

*Jim Jives*). The jazz influence was pretty remote for a good part of the time, and, when present, seemed of a definitely early vintage and somewhat too refined. I liked best the slower numbers with their charming feeling of nostalgia.

Michael Rosenker's violin recital — one-half contemporary music — included a première, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sonata-Quasi una Fantasia*, a variegated assortment of left-over impressionisms, chord streams, lush moods, chinoiseries, and "motives," thrown together in a half-baked manner. Its cheapness was emphasized by works that succeeded it, Szymanowski's *Tarantella*, a brilliant concert piece, and *Chant de Roxanne* (an excerpt from the opera *Le Roi Roger*), distinguished by a rich and tender diatonic melody and a peculiarly haunting cadence, which suddenly introduces an unexpected major chord in an exquisite manner. The Stravinsky *Suite*, based on material from *Pulcinella*, is not so interesting as the later *Suite Italienne*, a similar arrangement done in collaboration with Dushkin; yet even this earlier work shows how Stravinsky, instead of making an arrangement or adaptation, invariably creates a new piece. The writing for each of the instruments is superb, the fresh, clear sonority exhilarating. And *Pulcinella* is charming music in any garb.

Donald Fuller

## JUNGLES OF BRAZIL

I THINK that perhaps the most effective way to report on the Festival of Brazilian music at the Museum of Modern Art is to compare it with the Mexican program which Chavez directed at the same place last spring. The Brazilian affair was far more imposing — a series of three concerts of chamber music and solos, including one made up entirely of the works of Villa-Lobos. Works by this composer for three horns and trombone, for eight cellos, for harp, celesta, flute, saxophone and women's voices promised much in the way of unusual and seductive instrumental combinations. Nevertheless there was more musical interest in any single piece on the Mexican program than in all the Brazilian programs put together.

What was impressive about the Mexicans was the sureness of approach, the originality, the awareness and fine manipulation of sonorous material. The Brazilians, on the other hand, lack direction; their exoticism is sentimental and extravagant, their feeling for timbre haphazard and of the lush, impressionist school. They appear also to have only one figure who can be considered in the name of art, Villa-Lobos. And it was precisely

Villa-Lobos who turned out, as the concerts progressed, to be more and more of a disappointment. The program notes hint a naively bombastic temperament. Self-taught, he arrived in Paris for the first time at the age of forty-one, proclaiming, "I didn't come to learn. I've come to show you what I've done!" He has composed over fourteen hundred musical works in every form; his *Rudepôema* (savage poem) is, to quote the program, "the most difficult piano composition ever written," with – "an overwhelming sonority of sound." Well it is just this overwhelming sonority of sound which sums up Villa-Lobos. Behind it he takes refuge, concealing himself within an elaborate acoustic jungle like some wild animal, invisible beneath a tangle of ferns and creepers. He has a wealth of material, of more than musicological interest, and no idea what to do with it. There is no denying moments of beauty and originality in some of his works but I have yet to hear one which at the end leaves you with the feeling of having had a satisfactory musical experience.

The *Rudepôema* is not only the most difficult piano piece ever written, but surely one of the worst. Long, noisy and monotonous, it bristled with all the futile difficulties of the piano transcription of *Petrouschka*, although in the last analysis I think the *F-minor Etude* of Chopin harder. The other pieces offered nothing new in the way of pianisms, being simply virtuososyntheses of all that one has heard from France and Spain in the past fifty years. In the *Bachiana Brasileira, No. 1*, "an attempt to transmit the spirit of Bach – the universal spirit – into the soul of Brazil" (better described as "Bach goes to Brazil") one found the familiar neo-classic restraint. Scored for eight cellos, its chief interest is in the timbre. Curiously enough, in the aria from *Bachiana No. 5*, for voice and cellos, the melodic line modulated back and forth between Bach and Puccini with a logic that made the transitions imperceptible.

These concerts succeeded in pleasing neither the general public nor those interested in the progress of contemporary music. The one bright spot was Elsie Houston; her Voodoo songs supplied the only pleasurable event of the series. They had definite musical interest, and she sang them with her familiar but unforgettable magic.

I should like to discuss the Mexican program point by point in relation to the Brazilian one. For it was a brilliant event of new and provocative music; economy of means and extreme musical sophistication formed the point of departure. It was all very Mexican, and extremely "special" Mexican at that, since it may be taken for granted that we were seeing only

that side of the musical picture that Chavez wished us to see. But since the program has been recently recorded, I'll reserve comment for the department of scores and records.

Colin McPhee

## MILHAUD, CARPENTER, HARRIS IN CHICAGO

SINCE the sonorous *Festival Fanfare* for over-large orchestra plus Schellenbaum, which Frederick Stock himself wrote for the opening of the Chicago Symphony Jubilee, the city has heard, consecutively, world premieres of symphonies by Darius Milhaud, John Alden Carpenter and Roy Harris. Writing under the stress of war, Milhaud finished his score at Aix-en-Provence shortly before he took refuge in this country. In fact, he admitted that at its outbreak he remained for two months without composing any music, and that the commission provided the incentive to save himself from the intellectual and physical chaos around him. This influence, however, in the *Symphony*, though easily injected into it by the listener, is not otherwise apparent. But then, one means of depriving an influence of greater definiteness is by way of antagonism and reaction and this fact is of singular significance when considering a career that began as buoyantly indocile as Mr. Milhaud's.

The first movement, *Pastorale*, opens with a quiet and very impressive theme in the flutes and violins, reminiscent of a Provençal folksong. Strangely enough, it appears some thirty bars later as a canon in the octave for the harp, with the trumpet playing the lower part an octave higher and the flute the upper part, also up an octave. As a composition, the second movement, *très vif*, is perhaps a better illustration of the composer's maturity. But there, too, we look in vain for an evolution towards greater clarity and economy. A chorale-like theme alternates with a more expressive one throughout the next movement, which contains some of the best and some of the poorest orchestral moments; and the finale, beginning vigorously, builds its simple thematic materials into a very brilliant contrapuntal close.

It is a weakness in Darius Milhaud that he persists in subordinating his inherent feeling for simplicity when he attempts a larger form, and in failing his climaxes when he has but finished their preparation. Still, the symphony has a certain validity and dramatic sweep, and though details are obscure at times and very irritating, in its source and motive the whole is, as might be expected, of a dynamic quality. These considerations need not unduly debar us from pondering on a musical development, the kernel