

out of itself like a tree in the sun.

Arrow also gives us Piston's *Prelude for Organ and Strings*, but such rapid, skipping-all-over passage work for the organ which runs through the allegro never seems to do more for my ears than accentuate the ridiculous and macabre tone of the organ.

Stravinsky's *Four Norwegian Moods* for orchestra (Associated) is nothing to grow eloquent over. A distinctly minor piece, of a cold and none too interesting perfection, surely this work could have waited until the appearance of the *Ode*. Nor can I get up much enthusiasm, after long examination of the score, for the publication of Schönberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, performed here last year for the first time by Stokowski and Steuermann, which, in spite of its occasional outbursts of amazing and beautiful sound, I found a tedious anachronism in its complicated texture, an atonal puzzle one no longer has time to solve. Associated also publishes the *Violin Concerto* by Nicolai Lopatnikoff, conventional in form, but bright and gracious music. More ingenious is Nicolai Berezowsky's *Fantasy for Two Pianos*, complete either with or without orchestral accompaniment. The work, at its best in the crisp, lively sections, is dimmed by undistinguished lyricism. To the mounting

collection of musical Lincolniana, there is now to be added Daniel Gregory Mason's *A Lincoln Symphony* (Julliard), a series of symphonic variations in four movements labelled *The Candidate from Springfield*; *Massa Linkum*; *Old Abe's Yarns*; 1865.

RECORDS AGAIN

To return to records. Besides the releases mentioned above there is also the *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Opus 40, by Shostakovich. Competent, self-consciously easy to listen to, this music is filled with the characterless melody affected by this composer. But it is with whole-hearted enthusiasm that we turn to the recent album put out by Asch under the title *Folksay*. This is the first of a series of American folk music, authentic, indigenous and colorful, that promises well. The album is varied; blues and ballads are sung by such well-known folk specialists as Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie and Josh White; in *Glory*, a holy roller spiritual, the famous and primitive harmonica of Sonny Terry adds the true fanatic note. Of this sample of styles we can only say, Give us more!

We regret having neglected to give due credit to Ingolf Dahl in the last issue for his most welcome two-piano transcription of the Stravinsky *Dances Concertantes*.

MUSIC AND DANCING ON BROADWAY

By S. L. M. BARLOW

THE Christmas Pudding of seven shows, of specialty dancers, and of a whole new ballet company was

not all plums by a long shot, but the general effect has been festive; and there's no denying that the New York

Theatre (with *Carmen Jones* and *Okla-homa* held over) enjoys the most brilliant season in years.

The most sedate offering was *Song of Norway*, with the expected but freshly enchanting music of Grieg, satisfactorily adapted and orchestrated by Arthur Kay, and a book which would have delighted the heart of De Koven or Herbert in 1900. The show is admirably mounted and gives Irra Petina, of the Metropolitan Opera, a real chance to do her stuff, which is no small matter. Balanchine is credited with the choreography, but I couldn't find it.

A glaze of hulahula was laid on *Rain* and the resultant pot called *Sadie Thompson*. I enjoyed it, despite the fact that it is merely a synthetic trick, largely because I'm a push-over for June Havoc. Caton arranged the dances with the desired quantity of phoney Samoan heat (*Rites of Spring* in Niua-tobutabu) and Vernon Duke contributed a vastly negligible orchestral wash. (Where is the Dukelski of the admirable violin concerto? He should never drop his skis.)

Hats off to Ice is the usual skating vaudeville. It is frequently funny and sometimes lovely when the lavishness does not get in its own way. Catherine Littlefield has staged it, which shows that the producers are beginning to be conscious that they have a kind of ballet on their hands. That they are only semi-conscious is proved by the fact that they have left the music to James Littlefield and John Fortis.

