

dium of trivia, lists of items that may be of marginal interest to cultural historians of the near past but which should not be used to fill up the empty spaces in many of the skulls that have been created since 1954. (SM) □

Performances

Antonio Vivaldi: *Concerto for Two Violins*; Asten Magna Ensemble; Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records.

Vivaldi for aficionados, dependably assuaging, in a bit colorless, but correct, performance.

Janáček: *Concertino*; Prokofiev: *Overture on Hebrew Themes*; Berwald; *Septet*; The Amsterdam Nonet; Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records.

Janáček and Prokofiev represent the same period of transforming music into the grand modernist compromise between lyricism and intellect, imagination and knowledge. Somehow Pro-

kofiev was one of the very few who saved the intangible and the magic. Berwald hailed from Sweden of the early 19th century and idolized Beethoven. The Amsterdam ensemble renders justice to both epochs.

Samuel Barber: *Summer Music*; **Elliot Carter:** *Woodwind Quintet*; **Irving Fine:** *Partite*; **Joseph Goodman:** *Scherzo for Wind Quintet*; **Souli Ventorum Wind Quintet;** Musical Heritage Society, Inc.; Tinton Falls, NJ.

Barber unexciting, but sweet; the rest—respectable but unexciting.

The Western Film World of Dimitri Tiomkin; London Studio Symphony Orchestra & The John McCarthy Singers; Musical Heritage Society, Inc.; Trinton Falls, NJ.

Hollywood sinfonics of Anglo-Saxon musical roots by a composer with a Ukrainian family name. It's frightening how little it means and matters without the appropriate moving pictures. □

Rapids, where he was to live and work. Like other domestic painters and writers, he traveled to Paris. Consequently, he was, for a mercifully brief time, a belated impressionist; his works from that period have all of the possibility and grandeur of paint-by-number canvases. Then, apparently, Wood decided to paint what he knew, not what he pretended to. He became a regionalist.

Regionalism, by and large, had its day in the years following the Depression, a period that witnessed a concomitant rise in social realism. On the one hand, thanks, in many cases, to Federal programs, there were painters who turned to the land, while their peers in the cities rendered scenes for the edification of the urban proletariat. The latter took their fashion from Moscow. But as the 1930's turned into the 40's, a number of painters in New York felt that they had to become "world-class" painters. Naturally, the socialist realism program promulgated by the Popular Front had to go since propaganda is for illustrators, not artists and the Hitler-Stalin pact caused a few scales to be sluffed off of corneas. However, together with flimsy illusions, these New York artists also tossed regionalism into the trashcan. There are a number of reasons why they did so. One is that no one in Paris had done much with nature since Douanier Rousseau. Another, perhaps, is that few of the loft inhabitants were able to distinguish a cow from a horse.

A fairly typical New York organization called the American Modern Artists held a show in the city in 1943; the introduction to its catalog reads, in part,

This exhibition is a first step to free the artist from the stifling control of an outmoded politics. For art in America is still the plaything of politicians. Isolationist art still dominates the American scene. Regionalism still holds the reigns of America's artistic future. It is high time we cleared the cultural atmosphere of America... We who dedicated our lives to art—to modern art in America, at a time when men found easy success crying "to hell

ART

From the Heartland — & the Heart

by Gary S. Vasilash

Look long and hard at the "official" list of 20th-century American painters: Jackson Pollock... Arshile Gorky... Robert Rauschenberg... Willem de Kooning... Jasper Johns... Robert Motherwell... Mark Rothko... Almost nowhere, outside of Iowa, will the name Grant Wood be found. A recent show at The Art Institute of Chicago, "Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision," indicates why Wood is ignored, yet it also pro-

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vokes a lingering doubt about the sense of putting Wood in a subcategory along with, say, Norman Rockwell. Wood was often much more—and never less—than an illustrator; he is always more indigenously truthful and genuine than the before-listed artists.

It's said that "You can't keep the boy on the farm once he's seen the big city," yet Wood's career belies that maxim. A product of Anamosa, Iowa (born in 1891, the year that saw Gauguin getting back to nature and Toulouse-Lautrec finding his nature through the music hall posters), Wood spent his first 10 years on the family farm, then moved to Cedar

with art, let's have pictures of the old oaken bucket"—we mean to make manifest by our work, in our studios and in our galleries the requirement for a culture in a new America.

