

deal with externals. Yet such trials should be made. Read has grown a great deal since he applied pigments of the old, endorsed manufacture. The piece, however, can hardly be more than an isolated experiment on his part. (Remember *Pacific 231*?)

The enigmatic score of the week for me was Elliott Carter's *First Symphony*. With its avowed nature affinities – Cape Cod and cultural New England – it emerged as a work of ascetic complexion. This is no bar to splendor, truth, or poetry. Yet Carter seems hobbled by certain esthetic pressures or convictions, and by his own highly adjusted, check-reined temperament. He has the attributes of a candid artist. Only a certain native reticence holds him from bold, free expression. He will discuss everything but his secret heart. This fastidious censorship is no good thing. Carter can write a tune, but he can also surround it with a kind of esoteric tonal haze. Thus he sometimes succeeds in putting second things first. "Awake and Sing" is no bad motto for composers, especially those of Carter's modest character. Of the three movements I liked best the final rondo, with its salty rhythms and light-moving air. The first allegro – somewhat tenuous – is done with too much brush-work. The adagio, while noble in attitude, just eludes the heart. The scoring is clear, but gray rather than sunny. Yet the work shows signs of a mettlesome composer. Carter has the mien of an artist. Let him seize the orchestra with both hands.

A few other necessarily restricted observations. Jacques Gordon played Barber's lyrical *Violin Concerto* with surpassing art, and Dr. Hanson, who conducted three programs of the week with power, affection and great skill, gave his own intense and richly hued *Fourth Symphony* with the Senior Orchestra. Paul White led the Little Symphony in firm performances of Joseph Wagner, Haines, Hill and Daniels.

I have been able to describe only a few events of a festival crowded with interest. For those who can hear, there is American music.

Bernard Rogers

SOME FIRSTS IN PHILADELPHIA

THE American premiere of Marc Blitzstein's *Freedom Morning* was given here by Saul Caston and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Traditional Negro themes strung together in swing style and stiffly rendered, placed an inconsequential work in the embarrassing position of facing its build-up squarely. The best writing is in the slow modal introduction but

this music is left unexplored and blacked-out to give way to the superficial, fast medley section. Even a first rate band could not have made the "sock" chorus sound, at such a hurried and uneven tempo.

With Ormandy we got our yearly Eugene Zador work, *Biblical Triptych* (tone poems on Joseph, David and Paul after Thomas Mann's trilogy). This is forced, over-emotionalized music with uneven top lines, feebly moving bass voices, and recurring climaxes that are as artificial as the closing cadences of each piece are weak and unsatisfactory. A point of interest was the use of solo harp as a melodic instrument in quiet moments of the David poem. *Three Brazilian Dances* of Camargo Guarnieri, some of the most exciting and imaginative music to come from South America, have a woodwind fugal dance with percussion background and reveal a perfected technic of composition. William Walton's *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra* had a flattering performance by William Primrose, and with William Kincaid came the delicate and cool *Poem for Flute and Orchestra* by Charles Griffes.

A program of works by Louis Gesensway at the Academy Foyer brought to us a composer whose music had not been heard anywhere before. The advance publicity about "color-harmony" and the forty-tone scale was misleading, for the theory was reduced by reality to a Krenek-Berg twelve-tone way of life, less systematized. Strangely, his rhythmic material overshadows the harmonic which, because of an even-plane tension, is not always colorful enough. All three movements of the *Sonata for Piano* are built from the opening theme and are used with the necessary contrasts. Although the first movement of the *Duo for Violin and Viola* suffered from a sameness in variations and the third from tremolo effects, the work had better harmonic flow than the others. The *Quartet for English Horn, Flute, Violin and Cello* showed supple and animated writing for English horn; in fact the technical freedom of all the instruments gave us a brilliant virtuoso piece full of bite and strength. This was an unusual concert for Philadelphia.