Sing out, Sweet Land is the Theatre Guild's venture in the marriage market; to fabricate a mate to *Okla-homa*. Johnny Appleseed, reduced from Paul Bunyan and called Barnaby Goodchild,

sings his way down American history in Puritan hymns, Ohio river folksongs, Kentucky mountain ballads, spirituals, chanteys, 'via Stephen Foster, Casey Jones, Jesse James, to Gershwin. Burl Ives and Alfred Drake handle the songs to perfection; Humphrey and Weidman have directed the dances with their usual expertness (in Peter Hamilton they have a dancer of exceptional, almost demoniac fire), and Lucinda Ballard and Albert Johnson have done magnificently by the costumes and scenery. With all this, the pageant remains cute, without bite, except in certain scenes. The stagers and supervisors, Leonidoff, Langner, Helburn, lean to Radio City rather than to the Epic of America. They appear neither to know nor to believe in the true tragic-comic glory, but to "salute" (as they call it) distantly, from Broadway, as from a howdah. The most authentic moment was the brief appearance of Juanita Hall; and she is not even listed among the "withs." Elie Siegmeister arranged the music, without much distinction or originality.

On the Town has everything that the Guild show lacks: pace, wit, variety, a brilliant score, a continuously mordant satire, a touch of bitter nostalgia, and a flawless unity of direction. Oliver Smith did the scenery, Alvin Colt the costumes, Max Goberman ruled over a splendid orchestra, and Jerome Robbins staged the numbers. He and Leonard Bernstein cooked up the piece, I suspect (though credit is given to Comden and Green, and if due is richly deserved.) The cast is admirable. And the music is by Bernstein. Curiously enough there is only one hit-tune during the evening, and that is derivative. It appears now

definite that Bernstein has not the lyric gift of Kern or Rodgers or Gershwin. Yet the score is perhaps the most astonishing one for this type of music (hot-jazz) ever to hit the town.

It has a rare dramatic intensity and displays an uncanny power of characterization. Every song is enveloped in just the right aura of sound. The satire is there, the humor, the frustration, the gaiety. And this almost continuous score is molded with a sensitiveness and aptness that never fail. Toward the end, there is a short dance-number which begins with people sleeping in a subway-car and then dissolves into a night scene at Coney Island, that furnishes the best five minutes of ballet of the season. Here, the mood is grotesque; and Bernstein has contrived it with the same exact ease with which he purveyed the raucous or the tender. Yes, an astonishing performance.

If *On the Town* for all its wonders runs from the tough to the near-mawkish, if *Oklahoma* remains the pearl of Americana, still, *Bloomer Girl* manages a middle path with entire success. It has a little of everything and nothing too much: sets that put Lemuel Ayers in the top brackets, a fluent, melodious score by Harold Arlen (blessed by the hand of Russell Bennett), really good lyrics by Harburg, and quite a consecutive story. Agnes de Mille has arranged the dances which take a proper, illustrative part in the action (not just fortuitous lambrequins hung on the curtain, as in the *Seven Lively Arts*); and her ballet of the Civil War Women is tops. Now, *Oklahoma* is a musical play—as were the Comic Operas of long ago (and, speaking of financial suc-

cesses, it may be remembered that *Robin Hood* ran for thirty-two years without break!). These others are musical extravaganzas, without the long line or the leisure to be deep, and always dodging any conviction, even a musical one. Perhaps that's why so few of them can stand revival. *Oklahoma* and *Show Boat* can.

Beatrice Lillie is the eighth *Lively Art*. The other seven are in abeyance, with few exceptions, in Billy Rose's sophomoric caprice at the Ziegfeld Theatre. The skits by Moss Hart and others are pathetic (except one peach, about stage-hands, by George S. Kaufman), the songs are third-rate (except for one about a "wolf"); the rest is vulgar, extravagant, upholstered and bad. The major exceptions are the mere presence of the incomparable Lillie; a delicious *concertino* for clarinet by C. M. von Weber which Benny Goodman does to perfection; and a quite out-of-place *balletino*, danced by Markova and Dolin with their accustomed distinction and charm, to music specially written for them by Stravinsky. This new score is a little gem, gay, sweetly acidulous, yet full of real substance, and definitely to be noted as the master's latest. Among the exceptions, I should also name Bert Lahr, who draws laughter from a stone.

III

Before we move on to the Ballet International, mention must be made of Ragini Devi who danced various oriental dances for the Theatre of All Nations. The evening was authentic and pleasant, but the musical accompaniment was denatured by the intrusion of a well-tempered piano, about as apt as a cuckoo-clock.

