

peculiarly suited to a story out of Henry James by D'Annunzio, made exciting through a novel, and yet nostalgic choreography. Both of these ballets are in every way remarkable.

The Cimarosa music for *Capriccioso* has been orchestrated by so many hands, Rieti, Malipiero, and Paul Bowles, that the result is fairly indecorous, bumpy, and common. In picking the music for *Goyescas*, some of the better Granados was discarded for second-rate stuff; the choice was not made with much taste. Respighi's *Arie Antiche* are perfectly suited to Agnes de Mille's hilarious *Three Virgins and a Devil*, a cross between *Les tres-riches heures du Duc de Berry* and the under-side of a Choir Stall at Bourg-en-Bresse. *Gala Performance* is

well matched with its Prokofieff music (the *Concerto* and the *Classical Symphony*), rapid and pungent.

Of the American compositions, of course Aaron Copland's for *Billy the Kid* is the best. It is admirably scored, rhythmic, and in the quieter moments touching and personal. The marriage of score and story, I admit, seemed to me to be occasionally one of convenience, but this is probably not the fault of our most able, sincere, and influential American composer.

By and large, the season's forsythias go to Miss Lawrence and Mr. Tudor and *Pal Joey*. Which does not mean that there's any new music on Broadway that would make even Lehar blink.

## ON THE FILM FRONT

By PAUL BOWLES

LOUIS GRUENBERG has turned out a score for *So Ends Our Night* which, if less good than that for *The Fight For Life*, is so only because the film is less important and less interesting. Being a straight, even if very good, Hollywood product, it offers fewer opportunities for a composer to exercise his art. Nevertheless it is a first class score. The thematic material is generally straightforward, simple and rather distinguished, and the effect eschews corn as much as possible. Gruenberg gets nice dark moods with his strings and uses them a good deal. Also the orchestration does not suffer from overstuffing; he lets us hear single instruments and thin sounds occasionally. This is not to say that in certain suspenseful spots there is not too much symphony,

nor that the love themes are not at times excessively lovely. But the score is pretty much of a pleasure for the listener. The beginning of the hospital scene is particularly sensitive and right. The high-spot for most people will probably be the night train-ride with the locomotive whispering "Marie, Marie, Marie," above the blended train-sounds and train-music. It makes a beautiful piece. There are some poetic soliloquies with feeble music played behind them. This doesn't work very well, combined as it is with the down-to-earth treatment of the subject-matter in the rest of the film.

Miklos Rozsa, who did another grandiose Midwaysque score for *Four Feathers*, wrote the music for *The Thief of Bagdad*. This one is a piece with its

predecessor. It fits the Maxfield Parrish-like sets (in glorious Technicolor) with their Ludwig Baumann canopies and carpets. Practically ceaseless, the score gets off to a terrible start with a male chorus lamenting in fourths. Then there is an incredibly lousy song which Sabu manages to help a bit with his musically innocent little voice. Everything hopes desperately to be "Oriental;" you know what that means: fake Hindu, fake Jewish, fake Chinese, fake Balinese—anything that the composer imagines might suggest the atmosphere of Iraq. Wonder and magic are not present. Music renders the picture static because the sound is just what comes out of your radio during one of the more expensive commercial programs. It is hard to be breathless over events pointed up with music which may at any minute fade and give way to a wise-crack or a quiz. Poverty of invention everywhere. When the fatuous music already billowing out of the orchestra seemed insufficient to the makers, they simply added that damned lady-choir without which Hollywood has decided no film involving fantasy can be made. The ladies hum. There are also devices like this: a jazz-whistle (the kind acrobats swing to in vaudeville) to accompany fruit hurtling through the air, a xylophone ascending the diatonic scale step by step for a shot of Sabu running upstairs. Except for the complexity of sonorities and superior recording one might think the job was one of the old Riesenfeld scores of the pre-100-per-cent-all-talking, all-singing era.

