

liant Martinez, with a beautiful partner; his heeltaps make a noise as intoxicating as the noise of swing. At the Waldorf Astoria there are two terrific adolescents, who have not his mastery but have all the real temperament in the world, Dead End kids out of Garcia Lorca, Los Chavalillos. And at the Washington Irving High School I saw at the extreme opposite

of style, Argentinita, the very perfection of refinement, as limpid and as true a dancer as I know; this year she has a new male partner, Frederico Rey, who will no doubt make quite a sensation in his own right.

There was much more dancing than this during the last six weeks; this is only some of the dancing that I liked.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

TOP honors for sending new music this month undoubtedly go to Station WOR. A healthy step in the right direction was *Russell Bennett's Notebook*, a series of programs devoted entirely to American works, many written especially for these broadcasts. That kind of idea should be picked up and carried forward in the near future. Obviously the development of native talent must be viewed as a cultural necessity and not undertaken as a cautious experimental gesture. New and gratifying is the evidence that this fact is slowly being absorbed by the big shots of radio. The musical content of the series was certainly uneven but that, after all, is not the most vital criticism. It is more important that the programs had an entertainment value refreshingly different from the overplugged commercial affairs. Among the most amusing of the set was Bennett's own, novel, American folk-opera, *Music Box Opera, Number 1*. This slight and unpretentious work actually managed to sustain its charming fun for thirty nice, harmless minutes. Bennett knows which instrumental timbres take well on the

microphone. It is disappointing however that his fondness for lush, sugar-coated harmonies is so uninhibited; the result is too little textural variety. The vocal writing proved more successful, aiming modestly at coy sentiment and slap-happy humor, and admirably achieving both. The whole thing was a slightly corny farce, but it can always be said that the composer knew what he wanted and got it. Oscar Levant, guest on another of these programs, knew what he wanted too, and got it with a performance of his *Caprice for Orchestra*. In fact, he admitted as much on the air: "I would rather the *Caprice* had one performance and be forgotten, than no performance at all." However, an andantino movement from Levant's string quartet, heard on the same program, indicates that he leans over backwards to underrate his by no means negligible "serious" gifts.

Other WOR broadcasts included a beautiful performance of Honegger's *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* directed by Alfred Wallenstein, and played with superb restraint by Milton Kay as soloist. This was an example of music

whose delicately balanced orchestral sonorities are perfectly adapted to the radio. All minute details, finely chiseled muted brass, deep clarinet tones and mixed ensemble work seemed to have been handled specifically with a view to microphone requirements. Mr. Wallenstein's long experience with radio undoubtedly accounts for performances like this. Also heard over WOR was Walter Helfner's *Prelude to a Midsummer Night's Dream*, scored for chamber orchestra. This piece won the 1939 Paderewski award, but how is beyond me. It makes very poor air material, nor is it likely to sound much better in concert, with its gaudy tinsel-like colors – all effect and no music.

Two workshop dramas presented by CBS contained incidental music especially commissioned by the network for these programs. The score of the first, Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts*, was by Benjamin Britten. Largely a military affair of brass and percussion, it was appropriate enough, only there was too much of it. As background, the music seemed over-prominent and to lack subtlety of timing, though there was an exception in the string mood accompanying the verbal soliloquy of Napoleon.

In contrast to this was Virgil Thomson's very fine setting for Euripides' *Trojan Women*. I have never heard incidental music for radio with such poignant rightness in its relation to the inner movement of the dramatic line. This sparse score (it must have contained at least five notes) really packed a wallop. Here was conciseness and economy put to terrific emotional use. The one spot where Thomson allowed himself a splurge (a violent, metallic, brass screech) produced a really terrifying ef-

fect absolutely right for the stark mood of the drama. This was great radio entertainment. Orchids to CBS for a super-fine production and to John Houseman, too, for adapting the powerful Euripides classic.

The WJZ broadcasts of the NBC symphony concerts have maintained a fairly interesting variety of important orchestral works. Not so good, however, was Adolf Busch's *Three Etudes for Orchestra* devoted respectively to intonation, precision and mixed rhythms. This work is formally weak, mixed in style and generally lacking in economy. Even the fairly competent orchestration helps little, being totally undistinguished and over-scored. By far the best contemporary work heard on these programs was Aaron Copland's brilliant transcription for full orchestra of the score for *Billy the Kid*. It has some truly sensitive moments, especially in the first and last sections, and plenty of gunfire (brass) and "they bit the dust" (drums) in the middle section. Of course it is incidental music; one must know something of the program to make sense of the form. As is usual in Copland's writing, much of the excitement is achieved by interesting rhythmic treatment of otherwise simple material.

WJZ sent portions of the New Friends of Music concerts which included two Schönberg works, *Pierrot Lunaire* and his *Second Chamber Symphony*. The song-speech of the former didn't take so well over the mike, but the chamber symphony sounded excellent throughout. A rather annoying condition that seems to prevail in the broadcasts of these concerts is their unsystematic timing, without proper consideration of the beginning and end of the program. Even single composi-

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—

ASIDE 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