Mia Slavenska presented an elaborate program at the Y.M.H.A., and showed that she has lost none of her virtuosity. Schatzkamer and Bray played the two pianos in the *Symphonic Variations* of Franck, a rather dull compendium of *Coppelia*, arranged by Sadoff, and a series of *divertissements* (Auber, Glazounov, Rimski, Stephen Foster, and so on.) A young American dancer, Joseph Harris, came near to stealing the show.

And now for the new ballet company, always of real moment to our town because as a rule it portends new music by our composers or new visions or versions of older works. Many hopes were raised, many were dashed, and all the old axioms were nobly substantiated: that humor is a vital part of a ballet season (only one, *Mute Wife*, exhibited a ray); that the classics are all right, necessary and lovely, when well done, but that the out-moded are as fatal as novelties based on novelty (to gasp is not to enjoy); that the American scene interests Americans more than anything; that American dancers (usually a large percentage of our ballet companies) do best in Americana; that music written for a ballet is far better than arbitrary adaptations which border on Procrustean coercion; and that a unified, experienced command (a command of taste, among other branches) is indispensable.

Let us go through the undesirables in order to end with praise. Among the novelties, the Ballet International presented *Prince Goudal's Festival*. The music was taken from the ballet in Rubinstein's opera *The Demon*, and reorchestrated by Maurice Baron (Shostakovich's reorchestration not being avail-

able.) Gregor Fitelberg threw in a brief overture for good measure. And the whole was a watered borscht of Borodin and Cui. The sets and costumes were costly, and the dancing meaningless.

Paul Bowles wrote an excellent score, full of grace and mood, to underline Verlaine's immortal *Colloque Sentimentale*. When the premiere arrived, the curtain went up on a set resplendent with Dali's decomposing cadavers, huge eyes, stray fish, more and moribundia, and on a tortoise and a man on a bicycle who alternately ambled across the stage. Then, if you looked closely, you saw Marie-Jeanne and Eglevsky joined together by a winding-sheet. They struggled out of it and then in again, and that was the ballet. (Bowles had another undeserved trick played on him recently, when the Guild gratuitously reorchestrated and ruined his ingenious *bal-musette* score for *Jacobowski and the Colonel*.)

Dali then pounced upon Wagner, allowing Massine to pick over the pieces (Overture, end of Act I, end of Act II, and so on, boiled down to suit the International's orchestra by Boutnikoff), and again covered the stage with various forms of atrophy, St. Vitus, cholera morbus and horses; dressed Moncion as a cross between Brünnhilde and Undine, and called his opus *Mad Tristan*. Everybody had a split personality. The production was extremely costly and has now gone to the warehouse.

Ravel's *Bolero* was with us again (the music scaled down by Adolf Schmid.) The tempos were half way between Ravel's and Toscanini's. There was a certain tawdry heat about the proceedings but, with the exception of

David Ahdar's dancing, little else. Madame Nijinska might have left this ballet in her memory-book, along with Ida Rubinstein.

Brahms and Chopin were both coerced into submission. With scenery by Armistead and costumes by Grace Houston, William Dollar spun out an idea of Balanchine's over the *Piano Concerto in F minor* of Chopin (again boiled down by Adolf Schmid) and called it *Constantia*. Well and bravely as Miss Bockstein played the piano, music that should soar freely was cramped into an accompaniment. *Détournement de (F) mineur . . .* This abstract ballet had considerable merit and held its popularity in the repertory. The Brahms waltzes (originally for two pianos) were orchestrated by Maurice Baron for Semenov's *Memories*. Raoul Pène Dubois' sets and costumes were vaporously sweet and nostalgic, quite lovely in fact. But an endless procession of dances in three-four time and a nonexistent story and an entire absence of contrast tended to induce sleep. Brahms' *Variations* on a theme of Handel and his variations on an *Etude* (violin) of Paganini were portmanteaued (by Boutnikoff) into one score, and used for a ballet by the over-ubiquitous Nijinska. The costumes and scenery were by Vertes, and smelled delightfully. Diana, Apollo, warriors, maidens, Bacchantes, Loves, went through their variations against pink muslin columns; and Eglevsky, that superb dancer, was rarely allowed to dance, but instead glued to a harp.

