

music, special pieces, louder speeches. The meeting itself—questioning the various interrelating functions of critic, foreign and native composer, interpreter and public—and the points brought out were unmistakable symptoms. It is clear to me that one conception of music in society, with us these many years, is dying of acute anachronism; and that a fresh idea, overwhelming in its implications and promise, is taking hold. *Marc Blitzstein*

THE WORK OF ROGER SESSIONS

THIS we have known before, and definitely. In American music Sessions is not only a leader of distinction but also—and this is particularly true—one of the few masters of cultured craft, we can still count them on our fingers.

The imposing all-Sessions concert at the New School for Social Research added another certainty.

He is a neo-classicist of the Hindemith and Prokofieff kind. Not a stylizer, not a clever manipulator of tired pasticcio, but a man aroused by a vision of the orderly frames of the classical world, intoxicated by their lucid reason.

However, Sessions' reset classicism is possessed of his very strong, very individual emotion; and so is the tonal material he uses.

There is a sharp personal tang to his cryptic melos, a peculiar weight and color in his tonal plaster. Swarthy and of powerful mold, those drastic steles of tonal plaster used by Sessions to lay his spacious forms remind one of the Egyptian bas-reliefs and the Black Madonna of Chartres.

This is exactly the impression—an extraordinary one—had from the physical appearance of the composer himself. Most unexpectedly, a very deep and remote ancestry lurks in the emotional make-up of an American artist, and an Anglo-Celtic, too—in his parlance, his physical type, his ways.

In the opening *Giusto* of his *Symphony* an obstinate force with deep glints of emotion clearly racial yet personal and centrifugal, streams through the cyclopean lines of its structure. And, one must add, this force is coupled with a stark innate rigidity that allows for only well defined, limited and predictable swings of creation.

But equally typical of this drastically Anglo-Celtic nature, in the following *Largo* of Sessions' symphony, his very personal melos is covered by a delicate crust of chilled heartiness and humanness. One is moved by the same quality in the opening measures of the song from the *Black Maskers*, one of the most beautiful lines ever created by American art. One is bewitched by its dark glow and caress.

Of Sessions' latest works, the *Concerto* for violin and orchestra exhibits in its *Largo tranquillo* a melodic thread of steel-like resistance and flexibility. This music is marked by a spiritual climate in some way related to the sharp freshness and hidden aggression of the very air of New England.

But again, the opening bars of the *Romanza* of the concerto has that alluring melange of sombre glow and humanness that strikes one in such related acts of art as Edgar Poe's *Ulalume* and Sessions' song from the *Black Maskers*.

The principal weakness of Sessions' larger forms is an over-expanded unfolding of all the derivatives, sequels, side-thoughts hidden in his main thematic idea.

This draconian completeness, a fully exhausted development, does not appeal to my own creative taste. But one watches with admiring respect such frenzied, overpowering tenacity of aim and thought.

The energy of the organizers of these one-man concerts—the New School, their sponsor, and Aaron Copland, their director,—should be highly commended. Such concerts are a very usual thing in Europe. Only that absurd provincial distrust by Main Street of anything that rises from its own midst has made the American musical societies shy at giving comprehensive recitals of one man's work. A composer who is a master of his craft and has important things to say, surely has the right to take the public by its neck and make it listen. It is almost a constitutional right.

Lazare Saminsky

PREMIERE IN ROCHESTER: ROGERS' FRESCOS

AN American composers' concert in Rochester usually affords musical interest of a varied sort—though this was not the case on January 16 when Dr. Howard Hanson conducted a