In the orchestral field we had Anis Fuleihan's *Concerto for Violin, Piano, and Orchestra* (premiere by the National Orchestral Association with Carroll Glenn and Eugene List as soloists). This fell into all the obvious traps, so that any formal planning disintegrated under the vicious influence of the medium. Its improvisational character was no help either. The solo parts seldom got together satisfactorily, and quite a few pleasing sentiments were wasted. Never having heard of George Lessner, I can report only that his *Merry Overture* is a nonentity. Of Paul Creston's *Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra* (premiere by the Philharmonic, with Vincent Abato as soloist) it suffices to say that nothing new has been added.

Donald Fuller

THE HARRIS THIRD AND OTHER WORKS IN L. A.

THE Roy Harris *Third Symphony* has finally found its way to Los Angeles, the first of his large orchestral works to be heard here. Programmed between a Mozart symphony and a Brahms concerto (the first, with Serkin) it faced the most formidable kind of competition. Yet its virtues were not obscured, nor were its weaknesses magnified. It still had a strength and beauty of its own. The proximity of masterpieces served principally to emphasize what critical listeners have been writing in these pages and elsewhere: that what Harris lacks is a real inner intensity able to maintain itself at a constantly high level for a hundred pages of score. I think that is what critics mean when they write about the gain in technical skill which has not been accompanied by a gain in substance, about the loss of originality which came with the move toward greater intelligibility. And it is pointed to again in the "appreciation" literature which finds it necessary to "interpret" the music in terms of the crudeness and strength of pioneers, the bleakness of the plains of Kansas, or the solitude of a decaying farmhouse with a geranium pot standing in a window. The composer's inner intensity does lag from time to time, and so does our interest. The music then becomes bombastic, or overly complex or barren; and we find ourselves taking time out to count the gain or loss in skill, substance, originality or intelligibility, or to conjure up pictorial imagery.

The Shostakovitch *Seventh* was not new to us. Without the ballyhoo that accompanied both the premiere and Stokowski's later performance here at a huge benefit concert, it had to rely on its own musical merits, which are not inconsiderable, and upon Wallenstein's performance, which

was superb. It seems now to have slight relationship to the propaganda it generated, and its extensive bibliography grows less and less pertinent. In this more sober light it is a far better piece than even the press-agents suspected.

For a concert performance of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The old Maid and the Thief,* Wallenstein arranged his stage according to radio-studio blueprints: the reduced orchestra left and center, rear; podium center, front; props (two chairs, folding) left, front. The characters made entrances and exits, in costume, as is proper for opera; and they sang from their scores, as is proper for oratorio; the commentator sat far to the left and came front-center to an imaginary microphone to read his lines. The confusion of media was thus complete; and yet the Philharmonic audiences never had a better time. The libretto is thoroughly delightful. If the music has nothing in it of contemporary interest, it is at least skillful in its outmoded idiom. On the same program were Morton Gould's clever and ingeniously orchestrated *American Salute* which might be described as a medley of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home,* and Russell Bennett's orchestral rosary of song hits from *Porgy and Bess.*

At an all-Russian concert Werner Janssen introduced a *Dance Suite* by Nicholas Tchemberdji, cheerfully conservative music derived from folk-tunes. It made a great hit with the audience. But neither it nor Prokofiev's fussy *Violin Concerto* (the first, with Szigeti), both of them contemporary, was nearly so modern as Moussorgsky's *Pictures.* For this last, Janssen performed the interesting experiment of having a critic for soloist: Alfred Frankenstein, well known to MODERN MUSIC's readers, gave an illustrated lecture on the art of Victor Hartmann whose pictures Moussorgsky described. Both the composer and the critic were better than the artist who is now welcome to return to the limbo from which he was raised.

"Evenings on the Roof" is devoting half of its season to Richard Buhlig's presentation of the Beethoven *Piano Sonatas.* Consequently there will be somewhat less new music than usual. But worse than that: as his contribution to continental solidarity, Charles Wakefield Cadman has written an exhortative *Tone Drama for Cello and Piano* on the subject of Carlotta and Maximilian. This, for sure, sounds the knell of the Hapsburg dynasty. There is a different kind of Mexican influence – that of Chávez – in the *Six Sonatas for Piano* by Lou Harrison, which Colin McPhee described accurately in the last issue. But this was a night for romance; and

Cadman's cohorts, which had turned out in force, were at best apathetic, if not outright hostile, to the unromantic and clear-headed music of Harrison. On another evening Sol Babitz and Ingolf Dahl played the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Harold Shapero. Here an exceptional talent and a fine organizing intellect were united to create music that is excessively nervous and ungracious. Its first movement, in classical sonata form, is so completely compounded of emotional tensions that its thematic material, whether exposed, developed or recapitulated, seems never to grow, never to be presented in a new light, but to be constantly climactic. The second movement has the tempo of a slow movement but neither the repose nor the lyricism that the tempo appears to postulate. The finale seemed to me to be the best of the three movments, but I was warned by the performers that in admitting that, I acknowledged my sensitivity only to the obvious. So be it: if a certain symmetry and drive of rhythm make for intelligibility, let us not prostrate ourselves before the asymmetrical.

Lawrence Morton

STRAVINSKY MEETS THE BOSTON CENSOR

TWO Russian composers provided first performances at concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra during the two weeks following Christmas. Local concert-goers (as well as the millions who heard the broadcasts) were reminded how strikingly the face of music has changed within relatively recent memory.

Alexander Gretchaninov, who is in his eightieth year, and whose *Missa Oecumenica* Serge Koussevitsky introduced on February 25 and 26, was scarcely expected to produce anything new or provocative though the work was completed during the past year. He has long been an established composer, known particularly for much religious music, and smaller secular works and songs which exhibit an ingratiating lyrical gift. But one was quite unprepared for the shock of this new work, the harmonic and melodic flavor of which was not even as "modern" as the language of Rimsky-Korsakov and the rest of the Five, or even, one is tempted to say, of Tchaikovsky. The vocabulary was rather that of Gounod and Liszt; it wasn't especially Russian, anyhow. Outside of that the work was not unpleasant, it was tuneful and well written as to the voices.

Stravinsky, the other Russian, who directed a program of his own music on January 14 and 15, has also been established for some time, but