

analysis of human passion; where the older work preserves that brave intensity of expression which is always personal, the *Concerto* slips over the surface of classical rhetoric in not too successful a manner.

The fascination exercised over early twentieth century romantics by the works of Richard Strauss has often been noted. Perhaps no composer of decided gifts succumbed to it more completely than Albert Noelte. Strangely enough, his musical career began when he ran away from his home near Munich at the age of fifteen to become the pupil of Chadwick and Converse in this country. Even in the "elegiacal griefs, and songs of love" of this newly commissioned work, *Prologue to a Romantic Drama*, it is too easy to discover a relationship with *Ein Heldenleben*. But it should not be stressed with exaggeration. Noelte now speaks a forceful personal language despite his conscious and skillful use of Strauss's orchestral palette. The well-knit phrase, brilliant climaxes, and florid sadness of this glorified romanticism reveal a maturity of technic and style. It is one of the best contributions to the Golden Jubilee repertory.

The *Piano Concerto* that Rudolph Ganz wrote for Dr. Stock proved to be the dark horse of the season. Not having written in a major form for quite some time, Ganz, the pianist and conductor, dipped liberally into his long musical experience and sensibly picked simple and catchy materials, demonstrating to the chagrin of many a composer of more serious intent than adequate knowledge, that a thorough musical background can yield a satisfactory and well-written composition. On the other side of the fence should be mentioned the premiere of Roy Harris' *Cimarron*, a work for symphonic band, completed in January, 1941, and presented as a contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the University of Chicago. The student band, with Harold Bachman conducting, played the endless organum-type harmonies, building the reiterated rhythmic bits into a sonorous climax intensified by a ten-gauge shotgun. The materials used are apparently those left over from his recent *American Creed*. Unfortunately the piece again demonstrates his rapidly developing technic in circumventing most, if not all, actual compositional difficulties.

Remi Gassmann

QUICKENING THE DEAD

DEAD songs are being brought to life in the Library of Congress, for the Music Division's Archive of American Folk Music has now made its records available to listeners, students, composers. For years the Ar-

chive has been a "frozen asset" because the soft originals of its recorded music can stand only a few playings before becoming marred and distorted. In the case of the early cylinder-type recordings, brittle with age, the first playing might even have been the last. Yet these are the most precious, the very songs which can no longer be heard from human lips. The Division was therefore constrained to guard its collection (except for a limited number of expensive duplicates) against wear, which is to say against any use at all.

Now, at any time of day, one may visit the basement Recording Laboratory and watch the shiny new cutting arms of two recording machines built for the Division under a Carnegie grant. Opposite each recorder and connected to it by a direct wire, is a phonograph with a photo-electric pick-up and with a lightweight reproducer especially developed in the Philco laboratories to do the least possible damage to fragile field recordings. From the adjacent loud-speaker, which enables the technician to keep tab on the sounds transferred to the new disc, one will hear a plaintive country voice, an ironic guitar or banjo – the most American thing imaginable.

One may even choose records from the four thousand discs (ten thousand individual songs) in the catalog under preparation and possess them for the cost of duplication. The Archive will be augmented in time by reproducing important private collections and by systematic field work. (The grant includes a modern recording truck and six additional field recorders.) The South (including the product of John Lomax' decades of collecting in villages, farms and prisons), the Southwest, the Middle West, New England and the West Indies are already represented. Historically valuable are songs of the Forty-Niners, railroad-building work-songs, sea shanties as remembered by an old sailor, and the newly-acquired recordings of what the Okies were singing last summer. (Dare we hope that this fresh and authentic material may elbow Tchaikowsky off the sound tracks of a few Hollywood "epics?")

This is embarrassment of riches to any composer who wants to use folk themes, and rich raw material for those who work in incidental music. Even composers who have little interest in folk tunes as such, preferring more objective melodic materials, may here discover that the folk musician is technically suggestive. Negro melody in its unadapted state is anything but conventional, and possesses more resources of expressiveness than the sophisticated artist has yet explored. Negro rhythm, too, has varieties and

subtleties untransmitted by jazz to the upper reaches of musical currency. The folk guitar, sampled in commercial releases by such virtuosi as Led-belly and Joshua White, will someday broaden and deepen the concert use of that instrumental color.

Or consider a new approach to old principles of form. CBS last year introduced Charles Seeger's instrumental exposition of the prison song, *Midnight Special*, a theme and variations based not on abstract inventiveness but on the Archive's local versions of the song. Most songs, of course, have variants; for a folklorist the great thing is to track down the "original," "pure" or "best" form. But to the composer each carries its own validity, its fresh illumination of the musical idea.

Other perspectives are opened by the new Laboratory. Some of the Library's stock of unpublished music, old and modern, will be performed and recorded. Every performance in the Coolidge Auditorium is now preserved in excellent recordings; most of these are unavailable — unplayable, in fact — because of the exclusive recording contracts with commercial firms which bind soloists and ensembles. Experimentation in educational radio, again tapping the Archive, is under way.

Josephine Metcalf

SAN FRANCISCO REJUVENATED

SAN FRANCISCO, which has for years been a citadel of modern music, though a comparatively small one, is seeing more activity on the contemporary front this season than for many past. When Henry Cowell lived here and made this the headquarters for his New Music Society, there were many contemporary performances; after Cowell left, they slacked off. Now they are frequent once again, thanks to several different factors. One is that the patrons (or rather patronesses) of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra seem to be less opposed to things modern than they used to be. So Pierre Monteux is freer. Monteux has always been sympathetic toward contemporary efforts, but his board has not always agreed. Another factor is the presence in the community, thanks to the war, of several highly important composers. Ernest Bloch and Arthur Bliss have both come back to the University of California, and Darius Milhaud is at Mills College. A third factor is that Ashley Pettis has moved his Composers' Forum from New York to this city.

Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams of course don't count as modern composers; at least not when represented by music written