

items to be mentioned here. The Mahler recording was made by Bruno Walter at a concert performance in Vienna, 1938, and, punctuated at its most intimate moments with one of those apologetic but determined concert coughs, is far from perfect. But it is indeed something accomplished to have this most eloquent, most moving of all Mahler's symphonies down in wax, even if only as a temporary *faute de mieux*. To me, *Don Quixote* seems almost as good as *Eulenspiegel*. In spite of the fact that it is not so neat (by far!) in form, that it has many deadly passages (those verbose duets between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza) it has a humor, a warmth and an incredible brilliance which I think places it at the top of Strauss' works. I'm not much for humor in music, but here, based on imitative sound, it seems to ring true. If you take the work for what it is worth — as a tabloid opera in the baroque style, starring the cello in the leading role — I think there can be no pangs of conscience in enjoying it. The only irritating thing in the recording is the too belligerent, too prominent playing of Feuermann, who seems to think it was written only for cello.

De Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* has also appeared (Victor), but this is a wash-out, a fuzzy impression of impressionistic music. Bizet's *Symphony Number 1*, in C-major (Victor) comes as a surprise, and remains a disappointment. *Symphony* by X would describe it more

accurately, since it does little more than conform to type. We can see in it the ability of the Paris Conservatoire to turn out a brilliant pupil with a perfect work. The title should have been "You never can tell."

The *Triptych* of Carl Engel, a work in three movements for violin and piano (Schirmer recording) makes one wonder why so sensitive and well-equipped a composer has chosen to remain silent. Here is a work, written some twenty-five years ago, that is deeply felt, with real lyric charm. The urge to create music is a mysterious one that comes and goes; in this case the silence of the composer is something to be regretted.

SCORES

There is little to report about publications. Good workmanship rather than significant individuality predominates in the *Simfonieta for Strings* by Edward Burlingame Hill and the concise *Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon* of Werner Josten (both Arrow Press). Wallingford Riegger makes use of unusual rhythms and timbres in his percussive finale from the *New Dance* for two pianos (Arrow). Richard Franko Goldman has some charming and practical miniatures for beginners in piano in his *Nine Bagatelles* (Axelrod). But for over six months there has been a general lull in both recording and publishing. There are a few indications for a brighter column in the next issue of this periodical. Let us hope.

IN THE THEATRE

By SAMUEL L. M. BARLOW

THE most curious play of the season is *Liberty Jones*, an allegory by

Philip Barry which shows off, as the larger expanses always do, the faults and

virtues of the authors and producers. As usual with Barry's plays there are for each forty minutes at least ten minutes of superlative writing for the theatre. As usual with Paul Bowles' music there is the amazing contrivance of original and appropriate sound. Unfortunately, Barry, after getting off to a good start, allows the gas to escape from his balloon, throws out a couple of sand-bags which unhappily land on the audience, and drops into a bush where he plants the American Flag and says, "I'm the North Pole."

Unfortunately also, Bowles has been called on to reach heights where even two clarinets (alternate bass-clarinet), two trumpets (alternate trombone), one electric violin, one electric guitar, one bass, one harp, two pianos (alternate Hammond Organ and celesta), and drums won't take him. And, on hearing this really long score, an unhappy suspicion arises that Bowles isn't aware that mere contrivance or invention aren't enough. The rhythms are there but no waltz, the clever satire is there but no gusto, the heat is there but no love.

There are a great many good and interesting things about this play. The entrance of the Big Three at the end of the first act is a real and terrifying horror. And here, where a sound effect is called for, Bowles creates and sustains a scene with hair-raising unobtrusiveness. There are several excellent performances, notably by Ivy Scott, who sings two Irish songs and plays her part with humor and distinction; Howard Freeman plays well in a role that has some unexpected variety. He does, however, mumble his lines; though in this he is not a patch on the chorus, whose every word was lost. (I recommend Winthrop Ames' method to the producers.)

The burden of the evening fell on the young shoulders of Nancy Coleman. It was difficult for her to sound anything but raucous, as she hit a high-tension wire in the opening scene and had to stay there, over the unaccustomed indiscretions of Mr. Bowles. He blew her up on a couple of trumpets at the finale, right up to an I. J. Fox smoke-bridge. And as the music had no power of growth in itself, no *phusis*, the climaxes could only be achieved by making things louder. (Respighi's old stunt.) Wagner used a sky-bridge too; and somehow there the music buttressed the phenomenon into reality. Mere orchestronomy won't hold.

