

whenever they can possibly get it. In London the big orchestral concerts are mostly on Saturday afternoons, and the old-established organizations like the Royal Philharmonic Society have given several programs, including one conducted by Leslie Heward. A new body called the Sidney Beer Symphony Orchestra has announced an enterprising series of concerts which include the first performances in England of Bartok's *Divertimento for Strings* and Ibert's *Flute Concerto*. Provincial orchestras have had quite a successful winter season, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra has given a good many concerts all over the country, as the world now knows, under the unexpected auspices of Jack Hylton. Edmund Rubbra's third symphony had its premiere at a recent Hallé concert.

In addition, the daily National Gallery chamber music concerts still continue and so do local chamber music programs all over the country. The two wartime entertainment bodies, ENSA and CEMA have organized literally hundreds of concerts in rest centers and factories besides providing shows for the troops. The Old Vic opera company is on tour with a skeleton orchestra. It has recently revived *The Beggar's Opera* and *Hänsel und Gretel* as well as the usual old favorites.

The ballet is in full flower here. The new Anglo-Polish troupe is on tour, but in London there are still two permanent lunch-time ballets, and the Sadler's Wells company has just ended a five weeks' season there, in the course of which they produced a first-class new work by Frederick Ashton, *The Wanderer Fantasia*, to Schubert's music. This is much on the same lines as the Liszt *Dante Sonata*, but even more effective. It has a fine décor by Graham Sutherland and was superbly danced by the whole company with Robert Halpmann and Margot Fonteyn as the principals. There was also a revival of the Gertrude Stein - Lord Berners *Wedding Bouquet*, with the running commentary spoken into a microphone by Constant Lambert, who is still doing excellent work as music director of the company.

So many musicians have gone into the RAF that an RAF Symphony Orchestra has been formed which includes the complete Griller Quartet and a good many London Philharmonic players. In Britain, it seems, music is determined to flourish, come what may.

Humphrey Searle

THE LEAGUE'S EVENING OF FILMS

THERE appears to be a great attraction in music-with-films — much more, one gathers, than in music-minus-the-films. Unfortunately few

American composers of the first rank have written such scores and usually only for short documentary films. If one wishes to see and hear the result, it is necessary to find out where these documentaries are being performed — and they are hard to trace. Sometimes they are buried among "coming attraction" trailers at the big theatres; sometimes they run semi-privately in preview showings, and one needs to belong to the charmed inner circle even to know of such invitation performances. The League of Composers is to be especially congratulated for its recent Evening of Music with Films at the Museum of Modern Art, where a representative musical public heard and saw excerpts from a half dozen movies with music by nearly all the important Americans who have tried their hands at documentaries.

Aaron Copland, in the pointed remarks of introduction to his own music, frankly admitted the hope of all his colleagues that documentaries will help them to break into Hollywood. The problems, however, are different. Documentaries are filmed silently; both music and unctuous comment are added afterwards. In Hollywood the musical performance and the screening are far more closely joined in common plan and execution.

Few of the films presented by the League appeared to be exceptions to this rule. The lack of planning showed at its worst in *Roots In the Soil*, music by Paul Bowles. Bowles, speaking in advance of the showing, said that he himself had not yet heard the synchronized result; he simply handed his score to the film people and hurriedly left the country. (He didn't say whether that was the reason.) From what little one could hear of it, the music seemed both good and fairly apt; but it was drowned out by a bullying commentator whose purpose seemed to be to distract attention not only from the music but from the film itself.

The fleeting scene of cornfields from Roy Harris' *One Tenth of a Nation* is hardly a fair sample for judgment of the whole work. As it was, the music seemed delightful and beautifully wrought. The sophisticated tonal weaving and the tone-quality of city-union string section were, however, very much out of place in the cornfields. I had the same feeling about the music for Douglas Moore's *Power and the Land*. As music it was appealing and well-written, in a style neither very simple nor very complex, but nicely between the two. The parts for whistling alone were perhaps the most fitting sounds of the entire evening. Yet as a whole the familiar tones of symphonic instruments gave an unavoidable impression of city-concert-hall rather than of the bucolic atmosphere of farm life. Why should not the farmers sing their own tunes to the strumming of banjos and guitars?

Marc Blitzstein was not present but Copland introduced his *Valley Town*, which was fitting, since the music for Blitzstein's film and for Copland's *City* are curiously alike; not that they in any way imitate each other, but the approach is similar. When things get too tough in his picture Blitzstein characteristically breaks into song – a wailing semi-popular style social-content song. Skillfully scored dissonant passages contrast with naive, simple tunes which seem to fit the film in mood. Copland's music in *The City* is gripping. There is much phrase-repeating, used with humorous effect. It is a relief to find a composer detecting humor in a picture and acting upon it. In Hollywood that seldom happens; musical effects are ludicrous rather than funny. Copland's was the deftest score of the evening and is musically so self-sufficient that it can stand up as a suite in a concert.

The surprise performance of the evening was Virgil Thomson singing the tune he had used for his celebrated *River* film. The tune, called *Mississippi*, he found in one of those very old music books. His singing, wonderfully in the character of the Southern uncultivated tunesters, did prove what he wanted to show, that it was simple and American. Coming from Paris-loving Virgil this provided an unusual amusement; the audience enjoyed it hugely. The music benefited by this introduction. In the film it sounds far from naive; there it seems rather attenuated and dissonant. However it does roll along with the waters in a way that sounds quite proper, one doesn't know quite why. The score is suited to the film in a measure lacking in all the others: it does not try to be complete in itself. Music and film together form an integrated documentary; the music alone would not be complete and the film needs the music to enhance its interest.

All in all, an evening like this is historic for the record it makes. It showed music and film combinations in the experimental stage; nevertheless what was seen on January twelfth is the best America has done up to now, and it justifies optimism.

The evening had an anticlimax, and so this review will have one too. The audience was thrown into wild guffaws by a Disney short showing his animals going through rhythmic contortions to the tune of Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. The success of synchronization in this bit is all too clearly due to the fact that the picture is set to the music, and not the other way around. Let us see a fantastic film similarly constructed, to music by some of America's best composers – music which is complete *before* the picture is started.

Henry Cowell