

Psalm for orchestra, organ, chorus, and solo voice. We were feted with Pizzetti's interesting and pleasant *Concerto dell'Estate*, and Malipiero's second symphony, the *Elegiaca*.

Bad music found its way in also. We had the misfortune to hear a 'cello concerto by one Thomas de Hartmann, another Gallicized Russian. It was nothing short of meaningless rubbish; but Paul Tortelier, the marvellous cellist of the orchestra, did so expert a job that many were deceived about the value of the piece. Somewhat unwillingly, I also mention Alessandresco's *Actaeon*, a symphonic poem of no importance played by Mr. Enesco while guest conductor here.

Leonard Bernstein

RECENT FESTIVAL IN ROCHESTER

THE eighth annual Eastman School Festival of American Music went about its business with considerable effectiveness this year. For instead of the dry impression that most music festivals devoted to one style of music usually give, here one got the feeling that in spite of the depression, the constant threat of a European, perhaps a world war, and the general intellectual disintegration which many people seem to feel, music was carrying on in this country not only hopefully but with considerable enthusiasm, and a new pulse of life. This, in spite of the generally conservative choice of the programs, was especially true of the works of the younger composers, Vladimir Ussachevsky, David Diamond and Burrill Phillips. The festival, almost entirely under the untiring baton of Howard Hanson, rose to a higher level of performance than is customary at the modern music affairs I have heard abroad.

David Diamond's *Elegy in Memory of Maurice Ravel* was the most original and daring new piece played. Scored for brass, harps and percussion, it was in the nature of a slow moving chorale with several variations. Diamond's ability to invent new sounding, logical, strong progressions of sonorous, dissonant harmony is highly developed and the listener who is not antagonized by dissonances that have real meaning would find the music in a fittingly solemn, tragic and noble vein with an impressive, dramatic mood. The *Elegy* is difficult to listen to not

only because of the harmony but also because of the very unusual melodic line of the chorale theme, but anyone who has heard much contemporary music has heard many less well sounding dissonant works than this one. It has more personality than any work of Diamond's yet played.

Much milder, less striking but excellently done was Vladimir Ussachevsky's *Cantata* for speaker, chorus and orchestra. This was a very well planned setting of selections from the Bible arranged to form an exhortation to youth to have faith in God. From the dramatic and formal point of view, it was unusually effective, with convincing sincerity and musicality. The orchestration was expert and did not muddy up the choral writing. Unfortunately the style was quite derivative and not very personal. Much *King David* and *Symphonie des psaumes* came through but with this curious difference: the harmony was more consonant and did not have the bite that such a forceful rhythmic style as Ussachevsky's seems to demand. The lapses from general character would have been disturbing if the general line of the music had not been so compelling. Ussachevsky is young and he may go far.

■

Among the new works of older composers, Charles Vardell's *Symphony No. 1* had a considerable individuality about it, in spite of being in a much more conservative idiom than the music previously mentioned here. There was a kind of downright simplicity in his treatment of the folk tunes from the Carolina hills which was not without character. It is seldom one hears works from other countries beside Russia, Finland and Hungary which have a style that is consistent with the folk themes that composers have often delighted in using. Usually one finds French or Russian harmonizations of Spanish, Brazilian, American or English folk material. In fact one might go so far as to say that the folk style except for some notable exceptions is the least national of styles. At any rate many musically important countries have gotten along famously without an important folklore movement. It is still in the balance whether (begging the jazz question) anyone will come along who can derive great inspiration from American folk-music directly, as Moussorgsky did.

Vardell is a step in that direction but his symphony is not entirely convincing because, as so often happens in the "nationalist movement," the area where he is original is very small. His slow movements fall back into the ordinary though the fast, gay ones have considerable character.

Aaron Copland's *Saga of the Prairie (Music for Radio)* was reviewed in these pages when it was first performed on the air last summer. It makes a very good concert piece and reaffirms the excellent first impression. In spite of a growing simplicity in Copland's style his remarkable musical personality is as evident in this work as it was in any of his earlier ones.

The evening of ballet at the festival was notable mainly for the music played rather than for the dancing and choreography, though Evelyn Sabin, Dorothy Tucker and especially a modern dancer, Marja Born, stood out from the rest of the troupe. Bernard Rogers' *Five Fairy Tales*, reviewed here before, is music whose great delicacy and beautiful characterization make it excellent ballet material though it is not intended for this medium.

The new dance score which made a big impression was Burrill Phillips' *Play Ball!* It is written in a witty, sharp, lively, somewhat polytonal style. There is a real dry kind of American humor about the work that hits home. So often in popular American subjects like a baseball or football game composers have a tendency to become vulgar as was the case with Kay Swift's *Alma Mater*, done several years ago by the American Ballet. Phillips avoided this completely, for his satirical score is imaginatively instrumented and planned; while avoiding all the clichés of the jazz industry it still keeps some of the basic character of this kind of music. Fresh, neat and amusing in a straightforward way, it should be heard again with a more interesting stage performance.

Elliott Carter