

# MUSICAL EVENTS

## Manifest

**T**HE Juilliard School, I notice, has a new (non-credit) class, in platform deportment. So I must have been wrong in thinking for all these years that American conservatories did give platform-deportment classes, and that their tenor was: Never let an audience guess from the expression on your face that musicmaking might be an enjoyable business or that you actually like the work you're playing. Dour demeanor is so regular in New York that I had assumed it must be inculcated and carefully maintained. Watch *Speculum Musicae*, Parnassus, or the New Music Consort play some tricky, delightful modern composition: how often do the players' faces light up in pure pleasure at felicities in the music or in their execution of it? Watch British, French, or Italian musicians of comparable achievement play the same piece: although they may not play it any better, their manner is likely to invite the audience to share their appreciation of it.

Such reflections occurred to me, not for the first time, at the performance—a musically good performance—of Luciano Berio's "Circles" given in Carnegie Recital Hall earlier this season by the New Music Consort. "Circles," composed in 1960, is an immediately attractive modern classic. When Cathy Berberian, for whom it was written, sings and acts it, a deaf man can take pleasure in the piece. Judith Bettina, the protagonist of the Consort performance, sang the work accurately, sweetly, and brightly, but she enacted it in a deadpan fashion. At the end, the audience was enthusiastic. Miss Bettina and the two percussionists, Claire Heldrich and Gary Schall, accepted the applause gravely, almost grimly. Only the harpist, Alyssa Hess, intimated by her expression that "Circles" had been fun to play and that she was glad that we, too, had enjoyed it.

I don't want to make too much of this. "Circles" is a special case—in its composer's words, "a structure of actions, to be listened to as theatre and to be viewed as music." The singer also directs the piece, beating time, clacking her claves, ringing her little finger cymbals, jingling glass chimes and wood chimes, changing her command post. One doesn't want all music to be elaborately mopped and mowed through by its executants. A conductor who dances out an elaborate, obtrusive platform choreography can be distracting. A page-turner for Dame Myra

Hess told me that he was once surprised during rehearsal to see the words "LOOK UP!" writ large in her score over a tender second subject. Dame Myra didn't look up—not until the performance that night, when her eyes rolled soulfully to heaven. It's not really an unkind story: that soulful glance may well have helped some listeners to understand the expressiveness that she intended the melody to carry. Similarly, Lotte Lehmann's primer "More Than Singing" provides many tips about glances, gestures, and postures that can help a singer to communicate the sense of a song. Harry Plunket Greene's "Interpretation in Song" even suggests that the singer of "Er, der Herrlichste von Allen" may at the turns in the vocal line "clasp her hands or clutch at her heart or throw her arms out to the beloved image." But I'm thinking of something less carefully considered: unstudied, spontaneous communicativeness, a bond of shared enjoyment, unconcealed, between performers and audience. And I'm deploring the apparently deliberate cultivation of a stern, puritan platform manner—as if it were bad form to admit to delight. Sometimes, I think, the result "sounds": the inhibited demeanor or inhibits expression. Even when it doesn't, it is likely to inhibit an audience's response and dull its appreciation. There are phonograph records on which one can "hear" the twinkle in Elisabeth Schumann's, Horowitz's, or Gerard Schwarz's eyes.

"Circles" closed the third of the three national programs (French, Austrian-and-German, Italian) that the New Music Consort gave this season. Luigi Nono's "Polifonica-Monodiaritmica" (1951) began it, in a delicate and beautiful performance, conducted by George Manahan. There were also Bruno Maderna's "Honeyrêves" (1961), Berio's set of folk-song arrangements (1963), which call for more diverse characterization than Miss Bettina gave them, and Luigi

Dallapiccola's exquisite "Piccola Musica Notturna" (1954). It was something of a down-memory-lane program—nothing from the last sixteen years—and that was a pity, for in this town we hear precious little of what Italian composers are up to, while all these works are on disc (and all but the folk songs in the current catalogue). But it was a coherent evening of cultivated, finely wrought, and—in the Nono and in "Circles"—inspired music, performed on a high level of accomplishment. Next season, the Consort plays three concerts of American chamber music in its Carnegie series; I hope the programs include the best of the new pieces it has been introducing at York College, in Queens.

