

volved than in the African film, and one would have expected the music to express a personal concern with the men, their danger, the tension they must have experienced. But the score might have been written for some other purpose altogether, so carefully does it maintain a coldly objective attitude. A composer's desire to avoid a too literal imitation of the screen is understandable and laudable. But much of this music seems to me to be irrelevant, specifically in the scenes where bombs are being fused and loaded, where the ground crews are awaiting the return of the squadron, and most especially when the Memphis Belle returns, late but safe. The composer might have allowed himself to be a little happier about this happy ending.

III

Frank Capra's deeply moving film, *The Negro Soldier*, preaches a more solemn and timely sermon than many Americans would willingly admit need-

ing. The text is from *Mein Kampf*, a passage which degrades the Negro to a subanthropoid status. The sermon disproves the Nazi race theory by reviewing briefly the history of the Negro in the building of America, in war and in peace, with a modest accounting of his accomplishments and his contributions to our national life. There is no talk of the intolerance, the inequality of opportunity, segregation or any of the oppressive practices which have kept the Negro in partial slavery in America. There are no complaints. There is only one enemy - Fascism. That many of our leading exhibitors have declined to show the film must be counted as an acknowledgment of a sense of shame. Capra's picture speaks more eloquently for true democracy than all the highly advertised accomplishments of those exhibitors in war-time activities that call forth a much noisier patriotism.

The musical score for the film is negligible.

IN THE THEATRE

By PAUL BOWLES

ANOTHER old operetta on the list of the New Opera Company's offerings is *Helen Goes to Troy*. By not even intimating that either the vehicle or the production is anything but the toughest kind of field-corn, this one manages not to be offensive. That is if one can accustom one's eyes to the hideousness of the visual spectacle, which is, after all, probably no more unbeautiful than any table of prize lampshades and vases at a Luna Park shooting gallery.

Humor in wartime, like many other things, has a tendency to revert to its less subtle manifestations. The only moment of the concerted romp which seemed amusing in a distraught way was Massine's *Procreation Dance*, where the studied gaga quality was heightened by emphasis on Truex and Novotna, neither of whom danced a step and simply swayed clumsily back and forth like two people busy at charades.

For me, Novotna was the whole show. At last she was done up to look

like Dietrich, and at last her pure, small voice didn't have to reach a block across the Met. She seemed perfectly at home in her kewpie-doll trappings, in her burnished gold bathtub, in her bed built for three with flesh georgette sheets. Her diction, already careful, was made more pointed with the aid of her very movable eyes, and her spoken dialogue was distinguished both in its accent and in its faintly succulent modulations.

The score has of course little in common with the original. It contains no fewer than sixteen numbers from Offenbach operettas other than *La Belle Hélène*, whose music the adapter, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, considered "wilted" for Broadway audiences. As in *Rosalinda*, the music has been slicked up, weighted with contemporary clichés, and made generally acceptable to movie-radio taste standards.

Mr. Korngold's men in the pit blared out his vulgarized version of the music, a fitting frame for this Beverly Hills vaudeville show. The one pleasant thing about the production is that its brashness is homogeneous. No one moment is more enjoyable than any other. There is no let-down because there is no build-up; you are thus spared the constant shocks occasioned in a show like *Carmen Jones* which really gets off the ground now and then.

III

Not having seen the original unabridged Guild production of *Porgy and Bess*, I can't compare its respective shortcomings and virtues with those of the recent revival of Cheryl Crawford's pocket edition at the City Center. But it seems exaggeratedly sanguine of critics to acclaim this work as the long-awaited American opera. The construc-

tion is too casual for serious opera, and the material and its treatment too Broadway to let it be a true folk-opera. Say rather that it is a super-musical-comedy with several excellent songs and a good deal of less distinguished recitative. Whether Gershwin did better in his straight commercial work is a moot question, to be debated between those who like their Tin Pan Alley unconscious or circumspect.

III

You can hear suggestions of several Cole Porter tunes in *Mexican Hayride*, but they are from other days. *The Good-Will Movement* is reminiscent of *Let's Do It; Sing to Me*, *Guitar* sounds here and there vaguely like *Begin the Beguine*, and even *I Love You*, roared over the nowadays inevitable P.A. system by an acid baritone, makes you think the first three times you hear it that *Night and Day* might come out at any moment. Eventually, of course, *I Love You* establishes itself as a real song. It's a fair show, the costumes naturally come from Argentina and the Andes as well as from Tehuantepec, the sets are more or less Fourteenth Street display windows, and the acting, on the brighter side, is like a sophisticated adaptation of what actually goes on in a higher-priced *carpa* along Santa Maria la Redonda in Mexico's capital. I liked Bobby Clark as an Indian lady in the Taxco *zocalo*, and as a *marachi* flutist playing Paderewski's *Minuet* in Xochimilco. Also the reassuring lyrics to the macabre hymn, *Count Your Blessings*. I did not like Porter's treatment of *Guadalajara* in *Carlotta* or of *Cielito Lindo* in the last scene; he used to be a very clever man who could have done pleasant things to some Mexican rhythms.