

NEW MUSIC

A Recent Tributary

Until recently, the main stream of Western music flowed chiefly through the major European countries. Now the picture is much larger, and there are sophisticated composers of "Western" music in every corner of the globe. One of the many countries which have recently begun contributing to the main stream is Israel. Four recent publications of the Israel Music Institute in Tel Aviv (American agents: Boosey and Hawkes) give us an insight into what is happening there. All are written for professionals, but, as contemporary music goes, their demands on the performer are reasonable.

Josef Tal was born near Poznan (now in Poland) and has spent over half of his 53 years in Israel. His nine-minute "Structure," for harp solo (\$2.50), is a coloristic piece utilizing tremolos, glissandos, harmonics, and bisbigliando and *près de la table* techniques. Though the instrument can play only seven of the 12 pitch-classes at once, the composer managed to achieve nondiatonic harmonies which are beautiful and never static. The material is interesting; the structure is easy to follow; and the timing is quite sensitive.

The above works may leave a little to be desired, but they are certainly

not provincial. As in so many other countries which were previously outside the main stream, the composers are quite cosmopolitan, and, in a few years, may have produced as important a segment of 20th-century music as the composers of some larger and older countries.

Nor is the publishing quality below the current European and American standards. All but the Seter are engraved, and all are completely legible and apparently accurate. There are some rhythmic ambiguities in the notation, but no more than in some European and American editions of complex works.

Music may not be an international language, but the current idiom is the closest thing to a working Esperanto that we have had for centuries.

—THOMAS F. JOHNSON