

newsreel and feature picture in a large theatre.

A double-sided record devoted to Walton contains music for orchestra, *Siesta*, and two numbers from *Façade*. This disc, also from the Victor catalog, may perhaps seem a desirable item to admirers of Walton, but to me it is a sheer waste of time.

Otto Luening's *Suite* for soprano and flute is among the recent recordings of New Music, and, although a little thin in musical content, is so charmingly performed that it is very agreeable to listen to.

#### SCORES

Turning to the publications, one finds that this is rather a lean month. Nothing from abroad, of course, and only Schirmer active at the moment in America. This firm is in the midst of publishing Harris' *Folk-Song Symphony* for orchestra and chorus, which consists of five choral movements and two orchestral interludes; so far, only four of the choral movements have appeared. Naturally it is still impossible to form an estimate of the work, which promises to be an eloquent projection of the American folk-idiom on a big scale. A more detailed review must be deferred until the next issue. William Schuman's *Prelude for Women's Voices* (Schirmer) is obviously a very singable and effective short piece for a capella chorus. The part writing is extremely

simple, the tonality well-defined, both virtues whose absence sends most contemporary choral music on the rocks at a performance. Personally I don't care for the middle section, with its solo and whispered accompaniment; it seems to me a little false and melodramatic.

Schirmer also has just published *Ten Preludes For Piano* by Chavez. At first glance these pieces, written for the most part in two voices, have a disarming simplicity about them, which however is soon dispelled on closer acquaintance. All Chavez' qualities appear here in concentrated form, the intensity, the diatonic melodic line, the carefully chosen dissonance, the determined drive towards the objective of the piece. In these pieces Chavez achieves a very individual sonority in the piano, intensely strident and resonant at times, at others sharp and clear as the stratosphere. One is constantly referring the timbres to Chavez' very personal orchestration. In spite of the technical difficulties in some of them, the preludes seem to belong to the realm of chamber music rather than the concert hall. Pianists are sure to find them too uncompromising.

Schirmer has added Schönberg's *Fourth Quartet* (Opus 37) to the series of study scores; this, however, is among works that have arrived too late for review.

## THEATRE MUSIC

—By MARC BLITZSTEIN—

IF it is all right with you, I shall tackle theatre-music-of-the-quarter without that paragraph's-worth of initial theory

with which I should like to launch, tie up and generally belles-lettrify this type of review. The items on my list, which

are eight, are no great shakes. Neither individually nor collectively do they offer up a chance for highclass formulas; that is nothing against them. But there's no adventure in them either; and that is a shame.

Here they are: Two musical comedies: *Too Many Girls* (Marion-Rodgers-Hart) and *Dubarry Was a Lady* (Fields-Cole Porter). Two intimate revues: *New Pins and Needles* (Schrack-Harold Rome) and *Two for the Show* (Hamilton-Lewis). Two productions with incidental music: *Two on an Island* (Rice-Weill) and *Night Music* (Odets-Eisler).

There is also the Viennese-American troupe in *Reunion in New York* to be considered. And the Saroyan-Brant ballet *Great American Goof* about which I should like to raise a little belated wail.

In the musical-comedy field, Richard Rodgers still holds his own as the freshest talent. I personally don't always go for his sedate polished tunes, with their chic melodic contours and "smart" harmonies. But I admire his endless variety within the small frame; and I admire the exact and fruitful collaboration he has maintained with Lorenz Hart. Hart has probably the bigger gift; Rodgers is the shrewder person. In *Too Many Girls*, a silly rah-rah campus piece, there is an unbelievably infantile story-device (caps for the co-eds to prove they're virgins; you guessed it: a cap falls off, the audience roars; a cap is discovered in the ashcan, the customers die with delight). This device obviated any necessity for experiment or daring in the music and lyrics; but everything is at least expert. The best number is *I Like to Recognize the Tune*, which recaptures Rodgers' sprightly *Connecticut Yankee* style; the smartest lyric is *Heroes*

*in the Fall*, downright bawdy and candid, and a relief after all the smirking innuendo. The orchestrations are by Spialek, and a bit on the loud side; but expert too. No review of the show is complete without at least a mention of the hit tune *I Didn't Know What Time It Was*; so now it's been mentioned.

Three numbers are standouts in *Dubarry Was a Lady*: *Katie Went to Haiti*, *Do I Love You?* and *But in the Morning, No!* The marriage here of Cole Porter to Cole Porter is a shade less successful than the Rodgers-Hart combination. Porter sometimes has more zip, the doubling is mostly in brass; but he sometimes has less taste. His range of subject-matter is roughly the same - from *Esquire's* fullpage smut cartoon to *Vogue's* fashion-ads and back, with passing references to Freud, Lucius Beebe, and the horrors of the income-tax. There is no point in talking about this season's musical-comedies other than as commercial successes. Last year Rodgers and Hart turned out *The Boys from Syracuse*, which had two extended numbers boasting a certain amount of ingenuity and enterprise. Last year Cole Porter gave us, in *Leave it to Me*, a first-act finale in which a bit of musical counterpoint was startlingly played off against the *Internationale*. But this is another year; a war is on, and we all have the premonitory jitters. So we are being doggedly Broadway; I mean doggedly tried-and-true.

