

in, and are willing to take a chance on this home-made music; and finally, that those who are "ever on the watch for displays of energy and power in new art" will, in future, thanks to this catalogue, at least know what exists, and where it may be sought.

*Richard Donovan*

## NEW TONAL HORIZONS

THE outstanding musician and savant, Joseph Yasser, who represents the union of a powerful theoretical mind with supremely competent practical musicianship, amazed the musical world two years ago with his essay *The Future of Tonality* (special supplement to Volume VIII, Number 1 of MODERN MUSIC).

There Mr. Yasser outlined a forecast of the future harmonic medium which he called "the supra-diatonic scale," a synthesis of tonality and atonality in the sense that the tonality of the last three centuries of our era was the synthesis of the pentatonic scale and of its antithesis, the heptatonic scale ("infra-atonality" in Mr. Yasser's terminology).

In his new book, *A Theory of Evolving Tonality*,\* Mr. Yasser abandons the dialectic, Hegelian method of his former essay and bases the same forecast on strictly scientific, empiric data, both historical and acoustical. He shows how the future supra-diatonic scale is to be formed, incorporating the casual chromatic steps of the diatonic scale-order by transforming them into independent and regular links of the new gamut. This scale of the future he conceives as an inevitable outgrowth of humanity's past harmonic language. He shows that a breath of supra-diatonic harmony already animates our contemporary musical speech.

Mr. Yasser's reasoning is based on the universality of the pentatonic and diatonic scale. The first he designates by the formula "5 + 2" numbering thus its regular and auxiliary steps; and accordingly he inscribes the second as "7 + 5". Evolving the supra-diatonic scale of the future, the "12 + 5" scale from the

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above antecedents, Mr. Yasser strives to make it evident that the latter scale-formula is the only one to explain and to embrace all the latest harmonic directions, those of Debussy, Scriabin, and Schönberg, of the polytonalists, atonalists, etc.

Mr. Yasser considers today's music a transitory stage, its tonal basis a timid migration from the diatonic medium towards the supra-diatonic order. This present harmonic interregnum, the rule of the equal twelve-tone scale, lacks a definiteness of harmonic functions. Hence the confusion and lack of finality in contemporary musical speech, a confusion that precludes the perfect, collected expression indispensable to a work of genius. Moreover the lack of supra-diatonic instruments bars the way to the proper and universal use of the new scale-order. Our contemporary composers are still forced, against instinct and logic, to use the scale which they have tonally outgrown.

In justice to the author of this extraordinary book I feel impelled to conclude this formal account of his work with some measure of eulogy. The tonal and historical perspective opened up by Mr. Yasser's scientific vision is overwhelming and the clarity of his argument and his incomparable documentation are completely convincing. One finds here, in this achievement of a single mind, a tremendous review of all the harmonic dialect of humanity in the past and a picture of our anticipated tonal future.

*Lazare Saminsky*