

AMERICA'S MUSICAL DIARY

By Deems Taylor

THIS is a book of facts. In the space of fewer than 300 pages Mr. Lahee has set down every important musical event in America from the reprinting of the "Bay Psalm Book" in Boston, in 1640, to the world première of Prokofiev's "Love for Three Oranges" in Chicago, on December 30, 1921.

There are nine chapters, each covering a stretch of years in our musical history. The first deals with the 110 years between 1640 and 1750; the second treats of the succeeding half century; the next three progress by quarter centuries up to 1875, and the concluding three take us to the end of 1921. Every chapter begins with a brief summary of the period with which it deals, followed by a chrono-

logical list of its outstanding musical happenings. These embrace first performances of important compositions, native and foreign, birth dates of American musicians, notable débuts, and the founding of various kinds of musical organizations.

An alphabetical "Index of Composers", which follows, gives the place and date of the first American performance of virtually every important work by a famous composer. In a concluding section, headed "Miscellaneous", the author rearranges in more convenient order his chronological lists of foundings, first performances, and débuts.

Concise as this survey is, and necessarily confined to the tabulation of unadorned facts, it gives a fascinating bird's eye view of our musical history. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century we had practically no public musical life at all. The most important event of this period, according to Mr. Lahee, was the installation of our first pipe organ in 1700, at Port Royal, Virginia. Six decades later, in '59, the first American composer, Francis Hopkinson, published his first song. Twenty-one years after that, "The Mock Doctor", the first opera ever performed in America, was sung at a theatre in Nassau Street, New York. The country's first orchestra, a "Philharmonic" (not *the* Philharmonic; that came forty-two years later), was founded in the last month of the eighteenth century.

The book obviously represents an enormous amount of labor, for the facts presented, while they are none of them, probably, inaccessible to the earnest student, must be scattered through vast piles of histories, biographies, pamphlets, and programs. There are, of course, occasional inaccuracies and omissions. Gigli's dé-

but at the Metropolitan, to cite a by no means epochal instance, is erroneously given as having occurred nearly a year later than it actually did, and there is no definite date assigned to the foundation of so important an organization as the Philadelphia Orchestra. These slips seem to be rare, though, and a few of them are almost inevitable in a work devoted so overwhelmingly to facts. As a whole the book is a valuable contribution to reference literature.

Annals of Music in America. By Henry C. Lahee. Marshall Jones Co.