

## SCORES and RECORDS

By AARON COPLAND

EACH new season brings its new batch of novelties. In the case of scores and records, they are generally the novelties of last year—and before. This season, as usual, the choice of works recorded and published seems purely fortuitous. A Commissar of Scores and Records would order these things differently, I feel sure. In the meantime, let's be thankful for what we get.

Mahler's best work *Das Lied von der Erde*, is now available on discs (Columbia). It was recorded during an actual performance in Vienna last year under Bruno Walter's direction. The objections to Mahler's work have been repeated *ad nauseum*. Those who make them, year after year, have simply stopped listening. Whether this set will win them over is questionable. It contains obvious short-comings, which the conductor himself, in an accompanying booklet, frankly admits are there. But those already familiar with the work will find it easy to have their old enthusiasm reawakened. It is still the Swan Song of Romanticism. The warmth and inner glow, the special poetry, the trite passages, the brilliant orchestral colors, are all still there. The famous "ewig" passage at the end is still one of the really original moments in music. Until a better recording is made, Mahler devotees may be well content with this one.

R.C.A. Victor heads its list with Sibelius' *Sixth Symphony* and his *String Quartet, Voces Intimae*, issued in a single album. One asks oneself: who was it that first coupled the name of Beethoven with Sibelius. They would have been nearer the mark if they had said Smetana or Dvorak. These two works show why clearly enough: the constant tendency of Sibelius to fall back into a pastoral mood of folk inspiration, to repeat himself in themes and technical formulae, to put us always into the same emotional atmosphere, is not typical of the broad scope of a first-rate composer. Within his own limits, however, Sibelius is attractive enough. The *Sixth Symphony* belongs with the weaker ones,—

it seems to be in the nature of a sketch for the *Seventh*. The *Voces Intimae*, well rendered by the Budapest Quartet, retains a fresh quality despite its age.

Two modern Italian string quartets, somewhat off the beaten path, are now available (R.C.A. Victor) : Malipiero's *Rispetti e Strombotti*, played by the Kreiner Quartet, and Rieti's *Quartet in F-major*, played by the Pro Arte. (The Malipiero set has an extra side on which is Beryl Rubinstein's *Passepiéd* for string quartet). It is interesting to compare the works of the two Italians, both of whom are talented men. Malipiero's quartet, belonging as it does to the early post-war period, is characterized by a broad pathos, instrumental curiosities, episodic forms and Stravinskyisms. Nevertheless, it stands up very well for quality alongside the later beautifully tailored neo-classicisms of Rieti. They are both eclectic in different ways, suggesting that Italian music in the twentieth century still hasn't found itself.

The French School is represented by domestic re-pressings of excerpts from Honegger's opera *Judith*, songs of Satie and Poulenc, and pieces for flute and piano by Roussel (Columbia). *Judith* is little more than the *Roi David* done over again perhaps with greater care. It is dramatically effective music, but of the exterior sort. Poulenc's songs, *Le Bestiaire*, a favorite with Parisian concert audiences, need more atmosphere than cold wax can lend them. They were cruelly placed on the opposite side of Satie's *Trois Melodies*, which are impudently at home anywhere. Roussel's flute pieces are slight examples of the rather studied charm of that master. The record lists would not be complete without the mention of a dull *Sonata* for cello unaccompanied, Opus 25, No. 3, by Hindemith, performed by Feuerman.

#### SCORES

Last year the season's first scores were topped for interest by Stravinsky's *Concerto for Two Pianos*. This year it is his latest ballet, *Jeu de cartes*, available in miniature score (Schott-Associated Music Publishers). It would be a real pleasure to be able to say the definitive word about Stravinsky, to rid oneself of the problem his newer works present. But that isn't easy. Works like *Jeu de cartes* improve with examination of the printed notes, which is proof again that they do not give their secret easily.

Nevertheless one can't help wishing that these newer scores might reflect a little more generosity of soul than they do. Stravinsky no longer seems to "happen on" anything during the process of composition. Everything is calculated in advance. His card party has a cut and dried quality as if all the moves were known in advance. Stravinsky will have to return to invention if our interest is not to lag.

Zoltan Kodaly, on the other hand, presents no problems whatsoever. His newest choral work, a twenty minute *Te Deum* for soloists, chorus and orchestra, has just been published in small score (Universal Edition-Associated Music Publishers). It is clear in design, clean in counterpoint, with admirable choral fugues and resounding climaxes. In short, it is the epitome of "well written" work. But the question is: what has been added to music? And the answer: very little. Still one would like to hear the final thirty measures, a real "trouville."

*Two Concerti* of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (Ricordi), the first for cello, the second for violin (No. 2) leave one frankly depressed. If movie patrons ever imagine to themselves what goes on in Carnegie Hall this is probably what they think it's like. The music is so very pretentious and grandiloquent, and all on borrowed ideas. The composer's formula is to rehash Debussy (the *Piano Preludes*), debase Bloch, fancify Rimsky, and throw in a dash of Neapolitan song for the final movements. "Development" consists of endless repetitions of the same poverty-stricken phrase. And the pity is that it *does* find its way into Carnegie Hall all too frequently, while the native composer is asked to step aside.

Even Paul White's *Sinfonietta for String Orchestra* (Elkan-Vogel Co.) while no higher in the scale of musical values, is certainly more naive, and therefore less objectionable. American music, as a matter of fact, begins to divide itself into two parts. There is the "naive" kind such as William Grant Still's *Dismal Swamp* (New Music) or Otto Cesano's *Second American Symphony* (Affiliated Music Corporation). These are often based on the slushier side of jazz and make a frank bid for popular appeal. Both Still and Cesano know how to write for orchestra, but one can't help wishing that their musical content were more

distinguished. The music of the other school begins to look like a hang-over from the "modernistic" days. Otto Luening's *Fantasia Brevis* for clarinet and piano (New Music) or Gerald Strang's *Three Pieces for Flute and Piano* and *Sonatina for Clarinet Alone* (New Music) are characteristic examples. This species of American music, despite the obvious sincerity with which it is written, is headed toward complete extinction, for lack of an interested public. The road ahead lies some place in between.

## ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT

By GEORGE ANTHEIL

THE summer and autumn news is not particularly exciting; Hollywood, after a grand splurge with new composers and new ideas, has settled back into its old grind of producing easy and sure-fire scores. Even Boris Morros, who is certainly one of the most intelligent music directors out here, and who started out so marvelously, has retracted to some extent; perhaps pressure was put on him from the top, or perhaps he was just discouraged with the Academy Award for the best motion picture score of last year which went to Eric Korngold for a very lugubrious concoction indeed. Meanwhile many excellent composers have come out to Hollywood and returned East again. Scarcely any of them have gotten jobs. While on the other hand, the routine Hollywood composers who have been here many years, have grown alarmed at the influx of new men, and have used their influence to sew up every future score available. In other words Hollywood music is, at the present writing, a closed corporation.

There is a remedy, and it is this. If the music critics, especially those of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, would band together, and turn a searchlight upon Hollywood, Hollywood would soon see to it that these background scores did not continue to be the unmitigated tripe they now are. (I refer, of course, to the serious picture; "musicals" and jazz would need to be taken care of by another department). The music critics should realize,