

Set which is a brief but enjoyable piece.

Boris Koutzen presented his *String Quartet in B* at Town Hall during his violin concert. This is stream-of-tunefulness music. I had always wondered why Glazounov, Fauré and several other composers put me to sleep so promptly until I realized that this kind of music is essentially lullaby stuff and murmurs on without spaces in any of the parts. While the Koutzen quartet did not put me to sleep, it does have a dangerously ambrosial character and is far too continuous for my taste.

The Forum Group of the I.S.C.M., a growing and vital medium for the less frequently heard composers, is giving a large program of concerts this year on the air and in public recitals. The music presented is, naturally enough, of a wide variety of persuasions and shows plainly the number of allegiances to which the members, particularly the younger generation, are subject. This is all to the good and makes for interest in the discussion period which follows each concert. The concerts held at the Dalcroze Auditorium of the City Center have so far given Paul Schwartz' *Chamber Concerto for Two Pianos*, Elliot Carter's *Pastoral for English Horn and Piano*, Le Chemin D'Ecume (*Six Asiatic Poems*) by Jacques de Menasce, Harold Brown's *String Quartet*, *Three Dutch Songs* by Johan Franco, *Five Pieces for Piano* by Jeanette Siegel, *Three Songs* by Ned Rorem and a *Piano Sonata* by William Ames. Of these Elliott Carter's work seemed to experiment with texture and tone color the most directly and had some effective slow sections, enlivened by interesting piano sounds. Menasce's six songs were smoothly written and evocative, well made for the voice and clear in texture. Jeanette Siegel's pieces seemed to me to show signs of an original and firm talent and had space and melodic power in their substance as well as a new kind of basic nervousness which held the interest. The Rorem songs were well written in the French style only a good bit heavier in sound.

Lou Harrison

## JEROME MOROSS; YOUNG MAN GOES NATIVE

JEROME MOROSS' *First Symphony* is a lusty and joyful work, full of humor and brightness and charm. Like its predecessors, *Tall Story*, *Suzanna* and *Frankie and Johnnie* (the last now added to the repertory of the Ballet Russe, six years after its Chicago performances), it is an attempt to write an American music based upon the use of native American materials.

To say that Moross is a folklorist is an accurate statement only if the term "folk" is understood to include the American city-dweller as well as the Kentucky mountaineer, the deep-South cotton-picker and the cowboy. It is true that Moross shares that romantic interest in folkmusic which sends many a composer into the country for an exotic week-end. However, he is not at all an escapist nor a library-inspired antiquarian. The better part of his attitude is that he likes and uses what is close to home, even if it is not so quaint or pretty as the goods which the folkmusic industry has been trading in for several years. For him the sidewalks of New York have as good a song as the streets of Lorado; and one is as legitimate musical material as the other.

In the symphony, Moross has gathered together the spirit of various localities and various social phenomena. The first movement has a two-part theme which undergoes eight variations; it suggests in its first part a New England barn-dance fiddler, and in its second a Missouri revival meeting.



The second movement, *Sonata-Scherzo*, is predominantly urban. There is a first theme in the popular-song style of *Nola*, and a second which the composer describes as "universal folksong" with a *Floradora* accompaniment.



The slow *Invention* is a gem of purest water. It makes much of the hobo-tune, *Midnight Special*; but this is less prominent and less interesting than the original melody with which it is combined, a tune of western atmosphere.



Western too are both the subject and counter-subject of the final fugue. And like the themes of the first and third movements, both are pentatonic – black-key tunes if transposed.



The commitment to the use of such material poses some very nice problems; for if you want to make a symphony out of it, you must work the material, even though it has already, in the very statement of it, a kind of completeness, even inviolability, that resist "treatment." It will stand examination and repetition, but not complication. The most that can be done with it is to stand back and look at it from new angles provided by changes of tonality and orchestral timbres, and by limited changes in harmonic investiture. And then you might concentrate your attention upon a fragment or two, provided they have the completeness of musical phrases – which is not always the case with fragments of folk-like melodies. Your emotional range is thus very limited – unless you choose to strive for Beethovenian climaxes which would amount to distortion.

The job, then, is to convert limitations into opportunities, and Moross has done this with varying degrees of success. The slow movement, as I have said, is very beautiful; the first movement is brilliantly scored, with the last variations sufficiently contrapuntal to make up for the repetitiousness of the early ones; the fugue is carried off with infectious humor and bravado. Only the second movement is unsuccessful; the popular-song style has not proved amenable to the kind of treatment prescribed by the sonata structure into which the composer chose to cast it. Whatever other weaknesses exist in the work are attributable to the straining for an emotional release which the composer's very nature demands and which his material denies him. Thus the humor occasionally borders on low comedy, the brightness is frequently brassy and the charm becomes naive.

The symphony is a decisive advance over earlier work. It is, on the whole, an attractive piece, a cheerful commentary upon some of the simple pleasures of American life. People who are not above talking about the wonderful soda they had at the corner drugstore, about the color of the

hills at sundown, enjoying the feel of cool sheets at bedtime, telling a good story about their congressman, and being grateful for the Red Cross – I think they will all recognize their own feelings in the sounds of this symphony. It leaves one hoping that the next step will be to surpass attractiveness with a deeper significance. The sketches for the *Second Symphony* indicate clearly that this step is being taken.

### III

Werner Janssen turned his excellent orchestra over to Villa-Lobos for a concert of the Brazilian's own works, *Second Symphony*, *Chôros* 6 and the fabulous *Rudepoema*. The symphony is a disappointing mixture of European styles, none of them contemporary even at the time the work was written. But there were a few brilliant flashes of originality, the kind that make Villa-Lobos an arresting composer and an important one even though he has very few completely rewarding works in his long catalogue. The flashes were more frequent and more stunning in the *Chôros*, and again somewhat less in *Rudepoema*. The consensus is that Villa-Lobos is "unbelievable."

"Evenings on the Roof" is fulfilling its promise of celebrating the seventieth anniversaries of Ives and Schönberg. Of the former, there have been performances of the *Concord Sonata*, the *Children's Day at the Camp Meeting*, some songs, and two unfamiliar movements from the unfamiliar *Second Violin Sonata*, sub-titled *The Revival* and *In the Barn*. The first of these is in the beautifully quiet introspective mood with which Ives can so easily move the listener into Biblical calm and resignation; and the second rouses one into a whirl of gaiety and fun. Of Schönberg we have heard the piano pieces of Opus 19 and Opus 25, some songs from the *Hanging Gardens* (sung with wonderful sensitivity and miraculous control by Belva Kibler) and *Pierrot Lunaire* in an English translation by Carl Beier. This music is too well known to require comment here.

Other works at the Roof concerts have been the fine *Third Quartet* of Hindemith; all the 24 *Preludes*, Opus 34, of Shostakovich, surprisingly few of which have real merit; a *Sonata* for viola and piano by Donald Pond of Santa Barbara, which I did not hear but which was well spoken of; a coy and brittle *Dance Suite II* for piano by George F. McKay; and a song, *Sanctus*, by Lou Harrison. The last was long enough to be called a solo cantata. It was most interesting for a time, but it palled when the same experiments were tried over and over again, with the same findings.

Lawrence Morton