

distinguished. The music of the other school begins to look like a hang-over from the "modernistic" days. Otto Luening's *Fantasia Brevis* for clarinet and piano (New Music) or Gerald Strang's *Three Pieces for Flute and Piano* and *Sonatina for Clarinet Alone* (New Music) are characteristic examples. This species of American music, despite the obvious sincerity with which it is written, is headed toward complete extinction, for lack of an interested public. The road ahead lies some place in between.

## ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT

By GEORGE ANTHEIL

THE summer and autumn news is not particularly exciting; Hollywood, after a grand splurge with new composers and new ideas, has settled back into its old grind of producing easy and sure-fire scores. Even Boris Morros, who is certainly one of the most intelligent music directors out here, and who started out so marvelously, has retracted to some extent; perhaps pressure was put on him from the top, or perhaps he was just discouraged with the Academy Award for the best motion picture score of last year which went to Eric Korngold for a very lugubrious concoction indeed. Meanwhile many excellent composers have come out to Hollywood and returned East again. Scarcely any of them have gotten jobs. While on the other hand, the routine Hollywood composers who have been here many years, have grown alarmed at the influx of new men, and have used their influence to sew up every future score available. In other words Hollywood music is, at the present writing, a closed corporation.

There is a remedy, and it is this. If the music critics, especially those of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, would band together, and turn a searchlight upon Hollywood, Hollywood would soon see to it that these background scores did not continue to be the unmitigated tripe they now are. (I refer, of course, to the serious picture; "musicals" and jazz would need to be taken care of by another department). The music critics should realize,

before anyone else, just how important this music is for the cultural development of America. Eighty million people a week go to the movies. But their criticism of the Hollywood production might be, to some extent, bilked by the motion-picture criticism department. The motion picture critics would, of course resent any encroachment and yet they pay little, if any attention to the score of a picture except to note that it was either adequate or inadequate, and they will mark anything up as "adequate". Undoubtedly a good healthy public opinion, properly organized and articulate, would throw just about half of the present Hollywood "composers" out of their jobs.

Hollywood, of course, will answer this with a cliché—that our better composers do not understand the needs of the motion picture; that their music is too high-brow, or ill-adapted to the movies. I want to put myself on record as saying this is sheer poppycock. The music department of any studio can train any composer (who need only have a gift for melody and be able to write quickly) to become a movie man within three days. The technical accomplishments necessary are not insurmountable within seventy-two hours. And after a few months even a rather backward man should be able to use every Hollywood musical trick comfortably.

I do not however wish to minimize Hollywood musical technic. In fact I believe that the current attitude both in Europe, and in the East here is snobbish. After all, no matter what else we can say against Hollywood, (and I have only started) one can honestly concede that in musical movie technic it does lead the world.

Some time ago I talked to a colleague from the East who remarked upon the "cheapness" of the general run of musical ideas on the screen. He was judging cinema music from the standpoint of symphonic music; he, himself, was a symphonic composer. But cinema music is made of a broader and more dramatic weave. Later I discovered that he also thought that *all* opera ideas were also "cheap." At this point I gave up. The symphonic composer finds it hard to believe that good music can be written around a literary or visual idea. But art, like anything else, can only be judged by how well it serves its purpose.

The work of *some* Hollywood composers is, in this respect, good art—at least it is good artisanship. And that—in our land of inadequately equipped artists of every description—is something. The case of Max Steiner comes to mind. Everyone interested in motion picture music can study Steiner's scores with profit. Let us take, for example, an old film of Steiner's, *The Green Light*. It is a bad picture and hardly needs music. But his adept handling of its various cinematic problems is all the more astonishing. Steiner is an old Hollywood veteran of whom we cannot expect a too tremendously new or exciting music. But his product is always a lot better than most of the protruding and miscalculated European movie scores to which I have listened lately. The music for *The Green Light* is a fine example of the new medium of motion-picture scoring.

It is a comparatively easy matter to write a score to an "art" picture, or one in which special emphasis is laid throughout upon the pictorial. Without offering any opinion on their music I should point to several of Virgil Thomson's recent pictorial shorts, my own film *Ballet Mécanique*, or the photographically stressed Mexican picture *The Wave*, as examples of films comparatively easy to score. The reason is that they do not involve any of the dramatic problems normal to the commercial films. They are, more or less, straight symphonic or ballet-like music. So much for cinema technic.

There is little other noteworthy news. The wish of Paramount to have both Stravinsky and Schönberg score pictures has not materialized. Schönberg says that his understanding with Paramount was a very elastic one and concerned one of his pupils, Ralph Ranger, more than himself. Stravinsky still wishes to do a movie, but the right scenario cannot be found for him. As for the other important composers, practically none are now writing picture music. Kurt Weill last spring finished the scores of two films, one for Walter Wanger, and the other for Fritz Lang; neither have yet been produced. Ernest Toch wrote an excellent score to *The Outcast*, but it was not considered excellent out here. One of the best scores I've heard recently was the accompaniment to the first Citroen expedition across Central Asia. But then—as I have said above—that sort of thing really belongs to symphonic

music—it is a kind of a symphonic poem with pictorial accompaniment. A good commercial movie score more closely resembles an opera.

## IN THE THEATRE

By ELLIOTT CARTER

AMERICA'S idea of opera, if you can judge by the excerpts we see in our movies, or by the performances at our opera houses, consists of well-jewelled audiences listening to standard works sung by well-paid prima-donnas in front of standard sets doing standard stage business that is the same in all opera houses (so that identical performances can be given with little or no rehearsal here or in Lima, Peru, or anywhere else).

The Salzburg Opera Guild, now on its first visit to the United States, flies in the face of this tradition. The seats are the same price as in an ordinary theatre, the singers as a group sing and act well, the *mise-en-scene* is adequate, the whole is rehearsed, and the repertory is not standard. This program should meet with the approval of anybody interested in opera as a really living form.

The choice of works is decidedly popular, except for Milhaud's *Le Pauvre Matelot* and Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea*. For *Così fan Tutte*, Ibert's *Angélique* and Rossini's *Matrimonial Market* are gay and spirited and have a great deal of appeal when done the way the Salzburg people do them.

*Le Pauvre Matelot* has an unfortunate history in this country. It was given last year by the Curtis school, with the orchestra too loud, drowning out the singers. The Salzburg performance also was not good, as the performers did not sing their parts accurately and the orchestra, with too small a string section, sounded confused and bare. The score is original and new and its spirit is hard to convey; strong and simple, it uses popular sailor songs in a contrapuntal texture that is often against rather than with the voice. Its fault is that a few places are too greatly developed. But it does have a new quality of grim humor and many beautiful passages. These have to be done really very well to come across.