

more personal, and its middle section rich and original in texture.

Assorted trivia: The *Suite* for violin and piano of Antoni Szalowski performed by Roman Totenberg. This is ingratiating pretty-boy music, but since it is even more retiring and shy than Jean Françaix, it gives only a very hasty glance at the composer . . . The "American Group" for viola and piano presented by Emanuel Vardi. Messrs. Cooley, Gusikoff, and Bernstein are conservative and impersonal in style. Herbert Haufrecht's piece alone had some color . . . Paul Creston's works done by the Orchestrette of New York. In its stronger moments I was reminded of a diluted César Franck . . . At the Philharmonic: Zoltan Kurthy's *Scherzo* which dealt in such curios as whole-tone scales and "fourths and fifths, medieval fashion;" Anis Fuleihan's *Pastorale*, which has the nice mood of most of his music, but is equally pale; Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Overture to "The Old Maid and the Thief,"* which barely suffices even when the opera comes afterward . . . At the New York City Symphony: Horace Johnson's *Streets of Florence*, three impressionistic tone-poems, all similar in mood, all relying on the device of ostinato. They sound well and are judiciously brief; Courtlandt Palmer's *Piano Concerto*, which offered the 1840 brand of romanticism, without Tchaikowsky and Rachmaninoff. What it gained in freshness it lost through anemia; Vittorio Giannini's *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*. This is nineteenth-century Bach, well-managed in a heavy-handed way.

Donald Fuller

STRAVINSKY IN BEVERLY HILLS

"FILM music? That's monkey business, and for monkey business my price is too high." Thus, Igor Stravinsky, when asked if his going to live in Beverly Hills meant what it usually does with a composer. Of course Hollywood could use his experience and resourcefulness at fitting music to action and action to music. It still remains to be seen whether Hollywood will wake up to his presence, and, if it does, whether Hollywood will let him work as he wants. Stravinsky's ideas, while they can be paid for, cannot be bought. For the present, as for the past year, Stravinsky lives in a sunny small house overlooking Los Angeles, and he teaches, or rather, as he puts it, he "experiences composition" with his students. Thus the two polar opposites of modern music, Stravinsky and Schönberg, having been torn out of their natural environments, have come to roost in Film-

town, and the lessons of Stravinsky's rhythmic, nervous, polytonal neo-classicism now vie with the twelve-tone row.

Stravinsky completed the *Symphony in C* in Beverly Hills last August. Since then he has written a new work, a suite called *Dances Concertantes*, commissioned by Werner Janssen for the excellent orchestra that bears his name. This had its first performance under Stravinsky's direction at one of Janssen's concerts in Los Angeles early in February.

The work was heralded in the program notes with an interesting commentary by Sol Babitz, who has become a kind of official apologist for Stravinsky in his California phase. (Babitz is a violinist who plays in the Hollywood orchestras and conducts a column in the journal of the musicians' union. A member of Janssen's orchestra told me this column deals with "bowings and fingerings." Stravinsky said it concerns "the New Technic.") Babitz begins by observing that ours is a culturally retrogressive era, brought about "by the pressure of a world-wide death struggle in which 'normal' development has no place. Frantic efforts to discover 'progress' in the arts reveal only widespread mediocrity in the traditional haunts of the artists. The best of them have begun to wander afield in order to survive, and the roads they follow are necessarily unexpected. . . . Stravinsky's course at present lies in re-living the music of the past in a new way. . . . Not *what* is said, but *how* it is said is the important thing. Stravinsky's means is music, his subject, the music of others. Here he is in the tradition of Bach harmonizing the themes of others; van Gogh repainting famous Rembrandts and Millets in his own style, and Chapman rendering Homer. Not judgment but sympathy is the purpose of these men. Their 'imitations' are as good or better than the originals. . . . His procedure can be described in his own words: 'After studying many pages of a certain composer, I begin to sense his musical personality and signature. Like a detective, I reconstruct his musical experience.' . . . Having been influenced by the composer, Stravinsky begins to influence the composer with his own composing. In this interplay between old music and the modern ear, a new music is born.' Stravinsky's neo-classicism is thus, in Babitz's view, 'not a caricature of the past, but fresh, living music. . . . His commentary is not ridicule and horse-play, but tender parody. And therein lies a clue to an understanding of his work since *Pulcinella* in 1919.' Accordingly, says Babitz, "In the *Dances Concertantes* he treats the ballet music of the last century, noting all its charm and all its fatuity as well. Toward the former he shows fondness, toward the latter, understanding. His themes are

original, yet somehow vaguely familiar. He writes this music as it deserves, pointing out its inanities, for example, by underlining the classical chord progressions which the ballet composers stole from Mozart and Haydn. All vulnerable aspects of this music are parodied, and one can even detect music as late as Ravel's *Daphnis*. One of his sharpest weapons is his pretense at misunderstanding the routine musical devices of the trade, which he innocently uses in the most outlandish ways. The careful listener will be rewarded with many surprises of unexpected banalities."

