

SCORES AND RECORDS

By ARTHUR BERGER

ARON Copland's *Appalachian Spring* has enjoyed a success that should restore some of our faith in current musical taste. The substantial record of performances, the imposing prizes, the publication of the score and now its appearance in the RCA-Victor catalog are honors normally accumulated by far less deserving works in so short a period of existence (namely, two years). Despite Koussevitzky's tempos, which are often too slow and occasionally too fast, the recording by the Boston Symphony is superb — astonishingly lucid and vibrant. This performance has, in fact, made me conscious of the considerable degree of interest there is in the expert orchestration — the distribution of tones of the slow melodic lines among various instruments in such a way that apparently fragmentary motives form a continuous line while, at the same time, they engender a subtle overlapping of the harmony; the added spaciousness that woodwind or piano doublings give to the widespread, rapid passages of the strings; the audibility of each line in the tutti, notably where the scale figures converge upon one another contrariwise (middle of side 4).

Koussevitzky has made some minor cuts that are effective where they concern the slow parts. But he cancels the results by still further delaying these parts so that at times his note values are twice as long as Copland intended. Fortunately, there is enough

elegance of detail in the music to withstand this treatment. There is too an almost baroque amplitude that sets it somewhat apart from his two previous Americana ballets, of which four episodes from the second, *Rodeo*, have just appeared in a Boosey & Hawkes score. *Rodeo* has a frank playfulness, an ingenious treatment of the excellently chosen folk tunes, and a ruggedness of its own. I should regret to see *Appalachian Spring* entirely displace the cowboy ballets on our symphony programs, as it threatens to do. Both have their appeal.

Randall Thompson's *The Testament of Freedom* (Victor) and Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait* (Columbia) were received too late for review at this time. The only other item to mention in the recording field is an album of charming songs for children by Milhaud. The *Cinq Chansons*, sung by Verna Osborne and accompanied by Lukas Foss (Hargail Records), will no doubt offer some pleasure even to adults by virtue of their Gallic, folkish tunes and their highly pianistic accompaniments. But their strophic repetitions and square phrases render them primarily for the young. As such, the album is highly desirable.

SCORES

The most interesting of current printed releases are to be found, with one or two exceptions, among the piano scores. Nikolai Lopatnikoff's *Piano Sonata*, Opus 29 (Associated

Music Publishers), is precisely the kind of thing virtuosos look for; and it is better than some recent attempts in the genre. It is a developed work with all the paraphernalia of bona fide keyboard music, and the figurations are at the same time contemporary. (Hindemith comes to mind as a near kin, but the general effect is different.) At times Lopatnikoff becomes fascinated with facile passage work in sevenths or fourths, but elsewhere he recognizes the need for a strong melodic thread above these. The rhythmic impulse in fast parts produces more absorbing results than the relaxed approach in the Andantino, which verges on Palmgren.

This last observation may also be made, to some extent, with reference to the majority of new works (as almost everyone knows), though often there is not even the prettiness of a Palmgren to relieve the immobility. Everett Helm's *Sonata Brevis* (Hargail Music Press) and the more mature and inspired *Twelve American Preludes* of Alberto Ginastera (Carl Fischer) are among the many instances that come to mind. In the fast and more striking pieces, Ginastera uses ostinato and polytonal devices that are now common currency. To an Argentinian, however, they are somehow more natural than they are to us, and he can still handle them spontaneously. The harmonic sensitivity and rhythmic urge are notable, though the *Preludes* by nature do not aim far.

Burrill Phillips' *Toccata* (G. Schirmer) is one of his most successful accomplishments. Details like the unmotivated B major at the end disturb me, but the work flows along effec-

tively and musically, and an expeditious boogie-woogie pattern is nicely absorbed into a predominantly non-jazz framework. The same composer's *Three Divertimenti* (also Schirmer) are shorter and less ambitious. Walter Hendl's *Prelude to "Dark of the Moon"* (Hargail) completes the current piano list. Hendl dabbles too freely and uncritically with the Copland and Schuman clichés, though he shows his musicianship in the process.

The publication of *Cuahnahuac* by Silvestre Revueltas, closely following the appearance of his Lorca songs, represents, I trust, an initial stage in the accumulation of a substantial list of this striking composer's music in the Schirmer catalogue. The work itself is an early product of a career that began late and, tragically, ended early; to do justice to the composer this publication ought to be followed by more mature and integrated achievements like *Homage to Garcia Lorca*. *Cuahnahuac* is fragmentary, but has nicely sparse scoring. And the daring contours in the brass ought to sound fresh. The initial chromatic passages are curious companions to the diatonic melodies later in the work which progress in consecutive thirds after the fashion of a typically Mexican folk pattern. But the popular Latin American style unrelieved would be less desirable.

There is not much to detain us in other new orchestral scores. *Ode to Friendship* by Roy Harris (Mills Music) is but another instance of his ubiquitous chains of major triads succeeding one another at such intervals as a third or augmented fourth (thus creating the velvety false relations) and conforming to the square rhythms

straight out of the hymnbook. If the procedure was once creditable because it was autonomously Harris, by now it is tiresome. From the same publisher comes Morton Gould's *Spirituals*, five slickly orchestrated abstractions of Negro folk elements, done up with his usual skill and usual concession to semi-popular taste. Delkas Music has issued the orchestral version of Milhaud's *Le Bal Martiniquais*, with its very pleasant *Chanson Créole* and brisk *Biguine*. There is also Douglas Moore's *In Memoriam* (Elkan-Vogel), a sincere gesture that expresses, I assume, the common sentiment of these post-war years. Much more pretentious than any of these, finally, is Artur Schnabel's *First Symphony* (Edition Adler), its *Modernismus* lengthened out for almost two hundred pages, with spasmodic shifts and frantic gestures. Schnabel's rather private creative pursuits, which are now coming to light, seem inconsistent with his neglect of contemporary music as a concert pianist. But actually, while his idiom borders on atonality, and the elements mount up vertically to produce dissonantly modern effects, the lack of economy and the formal devices stem directly from the nineteenth century.

In Ernst Bacon's neat reproductions

of American folklore (*Songs from the American Folk*, published by Fischer) there is a freshness that makes them more appealing than his Brahmsian songs issued by Associated Music Publishers: *The Commonplace* and *O Friend*. Fischer has also published a reduction with piano of Vladimir Dukelsky's *Cello Concerto*. I miss the intriguing instrumental effects in this version, notably in the slow movement. But there are agreeable melodies along the way. The cello seems to suggest a dull type of passage work to almost everyone who writes for it these days, and this work is no exception.

A Jubilant Song, Norman Dello Joio's choral work, published with piano accompaniment by G. Schirmer, contains clean, youthful music, well-contrived for the high school students for whom it was written. The facile diatonic and repetitive short patterns are those that William Schuman has been perhaps most active in disseminating among us. Schuman's "flapping, flapping" becomes "lightning, lightning" in Dello Joio and the interval is now a third rather than a second. Easy as the method is, the results are much preferable to the unctuous music they used to serve up in our schools.

WITH THE DANCERS

By MINNA LEDERMAN

WHEN I go to see a ballet it's with the expectation of pleasure. If the ballet is new I hope to make a discovery. And I hope for more rather than less when Americans have

been at work on it. There must be thousands like me but the managements know us not. They are driving into next season with a club in one hand and a flag in the other.