

in performance despite a certain monotony in color due to the limited harmonic scheme.

Prague contributes two works of Leos Janacek written thirty years apart: *Amarus* (1898), a cantata for soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra, and a string quartet entitled *Intimate Pages* (1928), (Hudebni Matice). It is easy to recognize the same composer in both works. Strangely enough, *Intimate Pages* seems no more expert than the early cantata. But they both have so much savor and such honest emotion that one would willingly put up with even more gaucherie.

If it is piano music that interests you, there is plenty of new material to examine. A mere listing of some of it will give you an indication of what to expect:

*Episodic Suite* by Julia Smith (Harold Flammer, Inc.) Moderately simple pieces—five of them—in the by now quite usual modern idiom.

*Burlesca, Caricature* (Ravel), *Portrait* (Godowsky) by Rafael Mertis (G. Ricordi)—the super-effective piano number.

*Poemetti* by Gian-Carlo Menotti (G. Ricordi)—twelve little pieces, tastefully done, in the best conservative tradition.

*How Do You Like This?* by James Cleghorn and *Saraband and Prelude* by Lou Harrison (New Music), both of California, U. S. A. None too original pieces in that old radical tradition.

*Rampage* by Arthur Schwarzwald, *Espanharlem* by William Reddick, *Blarney* by Belle Fenstock (Remick Music Corporation). Tin Pan Alley gone high-brow, but not high-brow enough.

## IN THE THEATRE

By JOHN GUTMAN

MILHAUD, France's greatest supplier of stage music, always astonishes his admirers as much by prodigality as by versatility. When he wrote *Cristophe Colombe*, his imagination was equally expansive over space and time. Before that there were those extremely short mythological skits, the "opéras-min-

utes." Now, composing for the French troupe, *Quatre Saisons*, he has scored Anouilh's charmingly foolish *Le Bal des Voleurs*. The production, playing at the Barbizon Plaza, was cut dead by the public.

Milhaud has returned once again to the more economical principle and has definitely reached its final stage: the "score" is composed for one saxophone. It is all a great lark. Tonality reigns as if a hundred years were but a day. Here no one can reproach modern music for being unsingable. In the first act even the realistic pretence is kept up, though in a rather ironical way. Milhaud's lonely saxophonist thrones it on a bandstand and acts as the Kurkapelle of Vichy. Afterwards, however, he just sits in a corner of the stage, making disrespectful musical comments until he even intervenes in the plot and gets himself thrown out. Did somebody say snobbism? Maybe. Well, after so much well-meaning solidity that has proved so excruciatingly boring, let us at least be amused.

Anyhow, that is a solution, if a very personal one. Otherwise the age-old problem of the relation between stage and music is as far off as ever, a conclusion reinforced by listening to Toch's one-act opera *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse*, played to an enthusiastic audience by the Federal Music Theatre. Andersen's story certainly makes a creditable plot for a miniature opera. But is it really a parody? One must believe that to believe in Toch's music. All pepper and salt and ketchup, and no meat to speak of. It is written in a style that was all the rage when this little score was composed—a style hell-bent on being witty, even to the point of monotony. It *has* to be witty because it is hardly any thing else. As to the means employed, why, all these "false" notes when the right ones would serve just as well, and better?

So the joke rests mainly in the words, and those nobody understands. One rarely does in any opera, and here the case is aggravated by a method which gives the voices almost invariably an instrumental line. The directors, who had prepared a very commendable though slightly over-acted performance, met this difficulty by sending a narrator before the curtain to tell the children what it was all about. It seems that the same gentleman had also appeared to relate the story of *Cavalleria Rusti-*

*cana* which opened the double feature bill. And that's what I call pessimism.

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In *Leave It to Me*, a new musical comedy which Bella and Samuel Spewack have contributed to Times Square's higher lowbrow amusement, the mild Mr. Victor Moore kicks the Nazi Ambassador right in the belly, but that isn't the only kick one gets out of this smooth, witty and surprisingly logical show. It has a considerable number of songs, words and music by Cole Porter, and you can always count on Mr. Porter. It has often seemed to this writer that Porter is slightly underrated, the reason presumably being that he has a little more culture than most of his more popular colleagues. But after all, he is the man who wrote *Night and Day*, that great American classic, and, more recently, *I've Got You Under My Skin*, which still lingers in the memory of all those who know a beautiful song when they hear one.

Nothing half so good is to be found in this latest score, which greatly suffers from one of those overloaded, disproportionate arrangements that are the curse of Broadway. The wistful love-song being Mr. Porter's main forte, he has rewritten the second of the two aforementioned, and called it *Get Out Of Town*. It resembles its model in attitude, melodic gesture, and even in the sudden halt on the climax. Appearing in a place where it has about as much business as the *Liebestod* in an Offenbach operetta, and badly sung at that, it goes by almost unnoticed. But, unless I am a poor prophet *From Now On* is earmarked to be heard night and day, perhaps a little more often than its not too original texture will bear. And then there is always Sophie Tucker, with her perennial intensity, who "puts over" a song that has style and pungency but which would fare much better in more intimate surroundings, as would the majority of Porter's inventions.

How important this factor of intimacy may be, anyone can judge by attending one of TAC's uproariously amusing cabaret shows. It would be simply ludicrous to imagine them in a more ambitious frame but here, in the quite informal and adequately ramshackle atmosphere of the American Music Hall, it is great

fun, and the political meaning gets across with a bang. Their new program is again full of hits, not musical ones, indeed, but deal directly at their favorite target, the dictators of every description. There is no reason to be too critical about the music, nor to be enthusiastic. The various composers try very hard to do as Harold Rome does and their modest songs serve, which is more than can be said of many a more pretentious score.

## WITH THE DANCERS

EDWIN DENBY

**I** THINK Argentinita is a wonderful dancer, because she gives you a pleasure like that of being in good company. She is a lady who makes you feel at home in her house. Most people must find her very natural, she doesn't try to impress you or grip you or any of those things. She treats you as an equal, and you leave the theatre feeling as though you'd spent the evening with a friend. I say Argentinita, but it's her company too, all five, who are like that. It is a subtle entertainment, warm, witty, expert, and unpretentious.

As a dancer she is certainly wonderful. The structure of her numbers and the flow of them; the exactness of the rhythms and the clearness of the gestures. Even when she hardly moves, there is in the air that extra sense of well-being all over that is dancing. And especially her waist, if you haven't noticed how beautiful the middle of a dancer is, you can learn from her.

It's the bearing of any Spanish gypsy dancer that makes me feel so good, the lift of the waist, the expressive stretch from the pit of the stomach to the small of the back. It's the bearing of a bull-fighter too, when he makes his passes. It lifts the hips and lightens the feet, it settles the shoulder, eases the arm and frees the head. And it seems to heighten the dancer's visibility. Perhaps expression in dancing, the sense of an impulse, comes from the diaphragm as Isadora said. A flamenco dancer always seems to have more expressiveness than he needs for a gesture, a kind of reserve of it that gives him an independent distinction; or dignity as I have heard Spaniards say, who are very sensitive