That the new *Pins and Needles* is a comedown after the first fine edition is no fault of Harold Rome. His new tunes are if anything better than the old favorites. *Mene Mene Tekel* is really splendid, right in the tradition of *Shadrack* and the jazzed spirituals; *The Har-*

*mony Boys* is hilarious and cleverly wrought, both in the text and the music. But the show now presents a real contradiction in material and cast, which makes for a less than exhilarating evening. What good is it to have a fine anti-war song like *Stay Out Sammy*, if you're going to deny its message by implication everywhere else? The revamped *Angels of Peace* number provokes a pro-war spirit, if anything ever did. I am happy to report that it has now lost all its cunning, and incidentally its audience; this used to be one of the star turns. The kids in the cast (a few of the best ones, like Ruth Rubinstein and Al Eben, are unexplainedly missing) have for the most part gone pseudo-professional, which was inevitable, I suppose; they are too made-up, too intent and too sly about the audience.

If *Pins and Needles* disappointed me, I suppose tentative melancholia describes my state after *Two for the Show*. For here were scads of expensiveness, a cast of singers and comedians and dancers ready and eager for anything—in short a beautiful chance for little adventures in a sadly jaded realm. The realm has not been extended by this show; with all its good taste it remains undistinguished, forced, and in places downright inept. That young people should want to ape the moods of Noel Coward is already a bad sign; that they should be unable to do more than indicate the effort is really mournful. A number called *How High the Moon*, with a fine solid set of London streets that might have sufficed a full play, and three or four couples singing in the English manner, which is to say throaty and bored, left me humming to myself *How Long the Song?* Curtains reminiscent of Bon-

wit-Teller, interiors like a Louis Sherry candy-box are no help to young people eager to put on a lively show; didn't anyone in charge know that such sumptuousness would work against the pace, stultify the proceedings? And what was that *Cries of London* number, introducing Nell Gwynne, and parading the whole damned period senselessly before one's eyes to an incomprehensible tune called *Where Do You Get Your Greens?* It got so fancy that for a moment I hoped for Bea Lillie's horse; but it was not forthcoming. I can still do a tiny hymn of praise, however, for Richard Haydn's Mr. Carp; but he should not do juvenile leads, and he shouldn't sing.

It is pleasant to turn now to the incidental music Hanns Eisler has made for Clifford Odets' *Night Music* (Group Theatre). The play is spotty but brilliant; the music, used for carry-overs between scenes, is in every way a thoroughly good job. The scoring is for clarinet, trumpet, piano, Hammond organ, and electric-guitar; the last instrument is made to sound like everything from three saxophones to a plucked double-bass; real virtuoso scoring. The music comes through an amplifier which so distorts the sound (deliberately and successfully) that you get the feeling you have never heard music like this before; what possible combination of instruments is playing, where are they, is this music, or is this something in your mind? Since the play is fantastic, and about New York; since the characters are rich in color, and eccentric in line, and generated by the vividness of Odets' conceptions, such an effect from the music is highly apt. It is impressionism, if you will; an impressionism of medium; the style of the music itself is

more clean-cut and direct.

If Kurt Weill had not taken program credit for the musical arrangements in Elmer Rice's *Two on an Island* (1) I should not have believed it, and (2) I should certainly not bother to review it. He has; so what am I to say? If this is incidental music, or arrangements, or supervision, then I don't know what I am talking about, which is at least possible. As a job, it strikes me as pretty shabby; standard tunes seemed never so standard, harmonizations never so trite. Hasty and conscienceless moments during an entr'acte were followed by a mildly-ambitious moment (during a bus-ride sequence, I believe) where music punctuated a couple of speeches; I don't know which I liked less. Of a big man like Weill, one can ask: what is this, what goes on? (I listened a few weeks ago to his short cantata, *Magna Carta*; to a text of Maxwell Anderson, and done over the air; nervously exalted, as though obedient to some tenet of the year that demands composers be musically patriotic). Maybe Weill's real chance will come in collaboration with Moss Hart; or perhaps it has already come in the *Ulysses Africanus*, shortly to be shown.

*Reunion in New York* has some fresh music and some tired music. The tempo New York audiences seem to insist on is missing, except for a couple of interpolated American numbers which seemed out of place. I think these talented refugees should make up their minds either to stick to Vienna for style, or to give it up entirely. Miss Katherine Mattern is a real find, a comic. I got emotional at the number *Where Is My Homeland*, but maybe I'm a pushover for that kind of thing. The revue has been indifferently directed; the two-piano accompaniments are uninspired, but they serve. Everything is in the spirit of the people; and there's obviously plenty of that.

### III

All I wish to say about *The Great American Goof* is that when you have words and music (as well as ballet, lantern-slides, and costuming) it is not unreasonable to expect that there will be some kind of planned mutual relation. There was none. There was instead a lot of flair, which is the natural enemy of intelligence, running amok over one of the largest stages in the country. Nothing was without talent; nothing got anywhere.

## ON THE FILM FRONT

By PAUL BOWLES

I AM told that *The Fight For Life*, the de Kruif obstetrical epic, has the longest accompanimental film-score ever written. Pare Lorentz (producing for the United States Film Survey, now in Hollywood) wanted drama made out of

pathology, and so he subordinated everything to the music and got his drama. He familiarized Louis Gruenberg with the film material, Gruenberg wrote the score, Alexander Smallens and the Los Angeles Philharmonic recorded it as one big