

would get up and sing, roar, pray and shout but always fervently, seriously, reverently – perhaps not “artistically” – (perhaps the better for it) – “We’re men of the fields and rocks, not artists,” Farmer John would say. At times these “confurorants” would give the boys a chance to run out and throw stones down on the rocks in the brook! (Allegro conslugarocko!) – but this was only momentary and the quiet Children’s Hymn is sung again, perhaps some of the evening sounds are with it – and as this Movement ends, sometimes a distant Amen is heard – if the mood of the Day calls for it – though the Methodists and Baptists seldom called for it, at the end of their hymns, yet often, during the sermon, an “Amen” would ring out as a trumpet call from a pew or from an old “Amen-Seat.” The Congregationalists sometimes leaned towards one, and the Episcopalians often.

The Third Movement is more of the nature of the First. As the boys get marching again some of the old men would join in and march as fast (sometimes) as the boys and sing what they felt, regardless – and – thanks to Robert Lowry – “Gather at the River.”*

Charles Ives

BRITAIN CALLS MUSIC TO THE COLORS

A LONG with their fellow artists in other spheres, British composers of military age have gradually been absorbed into the workings of the voracious war-machine. Alan Rawsthorne (now a bandmaster), Edmund Rubbra and Alan Bush have joined the Army; Howard Ferguson is in the Central Band of the Air Force; and Lennox Berkeley is in the Overseas department of the B.B.C. William Walton is on the advisory music council of ENSA, the official body organizing entertainment for the troops.

Up to the present, none of our composers has produced anything that might be described as an important “war” work. Vaughan Williams, it is true, has written *Six Choral Songs to be Sung in Time of War*, to words by Shelley, and John Ireland is just now finishing a stirring march intended to express the spirit of freedom and democracy; but these are in the nature of occasional pieces. If it is as yet too early to define with any degree of certainty the reasons for this, it may at least be noted that in music – most abstract of all the arts – the digestive and assimilatory processes are as slow as they are selective; and it is perhaps not unlikely that if anything of value

*The above is mostly from remarks written on the back of some of the old music manuscripts. (1892-1914). C. I.

reflective of present events does get written, its appearance will be delayed until well after the guns have ceased firing.

The season, both in London and the provinces, is in full swing, the increased public demand for serious music showing no sign of abatement. In London we have had a colorful production, by a mainly Russian company, of Moussorgsky's lovable little *Fair at Sorotchintzi* (the only opera given in London so far), and the Vic-Wells Ballet has just returned to town after a long sojourn in the provinces. The B.B.C. has adhered to its policy of withdrawing its symphony orchestra from London, but in spite of this there has been a plenitude of orchestral concerts given under the usual auspices.

Of the few new or recent items which have found their way into programs, the most absorbing was William Walton's *Violin Concerto*, performed by Henry Holst under the composer's direction at a concert of the Royal Philharmonic Society. In relation to the composer's previous work one notices an increased intensity in the melodic line; a more involved and trenchant harmonic scheme; a freer use of counterpoint (always an important element in Walton's work); and a clear break with academic formal procedures. It is serious, sophisticated, and – at a first hearing at least – recondite. The importance of the work as a whole cannot be doubted, but further hearings will be necessary before a considered verdict can be pronounced. Walton's overture *Scapino*, written for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, was also heard for the first time in London. This vivacious and most exhilarating piece, in which the elements of humor and whimsicality already familiar from the composer's early *Portsmouth Point* and *Façade* are again very much in evidence, made an immediate appeal. Other works heard employing the full orchestra included the beautiful but rarely played *Symphony in Bb* by Chausson, and the *Symphony in G-minor* by the British composer E. J. Moeran.

A concert by the London String Orchestra, directed in khaki by Alan Bush, brought forth two new works of considerable interest: Bush's own *Meditation on a German Song of 1848*, for solo violin and strings; and a set of variations for strings by his pupil, Aubrey Bowman (born 1918). The *Meditation* is one of Bush's best efforts. Its ten minutes of sustained contemplative writing are free from the rigidity and over-emphasis of his *Piano Concerto* and *Concert Piece* for 'cello; while the moving quality of its poetry – infused with an intellectual rather than an emotional passion – is allied to a shapeliness that might be improved only by less reliance on a pedal-point in the closing bars. Bowman's *Variations and Finale on an*

Original Theme, with which the composer made his initial bow before a London concert audience, was decidedly an eye-opener. The young man obviously had something of urgency to express and he spoke with conviction, energy, and an extensive vocabulary that employed consonance without academicism and dissonance without self-consciousness.

