

they don't have any inner drive of their own. The Fates too dance witty parodies of decorative movement, they don't become a dynamic factor. The power of dreams, which appears as "Pegasus," has a mysterious airiness in dancing, but the influence remains remote and brief and plays an ornamental and not a dramatic part. The two central characters are left with only unreal puppet foils. They themselves, part puppet, part human, never can act toward the others humanly. I had hoped till the end that at least in conflict with each other they would break through their own stylization, become completely human, and that then the emotion would open up, become a real conflict with a real resolution. It did not happen. Their relation to one another is unchanged after they have gone through all their puppet antics. And the futility of the action is expressed in the last spoken words: "Shall we begin again?"

It is then that you realize the action you watched was not as above-board as you at first imagined. Was there a kind of slyness, the way you were lured on to a pointless result? No, you were warned by the unpleasant opening. But now the jokes have a bitter taste, when you find they were not real people who made them. It has been a puppet story, not a drama but a monologue. The gags were the author's wise cracks at life and she didn't give life a chance to answer back. You expected to see the humor of

living together, but what you have seen is the folly of it, the pointless folly. The folly might have found a point if it had had the contrast of sentiment; or if it had had the added force of fury to drive it into the vastness of the unconscious where folly is at home. But the point this work gives folly is a different one: it is the very care of its workmanship and execution. It is a high-class folly.

And so I found the piece easy to watch and hard to take. I found it not pleasant or open; but in its peculiar prejudice serious and interesting.

I was glad to be at a recital of Marie Marchowsky and her small group, both because she had seemed to me last year one of the good moderns and because she was presenting Virgil Thomson's *Synthetic Waltzes*. The choreography of this piece indicated, I thought, a more relaxed, a more intimate, a more lyric poetry than most modern dancers seriously attempt. The dance both in the figures and in the counter-rhythms was continuously interesting without being far-fetched, and graceful without being ironic. A grown-up and a friendly piece. Of the music, it is the best new dance music I have heard recently. It is as open and touching and as well made as Chabrier, which means that there can't be any better music for dancing. It is music with the charm of family life. It takes place among people at home, who live in a house with plants about it and they like it.

## OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

WILLIAM SCHUMAN's *Fourth Symphony*, presented by C.B.S.

and beautifully performed by Dr. Artur Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra,

was easily the most exciting and significant radio fare offered during the current season. This work marks the greatest advance yet made by this vital and impetuous craftsman, and it seems to promise a deeper fulfillment than could have been expected from his previous large attempts in symphonic structures. Here are massive proportions indeed, but in spite of ponderous size and heavy cast, it exhibits an almost streamlined flow of energy and strength. The sonorities make for exceptionally brilliant radio music, at times there even seemed to be an almost extravagant display of orchestral inventiveness. This was perhaps a gain in the way of elegant glamor and impressive sound texture, but possibly at some sacrifice of sobriety in atmosphere and coloristic restraint. Of the three movements the most completely gratifying from the standpoint of form in general was the slow second which exhibited a unity of design somewhat lacking in the two outer parts. It presents the finest side of Schuman's gift, one which up to now has been comparatively undeveloped. Especially grateful in the beginning was a sensitive, lyric, well sustained arabesque-like web of woods and muted brass beneath a long line somewhat reminiscent of Harris in quality and style. This music achieves a kind of poignant loneliness, a little dreary and barren, but convincing as a musical expression. Although the forms in the brilliant first and last movements were less successful, they show a great improvement in forward-going motion. Schuman's forms have tended to fall into an episodic and loosely connected array of patterns; here the disconnected joints are united by an almost imperceptible inner thematic relationship and subjective integrity.