Culture, as defined by these artists, then, had something to do with canvases displaying geometric figures, blobs, streaks, aureoles, etc. Such things smacked of intellect and sophistication. "Old oaken buckets" were for the rubes. These American Modern Artists were obviously worked up—and with good reason. During the better part of the first half of this century, modern art was European art. Impressionists, cubists, surrealists, and the rest were those who lived in and around what was then the center of Western civilization. They developed their abilities and sensibilities while surrounded by tradition. Monet, Braque, Picasso, Klee, Miro, Kandinsky, and their kin didn't say "to hell with tradition, let's have strange arrangements that are just new," but reacted to the art that had existed through the ages. Reaction requires interface; rejection needs only the briefest introduction. Part of the reason why the American modernists didn't make it (and why they became so upset) was that they were merely playing at art, mimicking those who knew, understood, felt, and internalized art. Had these Americans not rejected the regionalist tradition, one that had its roots in 17th-century America, there would have been great possibilities for a true American style. But reject they did, and so-called "contemporary art" is the result.

Admittedly, much regionist art is, in a word, bad. For example, Wood's pair *Farmer with Pigs* and *Farmer's Wife with Chicken* (both 1932) resembles something that belongs in the produce section of a grocery store. But his oil *Spring Turning* (1936), with its undulating but ordered sequence of green and brown rectangles representing more than an imaginary homage to Demeter, is more fecund, provocative, and, yes, appealing, than anything the

American pseudo-Europeans created during their puny aspirations to cubism or the rendering of myth. *Victorian Survival* (1931), an oil on composition board that resembles a tintype and which shows a prim, parched matron next to a goosenecked telephone, has something of a genuine but tangential relationship to the juxtapositions of Magritte—and the tangent is closer than Rauschenberg has ever come. Still, there are the petty lithographs like *Midnight Alarm* and *Shrine Quartet* (both 1939) that have a juvenile bucolicism or boosterism about them and which offset the genuine nature of other lithographs of the same year, such as *Fertility*. Perhaps Wood's vision, like that of the cataracted

spinster in his satirical *Daughters of Revolution* (1932), was clouded by his spending too much time down on the farm.

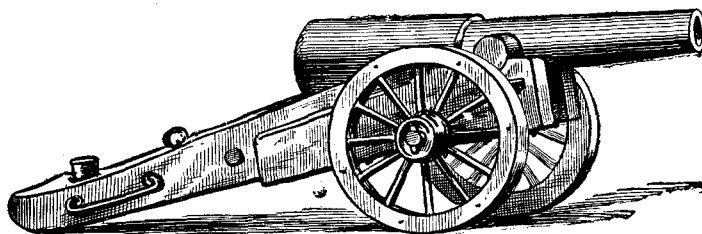
However, Grant Wood is undoubtedly one of the true artists of the American landscape and psyche. It was once not merely "okay" but *proper* to have a sincere belief in things like family and the land, in cooperation and struggle, in religion and the state. "Naive!" thunder those who barricade themselves in penthouses that rise above fetid and rotting cities. Perhaps. But unquestionably more sincere, fruitful, and edifying than the cryptic pastiches of horror and despair that are passed off on the market as art. □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Red Rainbow

What's astonishing (or, perhaps, moderately surprising, if we remain aware of what life in liberal America has taught us over the last two decades) is the media's color blindness when it comes to making an ideological evaluation of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's program-

dismantling the American economic system by means of Federally sponsored distributive pressures and practices. He calls for social egalitarianism that will be gained not through democratic traditions, but through quasitotalitarian prerogatives vested in the government and the bureaucracy. He declares an imperative to appease those interna-



matic rhetoric. At a closer look, this agenda followed by the press-at-large seems oddly identical with all that emerges as theory and doctrine from the Institute of Policy Studies (an idea and research center which cloaks the old Marxian orthodoxy and the defense of the Soviet march into the future with modern, pseudopragmatic, independently radical phraseology). Rev. Jackson unabashedly proclaims the necessity of

tional forces which we can rationally and legitimately call hostile to America, and to accept their terms, their postulates, and their global actions against us. If this is not pure and simply the political agenda of the domestic and foreign radical left, we do not know what is. But don't hold your breath waiting for CBS, *The New York Times*, Harvard's faculty, or the *Chicago Tribune's* editorialists to call it by its proper name. □