

pieces are delicate is William Schuman's *A Free Song*, for full chorus and orchestra (or two pianos). No cupping of ears is needed here; as with most of Schuman's music, this setting of Whitman texts is for the great auditorium or open air. As such it projects admirably, both acoustically and in the musical line. I find Randall Thompson's *Solomon and Balkis* (a one-act opera, commissioned by the League of Composers and Columbia Broadcasting, and published by E. C. Schirmer) simply quaint. If you love

Kipling's *Just So Stories* then here is your music, for it faithfully follows the whimsy of this bedtime tale. As for me, I don't.

### III

This is about zero hour in the recording market, and what little there is to mention (chiefly Milhaud's *Suite Provençale* for orchestra) will be discussed in the next issue, when it is to be hoped that the situation will have taken a considerable turn for the better.

## DANCING on BROADWAY

—By S. L. M. BARLOW—

SINCE the departure of the Ballet Theatre there have been two front-page evenings of the dance, that of Martha Graham, and that of Asadata Dafora; but one of the most charming performances was a relatively unheralded affair given in the Kaufman Auditorium by the American Concert Ballet. In personnel it was predominantly native, only the music (and why?) was foreign.

The American Concert Ballet is a new and young group, gifted and imaginative. From such beginnings have always come the really important courses of our artistic and civilized nourishment.

*Sailor Bar*, with a two-piano adaptation of Honegger's *Concertina*, and with choreography by Mary Jane Shea, presented the sailor and his pickup girl and also their ideal selves. The attraction and repulsion, the magnetism of this brief brothel encounter, is the same for the roughly tender, mortal couple as for their alter-egos; but what is realis-

tically danced here, is interpreted in aloof stylization there. The hearty realism, the good brawl, the crude heart-break were all touching and exciting. I found the ghosts a little stilted and obvious.

*Five Boons of Life*, after Mark Twain, I cared for less. It is a bitter story really, but William Dollar treated it like a Christmas pantomime, so that when the young man who had understandably preferred Love and Wealth to Death was constrained to accept Old Age as the crowning misfortune, it was rather as though he'd just turned into Santa Claus. The Dohnanyi variations sustained this fairy-tale mood. But this is not written disapprovingly, for the ballet had movement and flow, and was mounted and danced expertly — as they all were.

Todd Bolender wove a pleasant dance suite around Ravel's *Mother Goose*. The stories, such as they were, proceeded by indirection, or you might say in-

sinuendo. In fact the only vice proper of the three ballets mentioned seemed to be a bias in favor of traumatic emanations. Completely unschizophrenic was the best ballet of the lot, a little gem of astringent refinement, elegantly bony, full of drilled grace, *Concerto Baroco*, by Balanchine, to Bach's concerto for two violins (arranged for two pianos). This is definitely one of the high spots, bringing to us in concentrated form Balanchine's genius for handling the classic ballet, giving it new beauty and life by the chaste surprise of his inventions and the solid architecture of his patterns.

Argentinita gave two evenings at Carnegie Hall, repeating a few numbers given with the Ballet Theatre, and some others. Every dance had its peculiar perfection; the reviewer can only pick the ones that appealed to him most, for there was never a loose end nor something hastily contrived. I rejoiced in the exactness of her interpretation of the Peruvian *Huayno*, and I think the five minutes of most utter delight of the season were to be found in a little scene from *Goyescas* wherein Argentinita is carried off by two cavaliers, in a mood of macabre stealth to be matched only in *Magnasco*. Argentinita is a great artist, ably supported by her sister, Pilar, and by Greco and Vargas; and the Spanish music they fittingly use is supreme as dance music, having in itself variety of color, rhythm and contour.

En passant, Eugene Loring did the choreography for *Carmen Jones*. On the whole very successful, particularly the rout in the southern roadhouse. The only slip was an elaborate neo-hispanic herbaceous boredom in act II. But that was some slip.

It is probably unfair of me not to feel that Martha Graham is peculiarly American. She is not, of course, un-American, but her grim dream-world has a coterminable frontier with Anthony Tudor's, its riparian rights held by Chekhov and Freud. *Ethan Frome* and *Strange Interlude* belong to that world too; so it is part of the American scene, but a small part only, I submit, and a part with little joy or affirmation or nobility. Many of Martha Graham's gestures – the inward cult, in order to do the opposite of the Russian Classical Ballet, with the same obduracy that Downing Street and the State Department did anything for twenty years provided only it was the opposite of Russia – spring from her studies of Michio Ito. And I found the music, composed for her dances by such excellent composers as Nordoff, Hunter Johnson, and Robert McBride, to be generally petulant (which I hope comes from the Latin *peditus*).

Martha Graham is a great dancer, quite possibly our greatest dancer. Her choragic personality is so intense, expressive and vibrant that she easily holds together the lunar strands of her ghost-dramas, and dominates such remarkable members of her company as Jane Dudley and Merce Cunningham. I find Cunningham one of the finest dancers I have ever watched. But Martha Graham herself is the true and sovereign focus of all she presents.