The new Soviet film, *University of Life*, is a less-excellent sequel to *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*. There is a skimpy score by Lev Schwartz, and what there is is not very good. Surprising lack

of feeling for the musical needs of the drama. That is, surprising in a Russian film. The hero walks down a quiet village lane at night and disappears from view. There is a shot, and presently he staggers back into sight. This is dramatic in itself, but not when the sound of the shot is followed by a huge Tchaikowskian theme played by a full symphony. Not even if the theme were good. And then why should a good sequence wherein Gorky first feels the nobility in the performance of physical labor be rendered hopelessly commonplace by injection of a long paraphrase on the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*? Otherwise the sound-track is effective; it is made up of those elements which have given charm to countless Soviet sound-films: frequent but judicious use, behind and between bits of dialogue, of boat-whistles, train-whistles, dogs barking, street-cries, and folk-music rendered by barrel-organs, accordeons, guitars, harmonicas, the human voice unaccompanied, and (less fortunately) by choruses. There is an exciting passage for barge-whistles which echo beautifully across the river.

### III

It's not difficult to do. Hollywood merely needs a good record library and a few people who know a little about geography. It makes all the difference in the world to the picture. Just take *Pepe le Moko*, for instance, and try to imagine what a horror it would have been to the ear if it had been subjected to general Hollywood practices. God knows Vincent Scotto's Puccini interludes featuring Cui's oboe are bad enough when they occur, (Scotto wrote the score for *The Baker's Wife*) but the picture would have been a total loss if we had had nothing but those. But the film is not ruined even by such indescribably cheap sym-

phonic moments. It is saved by the inclusion of the work of Sidi Mohammed Yguerbuchen, an Algerian composer, who if he did not actually write the native music (one has no way of knowing) at least decided which recordings and which native pieces were to be used. It is certainly due to him that we have the exquisite background for the streets of Algiers' Casbah: a great brouhaha of native horns, Kabyle flutes and drums, together with sad lost wisps of bal musette tunes on the accordeon. There are Sud-Oranais pieces played on the strange chalumeau-like instrument that sounds like the human voices of the same region; and actual *Touchiats Algérois*, wonderful and ridiculous bastard numbers from the Casbah's cafes. (Piano four octaves with embellishments, flute, drum and tambourine.)

What is particularly fortunate about this track is the fact that the ever-present music in the street-scenes makes for greater realism: life in the Casbah *is* one long sound-track like this.

There are two remarkable moments: the murder scene using the mechanical piano with drum accompaniment (although René Clair used much the same device years ago it seems to me) and Frehel's song, where she sings to one of her own records on a wavering and scrapey gramophone. These two identical voices, sometimes falling one on top of the other, and sometimes being an immediate echo one of the other, become the Past and the Present, giving the scene great dramatic force which is due in no way to the visual images.

## WITH THE DANCERS

By EDWIN DENBY

MARTHA Graham has now presented to New York her two dance works, *El Penitente* and *Letter to the World*, which are full of interest and full of poetry. *El Penitente* looks like a Mystery Play. A young woman and two young men come on the stage carrying a bright banner. Their manner is collected and cheerful, and at once gives the sense of a religious festivity. You watch them act out a play which tells that though man's duty to Christ is hard, his pain is relieved by a Divine Grace visiting him in turn as a virgin, a seductress, and a mother. Sometimes they use their banner as a little curtain from which emerge supernatural apparitions; once, they strip off the cloth, and the frame suddenly is

a cross. When the play is over, the three performers add a little dance of jubilation in their character as farmers. The style of gesture reminds you of New Mexican primitives – the votive pictures and bultos. It suggests – as they do – a double emotion of unlimited space all around and of solid weight at the center, there where you are. There is an apparent naiveté of timing and placing which is charming in detail and carried through with distinction. All this might be true either of a real Catholic piece or of an exquisite tour de force. But the dance seemed to me to have a poignancy other than Catholic and a reality beyond that of charm. The gestures are not made so much for their symbolic meaning as for