

subtleties untransmitted by jazz to the upper reaches of musical currency. The folk guitar, sampled in commercial releases by such virtuosi as Led-belly and Joshua White, will someday broaden and deepen the concert use of that instrumental color.

Or consider a new approach to old principles of form. CBS last year introduced Charles Seeger's instrumental exposition of the prison song, *Midnight Special*, a theme and variations based not on abstract inventiveness but on the Archive's local versions of the song. Most songs, of course, have variants; for a folklorist the great thing is to track down the "original," "pure" or "best" form. But to the composer each carries its own validity, its fresh illumination of the musical idea.

Other perspectives are opened by the new Laboratory. Some of the Library's stock of unpublished music, old and modern, will be performed and recorded. Every performance in the Coolidge Auditorium is now preserved in excellent recordings; most of these are unavailable — unplayable, in fact — because of the exclusive recording contracts with commercial firms which bind soloists and ensembles. Experimentation in educational radio, again tapping the Archive, is under way.

Josephine Metcalf

SAN FRANCISCO REJUVENATED

SAN FRANCISCO, which has for years been a citadel of modern music, though a comparatively small one, is seeing more activity on the contemporary front this season than for many past. When Henry Cowell lived here and made this the headquarters for his New Music Society, there were many contemporary performances; after Cowell left, they slacked off. Now they are frequent once again, thanks to several different factors. One is that the patrons (or rather patronesses) of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra seem to be less opposed to things modern than they used to be. So Pierre Monteux is freer. Monteux has always been sympathetic toward contemporary efforts, but his board has not always agreed. Another factor is the presence in the community, thanks to the war, of several highly important composers. Ernest Bloch and Arthur Bliss have both come back to the University of California, and Darius Milhaud is at Mills College. A third factor is that Ashley Pettis has moved his Composers' Forum from New York to this city.

Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams of course don't count as modern composers; at least not when represented by music written

years ago, as they have been this season on Monteux's programs. But Monteux has so far played at least three works of true contemporary significance and has several more on schedule for the immediate future. The first of the three was William Schuman's brilliant and exquisitely orchestrated *American Festival Overture*. This was followed by the now celebrated *Third Symphony* of Roy Harris, a work of epic strength and concentrated power, and that in turn by the new symphony Milhaud wrote for the Chicago Symphony celebration. The last has so far been heard only in Chicago and out here; it has the mordant rhythmic drive, the easy flow of shapely and often folk-like melody, the originality in polyphonic device and the incomparable mastery of extraordinary orchestral effects one associates with Milhaud's music and over and above that there is a seriousness and eloquence such as Milhaud has rarely achieved in his orchestral works.

Among the more important novelties Monteux has scheduled are Roy Harris' *Ode to Truth*, a piece commissioned by Stanford University and slated to be played there for the first time in connection with the university's fiftieth anniversary celebration, Szymanowsky's *Sinfonia Concertante*, Bliss's *Color Symphony* (which will be new to this town) and a *San Francisco Overture* by Wesley La Violette. I have heard the last in rehearsal, and it is a very gay, energetic and well-made work.

The Composers' Forum opened with music by Milhaud and by Robert Delaney, who is living on a ranch a couple of hundred miles north of here. The contrast of Delaney's broad-shouldered, almost Moussorgskian style with the elegance and sophistication of the Frenchman's chamber music was stimulating; of interest too were the somewhat Milhaudesque quartet by Charles Jones of Mills College, the powerful, slightly Stravinsky-like *Psalm XCVII* for chorus and band by Charles Cushing of the University of California, and the tremendous élan and zest of Bliss's well known clarinet quintet. La Violette's *Violin Sonata* and a powerful if somewhat tormented *Sanctus* for contralto solo by Lou Harrison have also been important contributions to the Forum sessions. Harrison is a youngster who, somewhat under Cowell's influence, has been much interested in non-European music systems and in writing new music for old European instruments. You will be hearing about him in the East, if you haven't already, through music he has written for many modern dancers.

The Forum also took a flier into dramatic production with a bang-up presentation of Copland's *Second Hurricane* by a group of high school and conservatory students under the direction of Nicholas Goldschmidt. The

production, about as formal as an apple-ducking, had everything Copland intended, and maybe a few things he didn't, but it made a swell show. The Forum still has several programs to go and many discoveries to be made among local creators of music.

Other local organizations also have done some interesting modern works. The San Francisco String Quartet has given us a sonorous and highly expressive work by Bernhard Kaun of Hollywood. The Music Lovers, a chamber music group devoted to works calling for somewhat unusual combinations, gave the first performance of a *Music Lovers' Set of Five*, a quartet for flute, violin, 'cello and piano especially written for the society by Henry Cowell, in a style of exceptional clarity and melodiousness, and a *String Trio* by Vincenzo Tommasini that turned out to be the best work by this somewhat libeled composer it has been my pleasure to hear. The Woodwind Quintet of San Francisco, which last season concerned itself almost solely with modern music and greatly emphasized the Americans, has not been heard from this year, but it is likely to break out at any minute. Finally, although this scarcely qualifies as a local activity, I cannot end this report without mentioning the colossal recital given at Mills College by Bela Bartok, an event that fairly bowled me over with the profound originality and the depth of spirit expressed through the piano music of that great man.

Alfred Frankenstein