were shorter pieces to replace the usual endless two-piano arrangements: Virgil Thomson's *Five Inventions,* pleasing for their straightforward clarity of line, and three excerpts from Rieti's *Second Avenue Waltzes.* These are quite often unabashedly sentimental, as waltzes should be, but have many witty and satirical touches. John Cage's *Dance* for prepared pianos revealed his sensitivity to sonorities in a form whose very personal kind of continuity had considerable drive. The close, with a repeated tone against a background of monotony, was quite magical in an almost frightening way.

Earlier in the season a memorial program to Bela Bartok was presented by the League of Composers. The large works heard are by now, of course, modern classics. They were expertly performed by the artists, the *Second Violin Sonata* by Tossy Spivakovsky, the *Piano Sonata* by Andor Foldes and the *First Quartet* by the Budapest String Quartet. Several of the songs given by Enid Szantho were unfamiliar and quite recent; their deeply expressive quality made one hope they will now appear more regularly on recital programs. The striking individuality shown even in the early *Quartet* indicates clearly that from the very beginning Bartok was a figure of real distinction, who encompassed a wide emotional range with a technical skill of great invention and power.

Donald Fuller

MOSTLY CHAMBER MUSIC

THIS small mid-season I found more interesting for its chamber music presentations than for its orchestral ones. A *Suite* for violin and piano by Alexei Haieff, played by Joseph Fuchs, was vigorous and interesting. The few slow sections were both affecting and well-made, and though the fast ones adhered rather rigidly to the Stravinsky and Copland manner in their pattern, they bounced and jumped quite convincingly. Lehman Engel's new *Cello Sonata,* played by Bernard Greenhouse, was singularly lacking in motor drive, not because it was calm and meditative but because of its tonal and rhythmic weariness. Though quite competent in shape, it was tedious in expression. The first performance of another *Cello Sonata,* by Alfredo Casella, was given by Ana Dritelle. This has only a moment or two of warm sweet air and rather continuously laments the passing of empire in a set of barely concealed "marches of armies by night." It stays somewhere around the early thirties in texture and suggests that its composer wished music would stop developing new means, though mastery of the restricted material it does employ is also shown.

Webster Aitken galloped brilliantly through a quite shocking *Fantasie Burlesque* by Olivier Messiaen. I was incensed by its gaudy and vulgar swoops and swishes and firmly convinced that it was just an especially revolting work for the post-graduate perfume trade. Later I reflected on the

title of the piece and realized that such a reaction might be precisely what the author was aiming at. I began to see the relation to Rouault's horrid old whores and the bitter satiric cartoons of the Middle Ages. The piece employs Messiaen's full gamut of diatonic as well as chromatic dissonant harmony, spectacular rhythmic drive and a selection of virtuosic vulgarities suitable to the subject at hand.

One of Paul Bowles's finest slow movements for piano was played by Edna Bockstein. *Tamanar* is a lovely, extended nocturne, an evocation of a small South Moroccan Berber village. A single sultry voice sings a formless tune, indefinite in pitch sequence but expressive in outline. But the inhabitants must all have Oxford educations, for the tune alternates with beautifully conceived chord sequences in a refined and very polytonal style, unusually sensitive. Another Bowles piece, *Sayula,* was in his charming Mexican manner, brightly dancelike with its guitar and marimba cheer.

A set of Virgil Thomson's *Portraits* played by Samuel Dushkin was entertaining in the best sense. The nasty-naughty edge with which Thomson delineates the figments of his social consciousness, while it can sometimes become plain cutting up, also has the precision and ruthlessness of real wit and clips a true picture. The present three were fancily arranged by Dushkin and sport new frills and decorations. Most attractive was *Bird in a Cage,* which resembles those frightening fowls Picasso has been doing for the last ten years; hyper-expressive, they are terrible birds of the soul, in the way that the dove is the sweet and holy bird of the soul. Though the pieces are for unaccompanied violin, scarcely anything in the way of tonal variety or inflection is missing from the idiom.

Three new pieces for violin and piano appeared on Roman Totenberg's program. Henry Barraud's *Allegro* had little but reserve to offer. Theodore Chanler's *Nocturne* is constructed on the principle of a continuous figuration accompaniment over which a nostalgic melodic line is presented. William Bergsma's *Show Piece* revealed that composer in a lighter vein which exploited the fiddle and was alive if not over-entertaining.

The Forum Group of the I.S.C.M. continues its interesting work of presenting for public audition the music of young or, if older, little-known composers. I heard recently a set of *Preludes* for piano by Seymour Barab and Paul Schwartz's cycle of six songs, *A Poet to his Beloved.* These are afflicted with a lugubrious muddiness; though serious and with moments of poetry, they seldom define themselves. Ned Rorem's *Five Portraits* for oboe and piano are in his most extended and serious manner, somewhat thick chordally, a little bit unmoving in rhythmic behavior but well presented and always tuneful. Merton Brown's *Cantabile* for string orchestra appeared in a piano arrangement. This is a convincing and elevated essay in a dissonant contrapuntal style that is both sensitive and

tender in melodic address and well achieved formally. Its tense and incisive climax comes off well even on the piano.

The Three Choir Festival at Temple Emanu-el, under the direction of Lazare Saminsky, presented works by George Tremblay, Alvin Etler, Edward Cone, George McKay, Saminsky, Villa-Lobos and Otto Luening. I liked best Tremblay's suite for string quartet, *Modes of Transportation.* It is lengthy and lyrical and though completely chromatic (almost twelve-tone), of a humorous but not flippant nature. Its distinction lies in the charming melodic lines and workmanship in regard to the medium.

III

An ambitious orchestral work was Louis Gruenberg's *Violin Concerto,* Opus 47, played by Heifetz (who commissioned the score) with the New York Philharmonic. The three long movements were sumptuously performed and sounded luxurious in the extreme. Almost never does the little "sweet" choir stop; celesta, piano, harps and glockenspiel are heard nearly throughout, and the solo violin gives out a line of confection which is as remarkable for its extent as for its candyness. The general substance is of a popular kind, not the hymn tune variety but just simple vulgar tunes of the sort one sang in junior high school. Gruenberg has done a rather prodigal job of orchestral upholstering. Why he missed a sure-fire ending and simply stopped so surprisingly is a mystery.

Bartok's early *Portrait Number 1* for violin and orchestra (Szigeti and the New York City Symphony) is a touching and well-made work. Its vague character depends on the deployment of a fantastic array of secondary seventh chords. Bartok was evidently studying a special stylistic device in this piece and though this is clear, the tender and plaintive music is nonetheless lovely to hear. It also evolves on a fascinating structural plan which is most original.

Dean Dixon led his American Youth Orchestra in a first performance of Philippa Duke Schuyler's *Rumpelstiltsken* and George Kleinsinger's Corwinade, *Peepo the Piccolo.* Miss Schuyler has reached the ripe age of fourteen with a list of performed orchestral works behind her. Her extended and tuneful poem resembles its subject in the same way that *Till Eulenspiegel* does. Though less interesting in texture than her *Manhattan Nocturne* which so surprised me last season, it is certainly musical and happily done. Kleinsinger's piece is amusing and clever if also a bit long for its weight. Dixon is doing wonderful educational work among the young of New York. I sat next to a young lady of about six years who unnerved me by answering a questionnaire about the Beethoven symponies with easy scholarship, and who responded to the amusing visual and audible devices employed by Dixon in his instruction with a speed and information that left me swimming.

Lou Harrison