

balance and interpretation. This book is a must for the musical amateur, but also a valuable reference book for the pro-

fessional musician. It deals only with art-music, and no mention is made of folk- or exotic material.

## IN THE THEATRE

By SAMUEL L. M. BARLOW

THERE'S not much music in the new musicals on Broadway, so we can step lightly over a couple of corpses and get on to Louise Crane's Coffee Concerts where there was nothing else but.

The costumes of the Chorus in *Let's Face It* are probably held up by capillary attraction. Cole Porter's score is even more attenuated.

Lehman Engel did a competent job putting appropriate noises into *Macbeth*. "I'll give thee a wind," says the Second Witch. Personally, I'm tired of the emanations of the Hammond Organ as a substitute for a score.

And now for the Coffee Concerts. They were urbane, intelligent, interesting, often remarkable. Amid so much new provender, there was quite reasonably some dull chewing. But, as we said at the fourth Concert, that's just the Riff in the lute. Every evening I attended there was something memorable, and some evenings, notably the "Cuadro Flamenco," there was high excitement.

Essentially, Miss Crane presents the Source Book of Modern Music. Brahms swigged at just such a font when he was lucky enough to find a good Hungarian Gypsy. Before the series was over, Miss Crane had turned on the original tap of all the conglomerate music we hear, from Gilbert and Sullivan or Ravel's *Bolero* to Danny Kaye's latest *capo*

*lavoro*.

And not only was this an invaluable venture for the musically inquisitive, but the process of letting the very folks do their folk-stuff uncovered some notable performers. Anita Sevilla, Triana, Sarah Gorby, Carol Brice, and Belle Rosette leave their usual Broadway counterparts far behind. With the current depression in lieder singers, I should think there was a place at the top for Mme. Gorby's fine art and good soprano; and Mr. Hurok should hear Carol Brice's voice. It is one of the most beautiful I have heard. And Anita Sevilla is one of those rare personalities gifted with high comedy of means and pleasant intensity of feeling.

We give serious consideration to any of Bach's variants of a church chorale or to the sea change suffered by a tune which once traveled from Provence to New Orleans or from Ireland to the Kentucky mountains. It is only natural that the metamorphosis should go on. Lou Singer has swung, gently and low, such old favorites as *Barbara Allen* and Schubert's *Who is Sylvia*. These new dressings (and several old hats) were displayed by Maxine Sullivan, Sylvia Marlowe at the harpsichord, and Benny Carter's small ensemble at the first concert, under the title of "Salon Swing."

I entertain one major objection to this

first concert, as also to the fourth concert, called "Blues and Riffs," presented by an able group of Negroes. It is that swing and jazz and blues and riffs are now as "classical," stereotyped and monotonous as a figured bass. This last feeble turning back to Dr. Arne surely sustains my point. The turn is at least symptomatic. The forms now are as set as in the days of the *Bourrée*, and the original vitality of the music has melted away into the academic. People are writing or embroidering on or borrowing swing much as Cadman tatted on Indian themes; and Pocahontas sleeps through the fitful fever. Musically, the Negroes have the same innate dignity that characterized the Spanish. Jitter-buggery is merely an excrescent clowning, like the Porter's scene, and does not belong in either of the true courses of Negro music, — the native African or the American spiritual.

The third concert, "Antilliana," presented by the Haitian Rada Group, brought out the same point. Belle Rosette is a remarkable dancer and mime. The costumes were excellent. Many individual numbers were effective. But the trade winds have blown too amiably through the incantations. The taste of blood has turned into fried chicken, just as it has in Harlem. The West Indies have forgotten the tribal gods, just as musical Harlem has forgotten God. And the Negroes are a religious people. Asadatta Dafora showed us once what real African dancing could be. And though the Island music is closer to Africa than American Negro Music is, it has been diluted rather than shaped. To alter or broaden the original music, without dilution, required a new force as vital and primitive as the force left behind on the

Gold Coast. Negro music has met it only once. Moody and Sankey, the trumpeters of the Christian God. The dignity and depth of the spirit of man and the free ecstasy of a Revival — these were not met in jazz nor in Antillian voodoo. Music in general has been fairly godless since the eighteenth century. And maybe white music can struggle along without a deity. But Negro music cannot.

The fifth concert was called "Hebraica" and showed how magnificent music could be when addressed reverently yet familiarly to an indispensable god. Music is a kind of prophetic speech, wherein the prophecy is not necessarily forward in time but sideways into truth. The greatest discoveries are not outward. And a godless prophet is unthinkable. You may have a slick forecaster so but not a prophet.

This was prophetic music in the best sense, and being an integral part of daily life and ritual had considerable humor and charm. And it was consistently true to itself, to its function of illustration and praise of Jahveh and of his concern for his people, even in their humblest acts. (My personal and very arguable feeling is that Mahler and Bloch and how many others do their best work when celebrating their orthodoxy rather than their never very successful heterodoxy.) This music showed, too, the very strong external modifications caused by the various localities of the dispersion. The sixteenth century music of the Spanish Jews was far more "Spanish" than any Christian music of the period I ever heard. How old the gypsy, popular music is, — what we call "Spanish" — no one knows, for the court and church musicians ignored it. Scarlatti is typical. But in the Sephar-

dic music the true Spanish flavor appears three hundred years before Albeniz. The same is true of the Chassidic songs, splendidly sung by Sarah Gorby. In them the Slav strain was notable. And the Yemenite Jews make a music that obviously is the very essence of Orientalism – pastoral, florid, sad, lazy and lovely music. But at the core of every number was the shadow of the Ark of the Covenant. To the devout, music was the link between God and man; as man sang so he sent up the incense of sound to his Maker. And though the turn of phrase might be Spanish or Polish, there was always that mournful power and concentration of longing, the echo of the years by the waters of Babylon.

