

orbit of their influence is a sequel to the primary fact of their existence. It is not a condition of that existence. The composer's role, as deduced from this, suggests the *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God of Scripture, who indeed, should serve as model for all creative artists. What is atheism if not an unconscious tribute to the Creator's impenetrable objectivity?

But all at once this thesis falls into dust. It would seem that the term "neo-romantic," tentatively used by the author to describe Fauré's position, could be better applied to Copland himself. As a matter of fact, he applies the term to Fauré only as a kind of half-remorseful gesture. Having assigned him to a dormitory filled with out-and-out romantics, he concedes him the prefix "neo," which serves as a screen to put about his bed that he may enjoy some measure of privacy. But "neo" means "new" and has therefore nothing to do with Fauré's case. Whether Fauré was a romantic at all is open to question. But to set up a historical division between him and his contemporaries such as calling him "neo-romantic" implies is a bit nonsensical. One suspects, from the way Copland uses the word, that he thinks "neo" means something like "near."

The weakness of the romantics was to think of music in terms of adjectives rather than of the substantives from which these derive. They were more interested by what music expresses than by what it is. Copland's reference to

what he calls the change in the "emotional climate" of our day does not touch the core of this fallacy. Indeed, by substituting one batch of adjectives for another he only perpetuates it. It is not enough, as he would perhaps have us believe, to be tough where the nineteenth century composer was tender, direct where he was involved, terse where he was long-winded, or athletic where he was brooding. This is merely romanticism in reverse. His superficial analysis of the problem shows plainly that he has missed the point of the very trend he would seem to favor.

The premise of the "new objectivism," properly understood, connotes no denial of the expressive powers of music. It simply re-affirms the basic priority of the *being* of music, which is luminous and explicit, over its *meanings* which are shadowy and vague.

The composer who is seeking "health" and an escape from subjectivism that will not lead to an excessive preoccupation with his relations to his audience can find no better guidance than this doctrine affords. It provides him with an ontological approach to basic materials that is at once healthily ascetic and profound. It takes him out of himself and renews his sense of what Hopkins calls the "dearest freshness deep down things." He thus comes to regard his creations as analogous to natural organisms. For music, though it is to some extent an outgrowth of surroundings has for its chief concern the ideal fulfilment of its own discrete being.

Theodore Chanler

MEXICAN MUSIC – A DEVELOPING NATIONALISM

NATIONALISM in music is seldom discussed rationally, sociologists

taking very little interest in music, and musicians either dropping a few imper-

sonal nuggets from ivory towers, or working themselves into chauvinistic fury. Otto Mayer-Serra, in his *Panorama de la Música Mexicana - Desde la Independencia Hasta la Actualidad* (El Colegio de México, México, 1941) has done us an exceptional service. His book, the first to deal with contemporary Mexican composers, makes many really pertinent observations on the general subject.

It has three main sections: the first dealing with the relation between Mexican music and society in the nineteenth century, the second with musical production in that period, the last with Mexican musical nationalism. The first two serve as social and musical background for his treatment of the contemporary scene. They also give a full and detailed analysis of the musically dreary period when European influence completely dominated the native field. Pointing up the very special economic and political elements in Mexico, he shows why its musical life did not follow the expanding pattern of Europe. The salon activity of the Mexican nineteenth century is put on display and, in that setting, also the sad imitative works of its composers. With teachers few and far between and amateurs maintaining prestige above professionals, with the failure of a concert public, such as existed then in Europe, to develop in Mexico, and with many other determining factors, music remained static throughout the period. "The public was not educated to understand pure instrumental music, it looked on concerts as a kind of acrobatic exhibition." Only the better known selections from Italian operas and salon pieces were tolerated. And in the prevalent salon atmosphere, music was kept well under the control

of respectable young ladies of good society.

Although 1819 marks the beginning of music's emancipation from the church in Mexico, although salon music is strenuously cultivated throughout the following years, and a "Mexican pianistic" school develops, it was not till the "Porfirian epoch," which opened the country to industrialization by foreign capital, that the developments of French and German music finally reached Mexico.

The most arresting section of Mayer-Serra's work is the final third, which opens with a chapter on "Musical Universalism and Nationalism," that might in itself well be expanded into a very interesting book. Musical nationalism is considered in four phases. First - the simultaneous existence of folk-music and an art music written by composers using a foreign idiom. Second - the introduction of popular melodies and rhythms by composers who do not, however, alter the basic structure of the music. Third - the passage from a mere assimilation of folkloric material to the creation of a national language. Fourth - the complete liquidation of foreign models and sublimation of the crude folkloric materials into a new idiom. "Only when a national style reaches such a crystallization of its expressive means, can one say that it has acquired a universal character." Leaving the international musical scene, Mayer-Serra traces these stages in the development of Mexican nationalism - first popular music, then the efforts of León, Ituarte, Villanueva, Elorduy, Manuel M. Ponce (the first to consistently use folk material), Rolón, Huizar. Finally he comes to the present with Carlos Chávez and Silvestre Revueltas. This according to Mayer-Serra is Mexico's third phase.

Chávez and Revueltas, the two outstanding representatives of Mexican music today are discussed quite dispassionately. Fortunately Mayer-Serra does not belong to either "school." After a detailed analysis of their music, he makes a cool evaluation as follows: "For Chávez, the aboriginal musical culture is the most important in the history of Mexican music; his desire is to reconstruct musically this atmosphere of primitive purity, hoping to find in it the 'true' Mexican character. For Revueltas, on the other hand, Mexico is as genuinely represented by the remains of the primitive cultures . . . as by the surprising results of the mixture of distinct races and civilizations, so characteristic of modern Mexico." There comes then a brief mention of the younger composers: Luis Sandi, Daniel Ayala, Salvador Contreras and Blas Galindo.

Mexican music, says Mayer-Serra, has not yet found a "constructive principle." But, to quote the concluding note: "A synthesis of the two present tendencies which we might call *indigenismo modernista* and *realismo mestizo* – represented by Chávez and Revueltas respectively – can introduce a new perspective in the future development of Mexican music, the realization of which is in the hands of the young generation of composers."

This *Panorama* is very well documented. If it contains many provocative statements they are, nevertheless, based on careful research and sound reasoning. At last we have a valuable study of contemporary Mexican music. And now let us hope that Mayer-Serra, so eminently equipped for the task, will give us a more exhaustive study on the subject of nationalism in general.

Conlon Nancarrow

PISTON'S MANUAL OF HARMONIC PRACTICE

SINCE the publication of Walter Piston's small volume, *Principles of Harmonic Analysis*, students have waited eagerly for another book that would carry his viewpoint into the field of modern music. Much in this early volume is admirable: a treatment that makes the study practical rather than dully theoretical, a fund of illustrative examples well chosen from actual music, a method excellently correlated with hearing rather than with the visual aspects of music, but, most important of all, a fresh approach to methods of tonal analysis. It stimulated a great deal of new musical thought and gave the student a new technic for analyzing musical scores of the past two centuries.

Harmony, (W. W. Norton and Company, 1941) though not a continuation of that work is an admirable application of Piston's viewpoint to the field of a college elementary course. It is a text book written to introduce the student to common harmonic practice. There is great need for a book like this which may influence the teacher to make his course in harmony more than a mere introduction to musical rhetoric; to lift it to an exciting practical introduction to musical statement and thought. The effort has been made before but musicians have either lacked the creative viewpoint or the thorough grasp of the subject, or they were insufficiently acquainted with the curriculum of the American college to