

is organically attached to the time and place that produces it, and that even the greatest culture of the past can serve at best as an example and an ideal, not as a model. His motto, "Semper idem sed non eodem modo," is of course in the deepest sense true; it says little however that is definite, since there is no way of establishing theoretically the exact point of divergence between the two categories which it sets up. One can admit gladly that artistic values—since they are human values—are inherent and in the last analysis unchangeable; their living embodiment however must come from within—through the gradual growth and development of a tradition from the means at its disposal; it can never be imposed from without by the adoption of "standards" conceived in a purely static sense, and taken over from a period which, as Schenker himself would have us believe, is closed. The composer of today must, and at his best does strive, as composers have always striven, to embody in his art the qualities of synthesis, of range, of intensity for which he must perforce strive as a human being; he would only face hopeless and inevitable defeat were he to ignore the continuity which binds him to the great period of the past, even if that continuity has been primarily destructive of the older synthesis. It is his task, in fact, to build, as far as he is able, in the spirit of his titanic predecessors, but with the materials, vastly different from theirs, which his time and destiny have put at his disposal.

Roger Sessions

COMPOSERS IN AMERICA

THE present volume, *Composers in America: Biographical Sketches of Living Composers with a Record of Their Works*, by Claire Reis, (The MacMillan Company, 1938) is the logical expansion of her two earlier and briefer works dealing with the same subject.

The phenomenal increase in the amount of music of high aspiration composed in this country during the past quarter century demands closer attention to its nature and the potential means of its performance. Studies of the American composer have tended

chiefly to estimate the achievement of those who have acquired a certain reputation in the practice of their art. There are, however, many others who are casually dismissed in a few words despite the fact that they may be the leaders of another generation. The historian cannot examine these temporarily lesser pieces and give their music an adequate analysis without expanding his book to an unwarrantable extent from either the publisher's or the critic's standpoint.

Those who have the advance of American music at heart are justified in knowing the facts. Mrs. Reis has adopted a plan which will render her work of priceless value not only for the organizers of programs of native music, but for all future writers on the subject. For she has added to concise biographies of the composers in question, giving the essence of their creative, critical or educative attainments, a comprehensive list of their works, grouped according to categories with information as to their time-duration, publisher or means of performance. Mrs. Reis has been wise not to attempt a critical placing of each composer, nor even to suggest the nature of his individuality. She has let the works speak for themselves and the records given of performance can lead the reader to draw his own conclusions.

As a whole the lists of works presented is striking for a marked increase in works for chamber music or chamber orchestra, and still more notable for the number of stage works, particularly the ballet. The last item is specially encouraging as revealing growth of the dramatic instinct, a creative urge which hitherto has tended to be dormant. It was a foregone conclusion that the American composer would continue along the well-trodden paths of instrumental music, no matter how advanced his style, but his awakening to the call of the ballet is a sign of esthetic independence to be welcomed with rejoicing.

Mrs. Reis has performed an arduous task with an admirable sense of proportion. It is perhaps open to question whether one or two names in the supplementary list might not be subject to promotion. In the main she has given a graphic and accurate picture of the American composer of today.

Edward Burlingame Hill