

SCORES and RECORDS

By COLIN McPHEE

TODAY paper seems as precious as papyrus; the shadows of war fall on music publishers as well as recording houses. Unlike papyrus, however, paper is rarely treated with reverence. Publishing firms with a supply still on hand continue to squander it on worthless trivia. On the other hand, the Arrow Press devotes its last quires to the music of Walter Piston and Virgil Thomson. In press are the *Prelude and Allegro for Strings* and the *Second Symphony* by Piston, and the Thomson *String Quartet Number 1*. The quartet is just about to be released; the Piston works will come later. The publication of *Four Saints* depends on a fresh supply of paper.

Since the amount of actually published material at hand for the moment is slender, I can do no more than mention some works by Americans that are announced. G. Schirmer will bring out Samuel Barber's *Symphony dedicated to the Armed Forces* and William Schuman's *Symphony for Strings*; Juilliard will publish three orchestral scores — Herbert Elwell's *Introduction and Allegro*, Vincent Persichetti's *Dance Overture*, and Daniel Gregory Mason's *Abraham Lincoln Symphony*; Boosey and Hawkes will soon give us Aaron Copland's *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. Other scores I might mention are Boris Koutzen's string quartet, *Inionage*; Isadore Freed's piano quartet, *Triptych* (Society for the Publication of American Music); and Marion Bauer's *Concertino for Oboe, Clarinet and String*

Quartet (Arrow).

To turn to music just published, three choral works appear: Virgil Thomson's *Scenes from the Holy Infancy*; Norman Dello Joio's *Vigil Strange* (both Weaner-Levant), and *Good Wives of Pioneers* by Allan Sly (Arrow).

Thomson's absorption of the ecclesiastical style of the Roman Catholic Church is evident in this transparent and gracious triptych for mixed chorus a capella. The charm of the music lies in its modal color, its finish, and in the flexible prosody which needless to say is impeccable. Dello Joio's *Vigil Strange*, for mixed chorus and two pianos, is brief and at the same time spacious. I like most the antiphonal treatment of the chorus and two pianos which is imaginative and effective. I find the work by Allan Sly dull by contrast. It is for mixed chorus and orchestra, soundly constructed on broad lines and serious in mood. But tribute to the pioneer spirit is a theme which leads to music that, to my ears, inevitably sounds more static than ecstatic.

The January issue of *New Music* is dull too. It contains six short songs by David Van Vactor; two, in lieder style, have a certain deliberate Schubertian grace, but the others are completely undistinguished.

RECORDS

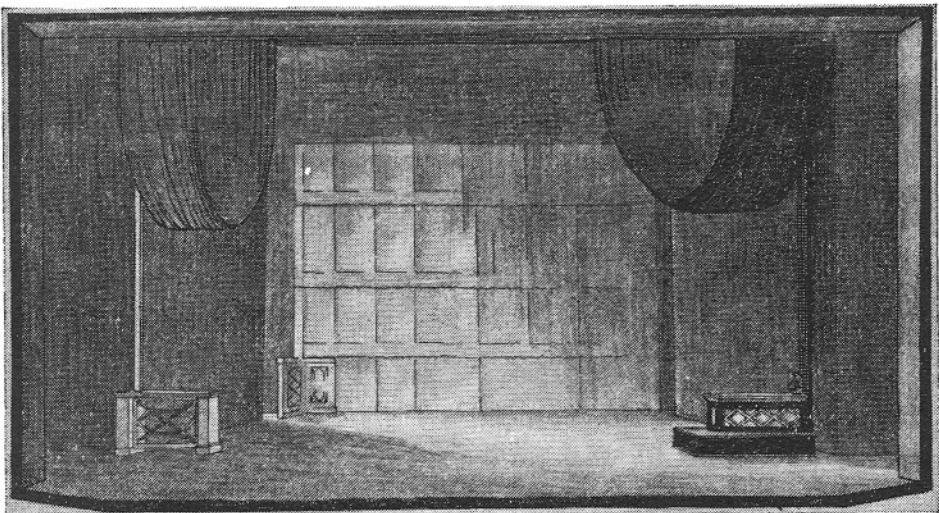
Among the records, the chief item of interest is the album, *Latin-American Classics*, which Continental has recently

put out. It contains piano music by Fernandez, Lecuona, Mignone, Vianna and Villa-Lobos. The best pieces are *Brasileiras Number 2* by Villa-Lobos, which has a delicate and atmospheric sound, and Vianna's energetic *Corta-Vanna*. For the rest, the pieces have more or less the same characteristics – Latin-American rhythms set automatically in motion, a baroque salon-style, and a general tendency to avoid any interesting manipulation of the material. The playing of Erno Balogh is brilliant and sympathetic.

Columbia turns to back catalogues and reissues the Stravinsky recording of the *Sacre* with a new cover. This performance is of course of permanent interest for its authoritative reading, and takes shining precedence over the Stokowski interpretation. There are many American works that one would like to see recorded before Arthur Foote's *Suite for Strings* (Victor). No revelation lies in this untroubled, unpretentious music which Koussevitzky conducts, however, with affecting warmth.

The *Carmen Jones* album (Decca) produces a curious effect. It may be both romantic and impertinent if I say that I find it lacks any Negro quality. The singing is highly competent, often brilliant, but rarely has that personal charm, the color and warmth that one expects from Negro voices. This was less evident on the stage. The production was at times extremely moving; the violent drama softened, took on a new pathos and eloquence when delivered in terms of contemporary Negroes. But all this is lost in the album; here *Carmen* becomes simply a Broadway show with unusually good tunes, and words that wear thin at second hearing and even seem embarrassing.

In the department of folkmusic lies the album, *Welsh Traditional Songs*, sung to the accompaniment of harp by Thomas L. Thomas (Victor). No spirit of bardic rhapsody animates these lush and commonplace airs, and the harp with its Mendelssohnian harmonies invokes the aquarium atmosphere of a mid-Victorian drawing-room.



DEATHS AND ENTRANCES, Ballet for MARTHA GRAHAM
 Décor by ARCH LAUTERER, Music by HUNTER JOHNSON