

house feel comfortable and friendly. She would have no trouble at all winning the Broadway audience all over again.

Louise Crane's Coffee Concerts at the Modern Museum have included a good deal of interesting dancing and are well worth going to just for this aspect of them. The finest, no doubt, was the dancing of Martinez in last year's Spanish program. He remains shining in your memory as only the great performers do, and he seems to me the greatest Spanish dancer in America. This season I liked especially Luisita, an eight-year-old flamenco dancer, a very exact little girl, who danced with all the joyousness of a child who is playing her best game. I liked too, Belle Rosette from Trinidad, an intelligent, really gifted and person-

ally modest artist. There was Baby Lawrence, a man who did a tap dance as purely acoustic as a drum solo; it was interesting how he ignored the "elegant" style in shoulders and hips, sacrificing this Broadway convention to the sound he made. But best of all I liked the Yemenite, Israel Tabi, from Miss Leaf's South Arabian Jewish group. Dressed in what looked like a flannel nightgown, this young man danced in a jerky style of thrusts and syncopations, with a decisiveness of rhythm, a sweetness of expression, and a violence of energy that showed him a born first-class dancer. He showed too in his technic a whole unsuspected dance tradition quite different from any I have ever seen.

ON THE FILM FRONT

— BY LÉON KOCHNITZKY —

SCARPIA announces to Melisande the death and transfiguration of the Fire-Bird. — This is not an exact synopsis of the *Maltese Falcon*. But the score written for the picture by Adolph Deutsch might be summed up in that manner. It is not my intention to tilt a lance against the Hollywood windmills. These are splendidly rationalized, industrialized, motorized. Many thousands of human beings depend on the smooth working of the astonishing machinery that sells pleasure and forgetfulness to millions all over the world. The music critic must yield to purely sociological considerations. Mr. Deutsch's score for the *Maltese Falcon* is neither worse nor better than so many others. It is exactly what it could be: a

fairly important part of the huge wheel-work that is a great Hollywood production. It keeps its place and runs quite satisfactorily.

The critic comes into his own, however, with John Steinbeck's *Forgotten Village*. Hanns Eisler has written for this beautiful painting of Mexican country life, a very important score, and his special work and research in the sphere of film-music are well known. The problem of the *Forgotten Village* was difficult, well suited to this fine musician's skill and talent. Since the picture is really a silent film that is *explained* to the audience by an announcer, he found himself in the difficult position of having to choose between two contradictory tasks —

commenting on the action and scenery or accompanying in the best way possible the rather monotonous and tiresome soloist, the announcer. Of course, Eisler preferred the former procedure; he did not feel himself to be a part of any efficient wheelwork. So, in the *Forgotten Village*, he has followed the action and the actors, leaving the announcer to fare for himself. The result is a certain lack of equilibrium in the whole production.

The landscape, the actors, who are not actors at all but genuine Mexican villagers, are splendid, and so is Eisler's music. But certainly the average filmgoer would enjoy both picture and music much more if the indefatigable speaker were silent, his many words replaced by a few indispensable, written lines, after the old custom of the silent film.

By refusing to write background music, undoubtedly the composer belittles the spoken part of the film. Had this been a valuable piece of writing, powerful and highly expressive, the emphasis on the music would have become intolerable (imagine a Shakespearian text or even the speech of a real orator treated in this way). But in the case of the *Forgotten Village*, the dramatic intensity and the musical variety of the score just save the production from being boring and Eisler runs away with the show.

Eisler for some time has been advocating the creation of "new musical material" adapted to film production. His experiments have guided him in the composition of his recent movie music. In the *Forgotten Village*, the music keeps within the boundaries of atonality, but the melodic lines are extremely well delineated and never fade into the Schönbergian mist. This writing helps make the score easily understandable and clear

to the listeners. That is not to say that Schönberg's music is incomprehensible or confused, but since our general education is still in the major-minor and chromatic tradition the twelve-tone system continues to sound like a foreign language. A psychological division of the filmgoer's perceptions is always to be feared. No matter what may be said about unconscious and intuitive reactions, it is chiefly the intellect that apprehends visual images, sounds and words simultaneously. However modern and abstruse the music, the essential task is to make a synthetic expression and to avoid any unfortunate fragmentation of the listener's attention. If he listens to the music and forgets about the picture, or vice-versa, the film is a bad film no matter how fine the separate achievements. Eisler has apparently realized that a constant use of the Schönberg system would inevitably exhaust the spectator and either alienate his ears entirely or transform him into a concertgoer. He has succeeded happily in creating a climate of "easy and agreeable atonality."

This sense of ease (according to the dictionary: *freedom from pain*) is further emphasized by the quality of the orchestration which is crystal clear—I should like to say even "readable." It shows the successful results of Eisler's experiments. A clarinet solo accompanied by the pizzicati of the strings is certainly more effective in movie music than a huge orchestral tutti.

Eisler has given his fantasy and inspiration full play in the musical form of his work; the first sequences of the film follow the consecutive rhythmic movements of a suite in clear fashion. This gives his style distinction and enables him to use discreet contrapuntal formula without

pedantry. The introduction of Mexican folklorist elements is also very skilful; a popular song uttered *a soli* by school-boys, the fine duetto of women's voices accompanied by guitars and strings during the market-scene, the *paso-doble* of the caricatured *corrida* (children disguised as *toreros* and a dog as a bull), are agreeable incidents that give the audience a relaxation from the yoke of atonality and help create local atmosphere.

Still something is lacking. What it is seems to evade definition. *Forgotten Village* is a sad story about witches and magicians who oppose the work of doctors and nurses during an epidemic. It presents a plea for science and civilization. And Eisler's music is composed like the most perfect, the most efficient serum.

It is, also, together with Steinbeck's story, all on the side of science and against superstition. But music has more to do with witchery and magic than with doctors and serums.

III

It is seven years since I last saw *Le Sang du Poète* and now I have just come from its New York revival. Like many others I am saddened by the present politico-social attitude of both Jean Cocteau and Georges Auric, once "collaborators" in a far happier sense. Today I still find the fantasy of their celebrated film, its simplicity of means, its extraordinary sensitivity and charm as delightful as on the day of its premiere. Their skill in mixing *savoir-faire* with *savoir-vivre* comes close to genius.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ONE of the best of Columbia's cycles, the "American Music Festival," has sounded its last note. This weekly offering had exceptional interest; it gave us a quite spacious view of American talent. Not always distinguished, it has nevertheless been consistently entertaining. C.B.S. now plans a "British-American Festival," which indicates a healthy and stimulating if journalistic policy towards contemporary music in general. As a whole the American Festival unveiled no panorama of the lofty peaks, the more imposing achievements of our native music. Instead we had an encouraging glimpse of what appears to be the vast undercurrent of chamber music and slight orchestral pieces which our younger men are now producing in

such amazing abundance. Amusing and colorful was the premiere of Dai-Keong Lee's *Introduction and Allegro*, beautifully played by Howard Barlow's Columbia Concert Orchestra. The introduction is a bright, singing moment, conceived in simple lines and fresh harmonies; the allegro, less successful, had enough jerky and convincing rhythmic statements to offset a somewhat ordinary orchestration. Throughout, the work displayed a strong, natural unity of harmonic color, accents, melodies. Most important was the impression of inner integrity and a feeling of logic which strengthened the contour of the formal design. *Music for Chamber Orchestra* by Alvin Etler, written in 1938, still remains a promising piece. It is unashamedly youthful, though by no