**T**HE League-ISCAM concerts, which a few years ago I used to attend, I confess, more as a matter of duty than with any great keenness, have again become an important element in the musical life of the city—not least because the works presented come from all over the country. This season's seven programs, performed in Carnegie Recital Hall, were varied and were imaginatively, intelligently, and purposively assembled. In the course of two of them, four of the six winning works in the League-ISCAM 1978 competition were done. The competition was held to choose six compositions, by six composers, to go forward as the national submission to the international jury of the World Music Days—the new name for the ISCAM Festival—which this year will be held in Athens in September. (Two of the winning pieces were for large forces that would not fit a recital format, so their composers were represented by pieces that would fit.) The American judges spanned the country: John Harbison (Cambridge), Paul Lansky (Princeton), Roger Reynolds (San Diego), Ralph Shapey (Chicago), and Harvey Sollberger (New York). So did the winners: Laura Clayton (Ann Arbor), John Heiss (Auburndale, Massachusetts), Michael McNabb (Stanford), Frank Retzels (Chicago), Maurice Wright (New York), and Scott A. Wyatt (Urbana). Three of the six winning pieces use tape, and in a fourth the instruments are amplified.

I caught three of the pieces submitted to Athens and particularly liked two of them: McNabb's "Dreamsong" and Heiss's Chamber Concerto. McNabb works at Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics; his "Dreamsong" is for computer-generated stereo tape, with recorded soprano. A few weeks





"We're not dumping it anywhere, Ma'am. We're just going to keep driving it around."

later, at The Rockefeller University, I heard the computer-generated score in somewhat similar vein which McNabb and William Schottstaedt had composed to accompany Elliott Levinthal's three-dimensional film of Martian landscapes, assembled from signals that the Viking spacecraft sent back to Earth. The sounds were strange, romantic, and picturesque, evocative of an other-world landscape. They made a good soundtrack. Much electronic composition (the term is intended to cover both synthesized sounds and natural sounds recorded and electronically processed) suggests background music—accompaniment to odysseys or travelogues that call for something more special than the mock-Delius habitually added to images of familiar pastoral scenes. And I own that at the League concert, which happened before I knew about the Martian movie, "Dreamsong" at first seemed to me an invitation to roam in imagination through long, unfamiliar landscapes. But soon, or so I thought, it was revealed as music in its own right—music to attend to, not to dream through—for interesting, arresting things were happening, and the shape was making sense. When the mysterious sounds suddenly coalesced into articulate words, the effect was potent. To put it another way, McNabb is plainly a

real composer, apprehensible as such—not a stunt man or a mere dabbler in technical tricks. Heiss's Chamber Concerto was closer to common musical experience, for although it starts scrappily, it then turns to ordered musical discourse, pleasing and holding the mind and the ear as voice responds to voice and theme plays upon theme. The piece is a clarification, now for four players (flute, clarinet, piano, and percussion), of the Flute Concerto, for soloist and ensemble of ten, which Speculum introduced two years ago. The flute still has the dominant role, of which Carol Wincenc was a striking interpreter. I didn't dislike the third Athens piece on this bill—Wyatt's "Menagerie," a four-channel electronic composition, in three sections entitled "Tree Clams," "Air Stones," and "Moonsheep." Indeed, "Tree Clams" began and ended captivatingly. But I felt that I'd missed the point of it, that I was somehow on the wrong wavelength.

The Wright work that went to Athens was "Stellae," for orchestra and tape. At the League concert, his Chamber Symphony, for piano and electronic sound, was played—an animated and cogent, and eventually witty, dialogue. Robert Miller was brilliant in the live role. The concert began with Eric Stokes's "Eldey Island, In

Memoriam Homo Sapiens," for flute and tape. The title may be dog Latin, but the piece is surefire, partly because it must be almost impossible to write an unattractive work for solo flute, or even for solo flute with tape effects, and partly because the subject (the subtitle is "An elegy on the extinction of the Great Auk at the hand of man through greed, folly and arrogance") has listeners on its side as soon as they have read the program note. It tells how, in 1844, three men spotted the last surviving pair of auks. As the men approached, the birds "ran along under the high cliff, their heads erect, their little wings somewhat extended. They uttered no cry of alarm, and moved with their short steps as quickly as a man could run." But they were caught, and strangled, and then their egg, the last egg of the great auks, was wantonly smashed. Given that matter, who could fail to write an effective and moving composition? Stokes has done it skillfully. The New York premiere of Jean Eichelberger Ivey's "Prospero," for bass, horn, percussion, and tape, completed the program. This struck me as a dull piece—"Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves," the epilogue, and some other scraps of "The Tempest" declaimed to pitches against sound effects.

—ANDREW PORTER