

Sowerby's "Comes Autumn Time," a Brilliant Musical Expression

"Program Overture" of Young Chicago Composer, Just Published, Work of Deep Significance—Superb Instrumentation Attest To Writer's Command of Medium—Truly Spirited, and of Forceful Conviction

BY A. WALTER KRAMER

TO the esteemed conductor, Frederick A. Stock, of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and that generous sponsor of musical art, Mrs. Frederick S. Coolidge, thanks is due for bringing to public attention the work of a young composer, who promises to be one of the big men in America's music of the next decade. The young man is Leo Sowerby, a resident of Chicago—late of the A. E. F. in France during the war, where he served as a bandmaster—who has to date produced enough music to take a place of honor among our creative musicians. It is not the purpose of this article to narrate what he has done, or even to suggest the many excellent achievements which he has already put to his credit. The occasion is to call attention of all who read this journal to his extraordinarily beautiful overture for orchestra, "Comes Autumn Time," which has recently been published by the Boston Music Co. And here let us pause a moment and express our pleasure at seeing this distinguished music publishing house issuing an American work for orchestra, a big expense and one that cannot quickly be realized in sales. Were our publishers all agreed in stimulating native composition as this house has done for a period of years, the Society for the Publication of American Music, organized last year to publish the significant extended works of American composers, would not have needed to be called into existence. But enough of that. To our muttons!

Mr. Sowerby has written what he calls a "Program Overture" and in his score we find Bliss Carman's fine poem, "Autumn," quoted, obviously the inspiration of the composition. Only in a general way can one sketch the work here, to give some idea of this exceedingly sincere, effective and individual composition. The opening theme in bass clarinet, bassoons, violas, cellos and basses tells in a bright manner of "the time of fruit and grain." The second theme, given out by the flutes and celesta in octaves, supported by a clarinet, and the first violins *divisi*, with the clarinet fig-



Photo by Moffett

"In Leo Sowerby, This Country Has One of Its Most Forceful Creative Personalities"

ure duplicated in harp harmonics—a lovely touch—is equally as fine. Such is the material. The rest is Mr. Sowerby's not simply ingenious treatment of it, but his vital skill in suggesting bits of the theme here and there with a masterly sense of appropriateness and a feeling for symphonic development that makes his work cohere. One is constantly reminded in studying the work of the fact that it is a unit. And in this it differs much from most modern works, which, excellent as they are, only too often suffer from a diffuse quality that is almost ostentatiously set before us by their creators.

There is a fresh quality in this music that is arresting. It combines, with Mr. Sowerby's use of English instructions to the performers, such as "plucked" for *pizzicato*, "bowed" for *arco*, "glide" for *glissando*, etc., to make us think that he has something very marked in common with Percy Grainger. We are told, let us add parenthetically, that Mr. Sowerby used these English expressions in his music long before he saw any of Mr. Grainger's music and noted that it was that composer's custom thus to indicate

his expression marks, etc. It is unimportant, whether it was before or after. The important thing is that he has a free spirit, a moving pulse and a brilliant expression, that he can control so admirably. Like Grainger, he is a composer of the outdoors, not one of the musty study, where midnight oil might solve the problem of a contrapuntal joining of thirty themes!

The work is scored for a big orchestra, two flutes and piccolo, pairs of oboes, clarinets and bassoons, bass clarinet, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, four kettledrums, cymbals, chromatic bells, tubular bells (did we hear someone whisper "Grainger!"), harp and celesta and strings. And here a word: we have not referred to Mr. Sowerby's instrumentation as yet. We wish to go on record that it is superb, in that he treats his instruments always idiomatically, with a respect to their intimate natures. Such splendid writing for the winds, the horn parts and the brasses (note the closing measures in which they are used in a tremolo!) attest their composer's absolute command of his medium. The work is not untried. It has been performed successfully in New York by Mr. Damrosch with the Symphony Society, and, if we mistake not, in Chicago by Mr. Stock with the local symphony. It ought to be played by every symphony orchestra in

America and Europe: in America, because few better new works for orchestra are to be had, in Europe because it is high time that our active composers, those who are young and have something to say, should be heard there, instead of our professors, who had a magnificent time of it last year in Rome when their compositions—recommended, of course, by the music department of a college where live lovers of professorial music—were performed as typical of contemporary American orchestral literature. An American who heard that concert has sent us word that he did not feel a bit proud of what the Italians were obliged to listen to!

There is a real spirit in this composer's production. He has ideas, knowledge, brains and balance; and he writes with conviction, the kind of conviction that makes the close of his overture reflect the lines of Mr. Carman:

*And while the crickets fife along her march,
Behind her banners burns the crimson sun.*

We are certain that in Leo Sowerby this country has one of its most forceful creative personalities.

Le Menestrel of Paris states that the Berlin Opera will shortly give several performances of the Nibelungen Ring at The Hague.

Beatrice MacCue

CONTRALTO

Press Comments

New York Recital

March 9th



Her enunciation is admirable. Every word was clearly heard. Her voice is of good quality. There was charm in her singing of light songs.—THE EVENING TELEGRAM.

She displayed an excellent natural voice. She showed in all her interpretations taste and intelligence.—THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

Singing with considerable beauty of tone.—THE NEW YORK TIMES.

The soloist's voice in the lower register was of good volume and quite agreeable.—THE WORLD.

She is a contralto with a voice of most ingratiating quality. In its middle register it is expressive, with sufficient carrying power, and often real beauty, to which a statuesque blonde personality adds a touch of distinction.—THE EVENING MAIL.

Miss MacCue's singing disclosed a voice of agreeable timbre. Her interpretation showed fine feeling.—THE SUN AND NEW YORK HERALD.

Her singing of a long, diverse and difficult programme yesterday, proclaimed her an artist who combines musicianliness with skill and assurance. Miss MacCue possesses undeniable gifts as a dramatic singer. The original charm of each selection was increased by beguiling eloquence, superb diction and directness of expression.—NEW YORK AMERICAN.

Her name is Beatrice MacCue, a singer of more than average talent. She has a rich contralto voice, sympathetic in quality, and well in tune. She has a pleasing personality, and an unusual amount of charm.—THE MORNING TELEGRAPH.

Address 206 W. 95th St., New York City

Phone Riverside 6180

A song by Frank H. Grey, composer of successful ballads which is being featured by all the prominent artists.

Since First You Smiled On Me

Low—Ab—Medium—Bb—High—C

Send This Order Blank

JOS. W. STERN & CO.
102-104 West 38th Street
New York

Gentlemen: Send me _____ copies of
Since First You Smiled On Me
in _____ Voice. Enclosed you will find _____
paying for the above at Thirty Cents Per Copy
(stamps accepted).

Name
Address



Jacob
GEGNA
Violinist

Teacher of
Gabriel Engel
and
Sammy Kramar

Studios: 25 E. 99th St., New York
Phone Lenox 5191