omane would not tolerate something which, however lovely, is but an animated picture, an imitation, unless the swan symbolized some deep spiritual reality or some anthropomorphic lesson.

For this reason, La Meri's handling of what I suppose is an essentially Oriental legend, "Swan Lake," is entirely legitimate, for, far from shearing it of meaning – as too often we have done to foreign importations: *Kitezh,* for example – she has illustrated and even invented meaning where there was but movement before. And surely, if we can indulge in occidental versions of *Scheherazade* or *Kismet* or *Lady Precious Stream* or *Mother Goddam,* we cannot quarrel with a nearer neighbor offering us *Swan Lake* according to the scriptures of Bharata.

La Meri is amazingly qualified to present just such an ice-breaker. She has humor, intelligence, and skill. Her company includes dancers of the real brilliance of Carolyn Hector; her costumes are the best I have seen. Her taste and talents are catholic. La Meri's Argentine Gaucho dance is as expert as (and far wittier than) Argentinita's *Huayno* dance. With her school, she brings to our ballet world a tradition and discipline that should enrich not only its immediate devotees and students, but also the inmost consciousness of every creator who is willing to consider that long Indian civilization wherein art is a form of worship.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ONE of the really important musical events of the season – the performance of Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the composer conducting, was given to the radio audience by the Blue Network. This work ranks with the *Symphony of Psalms* among the great monuments to neo-classicism. Its effect over the air is one of streamlined clarity and brilliance. It is fantastically well orchestrated, every detail of weight, balance and texture scored and delivered with a positive, serious objectivity. This Apollonian control, severely conscious and disciplined, by no means inhibits the communication of a profound interior experience which is exposed to us in unmistakable and purely musical terms.

The least impressive aspects of the score are the excessively concentrated development sections, harmonious to the general plan and purpose of the work, no doubt, but shortwinded in effect and psychologically disappointing. Deliberate thematic starvation by a master is of course a most legitimate plan of exposition. But our natural expectation, aroused by so great a demand upon patience and attention, lets us down in the end with a sense of viewing many more blossoms than buds.

Stravinsky also conducted on this program his *Four Norwegian Moods* and *Circus Polka.* The former is a set of dances scored with expert skill. Their musical material is disarmingly simple and fresh, though scarcely representative of the composer's best wit. But they

are managed with entertaining formal and instrumental treatments, and the ideas are always interesting. The *Circus Polka* was so effective that an applauding demand for a second performance was granted then and there by the composer and orchestra. This is indeed an unusual occurrence in radio. It strengthens a growing conviction that immediate repeats of new works over the air are all to the good. Of course, this request was made because of the piece's charm and humor. But the second hearing revealed subtle niceties of scoring and composition that were no doubt missed by many at first.

III

The N.B.C. broadcast of Schönberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra,* conducted by Stokowski, with Edward Steuermann as soloist, was another great radio premiere this year. Stokowski himself evaluated the concerto, in a few words before its performance, as a landmark for contemporary music. The composition, discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue, could with great profit have been heard twice in succession for a still clearer appreciation of its plan and beauties. But even on first hearing it is obviously a strong testimonial against the cry of those who brand the late Schönberg as dry, severely logical and inhuman in spirit. The *Concerto* is nothing if not lyric and expressive. It has the controlled poetry of maturity, but as music, it far transcends the sterile manufacture of pure logic. Perhaps its ecstasy could never have come out of the American soil, or sprung from the youth of our time. But it stands, nevertheless, in trembling, neurotic dignity, apart and above much of our more robust and brilliant music. And it bears in every measure the stamp of authentic compulsion and genius.

Among the most rewarding of Stokowski's other premieres with the N.B.C. Orchestra, was Aaron Copland's *Short Symphony.* The first performance of the orchestral version of a work familiar to so many as a sextet for piano, clarinet and string quartet, left much to be desired and there were several uneasy moments in important sections. However, the main outlines of the work's noble architecture were faithfully erected and in general the total effect was impressive. The slow movement in particular was one of the finest musical experiences I've had over the air. This section, though strong and sensitive in the transcription for sextet, is much more clearly fulfilled by the richness and variety of the big ensemble. The scoring throughout is in the category of the best orchestration that America has yet produced.

Stokowski also offered a world premiere of George Antheil's *Fourth Symphony.* This is a ponderous and extravagant work, wrought at times with convincing emotional force, and in weaker sections managed with a colorful pompousness. The character and structure of the work are more dramatic than epic, but too many high points weaken considerably the intended climactic effect. Also, an excessive exposure of striking instrumental colors lessens the effect that could have been achieved by more selective placement. The orchestration for indvidual choirs is often brilliant and daring, especially in the composer's wood and string writing. But the ensemble is heavy-handed,

lugubrious and muddy. The most obvious influence is that of Shostakovitch, and unfortunately in the latter's more bombastic style. Even the melodic and thematic manner is reminiscent, but a certain unpleasant staleness is counterbalanced by pages of genuine lyric sincerity. The most disappointing movement was the last, in its industriously labored attempt to achieve a fierce excitement. The whole work indeed seeks to convey power, passion, violence. Though commendably ambitious, it falls short of high tragedy.

