

suave but unimpressive *Songs for Three Queens* and Otto Luening's *Prelude to a Hymn Tune* by William Billings, also on the same program. Luening's music was formed of variations which started consonantly, grew successively more dissonant and then returned to simpler harmonies. This proved to be somewhat crippling, for Luening, at his best in dissonant contrapuntal anguish, could not sustain the interest in the more consonant parts.

Wesley Sontag and the Mozart String Sinfonietta gave an all American program for every taste. A slightly augmented seventeenth century piece called *Ukranian Suite* by Quincy Porter began the program which went on to a romantic song, *Dover Beach* by Samuel Barber, and a modern work *Homage to Handel* by Goddard Lieberson. Quincy Porter's work was nice and Lieber-son's was interesting especially in the Minuetto and Air-Courante which showed considerable feeling. The rest of the program on which there appeared Danburg, Kramer, Kernochan, Watts, Van Eps, Ebann, Mauro-Cottone, Marki, was of the leveling tastelessness of radio arrangements, Danburg's *Variations on the Hoochy-Coochy* being the best but never at any moment evoking the rich associations of this tune.

Movie and radio arrangements in France and Russia have a quality rare to our cheap splendours. Khrennikov's *Symphony*, played by the Philadelphia under Ormandy, was a work in the style of the best Russian movie backgrounds—appealing and fresh and full of melodic interest. It is better music than Shostakovitch's *First Symphony* with which it has many points in common.

Elliott Carter

## CONCERTS FREE AND PAID FOR

IN the past, we have been wary of free concerts, but this winter's experience with the Composers' Forum Laboratory Free Concerts has banished that fear. When the Federal Music Project presents Aaron Copland, Nicolai Berezowsky and Quincy Porter, to mention but three composers whose music was heard in the last two months, I for one am perfectly willing to attend, free or otherwise. For those interested in contemporary music, the season

has been more a matter of time than money. This is a pleasant state of affairs.

On the paying side were the Eva Gauthier retrospective recitals, the Roth String Quartet in a first performance of Roy Harris' *Piano Quintet*, and Lehman Engel's splendid Sunday afternoon recitals of his Madrigal Group.

The Roy Harris new *Piano Quintet* is a work that is both original and virile. This has nothing to do with lucidity, for I did not always find Mr. Harris lucid, but the *quality* of this quintet is important for its sincerity and purpose. Its quality was so apparent in fact, that I forthwith take leave of those persistent evaders who always remark that they would like to hear the work again before they pass judgment. There is a tremendous special strength in the first movement which is in the form of a *Passacaglia*, and a marvelous sense of growth which builds in the second movement, *Cadenza*, as each instrument enters after the opening for the violin alone. Least successful of all three movements was the *Fugue*, possibly because we have come to expect something from a fugue which Mr. Harris may esthetically believe it needn't give. This work is by no means flawless. It errs on the side of long-windedness, and if Mr. Harris kept in mind the varied possibilities of the combination for which he was composing, he also lost sight of the disadvantages inherent to the mixture of the percussive quality of the piano and the sounds of the string quartet. It is too bad Mr. Harris felt impelled to write program notes so ponderously philosophic that to read them challenged any possible pleasure you might have felt from the music. This fault is not peculiar to Roy Harris; in fact, he only falls into the pit that besets all composers when they make literary attempts to analyze their inspiration.

I also welcomed the opportunity of hearing a full evening of Aaron Copland's works. As Mr. Copland successively conducted his *Two Pieces for String Orchestra*, a suite from his satirical ballet *Hear Ye, Hear Ye*, and his *First Symphony*, it became convincingly apparent how important is his place in American music. Certainly there is no need, in this magazine, to review any of these compositions. They clearly stand as important

works that deserve a place in the libraries of any symphonic organization.

Mr. Berezowsky's program offered no music that was written after 1928, which gave a rather limited view of him as a composer. He unashamedly presented two early songs, one from 1921, *Awaiting*, and the other from 1924, *The Way that Lovers Use*. Here Mr. Berezowsky allowed us to see the adolescent mind at work, and I for one, was embarrassed. One wonders if it is always a good plan to bring out the family album with the baby pictures! However, there was plenty of compensation in this composer's *Theme and Variations* for piano, clarinet, two violins, viola and 'cello (Opus 7) and his *Suite* for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon (Opus 11). The first work, though very conventional, presented interesting contrasts of style in seven variations. There is a wide range of emotional content, from Oriental flavoring of the fourth variation to the simple and mellifluous theme itself. The composer has seemed to pack this work with every musical reminiscence, not even denying Chopin a place in the fifth variation. The *Suite for Wood-Winds* gives quite a different impression. Here the music more closely approximates the later works of Mr. Berezowsky. This *Suite* is justifiably well known, for it is not only interesting music, but eminently suited to the instruments for which it is written.

As did Mr. Berezowsky, Quincy Porter, in his Composers' Forum Concert, showed us an amazing range of tonality, starting with the simplicity of the eighteenth century harmonies and passing through impressionism into a more vigorous and interesting use of contemporary materials. The whole aspect of Mr. Porter's music seems to me to be lyrical. At the same time it is exceedingly well wrought. With quiet impressionism Mr. Porter can bring us a sensuous lassitude as he does in his *Second Sonata for Violin and Piano*. And then with great resourcefulness he gives us a *Suite for Viola Alone*, keeping it interesting all the way, which is no mean feat. The vital *Sonata for Piano* is built on modal tunes and rich polytonality, and the *Quintet* for clarinet and string quartet again imparts a lyric loveliness, but curiously enough, this time under a Russian influence.

One evening was used to present the works of both Seth Bing-

ham and Paul Creston. Mr. Bingham's *Tame Animal Tunes* for chamber orchestra were of that orchestral cleverness which some seem to like, but which for me is incomplete without the accompaniment of at least a newsreel. Mr. Creston's *String Quartet* showed a fine sense for line and imagination. The *Scherzoso*, we found particularly entrancing for its very original thematic material. The *Three Sonnets for Voice and Piano* were more conservative than one expected they would be, after hearing the same composer's *Three Poems from Walt Whitman* for 'cello and piano, the latter works being particularly effective.

I sometimes feel inclined to dissociate completely the art of singing from the art of music. Certainly a goodly number of singers show so little musical intelligence or imagination that a song of Bach or Debussy means less to them than *I'll Bring You Home Again Kathleen* . . . and as for the songs of Fauré or Mahler (to mention but two composers,) they are blissfully unknown. For this reason if for no other, Eva Gauthier brings with her recitals not only a deep intellectual satisfaction, but also a kind of hope that there may some day be other singers with intelligence and sensitivity. It is only a hope or trust of this sort that could allow the contemporary composer to continue composing songs. Certainly no one would go to hear Mme. Gauthier for her voice alone. Be that as it may, she gave the only series of solo performances this year which assured the listener a consistently good fare of music, ranging as it did from the seventeenth century to the present time, with a considerable amount of emphasis on contemporary song. However Mme. Gauthier seems to find songs of Bach and Beethoven that are equally as new to the listener as are the contemporary Spanish songs or those of Berg and Milhaud. Since these concerts were retrospective collections of music that Mme. Gauthier had performed in other years in New York City, it seemed too bad that she did not find it necessary to sing a program of American songs.

Goddard Lieberman

## BOSTON HEARS A NEW RUSSIAN WORK

**Y**URI SHAPORIN's *Symphony* in C-minor, introduced to America this month by the Boston Symphony under Richard