

quartet of Albert Moeschinger, also a Swiss, the *Klavierquartet* of Jef von Durme of Belgium and the well-worked out *Klavierfuge* by Piet Ketting of Holland. The *Bläserquintet* by Jean Absil proved his talent although he has created better works.

Honegger and Ibert were poorly represented by their opera *L'Aiglon*. This unsuccessful joint effort bears little evidence of its parentage. A performance of Wagnerian excerpts was given and also a presentation of the romantic historical oratorio *Die Schelde*, by the Flemish nationalist composer Peter Benoit, a work monumentally conceived but quite antiquated.

As compensation the festival offered an impressive display of Belgium's artistic achievements. Musical life in that country has enjoyed an unusual upswing in the last decade. Excellent ensembles were available, and special praise is due the Belgian Radio's symphony orchestra and its conductor, Franz André, the Flemish Philharmonic, the great Brussels and Antwerp choruses and the many distinguished quartets, ensembles and soloists.

Future meetings of the Conseil will be held June 1939 at Frankfort, the next one at Naples, and then another at Edinburgh. But unless this council of composers completely transforms itself, it will remain without life or real power. What musical value can reside in conferences made up exclusively of academicians and reactionaries? What can be the justification for the existence of such a society? Programs of "contemporary music" that continue to echo the music of yesteryear are decidedly open to question.

Arno Huth

BOSTON NEWS

PAUL HINDEMITH has provided the sensation of the Boston season to date, chalking up no less than four performances of one work in six days. His new *Symphonic Dances*, heard by some ten thousand people over the Christmas week-end, were received with exceptional warmth by orchestra and public, and deservedly so. Few scores of as much distinction have appeared in recent years.

Following the course of spiritual development revealed in such works as the *Marienleben*, the mystical *Mathis der Maler* and the

medieval ballet *Nobilissima Visione*, the *Symphonic Dances* rise to extraordinary heights of vision and intensity. Never before has Hindemith shown such an apt harmonic sense in the setting of his expressive melodies; not often has his structural ability been so ingenious, or his resource so unfailing. The work has an interesting history. It was projected as a stage piece for the Ballet Russe. But while it was still in sketch, Massine appeared with the plan of a ballet about St. Francis already maturing in his mind and, proceeding from this new idea, Hindemith wrote a wholly new score in collaboration with Massine. When *Nobilissima Visione* was completed he turned to his abandoned sketches and recast them into a four movement form of almost symphonic proportions, contriving the abstract ballet *par excellence*.

Other new works from foreign hands at the autumn and early winter concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra have been the *Second Pianoforte Concerto* of Ernst Krenek and the *Two Nature Poems* of Eugene Goossens. The latter are attractive pieces by a glib composer and sonorous orchestrator, but the former is a work of considerable significance. It is written in the twelve-tonal technic that Krenek has employed during the last six years, and contains music of much interest and no little charm. Twelve-toned music however still relies on romantic principles to obtain its effects: evidently it has yet to establish its own period. Strangeness alone is not sufficient. The weakness of the *Concerto* is its rhythmic stagnation. The sense of progress in a work must grow from an analogous movement in the generating thought.

Aaron Copland's effective and enthusiastically received rhapsody, *El Salon Mexico*, which has since been heard in New York, and Gardner Read's curiously derivative and inconsequential *Suite for String Orchestra* need not detain us here. Dr. Koussevitzky has produced, however, three concertos of more than current significance by American composers. Most important of the three is the *Violin Concerto* of Edward Burlingame Hill, a work of simplicity and eloquence. The new clarity of style and the familiar wit and effectiveness of orchestration are ideally suited to the form of the violin concerto, which he handles with ease. The slow movement possesses a richness and depth of feeling infrequently found in contemporary American music.

Nicolai Berezwosky's *Toccata, Variations and Finale*, for string quartet and orchestra is an uneven work containing a series of variations upon a theme of great beauty. The first movement, however, is an unsuccessful attempt to recapture the style of the *concerto grosso*, the string quartet completely losing its essential character of delicacy and expression in an effort to oppose the ferocious brilliance of the orchestra.

The *Dédicaces* of Vladimir Dukelsky is by all odds the most curious work that Dr. Koussevitzky has uncovered this season. Scored for large orchestra with a full complement of percussion that includes the seldom used emery boards to imitate the splashing of waves, the piece is really a piano concerto with what the composer calls "a vocal epigraph." In the introduction a soprano intones some brief verses from the *Alcool* of the impressionist poet Guillaume Apollinaire. From this poem the titles of the movements follow. There are dedications to the city, the country, and the sea. The music has occupied Dukelsky since 1934 and, despite frequent appearances of Vernon Duke in its pages, represents a great advance in technic. His wonderful versatility in the handling of the immense orchestral resources is at once evident, but more remarkable is the appearance of inevitability and logic in the construction of his total canvas. If Dukelsky's self-criticism can lead him along the difficult path of simplification, we may expect increasingly interesting works in the near future.

Walter Piston's ballet *The Incredible Flutist*, written for the Boston "Pop's" Orchestra and performed by it last spring, was recently given by the Providence Symphony Orchestra. It renewed the striking impression made in Boston, testifying to its composer's versatility and dramatic instinct. The *Symphony*, repeated by Koussevitzky this autumn in Cambridge, was reassurance of his seriousness and conviction. Certainly there is no American work in the same form to equal it.

George Henry Lovett Smith

AMERICANS IN THE FLEISHER COLLECTION

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