Included in this series of first-times introduced over N.B.C. by Mr. Stokowski, was Howard Hanson's *Fourth Symphony,* a new American work which I regret very much having been unable to hear that day. I trust that I will soon have another opportunity. Also broadcast was Virgil Thomson's well known *Plow that Broke the Plains,* the suite taken from his score for the movie of that name, *An American Rhapsody* by Efrem Zimbalist, Shostakovitch's *Prelude in E♭ minor,* the *Brazilian Dances* of Camillo Guarnieri, the *Batuque* of Oscar Fernandez, both brilliant pieces of Latin-Americana, the suite from Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione,* and Dmitri Amfiteatrof's *De Produndis Clamavi.* This regular scheduling of contemporary music, American and European, first-time and repetition (at least one, sometimes more such works in every performance but the last in his series), sets a landmark for broadcasting over a national network by a conductor of the first rank. The capacity of the radio audience to absorb the modern idiom is not only tested in this way, it is expanded. Stokowski's pioneering should make it easier for others to follow that trail.

III

The WNYC Fifth American Music Festival was more than usually rewarding. Twenty-seven world premieres (actually thirty radio firsts) were given. This program series is undoubtedly the most praiseworthy effort made by any station to acquaint its listeners with America's best serious music.

And now for my annual query: Are the networks too nobly engaged to consider a comparable project per year? Such music is of obvious civic interest. But what of our national welfare? Is not the nation's best music at least as important in its own way, say, as the annual World Series?

Space doesn't permit me to make a full, detailed report on this abundant program, and so I will sum it up and suggest a few of the highlights. Our major composers were well represented. Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions performed in their own violin and piano sonatas, which are interesting and inventive works. Quincy Porter's *Seventh String Quartet* was beautifully done by the Coolidge. This is a work of wonderful moments in the slow movement; as a whole, though, it is curiously glib and more intellectually well-mannered than inspired. The scoring for quartet is professional but often unimaginative. Copland's two important works for piano, the *Sonata* and the earlier *Variations* were also heard; their freshness and durability seem timeless.

One of the most well balanced, unified programs in the festival was the recital of songs for voice and piano by Theodore Chanler. There is a gratifying maturity and perfection about these

works. His *Three Epitaphs,* from Walter De La Mare, were especially fine, the evidence of a very real gift for this special form of expression. Another program devoted to songs for voice and piano offered Marion Bauer's *The Harp,* a splendid lyric achievement, probably one of the best contemporary American pieces in the medium. Paul Nordoff's *If There Are Any Heavens* is interesting enough in material but arty and so sophisticated that the total effect is artificial and dated. Much more disappointingly self-enclosed and eccentrically hopeless was John Cage's *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs,* a monotonous chant for voice with toneless percussive taps for accompaniment. I hope this example is unrepresentative of his talents.

A program presenting works by Robert McBride shows another kind of attitude, most unfunny and embarrassingly cheap in an effort to achieve brilliant showmanship. Works for saxophone and piano by McBride are so far beneath the entertainment level of Duke Ellington that one wonders why they were notated at all.

Vincent Persichetti's *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello* is indicative of a sensitive, promising talent. The young composer has already achieved a great degree of personal authority and individuality in style. A slight tendency towards mannerism is suggested by parallel melodic scoring for the strings in the first movement, but it never becomes ungrateful or obvious in effect, and may be only a necessary accent of delivery. Normand Lockwood's *Sonata For Piano* was one of the most curious of the serious works heard in the Festival. It is very rich in good sonorities but most disappointing in tonal content.

David Diamond's *Concerto For Two Solo Pianos* is a dignified and well managed score, though it is by no means one of this prolific composer's best. The form, in all three movements, is well designed, convincingly balanced. Harmonically, the texture is distinguished and grateful, though at times somewhat grey and non-committal. It is perhaps in the inner thematic developments that one feels an interesting, but somehow uninspired content. And I should like to say also that Carl Stern and Vivien Rivkin gave an excellent performance of my own *First Sonata For Cello and Piano.*

THE TORRID ZONE

By MERCURE

FOR all the advance to-do about it you'd have felt that something momentous in the history of jazz would be achieved when the *Esquire*-picked all-star band took over at the Metropolitan Opera House on a Sunday night in January. What actually happened was one more jazz concert that never really got off the ground. The ill-assorted stars took a long time to thaw out in spite of the beaming look-where-we-are-now-boys air of the MC's, and the heat towards the end of the program could not be described, even by Rodzinski, as conducive in any way to moral delinquency.