

the end, where the two couples walk off quietly into the dark, it was the one time I saw something with sexual feeling in a musical. In *Sing Out the News* there is a funny dance by Joey Faye as a little socialist that is extraordinarily mysterious. But the only show for me is *Hellzapoppin* (cheerfully imbecile) which also has the most cheerful dancing: Barto and Mann, Hal Sherman, and Adams. I saw the world's best strip-tease at the Apollo (125th Street) one Saturday midnight, done by Willie Bryant, who went only as far as his suspenders. And I hope everybody has seen the wonderful "Giants" dance in the movie *Dark Rapture*.

I have to make a serious jump to speak next of Martha Graham's *American Document*. It is a major work as everybody knows, with a moral to which everyone subscribes, stated by a narrator. It wants "to capture the feeling of America." I see Miss Graham's sincerity, her fine technic, her intensity. But I am troubled by the monotony of equal thrusts, the unrelaxed determination. There is something too constantly solemn, too unhumorous, too stiff about it; something sectarian. Even the "Walk Around" looks like an effort to me. Well, in detail there are many interesting things, and Martha and Eric did very well. But I missed the point of it.

ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT

By GEORGE ANTHEIL

THE first bit of Hollywood news is most emphatically this: Boris Morros, erstwhile Music Director in Chief of Paramount Studios, is leaving. Morros, if you remember, was responsible for the extraordinary remark that "only modern composers should write the scores of the modern motion picture of today" and for a time he tried honestly to prove this point. He almost succeeded. Unfortunately he developed the overwhelming desire to see himself in newspaper print entwined with the greatest musical names of the age. This weakness led him (often without sufficient basis in fact) to announce publicly the acquisition by Paramount of persons like Stravinsky or Schönberg. He might

have kept doing this with every important name in the musical directory had he only stuck to the living. It was the great and sacred dead which eventually tripped him, for Boris finally opined that "If Wagner and Beethoven were still alive they would be working for me and liking it." Evidently he cherished the exalted Gebrauchsmusik theory that Michael Angelos of all periods are always engaged by the greatest forward-looking dukes, or Music Directors, to clean up the production of the necessary art work of said periods. This pronunciamento was remembered on the evening of his famous Bowl Concert failure. Morros had promised to demonstrate just how motion picture music should be written—and played. Hollywood soured on him. He is now resigning "more in sorrow than in anger," with the parting shot that he has done his best for Hollywood and that Hollywood is no place for culture. The new Music Director-In-Chief of Paramount Studios is Lou Lipstone who comes to Hollywood from Chicago with an excellent reputation.

Last year was not a good movie year. The motion picture capital is extraordinarily sensitive to world conditions, and these conditions were certainly less than excellent. Movie producers dug in for the length of the siege; with the turn of the new year, however, they seem to be emerging, i. e. they seem to be in a more "revolutionary" frame of mind and willing to pick up ideas that last year would have been unthinkable.

There are, for instance, the Disney Studios which certainly promise something very extraordinary in their new production. As we already know, Leopold Stokowski is in charge of the musical score, and he works hard and long and every day, but further news we have not. "The Studio wishes to keep certain details about the score a secret but we can promise you this—when it does appear it will be something utterly new to filmdom!" And that is all your correspondent got in pursuit of certain rumors, namely that Stokowski is developing a new kind of electrical orchestra which will be used in the production. In all cases there should be more about this later; Disney will probably be working on it for many months.

Likewise it was recently announced that Janssen, Steiner, Toch and myself are to do a series of new pictures. My commission

(from M.G.M.) is to write a score for the first original screen opera to be produced. Will Jason directs; actual production begins early in the spring. The characters are children exclusively and the entire production will not take more than two reels. If this first attempt is successful Hollywood may essay an entire cycle, with grown-ups.

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Of new movie scores heard the one which pleased me most of all was Adolphe Borchard's for *The Story of a Cheat*, Sacha Guitry's excellent French picture. This should show Hollywood, if anything could, that a comparatively cheap production can be made to appear as expensive as any "super-colossal" provided the right kind of music is written—and plenty of it. Sound recording, for instance, when it is done upon the shooting stage, is extremely costly, and that is the only way dialog may be recorded in Hollywood. *The Story of a Cheat*, however, was obviously shot (with a few exceptions) by a *silent* camera, Guitry and Borchard supplying all the sound, verbal or musical, *afterwards*; that way of doing things is not only incredibly cheap but phenomenally successful. The most amazing thing to notice—at least from the Hollywood point of view—is how well *excellent* music can be substituted for dialog *and* its necessary sound recording on the stage. This technic is important for composers and musicians because Hollywood has at last recognized its merit; a motion picture so produced costs only about one third as much as one made the other way, and it certainly leaves the composer top dog. My objection to Hollywood to date is that it fails to consider music a matter of life and death; most of our producers are just as content with a bad score as a good one.

It is also interesting to note that Europe has made a great advance in picture scoring during the past year; almost every recent score from abroad is at least as technically proficient as Hollywood would demand; moreover the music no longer protrudes like so many sore thumbs, as it did several years ago. In fact, if Hollywood is not careful, Europe will again take away the musical wreath, though Hollywood undoubtedly still wears it, if somewhat askew. But a few more scores like Honegger's for the *Grand Illusion* and some others, and away it goes. Holly-

wood Music Directors take note. (Yes, MODERN MUSIC is read by every Music Department in Hollywood).

I also religiously go to see the new Russian pictures but emerge always in a state of fury because the sound tracks are so atrocious that the very excellent music which seems to be coming from them is garbled and incomprehensible. The Soviets would do well to import some of our numerous sound men now out of a job in Hollywood, any one of whom seems to know more about sound recording than anyone in Russia. I wish very much that something could be done about this; after all it is a comparatively simple matter.

OVER THE AIR

GODDARD LIEBERSON

WINTER is the time for ear-muffs, and if the radio goes on as it has been, you can wear them right into the parlor and keep them on evening after evening with little or no loss in musical enjoyment. That is, if you want to hear the work of your contemporaries—for in the welter of music coming over the air-waves, the moderns have been reduced to a trickle in the flood. I seem to remember saying this before, and can now envisage a choleric and frost-bitten old-age in which I shall say it again and again. For radio, edition 1939, offers even fewer prospects for American composers. The most unkindest cut of all is from CBS, who will not continue their commissioning of American works. If they have good reason to be disappointed in those they did commission, part, at least, of the disappointment was due to their own choice, a sometimes indiscriminating one, of composers. Yet in justice it must be said that such choosing is, at best, an unhappy task and one which involves the most vacillating, the most transitory, the most personal, and the most unpredictable of all human qualities—taste. If this all sounds too pessimistic, let me say that CBS is far too progressive to disregard contemporary American composers altogether; I am assured that their policy of playing new American works on regular chamber and symphonic programs will continue.