

gration of the aural and the visual, and at the same time it throws the composer right into the willing arms of "modernism." So far, Waxman is a little

timid in his embrace. But when one compares this score with his earlier ones, it becomes clear that he is at least courting a new mistress.

ON AND OFF BROADWAY

By S. L. M. BARLOW

THIS column will leave Broadway for the moment to dilate on Fifth Avenue and on Fifty-ninth Street and elsewhere, with a brief return to its proper beat.

The most stunning ballet on view at the moment is to be seen at the Metropolitan Museum, where Alan Priest has assembled hundreds of Imperial robes from the Forbidden City and arranged them in gallery after gallery with a cumulative dramatic effect that is breathtaking. The staging and lighting are remarkable: you pass through a guarded portal, along a procession, into an Audience, past a tomb, and into a theatre, where the Court is holding a Garden Party. And three hundred years of tapestry and embroidery shimmer, beckon, and move like stained-glass lights. The incredible continuity of one art alone is impressive — the wardrobes of ten emperors. But to the layman, it is the sheer theatrical effect that bowls one over.

Still in the Orient, but on Fifty-ninth Street, La Meri was at it again: this time with *Scheherazade*, done with her usual felicity of costume and lighting. She has followed the original story which Rimsky-Korsakov drew from *The Thousand and One Nights*, thereby illustrating rather than torturing the score. We see Sinbad, the Roc, the King of Al-Hind, the Zugth, Princess Budur,

Jirjis, Prince Kalenda, and many more. In fact, the story is so various that the ballet lacks the concentration of La Meri's *Swan Lake*. But for all that it is good to see an essentially Oriental story done with the proper *mudras* of gesture and movement. There is humor and poetry and surprise.

In the thirteenth precinct, at the National Arts Club, they have begun again the series of ancient music, presented without any affectation or artiness, using the best performers (Ben Stad and the Society of Ancient Instruments; Yves Tinayre; the Greater New York Chorus under Edgar Varese) and covering a lovely and neglected period. The last concert ran from early dances and songs, through Arresti and Scarlatti and Dowland to Mozart and Bach — all in the able hands of C. J. Chiasson (Sgt. 1st class and harpsichordist) and Isabel French. And the drum should be beaten regularly for those two remarkable scores discovered and produced by Yves Tinayre: the *Motetto di Requiem* of Alessandro Scarlatti (probably composed in memoriam for Mary Queen of Scots) and the *Kirchenkantate* by J. C. Kriedel (1640-1710).

III

I have seen three versions of *Frankie and Johnny* this year. The best one is the unexpurgated volume edited and illustrated by John Held Jr. The wood-

cuts exude the gusto and busto of the gas-light districts of a generation ago, and the verses *in extenso* make up as good a bit of Americana as you could wish. The next best version was the pantomime offered in *Sing Out, Sweet Land*. The least economical, the most diffuse was that presented as a ballet by the Monte Carlo troupe. It too might have been good Americana had it established a mood and stuck to it. Folklore, like the short story, is a distillation. The score alone did what it set out to do. The variations devised by Jerome Moross were individual, apropos and expressive. Though the original tune was very quickly lost sight of and much of the score compounded of illustrative noises, they did illustrate and they were exciting. But if the music had the contours of the Held woodcuts, it somehow lacked the opulence.

Ellabelle Davis sang several arias with the Youth Orchestra under the able leadership of Dean Dixon at a recent concert at Hunter College. The last time Miss Davis figured in this column was when she sang in *The Chaplet* at the "Coffee Concerts." She has come a long way since then and now ranks well up among our most gifted Negro singers. We are going to have a permanent FEPC in this state; and it might not be impertinent to ask of the great triumvirate (if *vir* can apply also to ladies) in B at the Metropolitan Opera why Ellabelle Davis should not be required to sing *Aida* there. She would do it admirably.