In the dancing, the use of hands and fingers was unusual. The ritual gestures were not unlike the mudras of Indo-Persian art. And the scenes illustrating home life – compound of singing, intoning, talking, dancing – had a naïve grace and humorous intimacy that were very persuasive indeed.

The second Concert was the "Cuadro Flamenco," presented by a small number of superlative artists.

To begin with the music was picked with such care that the percentage of broccoli was small. There was but little pastiche. And the program showed up at once the coagulating effects of sugar: Miss Montes, an excellent dancer and exquisite creature, and Granados' dances. They went charmingly together, and disappeared from memory the instant Sevilla and Triana came on, with a pose like a Callot drawing, a cape cut by Caran d'Ache, and music that sprang from the roots of a people who have the most passionate elegance in the world. Technically, there was not a flaw in the evening,

either. I am not hungry for the guitar solo, even when it's fine, popular stuff played by Villarino, – but that was part of the color and in place.

Some of the most purely peasant music had the Sephardic strain markedly. Donald Duff has pointed out the similarity between certain Holy Week Saeta and the Jewish Kol Nidrei, and the presence of the whirring wail, not of loneliness this time, but of Inquisitorial terror. Which influenced which I don't know; the more learned will dissect the *cante jondo* or quarter the *baile gitano* for you. I was entirely spellbound throughout the evening in untutored joy.

The last concert was a performance of *The Chaplet*, a charming eighteenth century English pastoral. It was given by four Negro singers, in costume, and an excellent small orchestra conducted by Lehman Engel. I suspect it was he who rescued this comfit and organized the proceedings with such care. I found it delightful. It was, I think, a mistake to fuss it up so. The slightly ridiculous quality of the costumes and of the story put the singers at a disadvantage, and certainly not at ease. The Overture and Carol Brice's luscious mezzo stand out in my memory. And there should be real gratitude for the premiere of a work notable in its own very small but important sphere.

Altogether, Louise Crane planned the series with astuteness. There was vivacious contrast in each program and between each of the programs. And it all totted up to a liberal education. And that it was fare usually denied us, but all the more relished by the knowing ones, is proved by the applause of a diverse, cultivated audience, – an audience of many races and creeds, come to hear

the Fathers, a smart audience and aware, an audience ranging from the balletomanes and frequenters of the Stork to

the silver immobility of Carl Van Vechten or to Virgil Thomson with his benign air of an unfrocked Proust.

## WITH THE DANCERS

BY EDWIN DENBY

THE reorganized Ballet Theatre presented a season that was timid and on the musty side. Only one new feature was a real pleasure: the presence of Alicia Markova, the great English dancer. The management had commissioned no new American choreography, or score, or set. It did not even offer a new piece by its own Anthony Tudor, one of the most interesting choreographers in America; and even abandoned the best of his previously presented works, *Dark Elegies*. This season's novelties were a revival of the Diaghilev *Princess Aurora*; a revival of the Rubinstein *Beloved*; a piece called *Slavonika* which was nothing, and a *Bluebeard* which at least was a new work by Fokine.

To take them in detail, *Princess Aurora* (a Dolin arrangement of bits from the Petipa-Tschaikowsky *Sleeping Beauty*) was supposed to revive the original Bakst décor. Some of the costumes were magnificently executed, others had an unconvincing lushness more like the old Follies than like Bakst, and the backdrop looked very sad indeed. In the dance, the Gibson-Conrad *Bluebird* was extremely attractive, and surrounded as it was by dull dancing, it brought down the house. — *Beloved* (1928) has a very beautiful and interesting score, a Milhaud free rendering of some Schubert and Liszt, and it has choreography in Nijinska's "ama-

teurish" or "primitif" ballet style, which I found oddly poetic in the whole effect of it. And Markova's dancing of a Romantic Muse ("half in love with easeful death") is terrific. — *Slavonika* was one of those washouts that are natural in any theatre routine and harmless. And it did have costumes by a talented local designer, Alvin Colt. Unluckily they were in a dressed-doll style that is fine for revue but too cute for ballet: and the lace-trimmed stage looked like a Christmas window at McCutcheon's, gigantically blown-up.

*Bluebeard*, the Fokine-Offenbach farce, was something of a hit. The choreography tells a very complicated story with admirable clarity, and it is full of effective gags, a little in the manner of a college show. In this collegiate style Dolin dances charmingly, and everybody around is pretty busy. I was sorry however that the Offenbach love lyrics which contrast with the action had been cut down to short bits, and that the dances set to them were conventionally nice instead of really poetic. The result was more like the mechanical balance of Sullivan than the delicate equilibrium of Offenbach. It seems to me that Offenbach's humor, like Mozart's, is poised on the suggestion that false love and true love are not as different as one might wish; they are both of them really tender. The