

SCORES and RECORDS

By COLIN McPHEE

NOW that the Petrillo situation is over, the two big companies are back at work, with feverish recordings that include new readings of the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* (Rodzinski), the Beethoven *Seventh*, (Ormandy) the Tchaikovsky *Fourth* (Koussevitzky), and so on, and on. All this is admirable, I suppose, from some one's point of view. But it also is infinitely depressing, for it seems in some way an indication of how long we are to wait before any significant contemporary music may be expected. This is not the time, exactly, to look for a renaissance in the history of American recording, but it is to be sincerely hoped that we do not return to the dull routine of the pre-Petrillo years, when for one sound work by a living composer we were given ten of absolute trash. Was it timidity, or lack of discrimination? Is it to continue? For we cannot welcome such works as Hanson's *Nordic Symphony* (recently issued by Victor) or Gould's *Latin-American Symphonette*, which indulge a far too widespread preference for the shallow and the gaudy. And we can only deplore bitterly the waste of wax and publicity on importations like Walton's *Belsazzar's Feast* (Victor), in which five twelve-inch discs are devoted to an Englishman's confused idea of Writing on the Wall.

What we want, of course, is the music of Stravinsky, and by that I don't mean one more recording of the *Fire-Bird*.

That most of his later work remains unrecorded is a grave cultural crime, for which critics, conductors and companies alike are guilty. We should like more music by Hindemith; the early *Chamber Concertos* – especially the one for piano and the one for viola; or the recent *Violin Concerto*. At random we think of other works from the not too distant past, Schönberg's lovely sounding *Herzegewäsche* for voice with celesta, harp and harmonium; Bartok's *Piano Concerto*; parts of *Wozzeck*. But this is sheer fantasy, for what we are certain to get is Shostakovitch, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams.

SCORES

We turn to publications, where the appearance of Piston's *Symphony Number 2* is an event (Arrow Press). Piston really seems to need the full orchestra to expand in to the point where his music achieves its final flowering and beauty. Here his imagination has full sweep, in the breadth of line, the fine feeling for play of one mass against another, the vigorous, uncluttered sound of the orchestra, exhilarating and resonant. Piston's thematic material is impersonal, and sounds best when stated by ensembles, for the beauty of his music is an abstract one, though not a cold one. His technical equipment is amazing, and he can spin the most intricate of webs. But the force of this symphony lies in its restraint and singleness of purpose. The music grows

out of itself like a tree in the sun.

Arrow also gives us Piston's *Prelude for Organ and Strings*, but such rapid, skipping-all-over passage work for the organ which runs through the allegro never seems to do more for my ears than accentuate the ridiculous and macabre tone of the organ.

Stravinsky's *Four Norwegian Moods* for orchestra (Associated) is nothing to grow eloquent over. A distinctly minor piece, of a cold and none too interesting perfection, surely this work could have waited until the appearance of the *Ode*. Nor can I get up much enthusiasm, after long examination of the score, for the publication of Schönberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, performed here last year for the first time by Stokowski and Steuermann, which, in spite of its occasional outbursts of amazing and beautiful sound, I found a tedious anachronism in its complicated texture, an atonal puzzle one no longer has time to solve. Associated also publishes the *Violin Concerto* by Nicolai Lopatnikoff, conventional in form, but bright and gracious music. More ingenious is Nicolai Berezowsky's *Fantasy for Two Pianos*, complete either with or without orchestral accompaniment. The work, at its best in the crisp, lively sections, is dimmed by undistinguished lyricism. To the mounting

collection of musical Lincolniana, there is now to be added Daniel Gregory Mason's *A Lincoln Symphony* (Juilard), a series of symphonic variations in four movements labelled *The Candidate from Springfield; Massa Linkum; Old Abe's Yarns; 1865.*

RECORDS AGAIN

To return to records. Besides the releases mentioned above there is also the *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Opus 40, by Shostakovich. Competent, self-consciously easy to listen to, this music is filled with the characterless melody affected by this composer. But it is with whole-hearted enthusiasm that we turn to the recent album put out by Asch under the title *Folksay*. This is the first of a series of American folk music, authentic, indigenous and colorful, that promises well. The album is varied; blues and ballads are sung by such well-known folk specialists as Lead Belly, Woodie Guthrie and Josh White; in *Glory*, a holy roller spiritual, the famous and primitive harmonica of Sonny Terry adds the true fanatic note. Of this sample of styles we can only say, Give us more!

We regret having neglected to give due credit to Ingolf Dahl in the last issue for his most welcome two-piano transcription of the Stravinsky *Dances Concertantes*.

MUSIC AND DANCING ON BROADWAY

By S. L. M. BARLOW

THE Christmas Pudding of seven shows, of specialty dancers, and of a whole new ballet company was

not all plums by a long shot, but the general effect has been festive; and there's no denying that the New York