

more vital music, so terribly dated, is just beginning to receive general appreciation.

Szymanowski's *Harnasie* was presented on the day of his death. It is the best work of Poland's finest modern composer. Often brutal, often gay, sometime wistful, the work is full of interesting orchestration which one would like to hear again.

The Philadelphians played Kodaly's *Dances from Galanta* which, agreeable and soothing, should make a pleasant addition to Pops programs.

Among the younger American composers Goddard Lieberson produced a *Tango* for piano and orchestra, which was over-orchestrated and not as good as his *Homage to Handel*, and Israel Citkowitz a setting to a Blake poem, for women's voices. This latter was particularly successful in its mingling of sung words and vocalizing. It is unfortunate that we do not hear more music by this man whose every work reveals loving care in construction and genuine musical ideas.

Elliott Carter

SPRING FANCIES, 1937

EVEN the most detached personalities must realize that this is spring, and so, much of the new music being presented at this time gives itself over for performance to motherly festival committees which, in turn, provide audiences who can, ostensibly, "take it."

Mr. Lazare Saminsky got off to a flying start way back in March by auspicing a "Three Choir Festival," the three being Lehman Engel's Madrigal Singers, the New York University Choir, and Mr. Saminsky's own Emanu-El Choir. Much of the music was from the Gothic Period, but parts were American choral from Jacob Kimball (1761-1826) to the present day. The only first performances were Arthur Shepherd's doleful *A Ballad of Trees and the Master*, and Lazare Saminsky's *De Profundis* which I found, by far, the more interesting of the two. Other choral works heard were by Roy Harris (his vigorous setting of *The Story of Noah*), Randall Thompson, Ernest Bloch, and Lehman Engel.

At one point, Mr. Saminsky gave an address on "The American Chorale and Music of Our Day," making statements with which this writer finds himself in complete disagreement. Mr. Saminsky set out to prove that most contemporary Americans use a strident polyphony that is neither typical or in keeping with the American scene. As proof, he points to the remarkable (?) and graceful *light*-polyphony of the New England chorale, and seems to feel that therein should be the model for the present-day American composer of choral music. At the climax, we found Mr. Saminsky eulogizing Howard Hanson, Randall Thompson, and Arthur Shepherd as the receivers of the early American tradition of psalm-tune. This may be, but the important thing is to prove that the early New England psalm-tunes were in any way remarkable, except when viewed from the angle of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Mr. Saminsky seemed to forget the American direction taken when William Billings, a poor tanner of Revolutionary times, set down his crude fugues with chalk upon the hides in his shop. The small amount of music he left behind shows another tradition of American music within which many composers are working today with great sincerity and purpose.

The first New York spring festival of the Chamber Music Society of America opened with three concerts of American music both old and new. The manner of presentation was distinguished and there were fine performances of a large number of significant and interesting works. Those of us who were not able to be in Washington for the Coolidge Festival were glad of the opportunity to hear Roger Sessions' new string quartet. Other works presented were by Walter Piston, Aaron Copland, Nicolai Berezowsky, Carlos Salzedo, Quincy Porter, and Roy Harris. Most of these have been reviewed here recently. However, it is of real importance to bring such pieces before the public as often as possible. The Chamber Music Society of America performs a distinct service by making programs of compositions that have proven their worth and have shown deservance of further audiences.

Music by Prokofieff, Porter, Bloch and Riegger was heard at Town Hall in a program sponsored by the League of Composers.

Prokofieff's *Overture on Jewish Themes* was a rather simple piece for piano, clarinet and string quartet. When compared to Bloch's *Piano Quintet* which appeared on the same program, it showed very clearly what Bloch meant when he spoke of the difference in character between Jewish and Hebrew music. With Bloch, the thematic material is strong and eloquent; and this, combined with an unbelievable amount of ideas and invention produces a marvelous and impressive piece of musical architecture. With the Prokofieff, the best you can say is that it is clever. Quincy Porter's *Quartet No. 3* revealed that composer's ability to achieve a successful end with very simple means. Mr. Porter, has an intensely lyric expression which is most apparent in his string quartets. On the same program, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and their group performed the *Variations and Conclusions* from *New Dance* for which Wallingford Riegger has provided splendid music. Besides being eminently suited to the dance it is of such fine quality and design that it keeps the listener constantly at direct attention. Its individuality is not dependent upon any one style or design; nevertheless, it has a perfect unity when considered on a whole.

Also at Town Hall, the Harvard Glee Club sang a wonderfully gay and ribald *Tarantella* by Elliot Carter. Mr. Carter, who used words by Ovid for a Prolog to Incidental Music for Plautus's *Mostellaria*, succeeded in writing something that even the Harvard boys found they couldn't be tight-lipped about! I wish I could convey with words the lift that this music gave. What a breath of life it was after Gustav Holst's pallid *Hecuba's Lament* which preceded it at the concert.

The Composer's Forum-Laboratory continues to present American composers. It is very encouraging to see these programs carry on a continual week-by-week performance of their work. This persistent presentation of contemporary American music is much more valuable than the sporadic virtuosi performances that composers have had to depend on in the past. Some of those presented at the recent forums were Howard Hanson, Bernard Rogers, Paul Pisk, Richard Donovan, David Diamond, and Robert McBride.

No new works were given at Dr. Hanson's concert, but a renew-

ed hearing of his *Lament for Beowulf* convinced me that it is the best and the most representative of his style. It was too bad that Bernard Rogers' orchestral works were not heard to better advantage, for Mr. Rogers is a composer of rich orchestral scores that most often convey a profoundly moving emotion. *The Raising of Lazarus* is one of the best American choral works and deserves more hearings. Also on his program was the early *Soliloquy* for solo flute and string orchestra; *Interludes* and *Third Scene* from his opera *The Marriage of Aude*; and the *Three Japanese Dances*. Dr. Paul Pisk and Rosy Wertheim shared a concert to present their own works . . . giving the audience a view of contemporary European activity. Another dual concert brought Cyr de Brant and Richard Donovan. This combine seemed calculated to keep people away. For those interested in the music of Cyr de Brant would certainly not be fond of Richard Donovan's compositions while those interested in Donovan would find it difficult to listen to de Brant. I found myself early on the Donovan side; his music has real workmanship and creativeness, though it is stark and at times, acid. However, I found those two qualities refreshing, even in their brittleness.

Certainly there is no doubt of the talent of David Diamond. His Forum concert gave further proof. The *Psalm* for large orchestra is a very complete and masterly piece; the new *Concerto for Violin* has much to recommend it to the listener, being filled with ripe melodies, sustained moods both bright and somber, and a very distinctive harmonic scheme. The orchestration sounds, at times, experimental, but it is the sound of *expert* experimentation.

Robert McBride's evening was a distinct success, with McBride participating on the oboe, English horn, and clarinet. He did not sing his own songs, which I liked least of all his music presented. The wood-wind works were chiefly little suites for virtuosi performers in jazz media. They were good, but not the most important. His *Workout* for chamber orchestra and *Prelude to a Tragedy* (for large orchestra) are both fine works which place McBride in a secure position as a composer.

Goddard Lieberman