

RECORDINGS OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

\$1.50

(Collingswood, N.J.)

VOL. 3 NO. 5



the magazine of experimental music recordings & sources

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Kaikhosru Shapurji, A LEGEND IN HIS OWN TIME

A LEGEND IN HIS OWN TIME. Music Masters MM20015.
Instrumentation: Michael Habermann, piano.

AVAILABILITY: By mail-order from Rough Trade Inc. (see Directory at end of issue) or in good retail shops. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji is a composer little known because for three decades he has banned all performances of his music. Only recently has he allowed two pianists--one in Europe, the other in the United States--to perform his work.

Born in England in 1892, son of a Spanish-Sicilian mother and Parsi father, Sorabji is largely self-taught. At one time he was an accomplished concert pianist, but he grew to dislike

performing and stopped. He writes primarily for the piano, without concern for convention. Sorabji's music is filled with constant invention; there are no restated themes, no common threads to follow through the music. At first the sound is lush and deceptively simple, but the lack of a harmonic center soon becomes apparent. Sorabji's music is polychromatic, polyrhythmic, and filled with asymmetrical phrases. The music moves without regard for the listener.

The six piano pieces on this record date from 1918 to 1937. The album opens with the first section of Sorabji's three hour OPUS CLAVICEMBALISTICUM and ends with a loony pastiche based on the "Habenera" from "Carmen". Michael Habermann handles this difficult music with ease and accomplishment, and would seem to know it as well as Sorabji himself. It can only be hoped that Sorabji will allow more of these extraordinary compositions to be heard. —G.G.

Gary Glenn