In the chamber-music field, the outstanding event has been the series of modern concerts at Wigmore Hall, sponsored by Boosey & Hawkes as "a contribution to musical culture in war-time." The four programs already given have included string quartets by Bartok and Honegger; sonatas for various instruments by Bax, Janacek, Howard Ferguson, Ravel and Debussy; and various works by Falla, Kodaly, Poulenc, Bloch and Shostakovitch. Several works were heard for the first time. Vaughan Williams' *Household Music* was a set for string quartet of four reflective preludes on Welsh hymn-tunes in the composer's most mellow vein. Edmund Rubbra's *Five Spenser Sonnets* for voice and string quartet, written six years ago, show the composer completely engulfed in an expressive neo-Elizabethan counterpoint; he has since reduced that influence to more reasonable proportions as his fine *Third Symphony* shows. John Ireland's *Sarnia - An Island Sequence* proved valuable pianistic material. Although not strikingly original, these three impressions of Guernsey (one of the Channel Islands) held the interest by reason of their intense poetry and subtle harmonic patterns. Arthur Bliss's *Music to Seven American Poems* composed during 1940 at the University of California in Berkeley, were heard for the first time in England. These settings of Edna St. Vincent Millay and Eleanor Wylie, expertly written for both piano and voice, are further essays in the romantic vein to which Bliss has increasingly turned in recent years, a style which while renouncing advanced dissonance or rough-edged counterpoint yet reflects Bliss's vigorous and thoughtful personality in an unmistakably contemporary language.

In the provinces, orchestral and choral concerts are well supported. The programs consist mainly of well known classical or modern works with little that is really new. The principal exceptions have been Bournemouth, where the alert conductor Reginald Goodall has recently performed Bartok's *Divertimento*, Walton's *Violin Concerto*, Stoessel's *Concerto Grosso* and Copland's nostalgic nocturne entitled *Quiet City*; and Nottingham, where the Music Club has engaged the still flourishing London Philharmonic Orchestra for a remarkable series of programs including symphonies by Shostakovitch, Walton, Williams and Bax.

In the broadcasting field, the B.B.C. continues to display a conscientious regard for modern music, although there is an admitted policy of not performing, under present conditions, works of an extreme, radical nature. Carpenter's *Violin Concerto* and Copland's *Quiet City* have recently been broadcast, as have quite a number of Soviet works. After strong parliamentary censure, there has been no recurrence of the unfortunate musico-political incidents which, early last year, temporarily damaged the B.B.C.'s reputation for impartiality.

Examples of Soviet music have been similarly frequent at public concerts since the Nazi invasion of Russia: Shostakovitch's *Piano Quintet* and *String Quartet*; Khachaturian's *Piano Concerto* and *Clarinet Trio*; and Shebalin's *Second Quartet* have all been heard recently.

Ernest Chapman

ARTISTS FIND A WAY—MINNEAPOLIS M.T.N.A.

IN the past few years the annual convention of the Music Teacher's National Association has shown a genuine interest in the activities of the American composer, yet a composer attending one is not always able to see where he fits into the general musical picture as it is there represented. Some composers would rather be shot than caught in the near vicinity of these meetings; others hover around the fringes, half hoping, I am suspicious, that they can land a job and still somehow avoid the hateful stigma of the academic world; and then there are those lost souls who have given hostages to fortune and now extend the glad-hand as a matter of duty.

Several meetings of the "creative brethren" which are often stimulating do take place, however, but usually on the side and surreptitiously. There is the whisper, "Junior Ballroom, 2 P.M.," and when you get there Robert Palmer is ready to show his new *Concerto* for orchestra in its early stages. It sounds as though it's going to be a step forward in his work. Then John Kirkpatrick plays the Hunter Johnson *Piano Sonata* on a piano admirably adjusted to the Boogy-Woogy, while from the convention program next door come asthmatic wails that one associates with the twelve-tone "lyric."

This December the concerts of the official schedule were very serious if a little less glamorous. Three were made up entirely of the music of the United States; and there was a commonly expressed delight in their variety and interest. The first program was piano music presented by Kirkpatrick,