

MUSIC JURY'S REPORT OF CANDIDATES

by Mr. William Grant Still

MUSIC - COMPOSITION

I am rating the three candidates now in the order of their musical importance, and am giving my conclusions purely on a musical basis, after studying the material submitted.

1. ULYSSES KAY stands head and shoulders above the other two applicants because he has good training (which the others also have had) but also because he is able to express himself in terms other than those used by the composers of yesterday. Certainly, he is more American in his music than the others. He handles his orchestra well and grasps the mechanics of musical composition efficiently. He shows good balance in his harmonic style. I find him writing mental rather than inspired music (that is, there isn't much in it that would appeal to the hearts of listeners) but this doesn't mean that he won't write inspired music in the future, if allowed to develop and to mature. Musically, I consider him worthy. There is a recording of one of his most-played works among the material sent. I would suggest that the members of the committee listen to this and see if they agree with my conclusions.
2. GEORGE T. WALKER is well-schooled and has inventive ability, but no originality. He has a good foundation in theory, but is merely re-writing what has been written before, and the old European composers did it so much better. I note his emphasis on wanting to secure European training in his plan of work. Personally, I object to this, for I have always felt that Americans - especially Negroes - should devote themselves to the American idiom. I would have been more impressed if he had asked to study at some American institution, or with some American interpreters or creators. With the wealth of material here in the United States, I see no reason for any of us to give our allegiance to European artists. I think Mr. Walker's compositions reflect this - to me - unhealthy point of view.
3. IRWIN SWACK's project is fine if confined to the educational aspect, but he doesn't yet measure up to the requirements of a composer.