C.B.S. noted the birthdays of Lincoln

and Washington, which were duly honored musically by works of varying interest and value. Jaromir Weinberger's *Lincoln Symphony* (reviewed elsewhere) was undoubtedly the most imposing of these tributes, both in proportion and pretension, and exhibited correspondingly a sizeable array of bristling problems. The second, a European-trained American's reaction to a strongly local tradition, was Boris Koutzen's *Valley Forge*, admirably performed again by Rodzinski and his Cleveland Orchestra. The title page of the score bears the following note: "The aim of this work is not to illustrate a sequence of historical events, but to convey the impressions of one visiting Valley Forge today. As the great panorama unfolds, majestic and serene, one's thoughts turn to the human drama of the past; to the unwavering fortitude" and so on and so on. It is only fair to observe that Koutzen seemed to achieve his aim fairly well. His fine sense of form shows to good advantage in this free and flexible kind of framework. Occasionally overly-rhapsodical when viewed as a symphonic structure, it is however largely successful. The loose design is more than compensated for by a harmonic and melodic unity greatly effective in sustaining the flow of this piece. The orchestration is somewhat dark and gloomy, though the string writing in general sounded excellent. Courage too was shown in some brilliant, dissonant brass scoring. As a whole though, the instrumentation was not totally convincing. The musical content was non-committal enough to forestall any criticism of treatment of the subject matter.

The C. B. S. British-American Festival has presented many interesting combina-

tions. Striking was the contrast between Deems Taylor's *Portrait of a Lady* and Stanley Bate's *Concertino for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*. Of Taylor's work, for eleven instruments, string quintet, wind quintet, and piano, the most pleasant thing that can be honestly noted is that it was beautifully performed, and that it might sound well to an audience that responds readily to chromatic, slushy, and sentimental materials in any idiom. Throughout there is a rather forceful presentation of banal, jazzy harmonies in the piano writing and a consistently insignificant quality of melodic writing for the other instruments. Stanley Bate's *Concertino* offered some lively fun to offset this dull work, and it is fairly safe to assume that the great majority of listeners found his little work attractive by comparison. Bate's harmonies, although dissonant enough, are hardly more than pretty, but there is a vitality and flow in the music which gives it rhythmic and nervous interest; as a radio piece it was not unsuccessful.

Also heard on this series were Wayne Barlow's *The Winter Passed*, a slight nostalgic pastoral, and Richard Arnell's *Second Divertimento*. Arnell's piece seemed rather long for radio and somewhat monotonous in texture. Four large movements served to exhibit a certain contrapuntal flair but not much inspiration in form or content. A much more successful radio piece was Norman Dello Joio's *Concertino for Flute and Strings*. This has been reviewed here before. At a second hearing it stands up very well as a light and elegant composition, gracefully formed and not without charm. Heard here too was Arthur Bliss's *Checkmate*, a small piece but nice in its effects and interesting in sound texture. One of

the most delightful of this series' smaller works was a *Dance in 3-Time*, by Quincy Porter. Although hardly representative of this fine composer's best accomplishments, it makes very successful radio music. The content is more notable for sobriety than passion; but the music arrives at a touching, almost dramatic ending with an apparent inevitability that is beautiful to hear. Porter's suave technical equipment has seldom been more compactly exhibited.

The C. B. S series "Stars in the Orchestra" presented an amusing *Overture on Yiddish Themes* by Prokofiev, entertaining throughout and especially well written for the solo clarinet. The harmonic and orchestral textures here seemed richer than most Prokofiev but were nevertheless light and racy in design and motion. Another interesting weekly set by Columbia, "Milestones in American Music," gave us the third movement from Frederick Jacobi's well-known *Quartet on Indian Themes*. This piece has good primitivism in texture. It is often percussive in a successful way. At times the quality of various sections seemed a little too sentimental for harmonious relationship with the savage mood that predominates in the piece, and in transitional aspects the form seemed somewhat jerky even for Indian music, which is, of course, somewhat abrupt in certain rhythmic alternations of dance metres. Heard on this series also was Harold Morris' second movement from his *Second Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano*. This was excellent writing in all departments. Grateful scoring was achieved over a basic rhythmic pattern of considerable interest in its varied and intense syncopation. The whole work was well organized formally, and the only disappointing factor is a

slightness of content. To me, however, this business of presenting isolated movement, of works is unsatisfactory all around; it makes unnecessary problems on radio programs ostensibly designed to do justice both to the composer and listener.

