

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 20

FOR RELEASE:

After

Friday, March 3, 1961

CARL RUGGLES CONCERT AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A concert in honor of Carl Ruggles' 85th birthday will be given at the Museum of Modern Art, Thursday, March 2, at 8:30 p.m. In this season's second Composers' Showcase concert, directed by Charles Schwartz, Robert Craft will conduct a string orchestra in works by Mr. Ruggles; and Helen Boatwright, soprano, accompanied by pianist William Dale, will sing compositions by Charles Ives.

The program will open with five early songs by Ives: "Abide with Me" (c.1892), "There is a Certain Garden" (1893), "Nevermore" (1897), "Judges' Walk" (1898), and "Where the Eagle Cannot See" (1900); and five later songs: "A Sea Dirge" (1925), "The Greatest Man" (1921), "Serenity" (1919), "Ann Street" (1921), and "General Booth Enters into Heaven" (1914).

Mr. Ruggles' works will include: "Portals" for string orchestra (1930), "Angels" for muted brass (1922), "Evocations" (four chants for piano, played by Lionel Novak) (1937-45), "Lilacs" (1923) and "Portals" (1930), both for string orchestra.

Tickets for the Thursday evening concerts, \$3, may be purchased at the Museum, 11 West 53 Street, or by mail. Museum members receive a 25 per cent discount on two. Tickets include admission to galleries, open every Thursday until 10 p.m. Dinner and refreshments are available. Special films will be shown on those Thursdays for which concerts are not scheduled.

Composers' Showcase will present a Walter Piston concert at the Museum on Thursday, March 30. The Dave Brubeck Quartet will appear in May under the auspices of Jazz Profiles, the counterpart of Composers' Showcase. Together, the two non-profit organizations are the only regular concert series entirely devoted to contemporary music and modern jazz.

Notes on Carl Ruggles attached.

Further information available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

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CARL RUGGLES, by Irving Kolodin (excerpts from New York Philharmonic program notes of October 16, 1958)

(Born in Marion, Massachusetts, March 11, 1876; now living in Arlington, Vermont)

Writing in the "Musical Quarterly" for January 1952, the versatile composer-educator-writer Randall Thompson (not to be confused with another, versatile Thomson) set forth some ideas on "American Music after a Quarter Century" which are worth reviewing at our point a quarter century later. Especially provocative is his characterization of American compositional trends into such groupings as "Nationalists," "Eclectics," "Esoterics," "Eccentrics" and "Innovators." It would be pressing courtesy to cite the well-known names of today and the identities assigned to them by Thompson, for yesterday's "Innovator" may be today's "Eclectic." But there need be no mystery in identifying Carl Ruggles as an "Esoteric" to Thompson, for he remains so today.

From the standpoint of the average concertgoer, it is not inaccurate to say that much of the music by which Ruggles is unknown today was written between 1920 and 1935. It was at this time he evolved the procedures distinctively his, for the most part on a massive scale of composition in fulfillment of the observation by the late Charles Seeger, a musicologist-friend and admirer who wrote "No orchestra is big enough" for Ruggles. "Parts just naturally clamor for extra horns and clarinets." The "ease-of-performance" problem is therefore a very real one in the infrequency of hearings for his work....

Seeger is also an authoritative spokesman for the special features of Ruggles' writing which distinguish it from any other mode of procedure. "The determining feature or principal of the melodic line is that of non-repetition of tone (either the same tone or any octave of it) until the tenth progression." (This would seem to ally it with the non-repetitive aspects of twelve-tone writing, save that the concept of a "row" or group of notes from which the whole composition is evolved does not enter into Ruggles' thinking). "It would indeed," continues Seeger "be a great surprise to most musicians and music lovers to realize what a sensitiveness has been developed by adherence to this principle.... The reader must understand that this avoidance of the repeated tone is not, with him, to any great extent an intellectual feat. Not given to analysis, and remarkably free of what is ordinarily referred to as the 'theory' of music (that is, the verbal description of the practice of the masters of the preceding century) he will often tell you that a melody or melodic line is bad, and will point out the place where it is bad, only later discovering that it is on account of a false repetition."

Ruggles arrived at his compositional practice from a background of independent thinking derived, perhaps, from forebearers who were whalers when Cape Cod was a center for such trade. It has been noted that Ruggles Street in Boston honors an ancestor. As a prodigy of the violin, he performed at an early age for President Grover Cleveland. One of his teachers was Christian Timmner, one-time concertmaster of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. While attending Harvard he came under the influence of John Knowles Paine and Walter Spalding. He spent some time in his early thirties in Winona, Minnesota, drawn by an effort to establish a conservatory of music and symphony orchestra in that community. However he has long been identified with Arlington, Vermont where he divided his time between composition and painting. In the aftermath of World War I he was active in the creation of the International Composers Guild in New York (with Edgar Varese and Carlos Salzedo), and also in the work of the Pan-American Association of Composers. In 1937 he inaugurated a seminar in composition at the University of Miami (Florida) which continued for a decade. In 1953 he received the National Association of American Composers and Conductors Award, and the following year was elected to membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters. There are other aspects of the Ruggles' personality - his identification with the people of the small town in which he has, for years, made his home, his preference for composing on "select pieces of wrapping paper of varying colors and sizes" on which he rules his own staff with lines "about one inch apart so that the notes are grand and fat, made often as not, with colored crayon" (Seeger, again, is the speaker) but they are extraneous to the quality of the music and its sound.

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