

SCORES and RECORDS

By AARON COPLAND

ONE continues to marvel at the music publishers. Month after month they print new music. This in the face of a colossal indifference on the part of the buying public. Unfortunately, those who do have the interest often do not have the price, and vice versa. The situation is in a way almost hopeless.

But apparently the publishers still trust in the capacity of pianists to be interested in new music. No one knows where they get such ideas—certainly not from studying the weekly recitalists' programs—but here, at any rate, are a number of new works for piano, emanating from various countries, indicating that publishers still "have hopes."

Among the most important are three new *Piano Sonatas* by Paul Hindemith (Schott—Associated Music Publishers). All dated 1936, they bear further proof, if proof were needed, of Hindemith's astonishing fertility. They also show that Hindemith's style has undergone no change—which may or may not explain his part-time residence in Turkey.

Of the three, we prefer *Sonata II* which is simplest, shortest, and most attractive. At times it has something of that not-quite-healthy charm which we have come to associate with one side of Hindemith's personality. *Sonata I* and *Sonata III* are longer and more imposing. Especially the latter seems over-burdened with an increasing dependence on the composer's mannerisms. (It is easier to recognize Hindemith's weaknesses than it once was.) Sometimes the music seems to go on by itself as if the pen were leading the brain, instead of the other way round. Though these works may add nothing to Hindemith's stature as composer, they certainly provide pianists with a much needed freshening of their repertoire.



From Mexico, by way of California, come *Seven Pieces* for piano by Carlos Chavez (New Music, October 1936). One de-

spairs, in a single paragraph, of making music like this accessible to those who have no taste for it. Even a Chavez-adept like myself is a bit nonplussed by the singular asperities of the *Blues* and the *Fox*. The novice, however, may safely begin with *Solo*, then move on to *Thirty-six*, and finally try *Unidad*. These pieces veritably breathe personality, and leave an impression of overwhelming clarity and sharpness of outline. They may not win their public easily, but once gained, I venture to predict it will be a faithful one.

Budapest sends a collection of *Twelve Hungarian Peasant Songs* made into effective piano pieces by Leo Weiner (Rozsavölgyi and Co.). These lack the real originality of similar settings by Bartok. But despite that they are cleverly contrived, and the astute pianist will hasten to be the first to introduce them here.

Prague sends *Five Pieces for Piano* by Emil Hlobil (Hudební Matice). This is a new name, and one worth noting. I particularly liked a *Sonatina* for violin and piano which accompanied these *Five Pieces*. Hlobil may be no heavyweight—his orchestral list, according to a back-page announcement, includes no symphony, but a *Suite*, a *Scherzo*, a *Divertimento* and a *Week-end* for symphonic combinations—but he writes what can only be described as good, every-day, modern music (in the Slavic style) which is distinctly *sympathique*.

From America, by way of Mainz, comes *Variations on a Bavarian Dance* by Paul Nordoff (Schott—Associated Music Publishers). These variations show a young composer with a certain musicality and a definite sense of piano values. But unfortunately, Mr. Nordoff got mixed in his styles, so that we seem to enter a new and different piece with each successive variation. The resultant impression is one of a rather serious lack of artistic conscience.

A volume of eighteen piano pieces chosen by Hans Barth from the catalog of the Universal Edition (Associated Music Publishers) comes under the heading of "selected teaching material." There was no need to issue it under the pretentious title *Piano Music of Today*. Nothing could ever make Max Springer's *Meditation*, for example, belong with the piano music of today, de-

spite the editor's disarming note: "Starting out with conventional harmonies, this composition soon takes on a modern cloak" (!).



The professional musician owes a debt of gratitude to whoever first thought of the "miniature" score. A new series of *Study Scores* in that format have begun to appear under the imprint of G. Schirmer. Among the orchestral works already issued are John Alden Carpenter's *Sea Drift* and Roy Harris' *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*, two scores that have been commented upon before this, and which may now be more closely examined. There is also a score in five short movements, *Mediterranean*, by Anis Fuleihan, a naturalized American of Armenian descent. Gently evocative of the Near Eastern end of the Mediterranean, this music was obviously written to please, and will no doubt succeed. It is composed in a simple and craftsmanlike fashion, which promises well for Mr. Fuleihan's future, if he can develop a more arresting style than is apparent in this score.

Two scores of Samuel Barber are included: *Music for a Scene from Shelley* for orchestra, and *Dover Beach* for medium voice and string quartet. Schirmer has also issued this composer's *Sonata* for cello and piano. All these are works by a talented, but not very adventurous young man. The *Sonata* and, to a lesser degree, *Dover Beach*, are hardly more than student works. The *Scene from Shelley*, which is the best of the three, in its nicety of taste, balance and finish, recalls the early work of Randall Thompson. One cannot help wishing that something or someone would inveigle Mr. Barber out of the safe and sane channels he seems to be content to tread.

Finally, Schirmer provides two provocative scores by Arnold Schönberg: *Suite for String Orchestra*, and *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* (after the *Concerto for Cembalo* of Georg Matthias Mann) in an edition for cello and piano. These scores are provocative, not in the old atonal sense, but because of Schönberg's recent preoccupation with the new, for him, diatonic system. These works are fascinating for study, to say the least. The *Concerto* seems less valid than the *Suite*, which is a perfect demonstration of Schönberg's complete mastery of his musical materials. But mastery does not necessarily result in masterworks,

—and one wonders whether the artistic sum total of the *Suite* is commensurate with the amount of ingenuity and complexity involved. Still, they remain fascinating works to study.

RECORDS

The Christmas rush was too much for our recording companies, so far as modern music goes. They seem to think Santa Claus hasn't gotten beyond Brahms. With the exception of Darius Milhaud's *Piano Concerto* there was a complete hiatus,—and that work we shall concern ourselves with next time.

IN THE THEATRE

—By VIRGIL THOMSON—

THREE SHOWS WITH MUSIC

ERIKA MANN'S *Pepper-Mill*, billed as an intimate revue, is neither the Chauve Souris culture-vaudeville nor yet the sort of small-but-costly girl-show formerly associated with the Music Box. It is the authentic European "literary cabaret," unpretentious, intellectual and actual, a form of art and entertainment that has flourished on the continent for longer than anybody knows and that is the parent stem of the *opéra-comique*, as distinguished from the *grand opéra*. I know the model better through its French than through its German representatives, because I have been more in France than I have in Germany, but I gather the essential formula to be the same. The Parisians call it the *revue chansonnière* or the *cabaret montmartrois*.

Its main function is satirical and corrective. Predominantly politics, but also society, manners, morals and the arts, are the subjects of its satire. Glorification of the home, of motherhood, of the American girl, of young love, of the luxury trades or of the white-slave traffic, all the preoccupations of what one might call the "serious" revue, are a "serious" business, and any theatre dealing principally in such merchandise is in the tradition of the serious, or devotional theatre. Such satirical numbers as occasionally get introduced therein, like Will Rogers in the Ziegfield Follies and the depression witticisms in *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, are usually incidental and inoffensive.