Pal Joey, with embroidery by Rodgers and Hart, confirmed my suspicion that George Abbott is really the Lady Macbeth of Minski. It is stripped and teased with an expertness amounting to genius. There isn't much plot, but there are four or five well defined characters borrowed from O'Hara and a production that should make *Liberty Jones* take arsenic as a counter irritant. The deftness and intelligence of this production carry the audience at such a speed that you positively like as low a heel as ever trod the boards, accept a keeping-lady without gastric revulsion, and laugh loud and long at lyrics that would have prevented Charles II from spouting his one great line about being an unconscionable time dying. He and his cronies would have died on the spot.

Most of the amiability of the show is due to Gene Kelly, Vivienne Segal, and June Havoc. And Miss Havoc has the added talent of being able to kid herself and anything that's lying around, like the rest of the show, or the arts in general. In one song, *Flower Garden of My Heart* — a pastiche of all the rosemarys and

rues—she kids the pants off the pansies and then does a Bee Lillie high-note. It's too good to be true. And again, in the *Rainbow* song, she takes ninety per cent of what one hears over the radio for a ride. I have a weakness for shows that kid themselves and for artists who can put such kidding over. Aristophanes began it; Gilbert and Sullivan were adept; and Rodgers and Hart continue the adult tradition.

There is a huge orchestra, and for more than half of the pleasant sounds it produces I suppose the credit belongs to Hans Spialek who orchestrated them. But there are some excellent tunes and rhythms, as such things go, and even one number based on "the Happy Hunting Horn" which, while probably in no danger of rousing St. Hubert or turning anybody's thoughts to the noble Art of Venerie, has more solid interest than most Broadway hits. If there is no longer the torrent of freshness that I seem to associate with *A Connecticut Yankee* and if in this play Mr. Hart has the edge, still Rodgers' score is not stale, and there are perhaps two or three good airs. But I remember dimly a composer called Offenbach who put six or seven good tunes to an act; and there were four acts in his day.

All of which leads very neatly into *Meet the People*, because in that young and purposeful review the only really good tune is by Offenbach. Incidentally, the skit itself, with Offenbach coming out of his grave to join the elder composers who have so often been robbed, is one of the best on Broadway. Much of this show is excellent; the second act in particular has several high spots, moments of adult and mordant satire, briskly on the side of the angels, where the "Good Neighbor Policy" is administered with a

kick in the behind, where the "Old South" is ribbed, down even to its pella-gra, and where Dean Swift would have chortled at the bland suggestion of eating, not the Irish babies, but the unemployed.

There's not much style and there are no budding Duses, but *Meet the People* has its heart in the right place, does not pull its punches, and proves a progressively lively evening, due largely to Henry Myer's lyrics and Mortimer Offner's direction.

Up at the Brander Matthews Theatre, the Juilliard Institute Opera Players went through their diverse Yeddings and Quinibles in *The Devil Take Her*, with music by Arthur Benjamin, libretto by Alan Collard and John B. Gordon, and *Blennerhasset*, with music by Vittorio Giannini, libretto by Norman Corwin; one-act operas each.

Benjamin is an Australian, now living in Canada. His little comic opera (which has been presented in London) deals with the legend of the man who married a dumb wife, and who, after her speech has been restored to her, hastily betakes himself to the Devil to escape her tongue-lashings. The book is witty and well made. The music is well written for the voice, nimble and lively, but without much profile. From some of the curious sounds that issued from the pit, I gathered that the Juilliard Orchestra was sometimes out of its depth and that at other times Benjamin's scoring was turgid. It is difficult, sarcastic music, and calls for a more skilful production. (I commend to Benjamin the excessively difficult but absolutely clear score of Jacques Ibert's *Angélique*, conceived in the same spirit of pasquinade.)

Blennerhasset is the kind of Americana

— a lovelorn maid and an officer who has succumbed to the treasonable ambitions of Aaron Burr — that is as American as the *Ballo in Maschera*. I've no doubt the Officer really was Gustavus of Sweden. He died at the end anyway. The music is straight 1900 Chianti. But Mr. Giannini knows his vintages; the music was roundly orchestrated and the vocal parts just what he intended them to be. In fact, this opus was admirably sung. It "sounded" from the beginning to end. Unfortunately, it was quite without interest; whereas the Benjamin offering was definitely alive and (under the reserve that Benjamin may be an old gentleman of eighty) promising.

Enough has been said of Gertrude Lawrence in *Lady in the Dark*; and it's all true. The production is flawless and the play phoney. Kurt Weill wrote the music.

