

dividual life in the separate voices; the writing is more angular. It shows the constant regard for careful and detailed working-out of material which is so characteristic of this composer.

New Music publishes the *3a Composicion en los 12 Tonos* for clarinet and piano by Juan Carlos Paz. The four movements of this little suite have all the brevity and disheartening aridity that always appear to accompany the mathematical juggling of the twelve-tone series. They offer one more example of an idiom that in another year held a certain interest but which today seems completely anachronistic in both conception and spirit.

Short piano pieces to be noted in passing are Norman Cazden's *Variations* (Weaner-Levant), Paul Creston's *Prelude and Dance* (Mercury), Leo Sowerby's *Toccata* (Mercury). David Gornston publishes Robert McBride's *Swing Stuff* for clarinet and piano. Roy Harris has made a new adaptation for band of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* (Mills). The general plan of the early orchestral work has been followed, but

it is much more condensed and tightened up.

Boosey and Hawkes has now brought out the full score to Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. Since this has only just arrived, and since I have not heard the work, comment is reserved for the next issue.

RECORDS

It is a luxury these days for this column to have any records to review. To venture any opinion that might be the least bit adverse seems almost sacrilegious, on a par with critical comment about a cup of coffee. But it is impossible for me to enthuse very much over the Shostakovitch *Quartet for Strings*, Opus 49 (Columbia). It is a dull work, only of interest because it adds a detail to the Shostakovitch picture. The Sibelius *First Symphony* (Columbia) is given an excellent performance by John Barbirolli. Rodzinski makes Debussy's *La Mer* sound sweeping and dazzling, but somehow I prefer my old recording by Coppola (Disque Gramophone), where the Debussyan detail is recorded with greater sympathy and clarity.

FILMS AND THEATRE

By ELLIOTT CARTER

THE *Siege of Leningrad* shows another phase of the magnificent Russian resistance and counterattack, less exciting perhaps but more touching on many counts than that already seen in *Moscow Strikes Back*. Using the news-reel technics, these pictures tell a story pieced together from many films shot by many different Soviet camera men on

the spot at the time. For the most part their scenes give the impression of not being staged. They have a roughness of photography that suggests the difficult conditions under which they were made, and which fortifies their documentary reality. The patchy musical background further heightens this effect. It is a selection of familiar musical moments found

under the heading of "Russian Music" in a transcription library. Since the picture is concerned with the moral qualities of the Russian people and not their Russian-ness, the score, for the most part, is incongruous, as incongruous in another way as the visual background of *Beaux Arts* splendors left over from St. Petersburg before which this drama takes place, a drama of heroic fortitude by people deprived of many of the simplest necessities of life in a big city. Already these men and women belong to a much larger group united by common experiences and a common cause, revealing universal moral qualities that picturesque, genre folklore usually reflects inadequately. Nevertheless the music is no real obstacle to the appreciation of an excellent movie.

One sequence which shows how cultural interests as well as war production are carried forward during the difficult winter months of the siege, has a shot of a Russian composer, stalking through a bleak, unheated apartment in a heavy winter coat and fur hat, thinking out his compositions. He sits down at a piano and strikes up a tune very much in the mood of the *Volga Boatmen*. The commentator meanwhile explains that civilization must be continued. This point of view which has been voiced during the siege of Madrid, during the blitz of London, and in some quarters rather hesitatingly even in this country, brings up a question beyond the scope of this article. To many people here, as was evident in their attitude toward the WPA art and music projects, any such emphasis on "culture" is just another example of making lots of fuss and accomplishing little.

The life of George M. Cohan, fresh,

vigorous and hearty, inevitably challenges comparison with his even more versatile contemporary prototype, Noel Coward. The paradigm of years passing from the past definite of *Over There*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Mary* and the vaudevillian troupe of the Four Cohans, to the present very indicative of *In Which We Serve*, *Bitter-Sweet*, *Ladies of the Ritz* and the inimitable, blasé solo actor, Mr. Coward, is something to think about. James Cagney who vivaciously takes off Cohan, stiff legs and all, in the musical film *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, puts across many of those brash, gay little numbers and keeps them from being too embedded in Hollywood plush. The tunes are pretty good, too. In this film, there is a parallel to the Soviet composer scene. Cohan tries to enlist in World War I and is turned down both because of his age and also because his military interviewer decides that he would be more useful as an entertainer than as a soldier. He does his bit by writing *Over There*, a song that has not yet been superseded by Noel Coward or anybody else.

For a score that must have been composed after the film was made, Louis Gruenberg's music for the *Commandos Strike At Dawn*, solves its problem in a very expert way. There is not too much of it, it is rarely obtrusive, often carrying on an impression of motion during visually static scenes, and sometimes pointing up the psychological excitement implied by the camera. The important thing about this music, which as style goes is not very personal or new, is the way it is orchestrated. The majority of the pieces are for solo instruments with transparent orchestral accompaniments which develop one theme throughout whole scenes. Occasionally there are descrip-

tive numbers, among which is the noteworthy musical double exposure of Paul Muni's fitful sleep just before the commando raid begins.

Two Hollywood films by foreign directors who used to be very careful about their musical backgrounds in the old days proved musically disappointing. *I Married A Witch* by René Clair using a super-fancy, Hollywood score cribbed largely from *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, and that of Hitchcock's *Shadow of A Doubt* with its creepy harmonizations of the Merry Widow waltz were both conventional and without character. I don't suppose these films with their unusual plot material could afford to tread further on audiences' toes by employing screwy scores too.

THEATRE

Sidney Kingsley's *The Patriots*, about the American 1780's, used the device of period curtain music to put the audience into an eighteenth century frame of mind.

Played in the pit by what sounded like a quartet of piano, violin, 'cello and clarinet doubling with flute, the music by the young English composer, Stanley Bate, and the arrangements of Mozart and the rest were not very telling. Bate's original pieces in an English folksongy vein are charming and well wrought but not particularly suited for the theatre and call for a hearing under more favorable conditions. His stretto piece on *Yankee Doodle*, a tune which probably can't be done without in a play about the early days of the republic, was not very effective.

The Skin Of Our Teeth, Thornton Wilder's polyhistoric human circus also uses special curtain music. Some itinerant musicians appear in the aisle before the show, with accordion, clarinet and drums and give a funny slap-dash rendering of familiar circus numbers. It is too bad there is not more room for music in this piece, for at times it seemed to need an imaginative score to point up the fantasy.

WITH THE DANCERS

By EDWIN DENBY

LA MERI and her Natya Dancers are presenting ethnological recitals: dances from Spain (both regional and gypsy), dances from North Africa, North and South India, Ceylon, Burma, Java, the Philippines, China, the West Indies, the Argentine, and maybe I've left out a few. The recitals are informative and very pleasant. Informative, because La Meri knows the authentic steps, gestures, and poses and reproduces them clearly; they are in fact easier to identify

when she does them than when the exotics do, themselves. She arranges them in simple and straightforward dances, set to native music (recorded) and in authentic costumes. She shows you the technical detail, she gives you the flavor of the style, and she adds a dash of the local theatrical manner.

Everybody knows that the various dance technics are in their highest forms mutually exclusive. Even in our own tradition, no star is personally expressive