It is always a privilege to hear Bela Bartok's *First String Quartet* which was played at the fourth concert of the Twentieth Century Music Group. *Three Observations for Three Woodwinds* by Mabel Daniels followed. The first piece is a horsey and static prelude in forced counterpoint; the second hits a snag and we soon realize that the canon has suddenly gone in retrograde motion when it should have moved on; before the third gets underway a change of plan brings a clarinet cadenza squeak-

ily saluting a tango which is kept under observation for the duration of the work. The usual boring characteristics of Frank Bridge were to be found in his *Divertimenti for Four Woodwinds*. The trio, *Five Short Piano Pieces for Piano, Violin and Cello*, by Bohuslav Martinu is music that hits a good stride and is happy at that. Much more rewarding was Frederick Jacobi's *Three Excerpts from the Prophet Nehemiah* (for soprano and two pianos). There is a fine sense of freshly handled harmonies, a bass line that is led effectively, and a natural shaping of the formal structure. *Now in the Twenty and Fourth Day* begins with a chant-like repeated note figure, opening into a dramatic exposition of high vocal phrases, and drops to a close with good timing sense. Throughout the work the meaning is well projected.

The local chapter of The National Association for American Composers and Conductors closed their second season with five concerts. We heard the well written *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Walter Piston and five new works: Georgianna Romig's *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, Francesco Caruso's *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, *Piano Sonatas* by Anis Fuleihan and Frank Potamkin, and Charles Mills' *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano*. The refreshing and talented youthful work of Georgianna Romig has easy flow and melodiousness, and in addition an individual, shy grace. Her nice feeling of diatonic progressions, however, gives us at times a monotony of harmonic color. Caruso's cello piece is a slow and carefully written student work with well-thought-out phrases that join to make clear lines of delicate melodic flavoring. His melodic gift produced an excellent lyric adagio with less fortunate surrounding movements. Fuleihan's sonata tends toward the bright and lively but its brilliance is hampered by many stops and a misplaced fugue. Potamkin's sonata is built on a smaller scale with a smattering of dissonances to keep things well spiced. In his trio, Mills proves his ability to use many types of material with authority and surety. The piece is well constructed, it has a high standard of workmanship; his unusual ability to meet any composition problem should make him extremely careful in selecting initial ideas. The Association also gave us songs by Paul Nordoff and Samuel Barber. Of special joy was Nordoff's little gem, *Willow River*. Here is natural vocal writing with genuine expressiveness.

The chamber series of the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music presented rehearsals of Walter Piston's *Violin Sonata* and the Bloch and Shostakovich piano quintets. The *Soliloquy and Dance* for viola and

piano by Roy Harris is a newcomer to this city and is one of Harris' best works. In the *Soliloquy* he uses most successfully a free autogenetic form and maintains a perfect symmetry in the general melodic outline. The harmonies are extremely concentrated and move quickly along with a growing sonority that reaches a high plane of intensity. The stirring *Dance* has an effervescent rhythmic push; it uses the demanding high viola register at just the right moments. Harris' penetrating craftsmanship enables him to rid a double fugue of all inhibitions and dance a lively step.

Vincent Persichetti

AMERICANS AND SHOSTAKOVITCH IN BOSTON

THE Boston Symphony Orchestra wound up its season with no let-down in the quantity of novel music. Quality and importance were also high. Within a few weeks we heard the newest symphonies of Samuel Barber, Walter Piston, Roy Harris and Dmitri Shostakovich. Barber's *Second* and Harris' *Sixth* were presented, under Serge Koussevitzky's direction, for the first time anywhere; Piston's *Second*, conducted by G. Wallace Woodworth, had had but a single previous hearing under Kindler in Washington; and the only earlier American performance of the Shostakovich *Eighth* was that of the Philharmonic and Rodzinski.

Neither Shostakovich nor Harris offered any important surprise, another way of saying, I suppose, that I have made up my mind about the music of both. You like Shostakovich or you don't. I do. The loose structure, the great length, the patchwork joints and the juxtaposition of serious and seemingly trivial matter won't bear close inspection. It is perhaps no coincidence that in at least two of these respects he resembles Mahler, whose melodic line has obviously made a strong impression upon him. Well, I like Mahler and I like Shostakovich. More than any other symphonic composer since Mahler, Shostakovich's symphonies have an immediate appeal to a large musical population as music and not as theory or esthetics. The great length of the first movement, to which many have objected, did not seem to me excessive. As in the case of Mahler, the length was of the essence of the music. In the only really fast part Shostakovich uses a whole bag of obvious orchestral tricks, as a Hollywood composer might. But here the showmanship amounts to genius.

Similarly you either like or you don't like Roy Harris. I do. But whereas I am willing to take Shostakovich as he is, I keep hoping that Harris will some day escape from the kind of intellectual and emotional