

THIRTEEN AT ROCHESTER

THE thirteenth annual Eastman School Festival of American Music last month – four evenings of music, one of dance – gave us some innovations and a few particularly interesting first performances. A Latin-American note was sounded in the works of two composers, the Brazilian, Camargo Guarnieri and the Chilean, Domingo Santa Cruz. The Guarnieri pieces were not impressive although his Brazilian dance is a good popular concert number. But Santa Cruz was represented by a suite of pieces for string orchestra, *Inquieto Doloroso*. Santa Cruz is reputed to be Chile's foremost music scholar; he organized Chile's Bach Society and is an authority on music matters at the nation's universities. His music is an excellent example of the sort of counterpoint once written by men who could make it eloquent and dramatic in its pure form.

Sowerby's *Violin Concerto*, played by Jacques Gordon, got its first performances in Rochester; it is a somewhat polyglot work originally composed in 1913, and re-written in 1938. The first two movements are still 1913; the last movement is 1938 and a bit plus. The effect is "queer." Another first was a *Piano Concerto* by Burrill Phillips, excused this year from the Eastman School faculty duties to do creative work on a Guggenheim Fellowship. The piano score is provocative, tartly bright but abounding in brittle staccato passages; the orchestral writing is also acidly good.

William Bergsma, who recently won the Columbia University Bears prize award, was represented by the premiere of a *Symphony for Chamber Orchestra*, commissioned by Town Hall. This was one of the most interesting pieces heard at the festival; New York will come to know it later. Young Bergsma is wise with right ways to write for strings, and he uses woodwind and brass discreetly.

Roy Harris came himself to conduct his *Ode to Truth*, written for Leland Stanford's fiftieth anniversary. In a program note Harris says he intended in this music to suggest an arch; the listener easily perceives the intention as the music takes on bulk and height, reaching its apex in a fine short chorale. Harris had a cordial audience and so too did Henry Cowell who appeared as soloist in his *Tales of Our Countryside*, which are told in likable style and embellished with tone clusters.

Howard Hanson revived his *Drum Taps*, set to Walt Whitman's Civil War poems and timely now. This music, in three sections, for chorus, orchestra, and baritone was first performed at the Ann Arbor festival in

1935. The Rochester performance was exciting and made its mark on the public. *A Dance Divertimento*, by Kent Kennan, late Prix de Rome man, won a first performance under this title, though two of its sections had been borrowed from earlier works. It is gay and well scored.

On the whole, the festival exploited little if any "experimental" music. There was much belonging to the present day but written by mature and sensible composers, deliberately made and occasionally revealing inflections of the laws of the "Nineties." In point of performance the festival was notable. Dr. Hanson used five good orchestras, a good choir and at the end a ballet corps. He himself was the conductor for three of the five performances. Others who directed were Dr. Paul White, Frederick Fennell, Dr. Herman Genhart, and Roy Harris.

Stewart B. Sabin

AS THEY SEE US IN RUSSIA

Moscow, 1943

ALL nations have a way of expressing the spirit of their time in music. A good song is a necessary piece of armament in the arsenal of an army fighting for a just cause. But every song that is created in the hour of great suffering and really reflects the struggle for freedom and justice, will outlast its epoch and long remain a monument to that period.

The world's best patriotic songs were created for armies which fought for great causes, for the people and against their oppressors. It is sufficient to mention the *Marseillaise*, the Spanish *Riego Hymn*, the songs of the Russian Revolution of 1905, the songs of the Civil War, the songs of Republican Spain. Many wonderful Soviet pieces have been created during the period of the present great struggle within our fatherland.

America has now been in the war against the dark forces of Fascism for over a year. In no other country of the world is the "production" of songs carried out on such a gigantic scale. There the realm of popular music is an important field of art and of industry. It involves the activity of hundreds of composers, arrangers, publishers, phonograph companies, radio stations, and an army of performers. It would be readily understood that the war-theme should be widely reflected in American songs of 1942.

Recently from the United States, there has been received by VOKS (the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) a first consignment of American "war music" — patriotic songs, military marches and hymns, several samples of defense music, and also some dramatic numbers from musical revues.