### III

Mutual's most distinguished offering was the *Piano Quintet* of Shostakovich, in a version of that work which substitutes full string orchestra for the original four solo strings. The arrangement seemed very successful; it was beautifully performed by Milton Katims as guest-conductor and Milton Kaye at the piano. The five movements are each interesting and expressive but seem as a whole slightly unbalanced. The finale in particular which is a strong, strident culmination, tapers off to a curious dance-like joke for a coda. Nevertheless the quality of material in this piece lifts it musically to a higher level than any of the composer's symphonic affairs. Another WOR program presented Deems Taylor's *Ballet Music From Ramuntcho*, which turned out to be the usual sort of thing one expects now from Taylor. The effects were clearly achieved, but with dated and conventional methods, shop-worn sounds and textures. This is just old-fashioned music, competent in structure, untimely in spirit.

"Russel Bennett's Notebook," also Mutual, has aired some of this prolific writer's earlier works and to the very great advantage of his program. A *Rondo Capriccioso for Four Flutes*, arranged by him for two flutes and two clarinets, shows definite French influence in general treatment; it is a beautiful little piece for radio. It has little discipline of form, poor thematic development, no economy,

but it manages to come off; it is florid, inventive and extremely well scored. Another early work was his *Charleston Rhapsody*. This makes far better entertainment than the usual run of Bennett's programs. Also somewhat derivative, with many charming moments à la Milhaud, it shows a kind of integrity that seems convincing and sincere. The piece sounds fairly well organized sectionally, but as a whole it has a free-for-all form. Alex North's *Slow Movement for Piano and Orchestra* was also presented on one of Bennett's programs. Jazz of the sophisticated Tin Pan Alley variety, managed with fairly interesting treatment of very loose thematic matter, it seems hardly more important than a very skillful improvisation.

The N. B. C. Symphony, under Dean Dixon, presented a *Pastorale and Tarantella for Orchestra* by Paul Creston. It would be difficult to imagine a more imitative brand of orchestration in the French impressionist manner than one finds here. Certainly one would never accuse Creston of any kind of musical nationalism on the basis of this work. Perhaps the composer has his reasons. However, in the style of Dukas, Debussy and Ravel, the work seemed attractively handled; indeed the spirit and orchestration of the *Tarantella* were very brilliant. The N. B. C. orchestra under Alfred Wallenstein presented a somewhat unsatisfactory performance of William Walton's *Façade* in a radio premiere of this piece arranged for narrator and full orchestra. The voice part was not very happily balanced with the instrumental sonorities and as a result there was more confusion than clarity. As music, one's impression can only be negative; it is certainly not a good radio piece.

The WNYC American Festival presented some interesting and stimulating music that should receive more frequent performances. Walter Piston's *Sonata for Flute and Piano* proved to be a very successful item for the microphone, especially in certain sections which brought out the deep low register of the flute in strong relief against the interesting and grateful sonorities of the piano accompaniment. The last allegro movement is one of the most transparent forms in American chamber music. Virgil Thomson's *Sonata Number 1 for Violin and Piano*, composed of four short movements, is neat and flowing as a whole, but sounds a bit too objective in quality to sustain emotional interest. The mixed style of this work is slightly confusing; its range of moods goes from modal and French to diatonic and Viennese. The most gratifying elements of this sophisticated piece were the charm and grace of the melodic designs, and the interesting use of violinistic sonorities, particularly of double

stops. *A Suite for Violin and Piano* by Paul Creston was no success on the air. There seemed to be a reluctance on the composer's part to give much meaning or significance to any one moment. This was especially noticeable in the slow movement where the nature of the music itself (an air for violin over a broken chord accompaniment in the piano) almost demanded some kind of heightened value, but the long line was neither polished nor made distinctive in any way by the relationship to the harmony. Norman Cazden's *Sonata for Flute and Piano, Opus 36*, was a successful, if somewhat dry, experiment in a pure and well mannered neo-classic style. Three songs by Marion Bauer, also heard on this festival, sounded very well for radio, and this in spite of a certain lack of freshness in the harmonic idiom. The forms seemed clear and well developed, and a definite feeling was well established and transmitted in each of them.