

SCORES and RECORDS

—BY COLIN MCPHEE—

IT is far too rare an event these days when a new score of Stravinsky's is published. The recent appearance of the *Danses Concertantes* for chamber orchestra (Associated Music) gladdened the heart of this reviewer, despondent over the pile of mediocre music which the mails had brought during the past two months. On first glancing at the score, especially in the opening pages, the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* comes to mind, but this later work has a far more delicate energy, a far subtler acoustic substance. Its impetus springs from the dance; its thematic material is strongly colored by the ballet-music style of the nineteenth century. The work is in five movements. An introductory march frames the music with its return at the end. The meat of the work lies in the energetic second movement (Pas d'Action) and the third (Thème Varié). This latter is a concentrated suite in itself, consisting of four brief contrasting movements. The scoring is crisp and fresh as new lace, and full of charming surprises. There is nothing startlingly new in this definitely minor work of Stravinsky's, but one loves it for its elegance and stylistic perfection, and for the Stravinskian genius for purely musical manipulation.

Associated Music also publishes Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* (1943), twelve piano fugues in as many keys, connected by interludes and framed by a prelude and a postlude which is an inverse reversal of the prelude. This may give you some idea of the work as a

whole, which is crammed with recondite tricks. The interludes are free, or in dance-form, and set in relief the tightly woven fugues. The work might be defined as a modern *Art of the Fugue*, by a master contrapuntalist. One likes to think of this piece as a unity, but just how much of the sixty pages can be listened to at a stretch with unwaning pleasure is difficult to say.

A brief *Passacaglia* for piano by Walter Piston (Mercury) is more a tribute to the erudite Hindemith style than the expression of any personal emotion. One cannot recognize the composer of *The Incredible Flutist* in these rather professorial pages. New Music publishes *Six Sonatas for Cembalo or Piano* by Lou Harrison. These brief miniatures are marked by simplicity and grace; they have a kind of Scarlatti nimbleness that is deft and witty. New Music also publishes John Cage's *Amores*, for piano and percussion. The piano is "prepared" by materials such as screws or pieces of rubber placed between certain strings to mute them. The percussion includes tom-toms, pod-rattles, and pieces of resonant wood with fixed pitch. Although I don't find the actual musical material of great interest (there is lack of rhythmic vitality and coordination), I admire Cage's imagination for delicate and refined sonorities. These little mobiles in sound are brittle and wiry; the different timbres are amusingly contrasted; one would like to see the musical invention on the same plane.

As robust and triple-forte as the Cage

pieces are delicate is William Schuman's *A Free Song*, for full chorus and orchestra (or two pianos). No cupping of ears is needed here; as with most of Schuman's music, this setting of Whitman texts is for the great auditorium or open air. As such it projects admirably, both acoustically and in the musical line. I find Randall Thompson's *Solomon and Balkis* (a one-act opera, commissioned by the League of Composers and Columbia Broadcasting, and published by E. C. Schirmer) simply quaint. If you love

Kipling's *Just So Stories* then here is your music, for it faithfully follows the whimsy of this bedtime tale. As for me, I don't.

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This is about zero hour in the recording market, and what little there is to mention (chiefly Milhaud's *Suite Provençale* for orchestra) will be discussed in the next issue, when it is to be hoped that the situation will have taken a considerable turn for the better.

DANCING on BROADWAY

By S. L. M. BARLOW

SINCE the departure of the Ballet Theatre there have been two front-page evenings of the dance, that of Martha Graham, and that of Asadata Dafora; but one of the most charming performances was a relatively unheralded affair given in the Kaufman Auditorium by the American Concert Ballet. In personnel it was predominantly native, only the music (and why?) was foreign.

The American Concert Ballet is a new and young group, gifted and imaginative. From such beginnings have always come the really important courses of our artistic and civilized nourishment.

Sailor Bar, with a two-piano adaptation of Honegger's *Concertina*, and with choreography by Mary Jane Shea, presented the sailor and his pickup girl and also their ideal selves. The attraction and repulsion, the magnetism of this brief brothel encounter, is the same for the roughly tender, mortal couple as for their alter-egos; but what is realis-

tically danced here, is interpreted in aloof stylization there. The hearty realism, the good brawl, the crude heart-break were all touching and exciting. I found the ghosts a little stilted and obvious.

Five Boons of Life, after Mark Twain, I cared for less. It is a bitter story really, but William Dollar treated it like a Christmas pantomime, so that when the young man who had understandably preferred Love and Wealth to Death was constrained to accept Old Age as the crowning misfortune, it was rather as though he'd just turned into Santa Claus. The Dohnanyi variations sustained this fairy-tale mood. But this is not written disapprovingly, for the ballet had movement and flow, and was mounted and danced expertly — as they all were.

Todd Bolender wove a pleasant dance suite around Ravel's *Mother Goose*. The stories, such as they were, proceeded by indirection, or you might say in-