Nijinska's best effort was with *Pictures at an Exhibition*. She had an aversion to Ravel's magnificent, lucid scoring, preferred Stokowski's, and got one by Boutnikoff. The lighting she

received was crude and undiversified, as it was in most of the productions. In spite of this there was considerable Little-White-Father freshness and élan about the ballet. A trifle on the order of Joy-through-Strength, somewhat calisthenic, but wholesome and bright. The Aronson sets had a gay, improvised economy about them that I found a relief after so much plush.

Swan Lake was reorchestrated by Creatore, and it sounded better than the Hurok version. One variation for Eglevsky was taken out of the original third act. I liked it less than the customary variation. *Les Sylphides* (Chopin *A ♭ Nocturne*, *C Major Mazurka*, preludes, waltzes) originally orchestrated by Glazounov, was none too well revamped by Baron.

In *Mute Wife* and *Sebastian*, the International came up with two hits, which rested solidly on two masterly scores. The sets for the *Mute Wife* were by Lebrun, the choreography by Antonia Cobos, who danced the principal role with brilliance. The music was a scintillating, witty, expressive score by Vittorio Rieti, a creative fantasy on one of Paganini's Perpetual Motions. A delightful ballet, with Cobos, Guelis, and Moncion at their best.

In *Sebastian* we got a new work: new story, new sets (Oliver Smith), new costumes (Milena), and an extraordinarily good score. Menotti deserves most of the credit for the whole ballet, since Caton, the ostensible choreographer, left his job half-finished to produce the ersatz languors of *Sadie Thompson*. Viola Essen and Moncion danced the principal roles admirably; in fact, in Moncion, ballet has discovered an unusually able mime. The score sus-

tains a baroque, brutal story with just the right nuances. It has verve, movement, power when needed, and a conspicuous use and invention of fine melody. Well built, personal, it is perhaps the most satisfactory work that Menotti has given us.

In the record of deserved credits: Alexander Smallens, George Schick, and Boris Kogan were the accomplished

conductors, and had an excellent orchestra to lead. Moncion (a San Domingan) and Guelis (from the Paris Opera) were real finds. And Cordoba (Duane), Patterson, Geleznova, and some other old friends were the pivots upon which this new ensemble turned. It has real possibilities; and I wish them all a Happy New Year.

ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT

By LAWRENCE MORTON

CONDUCTING this column during the late 'thirties, George Antheil began by writing happily about the "more and more respectable creative field" that the cinema was opening up to the serious composer. Film music, he found, was on the upgrade. Hollywood was no longer afraid of the dissonant music that he and Werner Janssen were writing. The best American composers would soon be taken into the industry, just as Honegger had been, and Auric and Milhaud and Walton and Shostakovich. Film opera was imminent, and there was talk about assignments for Schönberg and Stravinsky.

By the next season, Antheil's enthusiasm had been dulled: Korngold had won an Academy Award. The Schönberg rumor had been reduced to a Krenek rumor which materialized in the engagement of Kurt Weill for a pair of films. Nothing was found for Stravinsky — it was doubted if he had a real sense of theatre. The general run of Hollywood music, Antheil wrote, was disappointing, and it was time for music

critics to turn their searchlights on this situation.

But still there was hope: there was Walt Disney and there was radio. Not all motion pictures were being made in Hollywood. Thomson, Revueltas, Blitzstein, the Russians and the French were turning out significant scores. Film music as a medium still had vast potentialities.

Antheil could be writing the same lines today, for the situation is not much different. Going from one movie to another, in search of a fresh and interesting score, you ride the Antheil pendulum between hope and disappointment. You learn that an *American Romance* has a score by Gruenberg. But once in the theatre, you hear a potpourri of styles, idioms and scoring methods which make you wonder; and after inquiry you find out that "Gruenberg" is a collective name for a half-dozen contributors who had been called to rework large sections of Gruenberg's score which, for any one of a dozen possible reasons, had proved unsatisfactory. Then