

chamber music morning, have been referred to above. The *Hymnes* for three pianos of Dallapiccola was efficient if undistinguished music, the *Quartet* of Elizabeth Maconchy (Ireland) only undistinguished, while the *Variations on a Theme of Rameau* by Dukas would scarcely be considered music at all outside of France.

It is unfortunate that the impression made by the few good works at the Paris festival, was in danger of eclipse, through the deterioration in quality of the last concerts. But peter out it did; and the reviewer can only sorrowfully record the fact and mobilize his hopes for London in 1938.

Mark Brunswick

### OPENING NOTES, NEW YORK

THE Philharmonic started the season off bravely with a first performance of Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* and Gardner Read's *Symphony in A-minor* that won the Philharmonic prize contest last year. No two works could be more widely different in character. Bartok's work is the finest of his compositions to be heard in these parts for a long time. It has much greater clarity than his more recent quartets and is less choppy, with greater broadness than the *Dance Suite*. Recently Bartok has learned how to keep to a simple tonal pattern that organizes his counterpoint and gives it a sense of progression. This work has the very definite tonality of A and many reinforcements of that key throughout; it thus avoids the chromatic wandering that so many of his followers slip into when they begin to write in his style. The first movement, a beautiful fugue, has a simple grand plan and a continuity of expression which rank it with the best of recently composed music. The second movement in a lively, nervously rhythmic vein has almost the dignity and solidity of a Beethoven scherzo. The system of development is much more free and natural than in Stravinsky whose music it resembles. The other two movements sustain the general high level of quality. Throughout there is great beauty of sonority and a very elegant kind of writing that is as rare as it is delightful in modern music.

The other work, by twenty-four year-old Gardner Read seemed as if it had been written before the war rather than last year. It is a sorry thing to see a young man so unadventurous. If however, he had been bolder he might not have won his prize. The work is a "motif" symphony in four movements with constant developments of undistinguished material. Read never relaxed into a tune for a moment; he was either working up or calming down to "entrances" of little fragments that were weak and did not merit the fuss he made to bring them in. Although the work was empty and unoriginal, it is quite evident that Read has true musical feeling. This showed itself most often in his orchestration. If he had stuck more tenaciously to a unifying expressive conception, instead of to an intellectual one, his work might have had greater coherence. A more personal and challenging style would not be out of place.

Roy Harris and Elie Siegmeister opened the Fall concert series at the Composer's Forum Laboratory. That remarkable organization has been improving steadily. The standard of performance this year is much higher than last, and the concerts promise to be more interesting. It is too bad that because of its isolation the good works discovered by this unit do not reach wider audiences. But that will certainly come.

*Elliott Carter*

## COOLIDGE FIESTA IN MEXICO

THE first festival of Pan American chamber music, sponsored by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge at Mexico City, was held from July thirteenth to the twenty-fourth, in the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Compositions from the Americas were presented in six concerts under the direction of Carlos Chavez, Mexico's leading conductor and composer. He not only arranged the fête but, with Hugo Kortschak and Carl Engel, also acted as a judge of the two works which won the Coolidge prize and honorable mention for 1937.

Distinction for performance went to the visiting artists Jesus Sanroma, and members of the Coolidge quartet who, with Mr. Chavez, were responsible in a large degree for the musical in-