

OVER THE AIR

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COMPOSERS Beware! Grandma Radio can prove to have big teeth, the better to eat you with. Particularly if you are Red-Riding-Hood enough to sign any statement that will allow them to play your compositions without remuneration. I have just recently seen a "release" form which was handed to a composer to sign in the event that a composition of his should be played on a certain radio station. That release was one of the most appalling legal documents that has appeared since the days of the long moustached mortgage owner. It not only called for the release of a specific composition, but allowed that station to play *any* work of the composer for a period of a year; with absolutely no responsibilities on the part of the radio station; with provisos that covered every aspect of the compositions, the copying of parts, etc.; *and all to be delivered to said radio station for the sum of one (\$1.00) dollar!* Think of it! Not only that. The final insult (a composer who was gullible enough to sign the release told me this) is that the dollar never is delivered!

I have mentioned no names and by no means do I wish to imply that this treatment is typical of all the radio companies, though it is a general practice to pay (if at all) as little as possible. What the radio people do know is that unless they have the composer's permission to play his composition they cannot play it without risking law suits. Therefore you will be asked to sign a release, not always like the one above, but a release nevertheless. If you ask for some payment before signing, you may get it. You may also get a refusal to have your work played. Further proof that the composers must be organized into a strong group to protect their own rights.

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More than the usual amount of modern music has been coming over the radio in the last weeks. The League of Composers took to the air again with compositions of David Diamond, Louis

Gruenberg, and Paul Creston (whose music took the place of Mark Brunswick's previously announced string quartet). Diamond's *String Trio* was a first performance and proved to be a sprightly and witty composition going further into the consolidation of this composer's style. Frederick Jacobi was the commentator. Artur Rodzinski gave America the first hearing of Shostakovitch's new *Fifth Symphony*, which was elaborately discussed in the last issue of MODERN MUSIC by the Soviet music critic, Grigori Schneerson. Though I can not agree entirely with what Mr. Schneerson had to say about the "energy," "emotional power" and "marvelous richness and serious thought," all of those elements do play a part in the symphony. The opening pages of the symphony start out to be a revelation of a new Shostakovitch, but because of what one may term inexcusable inconsistencies, the final result is not entirely satisfying.

Come spring, comes a music festival from Rochester, N. Y., came a composition called *Come Autumn* by Leo Sowerby which didn't come off. Also, by a chap named Ussachevsky, a *Cantata* which should have been written by someone named Smith, so full of cliché and banality it was. Much better, though not on the festival, was Bernard Rogers' *Fantasy* for flute and viola solo with orchestral accompaniment. This work, which was played by the Rochester Civic Orchestra on one of their programs, was stirringly evocative. The same composer's *Symphony* was even more impressive but only partly broadcast from Rochester so that room could be made for music of much less importance.

Other items: Aaron Copland's *Salon Mexico* was broadcast by the British Broadcasting Company, thereby stealing a march on the American radios by a few months, since Adrian Boult will conduct it once again when he will be guest conductor for NBC. Fritz Reiner played Morton Gould's *Pavane* with the Ford Symphony. Arranged for string orchestra, Charles Ives' *String Quartet* in G-Major was heard over Columbia under the direction of Bernard Hermann. Fritz Mahler gave a performance of the De Falla *Concerto* for harpsichord (or piano) and small orchestra. A piano was used for this poorly rehearsed (or so it sounded) program from WOR. And, as if you don't know, Duke Ellington is back on the air.