How much of this can be regarded as "official" one cannot say. However Stravinsky approves of Babitz, and his notes would scarcely have appeared in Janssen's program book if the composer did not sanction them. Nevertheless, Stravinsky said nothing even remotely similar during the hour I spent with him over the score. "The attention span of today's audience is limited," he remarked, "and the problem of the present-day composer is one of condensation. To say the essential and say it quickly – that's what counts." (The five movements of the *Danses Concertantes* take about twenty minutes.)

Another problem dealt with in the *Danses Concertantes*, said Stravinsky, is that of creating a suite for small orchestra (the scoring involves single wind instruments in each department, except that there are two horns, plus tympani and strings) in a fairly light vein, but employing big periodic forms and not mere contrasts of tempo. It opens with an introductory march, followed by a movement called *Pas d'Action*, which is in rondo form and has the function of the sonata-allegro in a symphony. The third movement is a theme and variations, each variation being in a different form and character (*Allegretto*, *Scherzando*, *Pastorale* and "a kind of slow *Tarantella*"), the whole thus forming a kind of miniature four-movement piece in itself. The fourth movement (*Pas de Deux*) is an *Andante* with contrasting and recurrent episodes, and the finale is a re-statement of the introductory march.

Hearing this work performed, one could perceive in it both the formal concerns Stravinsky spoke of and the stylistic pre-occupations mentioned by Babitz. It begins by rustling off in a manner a bit like that of the sixth Brandenburg concerto. There are reminiscences of the dance parodies of *L'Histoire du Soldat* and of Stravinsky's earlier dance suites for small orchestra, with their out-and-out slapstick polkas, waltzes and gavottes. But the orchestration is more light-handed, delicately balanced and luminous; the irony is less acid and biting, and the rhythm less taut and tortured.

It is not accidental that Stravinsky, in speaking of works that might go with the *Danses Concertantes*, mentioned the symphonies of Haydn. For here, as with the *Symphony in C*, one feels that Stravinsky's neo-classicism is entering a mellow, more serene and more readily approachable phase and, although the word will make Mr. Babitz scream in horror, that way lies a new romanticism.

Alfred Frankenstein

COLLABORATION IN FRANCE—SWISS NEWS

Geneva, January 30

NEWS from France has begun to filter into Switzerland through the long impassable barriers to the occupied zone. Now after many months of silence we finally have direct word from Paris. Activities of artists appear to have revived, concerts are again given weekly. These latter consist of regular performances by the Société de Conservatoire, the Concerts Lamoureux and Padeloup, the two former directed by their old conductors, Charles Munch and Eugène Bigot. There are also the "Gabriel Pierné" concerts to replace the Colonne, and those of the Orchestre Féminin Jane Evrard and the Orchestre de la Chambre de Paris.

Something new, a bit startling in a German-dominated city, is the Orchestre Symphonique de Jazz comprising seventy performers. Its repertory begins with Debussy. Reminiscent of the Paris that used to be, there are also innumerable small groups, the Concerts Historiques, Ars Rediviva, the Société des Instruments à Vent and even La Jeune France and the Tryptique.

The last few months have been marked chiefly by ceremonial observances. The 150th anniversary of the death of Mozart was memorialized by a super-festival in Paris, and for a whole week lyric, choral and instrumental performances followed one upon another, the Orchestre du Conservatoire under Charles Munch and Hermann Abendroth, the Trio Pasquier, Alfred Cortot, Jacques Thibaud, co-operating with the chorus of the Bremen Cathedral and the Collegium Musicum of Berlin. The tenth anniversary of Vincent d'Indy's death, the anniversary of César Franck, and the memory of Albert Roussel were also honored. Modern music is once more cultivated by little groups, and the Orchestre du Conservatoire at the Palais Chaillot (the old Trocadéro) has ventured to give a program of Debussy's *La Mer*, Poulenc's *Concerto* for organ, string orchestra and kettledrums, and Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*.