

sung by Marie Kraft. Mr. Elwell's songs, which have been heard before in their piano version, are based on texts by Conrad Aiken, Robert Frost, and Alice Meynell. Mr. Elwell has set the poems very sensitively, and they make an attractive suite. The scoring, while effective, is a little thick for the subtle emotion of the texts and the music.

Other conductors have brought various novelties to The Cleveland Orchestra's concerts. George Szell gave a stunning performance of Hindemith's new *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by C. M. von Weber* which had an enormous success here. This effective score makes its way quickly with the broader musical public and should bring many new friends to Hindemith's music. Vladimir Golschmann introduced Copland's *Quiet City*, and Eugene Goossens revived his *Sinfonietta* of 1922, which remains one of his most impressive scores. Fritz Reiner may be credited with another revival, the *Dances from Galanta* by Kodaly which are already eleven years old and worthy of more frequent performances.

There remains only to mention the *Bachianas Brasileiras Number 2* by Villa-Lobos which was introduced to Cleveland by Mr. Goossens. This is the work that contains the charming *Little Train of Caipira*. The other movements of the suite, however, prove useful material for the concert hall. It might make a better impression if the second and third movements were interchanged; as it stands, the fervent *Aria* is dulled by coming after the long quiet periods of the *Prelude*. A greater contrast is needed between these first two movements. The music of all four parts is impressive, and some of the best to come into the orchestral repertory from South America.

Little has turned up outside of the symphony concerts. The Cleveland Orchestra gave a stunning performance of Leonard Bernstein's *Fancy Free* score with the Ballet Theatre at some special ballet performances, and the Walden String Quartet repeated the D-minor Quartet of Normand Lockwood.

G. H. Lovett Smith

## BALTIMORE THAWS OUT IN WAR-TIME

THE thoroughly rejuvenated Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, now in its third season under the skilled ministrations of Reginald Stewart, is bringing to this city and its war-swollen population an increasing number of new works. So far, we have heard the Stravinsky *Circus Polka*, the Prokofiev *Third Piano Concerto*, and Nicolas Nabokov's *Sinfonia Biblica*,

all first times here. Preceding this triumvirate was the American premiere of Hugo Weisgall's overture, *American Comedy '43*. Notoriously callous to anything post-Victorian in music, the sober burghers of this community greeted the Stravinsky with much of the pained puzzlement that marked the reception of the work by Mr. Ringland's elephants. However, being unable to retort in kind, they resorted to the indeterminate applause that covers everything from confusion to acclaim. On the same program Gladys Swarthout presented the initial performance here of Canteloube's superbly scored *Four Songs from the Auvergne*.

The third Prokofiev piano concerto is a delight, gracious and gay, free of pretensions. Its performance by Stewart and the soloist, Reginald Godden, fairly glistened. It has a charming lucidity and if it weren't for the technical hurdles that straddle the soloist's course, one might wonder why it isn't heard more often.

Weisgall's *American Comedy '43*, originally *Overture in F*, is described by its composer as "a work of obvious structure" and was written in the main while he was training at Camp Ritchie. (He is now stationed in London where he has conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra.) It struck us as being good ballet material, its vigorous, well-defined rhythms seeming to catch some of the carefree Saturday night gaiety of a Blue Ridge town, which was the composer's stated intention. Unfortunately, like a large number of contemporary scores, it must be seen to be fully appreciated. So examined, it impresses by its technical skill and surety.

The Nabokov *Sinfonia Biblica* is in four movements, "Wisdom," "Love," "Fear," and "Praise," and was inspired by a recent reading of the Old Testament. It was started in France in 1938 and completed two years later, at Cape Cod. The writing has a certain profound sincerity but we failed to detect the serene dignity and beauty that its eloquent source led us to anticipate. Of the four movements, two hearings of the symphony left us with a preference for the third, a scherzo of considerable vitality.

At all of his concerts this season, Stewart has been startling the natives by playing the "original" version of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, as published here in Baltimore by Carr, at 36 Baltimore Street, in 1814. This unfamiliar arrangement, a copy of which Stewart found framed in an out-of-the-way corner at the Maryland Historical Society, boasts a four-measure introduction and a postlude of the same length. There are a number of rhythmic and melodic variations from the generally accepted version, disturbing factors that so far, and strangely, seem to have pro-

voked no patriotically inspired protest from the more articulate citizenry. The orchestral transcription of this "original" version is by Nabokov, newly added member to the faculty at the Peabody Conservatory.

Franz Bornschein's elegiac *Ode to the Brave*, given its world premiere here by Hans Kindler and the National Symphony Orchestra (it was repeated the following night in Washington), revealed itself as a warmly expressive work, expertly scored. It is a tribute to the men who lost their lives when the aircraft carrier, *Hornet*, went down off Santa Cruz. It runs about twelve minutes and opens and closes with a rocking figure for piano and harp, that sounds a vague knell over sustained 'cellos and plucked basses. Midway, muted brass figures of a martial nature form a contrast to passages for divided strings, more tender in design. With the exception of the less pretentious *Moon Over Taos*, for flute, strings and percussion, it is the best of this composer's prolific output to reach our ears.

Kindler brought Baltimore its first hearing of Villa-Lobos' *The Little Train of Caipira*, a stunningly scored, highly descriptive toccatina, that centers about a succulent tune which Cole Porter is probably sorry he didn't think of first.

Gustav Klemm

## PREMIERES AND NOVELTIES FOR PITTSBURGH

THE premiere performances and novelties announced for the season 1944-45 by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra would distinguish any musical organization as progressive. From uncompromising guideposts of program making there was no deviation despite the fact that of its eighty-five members no less than forty-two are new to the orchestra this season. When numerous first chairs are being occupied by new-comers, the task of rebuilding an instrumental ensemble of precision and style is particularly laborious. This challenge of amalgamating the old and new into an orchestra capable of performing a contemporary repertory fortunately fell to a wise and experienced builder. Fritz Reiner, now in his seventh season here, made the orchestra sound, in record time, like an ensemble for whom the reading of modern parts is something quite natural. With five days of rehearsals Aaron Copland's *El Salon Mexico* received a reading of rhythmical élan, and in the second week, the *Sixth Symphony* of Shostakovitch was heard in an extraordinary performance. The same concert brought the American premiere of *Maku*, a suite on Iranian themes by Lev Knipper, the Tiflis-born disciple of Reinhold