

New music dictionary merits landmark status

By GENE BARNES

In 1969, a group of musicologists headed by Stanley Sadie set about revising the legendary Grove Dictionary, then in its fifth edition (1954) and sporting nine volumes and a supplement.

Eleven years and countless man-hours later, the New Grove (so named because so little of the previous material was retained) has at last arrived. As one might expect, it is exhaustive in the extreme, documenting every aspect of human musical endeavor without regard to tradition, national or cultural boundaries.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, in 20 volumes, is edited by Stanley Sadie, published by Macmillan and costs \$1,900.

Need a musical history of Tibet? The New Grove has 12 pages on that region, plus articles and photographs on each instrument mentioned and a complete bibliography.

Care to know more about J.S. Bach's youngest son, Johann Christian? Again, 12 pages, five of which list all his known compositions.

Do your tastes run to rock or jazz? Articles on the Beatles, Louis Armstrong and Miles David feature in-depth musical analyses of some of their most representative work.

See what I mean?

If the New Grove has any significant

falling, it is that many of the articles, especially those concerning contemporary performers, rely rather heavily on the opinions of contributing authors.

For instance, in his article on British conductor Adrian Boult, Ronald Crichton has observed, "There are nights when the physical impact of his conducting is low. . . ." A dictionary is no place to take a pot-shot at an artist's off-nights.

Considering the gabbiness occasionally encountered, then, it is surprising to find an attendant sense of humor. But an air of sustained sobriety persists throughout the New Grove.

The article on Gilbert and Sullivan contains, for example, many references to Sullivan's excellent musical parodies and satires. But never does one come to feel, through the style of the narrative, the really hilarious heights Sullivan could attain.

Those relatively trifling concerns aside, it should be noted that the freshness of the work is altogether quite exhilarating. Some nice touches include:

- A habit of publishing rare photographs of some famous composers in their youth (Brahms at 17, Faure at 19, Tchaikovsky at 24).

- Listing lost and unpublished works in composers' catalogs, and, when published, the work's publisher.

- An 85-page essay on musical notation that begins with ancient Egypt.

WSU art prof visits Germany

Robert Broner, professor of art, Wayne State University, recently returned from two and a half weeks in West Germany as a guest of the German government.

Broner was one of five university artists invited to visit German facilities in schools and studios and observe

fine art printmaking and graphic design work. Berlin, Aachen, Essen and Düsseldorf were the cities visited.

Other universities represented on the tour were University of California at Long Beach, the University of Georgia, University of Washington and University of Houston.

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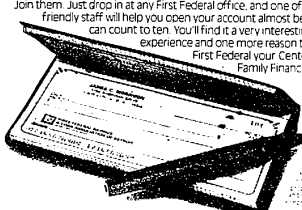
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