The last brain-child of the Bard, *The Tempest*, has been rousing produced by Margaret Webster. There are notable people in the cast, a revolving hillock, a banquet served in ballet style,

and a score by David Diamond. There are three things that render a disservice to Diamond's real talents. The first is that the play includes several songs. Neither Vera Zorina, otherwise delightful as Ariel, nor Canada Lee, otherwise excellent as Caliban (though somewhat ill-directed and ill-clothed), is capable of singing. The music suffers in consequence. Secondly, the small orchestra sounded ragged and angular. It was probably an off-night for singers and players. But, thirdly, I suspect it is not all their fault. It may be that Diamond, who is so astonishingly at home in the higher symphonic reaches, is unhappy in the pit. I felt that he was cramped. I sensed a striving for effects that his ensemble could not produce — such as the ship-wreck music. After all, this concerns a very special branch of a very spacious art, this minor science of accompaniment, wherein the music must have profile, yet never intrude.

Lastly, mention should be made of Merce Cunningham's solo dance recital. Few other dancers would embark upon such a venture, and few sustain it so well. Not that it was all gravy. Cunningham is no brain-trust, but definitely a natural. He has within him the real incandescence of dance. He has tremendous freedom and precision in his *grand rond de jambe* and often executes a movement of the whole body (he does not dance in bits and pieces, anyhow, but all over) which brings to life the baroque cartoons of Callot or Guillot. Many of the dances possessed this grotesque elegance; and he proved, in *Spontaneous Earth*, that he could also animate a severe and lovely classic line. There was considerable obfuscated pretension to his program (dances called

"Experiences" or "The unavailing memory of" or "Root of an unfocus") which unfocused Cunningham as much as anybody. His search for the non-representational and abstract lent considerable monotony to his performance, as did John Cage's intermittent noises. But there were variety and suspense, and frequently a force and justness of ex-

pression truly exciting.

The music ranged from part of Satie's *Socrate*, and from Livingston Gearhart's organized thumps (for the second part of "Experiences") to the varied, tricky, often apt and, to me, generally uninspired things which John Cage does to piano-strings and percussion. It is not my particular cup of cyanide.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ARTHUR LOURIÉ's symphonic suite, *The Feast During the Plague*, was performed by Dr. Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Orchestra over the Blue Network. This is a magnificent lyric achievement, original, convincing in form and content, of a deep and inward poetry. It is a rare thing to find a work of great musical wisdom which also has such distinctive sonorities, and such a long, soaring, melodic flight. The writing for orchestra, chorus and soprano is in every way expert. Fantastic skill is employed in certain sections to create the illusion of great intensity of motion, where actually a subtle quiet exists in all the instrumental parts. Such exciting effects, especially successful over the radio, are not mere colorisms, but very real thematic necessities in this highly tragic work.

C.B.S. offered the radio premiere of Nicolai Berezowsky's *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*, beautifully played by Edna Phillips and the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. Although the solo part for harp is set in high relief, all the obvious and over-worked clichés are happily absent in its

aristocratic treatment. Its glamor and elegance should appeal to harpists and conductors alike. And besides these attractions it has a lovely unreality.

Another offering of the Philadelphia Orchestra over C.B.S. was Bohuslav Martinu's *Second Symphony*. It is in many ways disappointing, though well-made and brilliantly impressionistic. The organic structure is too weak for a symphony, even a pastoral one, the tonality, harmony, and indentation of design too indecisive for a suite. It is really a rhapsodic improvisation in three movements, composed about twenty years too late.

Hector Villa-Lobos conducted two broadcasts of his own works on C.B.S.'s Invitation to Music programs. *Discovery of Brazil*, a suite for orchestra, had all his usual grandiose backgrounds, pedals, paddings and fancy, freak treatments of instruments, in an enormous riot of color and violent imagery. *New York Skyline*, a much lighter piece, styled a "musical graph," was probably composed in five or ten minutes and is no doubt a minor offshoot of opus 2000 or thereabouts. The influence of *Le*