After a long absence, she returned with *Salem Shore*, a short novelty which I found dull; another novelty, *Deaths and Entrances*; and her amusing satire, *Punch and Judy*. Of these, *Deaths and Entrances* is the most ambitious and interesting. The music by Hunter Johnson is adequate, and has perhaps more

diversity of rhythm than the two other scores. The scenery and costumes were excellent throughout the evening. If I quarrel with the grim tone of *Salem Shore* or *Deaths and Entrances*, it is not that I am unaware that we are living in a grim, peculiarly grim, world. It is that the answer to a grim world is not a cloudy mirror, an introverted nightmare, but the brave heart of those who are valiant and who endure.

When I first saw Asadata Dafora, he himself, I believe, was quite freshly come from Africa, and some of his troupe were from the hinterland of Haiti where the native tradition still runs fairly true. There was a fierce fire in his work, a savage and raw magnificence, a terrifying sense of propitiation. Now, in Carnegie Hall, as an urbane Master of Ceremonies, under the aegis of the African Academy of Arts and Research, and with some regrettable Follies costumes, this tribal god has become almost dapper.

There was a fine simplicity about the opening of the performance: the primitive, diurnal round of village life, with its marriage and giving in marriage, its corn-huskings, and giving of gifts. But, with one or two notable exceptions, from there on the evening became a prey to compromise. The abandon which characterized much of Katherine Dunham's show was absent; the fire smoldered. Pearl Primus' first *Visitor's Dance* was splendid, and the *Bondo*, performed by Florence Johnson, had the real orgasmic shock. (It took a cow's horn to revive her after she had collapsed.) Dafora himself danced little; what he did was classic and effective, with the stateliness of slow jungle animals, or of a priest measuring his diffidence be-

fore the Great Spirit. His rhythms were simple, far simpler than those to which we are accustomed, and the unique variety he achieved was by his skilled use of off-beats or between-beats for his steps. As expected, the drummers were impeccable.

If the evening presented a fair and broad selection of African rhythms, then surely there was confirmation of my belief that the American Negro — with his tincture of Moody and Sankey, of French and Spanish, and above all with his own plantation and subsequent evolvments — possesses a far richer repertory than his African ancestor. In the matters of physical routine, — steps, beats, acrobatics, — I fancy Harlem far outstrips Uganda. We cast forth turns that come back to us as foreign but are as native as potato. The *Conga* is only an early American hop rhythm: "Bill's got a girl, O!" At the moment, the blare of our radios, treacling the ether with Cole Porter and Sinatra, has a depressingly world-wide effect, dangerously damaging, for instance, to the pure and living strains of South America. But our real folk music has hurt no one; indeed it has enriched the music of this earth, unobtrusively, and been neglected at home.

### III

To return for a moment to South America, where ballet thrives in the state-subservent opera-houses of Chile, Argentina, Brazil and probably elsewhere.

The activities of the Colón, in Buenos Aires, are modeled on those of the Paris Opéra, with all the attendant Sorbonniferous joys and sorrows. At least there is a system, and a thorough one, from which our own haphazard Metropolitan could learn. (In New York, neither the people nor the city nor the state own

their opera nor their symphony orchestra. The Housing Commission might well start its labors right here.) Attached to the Colón are complete schools of painting, singing and dancing. The prize-pupils sing at the opera, design or execute scenery, or perform in the ballet. The employment is continuous. It is a factory to produce and purvey all the arts and entertainments of which a theatre, in the best sense, is capable. It suffers probably from the usual academic faults of bureaucracy and ancient pensioners, but the level is kept remarkably high. And with the musical direction in the hands of Busch, Castro and Kleiber, the artistic integrity is safe and often memorable.

In Santiago there is another fine opera house, and a corps de ballet under the direction of a former star of the Ballet Joos; but the season had not begun when I left. I did catch however an evening of dance in Rio, in the Teatro Municipal. There was part of a ballet by Mignone (the other part had been cut out by the censor) and one by Sequeiros, and some folk-divertissements.

Though ballet at the Colón is as sumptuous as any I've ever seen, what interested me most were the native dances and dancers, once or twice caught with luck unexpectedly at their evolutions *sur*

*place*. Shrove Tuesday falls in lambing time, and one day, out from Arequipa, I found groups of Indians in the high pastures daubing their llamas with red, offering libations to Mother Earth, passing a goblet of *chicha* with the fraternal kiss, and singing Inca tunes. The words were sprinkled with meaningless references to Carnival or with a bob to some Catholic saint, but the true heart of the song lay with Viracocha, God of the Sun. Then the group would rise, beat on the drums and blow on the long pipes, and whirl in their many skirts as they moved off along the steppe. And every now and then, from the still creative highland races, come particular artists, singers, painters, or a diseuse like the incomparable Terecita Arce, to shame a desiccated and moribund *Hispanismo* with the rare ether of the Andes.

In Mexico the Indians have taken over. South of there, the day will come.

### III

A misprint in the last issue made nonsense of my last sentence. As I still believe in it, I should like to present it properly: "I see no excuse for hybrid ballet in New York out of which everything American has been left except the American dancers." Stet.

## ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT

By LAWRENCE MORTON

**O**BVIOUSLY, Fox Studios took infinite pains with the filming of *The Song of Bernadette*. A story about miracles, set in Catholic France of the mid-nineteenth century when modern science was just becoming conscious of strength and finding itself opposed to

many of the tenets and dogmas of the church, this is indeed a delicate subject for the movies. It may be questioned whether it should have been tackled at all, but it was undertaken, and it must be admitted, with tact, sensitivity, and conviction. Bernadette is, like