

tions are interrupted. Something ought to be done about it for the sake of the composers, the music and the public.

Over WNYC came Bernard Wagenaar's *Divertimento for Orchestra*. This is a work of complicated tonal texture. It certainly demands skillful treatment for a clear radio interpretation, which it certainly didn't get in this brutally chaotic performance. Another very poorly done work from this same station was Henry Cowell's *Four Irish Tales* for piano and

orchestra. Strangely enough Cowell himself was at the keyboard. It is hard to understand why he thought the muddy, jumbled bass in the piano part would sound well over the mike. Altogether a very messy business which will not help his reputation as a tonal experimenter.

WQXR continues to broadcast some interesting recordings of modern music, but much more could be done in that direction.

## ON THE FILM FRONT

—By PAUL BOWLES—

**A**SIDE from *Fantasia's* esthetic implications, the most important of which is having been called Nazi (not too ridiculous a term in fact, since this kind of mindless super-slick *kitsch* is the perfect Fascist entertainment), it has a very real value in containing the best synchronization that has yet been made. Mention of *Fantasia* properly speaking doesn't belong here, since this column concerns itself primarily with sound tracks containing new music made for pictures. And *Fantasia* is a sight track made for music that we all know perfectly well. Nevertheless, "thrilling Fantasound" actually makes all other sound tracks one has ever heard seem feeble and mechanical in comparison. The night I went, something happened to the sound equipment and there were occasional roars, followed by violent silences. Still I was able to discern the overwhelming superiority of the sound to anything I had heard before. The upper registers at last come through strong and clear without whir-

ring. The various smaller percussive instruments stand out beautifully. Sometimes there is an illusion of reality, as in the tuning up or the solo female voice in *Ave Maria*. Often reality is improved upon, as in the *Sacre* (of whose mutilation Stravinsky is stated to have approved, although God knows why).

Antheil has written an unpretentious little score for *Angels Over Broadway*. It's of the generally screwy variety, with Viennese waltz relief. When it's screwy it's full of small string glissandi or bumping bassoons, generally playing one slightly square theme which one hears a good many times. Antheil, having dealt in dissonances longer than his confrères, handles this kind of thing better than most of them. When it's sentimental, on the other hand, it sounds a bit like bridge music between two themes of a *pas de deux*: neutral, rather pretty, climaxless. And here Antheil also has the edge on many other Hollywood men, because his tunes are a little less expected in their

tourneur, a little more inventive. Once in a while one is startled by hearing Richard Strauss or Scriabin. (Why do I keep hearing Scriabin in the movies? He must have written some good film-music somewhere.) The beginning is the same old Hollywood favorite: a piece of stale Herbert with Ravel sauce, garnished with harps. The end is a little less unsavory, but musically senseless. A detail: a little piece is playing. The hero is in a lunch room, walks toward the cash-register. The music rises in pitch and intensity. His money is taken, the sale is rung up. The music reaches its climax, stops as the drawer opens, and the register rings. The bell sounds for a second alone, then the music picks up.

The general impression left with the listener by Roy Harris' score for *One Tenth of a Nation* is satisfactory. It is more difficult to be sure about any one section. The worthy music therein always has charm and always sounds well. It provides a proper setting for a wholly engrossing subject: the lack of educational facilities for American Negroes. Even that famous ineffable sadness that never really lets up anywhere in Harris' music, is not inappropriate here. I don't even reproach the composer with having chosen not to include one Negroism in his score, even if he did decide to use folk-music and had to get it in the British Isles. The film was made by Whites for Whites; it is without ethnographic overtones. And since it was only a sociological plea to the White population, its creators were esthetically free to use whatever idioms they thought most effective, provided that each element was com-

pletely subservient to the discipline essential in a propaganda film. But it seems to me that Harris rather arbitrarily steals the whole show. His music isn't functional. It is complex, and tends to be descriptive rather than evocative. A good deal of it would be better over the radio, with a few words of commentary first to explain it, such as: *Children Running Down a Country Road*, or *Fishing in the River*. It is essentially concert music, and the musical line is often too long to be of service. The best sections are those where the composer had an opportunity to do some of his well-known "noble" mood-music. Here the effect is touching and most successful. In other places the result is confusing; one feels that the show is a piece of rather nice music for which some pictorial sequences have been conceived as an added item of interest. There is one really bad moment: the end. It sounds quite accidental, like the ending of a record in the middle of a movement. Completely unsatisfactory. The recording is superb, although the piano is very much in evidence.

*Escape* evidently was a studio job, as its score went unsigned. Little wonder about that, although it was not much worse than the usual Hollywood thing. Short and very lush symphonic comments make up a good amount of the music. There was also a dull score for *The Merry Wives*, a dull film from Czechoslovakia, and a far better than average score by Richard Addinsell (of *Come of Age*) for a British film whose title, plot and players I have already forgotten. The music was careful and sensible.