

SCORES and RECORDS

By AARON COPLAND

SCORES AND RECORDS is one of five new departments devoted to the theatre, the films, the dance, the radio, the phonograph and scores, which make their first appearance in this issue of MODERN MUSIC. It will be the policy to publish these regularly in every number and, whenever possible, always over the same signature. — ED.

OUR title, we hope, is prophetic. The time may not be far off when recording companies will issue scores with their records, and publishing firms records with their scores. For the present, however, we shall have to treat them separately. These reviews are not meant to be primarily critical in nature. The final test of any piece printed or recorded is public performance before a live audience. What we wish to do here is to introduce, describe, and comment upon any newly published music or newly issued records that might be of some interest to the readers of MODERN MUSIC.

If you are one of the increasing army of record fans you owe a debt of gratitude to a modest young man named R. D. Darrell. His recently compiled *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* is a complete job, brilliantly done. Besides finding an invaluable source book of record information, you may enjoy the spectacle of the record companies confronted with the inaccuracy of their own labels, or of Mr. Darrell straightening out the Chinese puzzle resulting from the various versions of Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*, or the thumb-nail sketches of more than six hundred recorded composers, which is no small achievement in itself. This book was badly needed. We trust that the author is already at work on the next edition.

One of the most courageous offerings of recent months in the record field is that of Bela Bartok's *Second String Quartet*, Opus 17 (RCA Victor) as played by the Hungarian String Quartet. What will the innocent record buyer think of this work? It is a

picture of the artist in a shell-shocked world. One need not know that it was written during the darkest war years to realize this—for the work itself, with its bitter harmonies and cheerless melodies, betrays the period of its birth. It is an impressive, if somewhat forbidding, document.

Equally impressive are the excerpts from Darius Milhaud's operatic essays on the Orestes of Aeschylus (Columbia). This set contains the astonishingly dramatic *Exhortation* from *Les Choéphores*, which, once heard, is not easily forgotten. There is no music—only a declamatory voice, a chorus emitting rhythmic cries and a whole battery of percussion instruments. The effect in the theatre must certainly be overwhelming for much of its power is retained on wax. The final *Processional* from the Eumenides is of a complexity which, unfortunately, does not lend itself well to recording.

Of the recent Sibelius releases I much prefer the *Night Ride and Sunrise*, Opus 55, to either *The Oceanides*, Opus 73, issued in the same album, (RCA Victor) or *Festivo—Tempo di Bolero* (Columbia). All this music has a certain naive side to it,—the *Night-Ride* with its conventional horsey rhythm, the *Oceanides* with its crawling chromatics, and the *Festivo* with its pseudo-Spanish-isms. But naive or not, the *Night-Ride and Sunrise* is powerful music and shows Sibelius' most sympathetic, nineteenth century self.

It is pleasant to be able to report that the four short excerpts from Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (Columbia) are as fresh as ever. One should like to see the whole ballet recorded. Instead we have the whole of Poulenc's choreographic concerto entitled *Aubade* and written for piano and eighteen instruments (Columbia). It's a long work for Poulenc—six ten-inch sides. But if you are not too exacting (and certainly Poulenc isn't) you will probably discover moments of charm and *allegresse*; also pages of warmed-over neo-classicism.

Alexandre Tansman's music is well adapted for record presentation. It is neither too heavy nor too light in texture. It divides itself easily into separate sides and makes use of a number of well-known modernist devices. All of which resolves itself into a pleasant enough piece for piano quartet called *Suite*

Divertissement (Columbia). The music does not exactly induce a glow of pleasure, but it probably will make converts to the contemporary idiom.

One is accustomed to hearing Enesco's talent as a composer belittled. The *Third Violin Sonata*, as played by the Menuhins (RCA Victor), may not be great music, but it is not dull music either. Particularly the third movement is arresting; it has a Slavic and a rhapsodic quality not unlike Bartok in his more whimsical moments. This is a musicianly work at any rate, and played to the hilt, as one would expect.

NEW SCORES

The list of new publications is easily topped for interest and importance by Stravinsky's latest work—a *Concerto for Two Pianos* (Schott Sons) without orchestral accompaniment. The mere outward appearance of the music is imposing—fifty-eight pages of piano score, four movements of a highly complex contrapuntal texture, including four variations and a prelude and fugue. Needless to say this work follows the path Stravinsky took with the writing of the *Octuor* fifteen years ago. If he continues to compose in this manner for another ten years explanations will be in order as to how he happened to write *Petroushka* and the *Sacre*. Whatever the value of this new *Concerto*—and a final estimate should not be attempted until it is performed in America—one is certain that it will repay close study on the part of all students of the art.

Florent Schmitt's *Three Dances*, Opus 86 (Durand), are workmanlike pieces for piano. Pieces such as these would add a fresh note to our hopelessly dull pianists' programs. But to say that they will add anything to Schmitt's reputation would be untrue. They are practically indistinguishable from similar pieces written twenty-five years ago by Monsieur Schmitt himself.

Jean Françaix can be depended upon to keep the presses busy. A *Trio* for violin, viola and cello, a *Sonatina* for violin and piano, and a *Scherzo* for piano solo (all published by Schott Sons) have recently appeared. This gifted young Frenchman's music is akin to that of Jacques Ibert—light, charming, technic-

ally proficient, prolific—in every sense of the word *habile*. Perhaps in spirit it is less sophisticated than Ibert—simpler in sentiment, more nearly approaching a child's humors. The *Trio* is the most successful of these three works, wistful and gay by turns and sometimes playfully inconsequential.

Malipiero contributes two works composed in 1934 and 1932, and both dedicated to Mrs. Coolidge,—the *Fourth String Quartet* (Wilhelm Hansen) and *Concerto* for violin and orchestra (A. & G. Garisch). The *Concerto* is published as a holograph score which makes it pretty to look at, but difficult to read. Malipiero's music is always straightforward and sincere—for that we are grateful. But one cannot say that it is always well sustained or brilliantly executed. Nor is it possible to find any signs of spiritual growth in these recent works. Nevertheless, one would hear either the *Quartet* or the *Concerto* with pleasure, for they are honest works from a truly musical nature.

Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* excerpts (Schott Sons) and Bela Bartok's *Fifth String Quartet* (Universal Edition) have both come out in small score and are indispensable additions to any music collection. These are the works which bring credit to the entire modern music "movement" and should be studied and restudied by those who wish to keep aware of what is going on in the field of contemporary music.

Aaron Copland

IN THE THEATRE

WPA SHOWS WITH MUSIC

A RIOTOUS night in a mad house is provided by the WPA performance of *Horse Eats Hat*. This modernistic version of Eugene Labiche's comedy, *Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* (Paris, 1851), by Edwin Denby and Orson Welles, is highly amusing and it is only a pity that the producers have repeated a number of their theatrical formulæ (already somewhat threadbare) too often so that the second act falls far short of the first in comical effect. Acting, costumes and scenery are excellent.