

SCORES and RECORDS

By AARON COPLAND

OUR quarterly check-up on new recordings is easily topped for interest by Albert Roussel's *String Quartet* in D major, opus 45 (Columbia). Unlike most modern works of its kind, this was not merely re-pressed from a foreign recording, but was made domestically by the Roth Quartet. Roussel, like Debussy and Ravel, wrote only one work in this exacting medium. From the standpoint of sheer style it is a model. That was to be expected, for all Roussel's music moves in a world of culture and refinement, the protected world of the string quartet. But what of the music? One can so easily be put off by the somewhat studied and unnatural atmosphere that is typical of so much of his work. There is always a certain fascination in watching him triumph over what appears to be a lack of spontaneity. The *String Quartet*, opus 45, has a peculiar tense charm of its own, most immediately apparent in the second, slow movement, and in the fugal exposition of the last. One is surprised to find so few of the typical Rousselian mannerisms—those curiously strained harmonies, the slightly (always slightly) awkward melodies and artificial rhythms. This work is almost too smooth for Roussel. But one can never be too sure. Like other works of his, it does not give up its secret easily.

Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, already available in the well-known Ravel orchestral version, is now reissued in a new orchestral transcription supplied by Lucien Cailliet of the Philadelphia Orchestra (RCA Victor). It is difficult to judge the new version impartially. The idea of re-doing what everyone agreed had been done once and for all was, on the face of it, grotesque. But if you are able to retain the necessary calm, there are lessons to be learned from even so foolhardy a venture as this. The trouble with Cailliet's orchestration is not that it doesn't sound well. If anything, it sounds *too* well. He makes one realize what infinite colors are at the command of the astute orchestrator, and how inartistic it is to use them all in the same piece.

What Revel did, and did so marvelously, was to decide in advance the exact quality of the Moussorgsky pieces and to confine his orchestral palette to colors that faithfully transcribed it. But Cailliet, as is blandly stated in the accompanying booklet to this set: "has accomplished a task of enormous difficulty in avoiding any suggestion of imitation with respect to the older Ravel transcription." He is certainly welcome to any glory he can get out of that.

Ernest Bloch's *Violin Sonata*, reviewed in these pages apropos of a recording made by Gamut, is now also available in a new version as played by Jose Gingold and Beryl Rubinstein (RCA Victor). This new reading is worth having,—it is an imaginative performance of a very difficult work. One cannot help but be impressed by the sureness and firmness of the interpretation. And the performance is matched by a superb piece of laboratory work so far as the waxing is concerned.

Gustav Holst's *St. Paul's Suite* (Columbia) is music for a pleasant afternoon; "Unterhaltungsmusik" the Germans used to call it. Holst, as a composer, is more sympathetic in an unpretentious work such as this than in the more imposing *Planets*. Clever, well-made music of this kind is especially appropriate on records. It may be referred to when one is in the mood, and forgotten when one is after bigger game.

New Music Quarterly Recordings continues to remind us that there are also Americans to be waxed. One of their most successful records has just been released. On one side are three short piano works by Paul Bowles and on the other a violin and piano solo by another young American, William H. Bailey. A talent as fresh as that of Bowles is not often found. Listen to the poetic *Cafe sin Nombre*, or the second of the *Huapangos*. They seem to be effortlessly yet sharply conceived. Bailey has written a sensitive piece, though it is somewhat spoiled by a tendency to become static with each new phrase.

Another successful disc issued by NMQR comprises six of the Charles Ives songs, sung by Mordecai Bauman. If you are unfamiliar with the fabulous collection of one hundred and fourteen songs from which these six are taken, you are definitely missing something. At any rate, here are six to begin with.

NMQR has also put on a single disc two movements from a *Suite* for clarinet and bassoon by Johanna Beyer, and *Two Chorales and Ostinato* for oboe and piano by Henry Cowell. Miss Beyer's pieces produce an improvisatory impression which tends to leave one suspended in mid-air. This is less true, however, of the second of the two movements. Cowell does not seem to me to be fairly represented by these slight works.

SCORES

The Affiliated Music Corporation has done itself proud with the publication of a miniature score of Harold Morris' *Symphony* based on Browning's *Prospice*. It consists of four movements: *Elegy*, *Scherzo*, *Adagio recitativo*, and *Allegro vigoroso*, and is planned on broad, generous lines. Morris' best asset is the quality of his musical ideas, for they are almost always natural and spontaneous. His weakness has been his inability to shape these ideas born of a musical nature into a convincingly coherent form. That is, after all, the hardest job in music. It would be simple temerity to decide in advance of an actual performance to what degree this present work avoids the pitfalls of Morris' past production. (What a commentary it is on our musical life that a work of such breadth and seriousness should go unperformed!)

Karol Rathaus' *String Quartet, No. 3*, which was given at the I.S.C.M. Festival in London last June, can now be more closely examined (Oxford University Press—Carl Fischer). Rathaus is best known in America for his film music. His work as a whole is completely abreast of all recent European developments. The *String Quartet, No. 3* reflects a highly finished technic, but one would love it more were it less eclectic. Still it cannot fail to interest followers of string quartet literature.

Two new choral works by young Americans: Elie Siegmeister's setting of *John Henry* for mixed chorus with tenor solo, and Robert McBride's *Hot Stuff (We Hope)* for men's voices with clarinet obligato and piano accompaniment (Carl Fischer). McBride's piece is set to nonsense syllables and looks amusing on paper. Siegmeister is a practiced hand at setting folk tunes and this one is a particularly beautiful melody. It is effective

in performance despite a certain monotony in color due to the limited harmonic scheme.

Prague contributes two works of Leos Janacek written thirty years apart: *Amarus* (1898), a cantata for soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra, and a string quartet entitled *Intimate Pages* (1928), (Hudebni Matice). It is easy to recognize the same composer in both works. Strangely enough, *Intimate Pages* seems no more expert than the early cantata. But they both have so much savor and such honest emotion that one would willingly put up with even more gaucherie.

If it is piano music that interests you, there is plenty of new material to examine. A mere listing of some of it will give you an indication of what to expect:

Episodic Suite by Julia Smith (Harold Flammer, Inc.) Moderately simple pieces—five of them—in the by now quite usual modern idiom.

Burlesca, Caricature (Ravel), *Portrait* (Godowsky) by Rafael Mertis (G. Ricordi)—the super-effective piano number.

Poemetti by Gian-Carlo Menotti (G. Ricordi)—twelve little pieces, tastefully done, in the best conservative tradition.

How Do You Like This? by James Cleghorn and *Saraband and Prelude* by Lou Harrison (New Music), both of California, U. S. A. None too original pieces in that old radical tradition.

Rampage by Arthur Schwarzwald, *Espanharlem* by William Reddick, *Blarney* by Belle Fenstock (Remick Music Corporation). Tin Pan Alley gone high-brow, but not high-brow enough.

IN THE THEATRE

By JOHN GUTMAN

MILHAUD, France's greatest supplier of stage music, always astonishes his admirers as much by prodigality as by versatility. When he wrote *Cristophe Colombe*, his imagination was equally expansive over space and time. Before that there were those extremely short mythological skits, the "opéras-min-