redes*, and continued with a long list of documentaries and several feature-films, the most important of which are *La Noche de los Mayas*,

Bajo el Signo de la Muerte, *Los de Abajo*, and *Que Viene Mi Marido!* The other man is Raul Lavista, who at the moment has a virtual monopoly on Grade-A Mexican films (if indeed such can be said to exist). Lavista believes in Hollywood, has the greatest admiration for Max Steiner, and explains that the film people here have always preferred his music to that of Revueltas because he knew how to make concessions to popular taste, a thing Revueltas refused to do. The music for his four most recent films: *Viviré Otra Vez*, *El Hijo de Cruz Diabolo*, *Ay, Qué Tiempos*, *Señor Don Simon!* and *La Casa del Rencor*, is decidedly non-experimental and completely competent. He has to do all his own orchestration, as well as rehearse dancers and singers, conduct at recordings and write lyrics if needed. The average price paid for an hour's score is the equivalent of five hundred dollars. Since feature films are made here on budgets comparable to those provided for short documentaries in the United States, practically no time is allotted for rehearsals. Fortunately the musicians are from the Orquesta Sinfónica, which eliminates some of the headaches. Deservedly or not, Lavista now receives the same credits and publicity accorded to the director of the film, a state of affairs inconceivable in Hollywood!

III

One event of the past symphonic season was the new Stravinsky symphony, which, even though the composer conducted, proved a balancing job a bit too difficult for the Orchestra. Instruments supposed to pick up the line unnoticed would blurt boorishly in, apparently unaware that they were destroying the extremely delicate fabric. However the reception was favorable. The other event was the good old-fashioned *succès scandal* provoked by the world premiere of Copland's *Short Symphony*. The critics of the three large dailies were divided. One simply announced he considered it shameful that Chávez would stoop to conduct such a piece publicly just because it happened to be dedicated to him. Later I questioned this gentleman as to why he had so heartily hated the piece. "Copland is a Jew," he replied, "and I never review Jewish music. Not even Ravel."

The Lener Quartet and Irma Gonzalez gave Virgil Thomson's *Stabat Mater* what was probably its best performance to date, in spite of Señorita Gonzalez' unrecognizable French. Chavez conducted Revueltas' *Janitzio* to which I took an Indian from Noxtepec in the mountains of Guerrero. His comment was: "How beautiful! It sounds just like a *cantina*." A few nights ago a little orchestra with a long name: La Orquesta de Camera de

la Sección Cultural por Radio (part of the at present much-beleaguered Secretaria de Educación Pública) played two *Revueltas* pieces. In spite of the uniformly bad execution, *8 x Radio* sounded well, perhaps because it is a pastiche of the kind of folk music one is accustomed to hear rendered with extremely indifferent technic. *Planos*, a larger orchestral piece arranged for nine instruments, was less happy. The vengeful dissonances came out watered and senseless, and the ostinato passages, which should have force, lacked dynamics and became monotonous.

The *Revueltas* family is not eager to have the work of its most illustrious member made known to the world at large. Victor had agreed to make an album consisting of *Homenaje a García Lorca* and the orchestral version of *Siete Canciones* with text by Lorca, the men had been rehearsed and everything was set, but the family refused permission. They were adamant also in not allowing Steinbeck and Kline to use *Revueltas* music for *The Forgotten Village* when it was suggested that a score be pieced together out of sections of various orchestral works. I have even heard it said that Koussevitzky had to forego playing a certain piece of *Revueltas* because he was unable to obtain the family's sanction.

The Orquesta Sinfónica offered a prize this year for the best new work by a Mexican composer. Prize: one hundred dollars. Conditions: ink score, and parts furnished by composer. Result: no entries.

Paul Bowles

PUBLISHING MUSIC IN A TIME OF WORLD WAR

IMMEDIATELY upon the outbreak of war, it became necessary for those of us involved in publishing music to consider the effects of hostilities upon our future policy. Most of us envisaged – and I vividly recall the days of September 1939 – a wholesale destruction by the Luftwaffe of our London headquarters. My own firm, Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., had for many years maintained branches in Toronto, New York, Capetown, Sidney and Paris. So in those periods when we were not busy with fire-watching, the ARP, and other civilian defense duties, we tried to give time and thought to the reorganization of our world-wide trading system which we expected would of course be thrown completely out of joint.

Some years before we had drawn up an ambitious program for contemporary music and had set aside a large budget therefor. How would