Perhaps it was the poetry of Brecht or perhaps it was that Kurt Weill was working in a town and a tongue which he understood; but the *Drei Groschen Oper* and *Stadt Mahagonny* were new, authentic, devastatingly personal, alive. We have all, some of us for ten years, helped the luckless expatriates to come over to our refuge, tried to find jobs for the writers bereft of their native speech, for painters faced with a new landscape, for statesmen thrust into a brash way of life where Herr Doktors are of little account; and, in Kurt Weill, we received the most arresting voice of young musical Germany, a voice with the grinning, pavement pathos of Villon. Since no producer wants his best stuff here, Weill has attempted to attune himself to our ears. The results have been tragic. His musical sentences persist in having the verb at the end. He struggled pathetically with a bit of paste in *Knickerbocker Holiday*,

where the absence of Mr. Gilbert was even more striking than that of Mr. Sullivan. Already in that Tin-Pan-Germany fantasy, *The Eternal Road*, where Weill's blood might have surged authentically into some *Schelomo* of lamentation, the falling off was evident. In *Lady in the Dark* the catastrophe is upon us.

Weill can build a musical comedy scene as only one or two people in America can (Kern, for example), but here he builds out of papier maché. There is a constant, thick soup of music going on; and you wait for just one taste of the old salt. In this long score, there are not three minutes of the true Weill. And in this new medium, this new life, this new success, the promise has been buried under a branch of expensive but imitation laurel.

This is sad, and no joking matter. Something first-rate has gone third-rate, which is a loss for everyone who cares deeply for an art, beyond any prejudice or timeliness or mode. The Muse is greater than any Master. And it is depressing, too, to see those who reject Weill's really good work falling in delight for stuff that a dozen men on Broadway can do better.

The Ballet Theatre has achieved something very rare nowadays—the early Theatre Guild had it, the first Russian Ballet, also, and the Minneapolis Symphony today: *esprit de corps*. The result is that whatever they do is lively, communicative, often astonishing.

Tudor's choice of music is curious and curiously successful. For *Dark Elegies*, a reserved and moving lament in motion, he uses Mahler's *Kindertoten-Lieder*, orchestrated, and well sung (in the pit) by Mordecai Bauman. In *Jardin aux Lilas*, he uses the Chausson *Poème* which seems

peculiarly suited to a story out of Henry James by D'Annunzio, made exciting through a novel, and yet nostalgic choreography. Both of these ballets are in every way remarkable.

The Cimarosa music for *Capriccioso* has been orchestrated by so many hands, Rieti, Malipiero, and Paul Bowles, that the result is fairly indecorous, bumpy, and common. In picking the music for *Goyescas*, some of the better Granados was discarded for second-rate stuff; the choice was not made with much taste. Respighi's *Arie Antiche* are perfectly suited to Agnes de Mille's hilarious *Three Virgins and a Devil*, a cross between *Les tres-riches heures du Duc de Berry* and the under-side of a Choir Stall at Bourg-en-Bresse. *Gala Performance* is

well matched with its Prokofieff music (the *Concerto* and the *Classical Symphony*), rapid and pungent.

Of the American compositions, of course Aaron Copland's for *Billy the Kid* is the best. It is admirably scored, rhythmic, and in the quieter moments touching and personal. The marriage of score and story, I admit, seemed to me to be occasionally one of convenience, but this is probably not the fault of our most able, sincere, and influential American composer.

By and large, the season's forsythias go to Miss Lawrence and Mr. Tudor and *Pal Joey*. Which does not mean that there's any new music on Broadway that would make even Lehar blink.

ON THE FILM FRONT

—By PAUL BOWLES—

LOUIS GRUENBERG has turned out a score for *So Ends Our Night* which, if less good than that for *The Fight For Life*, is so only because the film is less important and less interesting. Being a straight, even if very good, Hollywood product, it offers fewer opportunities for a composer to exercise his art. Nevertheless it is a first class score. The thematic material is generally straightforward, simple and rather distinguished, and the effect eschews corn as much as possible. Gruenberg gets nice dark moods with his strings and uses them a good deal. Also the orchestration does not suffer from overstuffing; he lets us hear single instruments and thin sounds occasionally. This is not to say that in certain suspenseful spots there is not too much symphony,

nor that the love themes are not at times excessively lovely. But the score is pretty much of a pleasure for the listener. The beginning of the hospital scene is particularly sensitive and right. The high-spot for most people will probably be the night train-ride with the locomotive whispering "Marie, Marie, Marie," above the blended train-sounds and train-music. It makes a beautiful piece. There are some poetic soliloquies with feeble music played behind them. This doesn't work very well, combined as it is with the down-to-earth treatment of the subject-matter in the rest of the film.

Miklos Rozsa, who did another grandiose Midwaysque score for *Four Feathers*, wrote the music for *The Thief of Bagdad*. This one is a piece with its