

the most significant part of the business was that it served to bring Mischa Elman into the company of contemporary music and that, as I have indicated, he behaved very well in his new surroundings.

The only other novelty was Paul Crestor's *Pastorale* and *Tarantelle*, performed at the concerts of January 24 and 25, while Vladimir Golschmann was guest conductor. Unable to hear the performance, I can only report at second hand that the music was well received.

Moses Smith

REVIVING HENRY F. GILBERT

AN interesting and important commentary on the progress of American music was provided in a recent San Francisco Symphony concert when Pierre Monteux presented Henry F. Gilbert's *The Dance in Place Congo* along with Morton Gould's *Spirituals for String Choir and Orchestra*.

Gilbert's tone poem created a considerable stir when Monteux played it for the first time in 1918. In the intervening years it has had very few performances, but while it is scarcely a masterpiece, it remains far and away the best American folk piece of its period.

Gilbert was a man of exceptional talent. He had a remarkably keen and perceptive knowledge of what was essential and significant in American life, but he had the misfortune to live at a time when a symphonic composer in the United States had about as much chance as a symphonic composer in Afghanistan. Consequently his list of works is very small, and *The Dance in Place Congo* is, in some spots, lopsided and confused. It is based upon four Creole tunes taken from an essay by the once-celebrated New Orleans novelist, George Washington Cable, and one is amazed to read in Gilbert's notes that he had attempted to develop this material "in the manner of Grieg or Tchaikovsky." Fortunately, much of the piece would make Grieg and Tchaikovsky writhe in their tombs. In profoundly prophetic moments Gilbert indulges in a direct, free, barbed and telling use of rhythm, a pungency of harmonic effect, and a powerful brilliance of orchestration that directly predict the contemporary American folk works of a Copland or a Chávez. After hearing *The Dance in Place Congo* one has the feeling that Gilbert would have made a great American composer if the circumstances of his life had permitted his gifts to develop as they should have developed.

In striking contrast was the little work by Gould, who, at thirty,

has composed much more than Gilbert did in all the sixty years of his life, and who, thanks to radio, has had extremely varied experience writing music for every conceivable purpose and for every conceivable type of ensemble. Gould does not possess a fraction of the native gift which Gilbert had, but his small, lightweight ideas are set forth with the last word in shiny effective polish, neatly balanced forms, point, design and craftsmanship. In other words the American composer today can be a fully professional musician, employing that term in its widest meaning, whereas in Gilbert's day the American composer had to be either a professor or an amateur or, in many cases, both.

Some other works of the mid-season, like Hindemith's *Mathis, der Maler*, Stravinsky's *Capriccio* and the *Fourth Symphony* of Vaughan Williams, were new to San Francisco concert audiences although they are well established in the international repertory and need no commentary at this late date.

Carlos Chávez conducted the first local performance of his ballet-symphony *H. P.*, one of his most original, forceful and significant works, and a magnificent new orchestration by himself of a *Concerto Grosso* by Vivaldi. If the orchestral music of the eighteenth century must be recast in order to make it sound in the large concert halls of our own time, that recasting should be done in this style, for Chávez does not attempt to romanticize the music or make it strut a bigger gesture than it naturally possesses; his Vivaldi remains Vivaldi, and does not become a cross between Rimsky-Korsakov and Strauss.

The season also reached its lowest point at the Chávez concert in a cheap, trite *Piano Concerto* by Aram Khatchaturian for which the soloist, Artur Rubinstein, was responsible. Hands across the sea are all very well, but a certain degree of selectivity is also advisable.

Other mid-season novelties were the beautifully made and deeply sincere *Ecce Homo* of Felix Borowski; some mildly interesting *Variations* for orchestra by the local composer, Wendell Otey; the equally mild *Pastorales* of Isadore Freed; and Gracie Allen's *Concerto for Index Finger*, which is four minutes of masterful kidding. The revival of Leku's *Fantasy on Two Angevin Folk Tunes* was more an act of piety than of musical importance.

Remaining San Francisco Symphony concerts will bring forth David Diamond's *Psalm*, Shostakovitch's *Sixth Symphony*, and other things as yet undecided.

Outside of the orchestral concerts there has been very little in the way of new music. The San Francisco String Quartet resurrected the dreadful *Third Quartet* of Glière, and William Primrose introduced Arthur Benjamin's stiff and meaningless little *Viola Concerto on Themes by Cimarosa*.

Alfred Frankenstein

REVUELTAS REACHES PHILADELPHIA

ACCORDING to certain Mexicans some very special manuscripts by a composer known to many by name but to few by his music have been fermenting in dark cellars awaiting their toast, now long overdue. Philadelphia at last has heard one of these works. The Twentieth Century Music Group was blessed with a unique set of parts from one of the high priests of North and South American music, so with no score but much faith the work was programmed and proved to be the feature of this city's midwinter season. *Musica da feria* by Silvestre Revueltas, a work in five compact parts for string quartet, begins with a daring projection of an embryonic exposition of unusually exciting material, and holds the listener in its grip to the very end where all aspects of thematic growth reach their completion. This kind of form often finds itself struggling from the vague to the obvious. Revueltas, however, moves from the promise and hope of a very personal, imaginative beginning to the revelation of a benedictive, folk-like outcome. The fast and vigorous early portion of the quartet is followed by a strange, sustained and sensitive singing section where the melody has two or three notes for its goal. These are referred to repeatedly and each time a different meaning comes from the subtle melodic changes that precede these recurrent high points and not from a rhythmic or harmonic shift here and there. Then a series of climaxes strikes a high pitch of intensity and forges ahead relentlessly without overreaching the maximum of emotion. It is in the fourth section that the motives resulting from the moving formal structure take the fore and become more and more folk-like in character until the finale breaks out with a surging, earthy, sonorous glorification of the whole.

On the same program we heard Alexander Tcherepnine's *Second Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Ernst Krenek's *Suite, Opus 84, for Solo Cello*, and Norman Dello Joio's *Second Piano Sonata*. In the cello sonata, Tcherepnine successfully uses a plan that seldom comes off in performance. The first movement is one continuous line with both instruments