

Clavier

September 1994 \$2



New Music Reviews

Reviewer's Choice

(E6) Robert Greenberg, *In Shape: Concerto in Three Movements for Two Pianos and Marimba*.

According to the composer the title, *In Shape*, refers to the physical condition of the players to perform the work and the themes that characterize each movement. The opening movement, "Wedge," begins with a declamatory wedge-shaped motive. The first half of the movement is visceral and muscled; the stark motive reaches outward and upward and contrasts with bursts of rattling energy. This juxtaposition gives way to an intense, rhythmically charged dialogue between piano one and the marimba against driving 16th notes in piano two. After a brief return of the wedge motive a jazzy bass line leads to the ending cadenza in which the composer directs performers to "unleash the beast."

The second movement, "Labyrinth," is a cadenza for the marimba set against tremolos in the pianos. The title refers to the harmonic paths created by the tremolos. The effect of shivering piano lines and alternating solo and textural lines in the marimba is magical. The title of the final movement, "Spike," reflects the jagged rhythms, explosive accents, and relentless hammering in the movement.

The combined energy of the three instruments is ferocious and exuberant. Performers should follow Greenberg's meticulous and detailed directions in the score and use skilled page turners. Greenberg has received numerous prizes and grants and teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He is an artistic director of Composers, Inc., a Bay Area concert series devoted to American contemporary composers. (Fallen Leaf Press, \$60.00) K.F.

(S3-4) Maurice Hinson, ed., *Masters of English Piano Music, Masters of French Piano Music, Masters of Spanish Piano Music, and Masters of Russian Piano Music*. These volumes introduce many obscure works by well-known and lesser-known composers from Russia, France,

Spain, and England. Most of the material is questionable for young piano students. Over half of the pieces in *Masters of English Piano Music* are virginal pieces. It is doubtful that teachers will wish to focus a great deal of attention on English piano music from the 17th and 18th centuries. Twentieth-century music is represented by "Moment Musical" Op. 11, No. 6 by pianist and pedagogue Tobias Mathay; this piece is a novelty, nothing more. "Springtime in the Village" by Alec Templeton is predictable and deceptively difficult. Instead of 20th-century English music by Mathay and Templeton, the works of Benjamin Britten, Frank Bridge, Ralph Vaughan Williams, or Arnold Bax would make a stronger case for English piano music.

Masters of French Piano Music is the musical equivalent of a dessert tray. Most of the music is 19th-century salon music or harpsichord music by such 17th- and early 18th-century composers as Couperin, Daquin, Lully, Rameau, and others. The works by Fauré, Delibes, Franck, Chausson, and others are sentimental romances or spirited frolics.

The music of Enrique Granados dominates *Masters of Spanish Piano Music*. Although several of the Granados works included are fine pieces for students, teachers may find Federico Mompou's intermediate-level works more successful musically than the easier pieces of Granados. No music by Mompou is included in *Masters of Spanish Piano Music*. One of the most striking pieces in this collection is Manuel de Falla's "Montanesa" from *Pieces Espagnoles*. Unlike many of the works in the collection this piece would be most appropriate for an advanced student.

Masters of Russian Piano Music suffers from some of the same problems as the other volumes. Borodin's "In the Monastery" may interest musicians who know Borodin only as a composer of operas and symphonies, but I doubt it will interest teachers enough to assign it to students. The octaves in Rimsky-Korsakov's "Small Song" require a fairly advanced technique, but may not be worth an advanced student's time.

These collections are a potpourri of oddities, musical bonbons, some standard works, and an occasional discov-

ery. The level in each volume ranges from intermediate to advanced with some of the music chosen being of questionable quality considering the wealth of material available from each country. (Alfred, \$6.95 each) K.F.

✓ (S6) Franz Liszt, *Symphonies of Beethoven*, Transcribed for Piano. Liszt prepared these transcriptions using the most recent critical editions of the Beethoven symphonies available. Liszt followed the original score as closely as possible and at the same time created a piano version that did justice to the orchestral score. Initially interested in transcribing those symphonies that "have the greatest effect on the piano," Liszt transcribed all nine symphonies over the 30 years from 1835 to 1865, revising arrangements written early in his life to correspond with the Beethoven edition published by Breitkopf und Härtel from 1862 to 1864. Liszt's desire to create an orchestra at the piano resulted in a highly detailed, thorough transcription that includes some frighteningly difficult passages.

Although transcriptions by Otto Singer and Carly Czerny are more pianistic, Liszt's transcriptions helped to make Beethoven's work widely known. The piano was the phonograph of the 19th century, recreating orchestral, chamber, and operatic works, and Liszt wanted the pianist to hear the orchestra at the piano. He often indicated which instrument or group of instruments plays sections or passages in the original, and he wrote out certain parts of the original score

Categories: (S)-Solo, (E)-Ensemble, (P)-Popular. Ratings: Reviewer's Choice, ✓-Recommended. Levels of Difficulty: (1)-Beginning: five-finger patterns and simple rhythms; (2)-Easy: entire scale and simple syncopation; (3)-Intermediate: introduction to counterpoint and complex rhythms (Bach *Notebooks*, Bartok *Mikrokosmos* I-II); (4)-Late intermediate: technical and rhythmic sophistication (Bach *Inventions*, Bartok *Rumanian Dances*); (5)-Difficult: for the competent pianist (Mozart *Sonatas*, Brahms *Rhapsody* Op. 79 No. 2); (6)-Extremely difficult: for the advanced pianist (Beethoven *Sonata*, Op. 57, Chopin *Etudes*)