

## SCORES and RECORDS

By COLIN McPHEE

DAVID DIAMOND'S *Quintet in B Minor*, for flute, string trio and piano, has been brought out by the Society for the Publication of American Music (G. Schirmer). There is much to like and admire in this work; it has vigor, is carefully constructed, has the beginnings of real stylistic distinction. The general concept is simple and direct. Written in 1937, it shows surprising maturity in a composer of twenty-two. It contains at the same time certain elements, very characteristic of Diamond, which I find negative in effect, and which often prevent me from liking his music as much as I admire it. There is a tendency to remoteness, an abstract quality which at times can become very dry. This is less apparent when he writes for orchestra, for he has an individual orchestral approach that at times is amazingly sonorous. But the very nature of his musical approach, which is so selective when it comes to orchestral timbres, tends to create, at least for me, a sensation of eclecticism when delivered in more intimate terms. It can be too serious, too uncompromising. There is a different side to Diamond which is often seen in his slow movements. In the present work the *Romanza* is by far the most appealing. It is warm, moving, deeply felt. Diamond has many positive qualities; not the least are his honesty and preoccupation with purely musical values. One only wishes that he would be less concerned with problems of style.

Weaner-Levant gives us Virgil Thom-

son's *Seven Choruses from the Medea of Euripides*. This is also music that is eclectic in style, but with a completely different effect. It is in the style, disarmingly simple, that part of the special quality of the music lies. The choruses are concise; the words are set to perfection. But it is the color of the music which gives the final effect. Written for Negro chorus and percussion, the work offers an unusual contrast in timbres. The percussion is treated with reserve. Antique cymbals or snare drum merely scan the lines from time to time. At one place a chime is used. This establishes an atmosphere of remoteness, creates a mood of austerity. It seems to me that the score could only produce its full effect in a dramatic production.

The Juilliard Edition (American Music Center) publishes Robert Ward's *Symphony Number 1*, a bright and promising work by a young composer fairly new on the scene. The movements are short and to the point; the orchestration is conventional but clear and direct. The style is not yet very personal, but one likes the work for its animation and the zest with which it seems to have been written.

Newly published string quartets include works by Goossens and Harrison Kerr. The Goossens quartet (Boosey and Hawkes) is elegant and distinguished in its brilliant handling of the strings. The quartet by Kerr (Arrow Press) has far less of a bright surface finish, but is perhaps more personal. There is more in-

dividual life in the separate voices; the writing is more angular. It shows the constant regard for careful and detailed working-out of material which is so characteristic of this composer.

New Music publishes the *3a Com-posicion en los 12 Tonos* for clarinet and piano by Juan Carlos Paz. The four movements of this little suite have all the brevity and disheartening aridity that always appear to accompany the mathematical juggling of the twelve-tone series. They offer one more example of an idiom that in another year held a certain interest but which today seems completely anachronistic in both conception and spirit.

Short piano pieces to be noted in passing are Norman Cazden's *Variations* (Weaner-Levant), Paul Creston's *Pre-lude and Dance* (Mercury), Leo Sowerby's *Toccata* (Mercury). David Gornston publishes Robert McBride's *Swing Stuff* for clarinet and piano. Roy Harris has made a new adaptation for band of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* (Mills). The general plan of the early orchestral work has been followed, but

it is much more condensed and tightened up.

Boosey and Hawkes has now brought out the full score to Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. Since this has only just arrived, and since I have not heard the work, comment is reserved for the next issue.

#### RECORDS

It is a luxury these days for this column to have any records to review. To venture any opinion that might be the least bit adverse seems almost sacrilegious, on a par with critical comment about a cup of coffee. But it is impossible for me to enthuse very much over the Shostakovitch *Quartet for Strings*, Opus 49 (Columbia). It is a dull work, only of interest because it adds a detail to the Shostakovitch picture. The Si-belius *First Symphony* (Columbia) is given an excellent performance by John Barbirolli. Rodzinski makes Debussy's *La Mer* sound sweeping and dazzling, but somehow I prefer my old recording by Coppola (Disque Gramophone), where the Debussyan detail is recorded with greater sympathy and clarity.

## FILMS AND THEATRE

By ELLIOTT CARTER

THE *Siege of Leningrad* shows another phase of the magnificent Russian resistance and counterattack, less exciting perhaps but more touching on many counts than that already seen in *Moscow Strikes Back*. Using the news-reel technics, these pictures tell a story pieced together from many films shot by many different Soviet camera men on

the spot at the time. For the most part their scenes give the impression of not being staged. They have a roughness of photography that suggests the difficult conditions under which they were made, and which fortifies their documentary reality. The patchy musical background further heightens this effect. It is a selection of familiar musical moments found