

logue and give Americans a greater opportunity to hear works emanating from the American soil. For those of them asking "Where is your American music?" a perusal of this booklet will be an answer more than conclusive. Incidentally this applies to some of our American conductors who are far too much on the lookout for the *dernier cri* of European music to interest themselves in what is going on in their immediate environment.

Having read the catalogue, one is inclined to ask "What is an American Composer?" Does the music writing individual who comes to America for a political, economical or "a desire to live in this country" reason become an American Composer when his entire heritage and musical training have been European? Can he absorb the spirit of the American scene after a few years of residence here, at least to a degree sufficient to dominate his old world background?

To Claire Reis, who compiled this catalogue, a debt of gratitude is due for her labor, her tremendous enthusiasm and her devotion to the cause of American music. May we suggest—if the thing be at all possible—that future catalogues be a little more discriminating in separating what one may consider composers worthy of serious consideration from talented dilettantes?

Alexander Smallens

MODERN ORCHESTRATION SURVEYED

FOR some time now we have been badly in need of an authoritative work on the subject of orchestration as practised today. Except for a short brochure written by Malipiero, there has been no serious attempt to study the underlying characteristics of modern orchestral technic since Rimsky-Korsakoff wrote down his *Principles of Orchestration* at the beginning of the century. Since that day many changes have taken place and entirely new manifestations, such as the recreation of the chamber orchestra and the influential jazz-band, have come into existence. That no one has sought to bring Rimsky's excellent treatise up to date seems all the more remarkable when we consider that even the most severe critics have long admitted the brilliance and cleverness of the newer composers in their treatment of the modern orchestra's varied resources.

Undoubtedly, if no such book exists it can partly be explained by the difficulty of the undertaking. Merely to have in one's possession a large selection of new scores by composers of many schools and of many nationalities is no easy matter. But to collate and analyze that material so as to determine with any degree of exactitude what constitutes the "secrets" of the new orchestration is a task to make the heartiest weaken. Moreover, it is an ungrateful task, for few branches of musical art are founded on principles which are so quickly superseded—a new orchestral style being born with every new and important composer. Nevertheless the writer striving to fill this gap would be certain of the gratitude of the musical historian and student-composer.

Egon Wellesz, pupil and biographer of Schönberg and a composer in his own right, has made the pioneering effort in his recent two-volume work, *Die Neue Instrumentation*. Let it be understood immediately that this is not the book we have been waiting for—it is no more than a beginning. From the several apologies to be found among his pages one gains the impression that Wellesz himself was quite cognizant of the book's shortcomings. But he failed to realize two things: first, that it is poorly planned and second, that too often what he has to say is hardly more profound than what might occur to any musician who had given the problem of modern orchestration some serious thought.

From the first Wellesz was handicapped by the fact that his treatise was to fill a prescribed place in the series of musical text books published by the Max Hesses Verlag. A manual of orchestration needs room in which to spread itself. With the limited space at his disposal one would have thought that Wellesz might have chosen the highlights of modern orchestration and put his emphasis on those. Instead, he has tried to survey the entire field of orchestral literature with the inevitable result of obtaining only a very sketchy bird's eye view of the whole subject. Thus we find him devoting four pages of text to the orchestral technic of Stravinsky in order to save space for a mention of orchestrators like Joseph Marx and Franz Schmidt. In trying to do too much, he has done too little.

For Wellesz the most important orchestrators of the twentieth century are five: Mahler, Strauss, Debussy, Schönberg and Stravinsky. Ravel is conspicuous by his absence. He should have been included with the others not only because he is himself a brilliantly original technician in the orchestral medium, but also because he has acted as influence on a host of composers, including Stravinsky. From the number of pages devoted to Mahler, it is safe to imply that Wellesz considers him the peer of them all. In this he has paid a just tribute. No matter what we may think of this last-of-the-romantics as composer, he was indubitably an orchestrator of genius. Strauss, by comparison, cuts a pre-war figure with his richly overlaid orchestra. Even Debussy's orchestration, beautiful as it is, evokes the soft iridescence of another era. But Mahler, far in advance of his time, completely satisfies our needs—his was the first orchestra to play *without pedal*. Mahler created that sharply-etched and clarified sonority that can be heard again and again in the music of later composers. Two excellent examples of scores that show the influence of Mahler are Honegger's *Pacific* and Hindemith's *Concerto Grosso*, Opus 36.

Schönberg has achieved an orchestral style of his own, ideally fitted to the super-sensitive quality of his music. This he accomplished by applying the chamber orchestra technic to the large orchestra. Instead of dividing the seven notes of a given chord among seven instruments of the same group, he carefully distributed them among instruments of different groups, thereby gaining the richest possible texture for each separate chord. Very characteristic also of one small corner of his orchestration is the love of a magical bell-like sonority which is somehow extracted from harp, celesta, glockenspiel, mandolin, etc. It is surprising, that although Wellesz's discussion of Schönberg's orchestration is more complete, it is hardly more illuminating than his treatment of other composers.

His understanding of Stravinsky's orchestral prowess is weakest of all. To read him one would think that Stravinsky's mastery of the orchestra could be explained merely by the fact that he invariably writes for his instruments in their most grateful regis-

ters. There is an important distinction to be drawn between what is new and what is old in Stravinsky's handling of the orchestral medium. Malipiero cleverly pointed out that even an old orchestra would sound transformed into a modern one if it were given Stravinskian harmonies and rhythms to play. Thus the opening section of *Le Sacre* would unmistakably be orchestration *à la* Strauss were it not for the musical content.

Wellesz almost completely ignores Stravinsky's orchestral works of the past ten years. This is a fatal error, for they contain the germ of the orchestra of tomorrow. That orchestra will exchange the surface brilliance of today for a new sobriety. In *Oedipus Rex* and *Apollon Musagète* Stravinsky has shown the way. Out of an old orchestra he has forged a new sonority, this time without the aid of unusual rhythms or harmonies.

Die Neue Instrumentation is at best a disappointing book but at least it makes a start in a much-neglected field—a field of which the modern musician may justly feel proud.

Aaron Copland