

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco accompanied a group of his Shakespearean songs which ran the gamut from Sullivan to Puccini or vice versa. Two programs were dedicated to the musical autobiography of Dana Suesse, which might well have read, "My Problems with Art." Always cherishing the urge to write "serious" music, she has had, it seems, to make concessions to popular taste. The innocuous songs were successful, but the "serious" music, in which she really makes the concessions, is pretty dull. Just as in the whole school of Swingphony, Symphonic Jazz, etc., alternating phrases of Lisztian dithyrambs and corny jazz are poured into the mold and emerge as "American" music.

Erno Rapee's Music Hall of the Air gave the first American performance of Erich Zeisl's *Little Symphony*, "an excursion into musical surrealism." It had several amusing sections, the most amusing of which, unintentionally, was the final Wagnerian "return to faith." Dissonance can be made quite respectable when the audience is assured by the composer that he is only joking.

WEVD started a series of contemporary music programs, which were to have various composers as commentators. I don't know why it was discontinued after the first one, which consisted of recorded music by Roy Harris. Forty-five minutes

were given over to Harris' remarks about andantes, sunsets and pantheism, plus a group of Andantes, selected from his various compositions. The effect was of extreme unbalance and in my opinion showed the most sentimental side of Harris. The commentary was supposed to explain the function of the Andante (though I still don't know what the function is), the music in turn was to illustrate the text.

Alan Lomax' varied assortment of folk music on Columbia's "American School of the Air" has ranged from teamster to nonsense and animal songs. The accompanying commissioned orchestral works were not so varied. Within the limitations of this educational form, Henry Brant's rondo, *Fisherman's Overture*, seemed to be the most original. Converse's *Haul Away, Joe*, variations on an American sailor chanty, was effective in spite of being very Brahmsian: the theme was always easy to follow throughout the variations, which is an important point in a program designed for teaching purposes in schools.

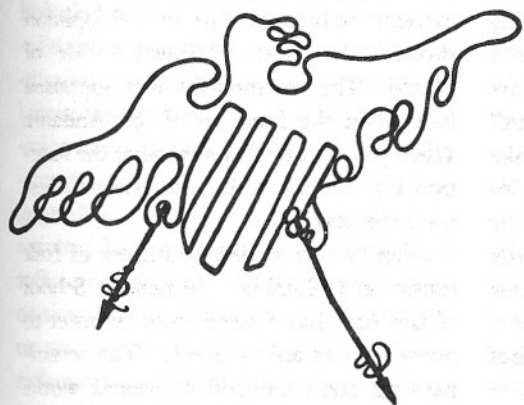
The Columbia Concert Orchestra, under Howard Barlow, gave the first performance of Benjamin Britten's *Young Apollo* with the composer as piano soloist. The piano part was very difficult and well played.

WITH THE DANCERS

By DAVID DIAMOND

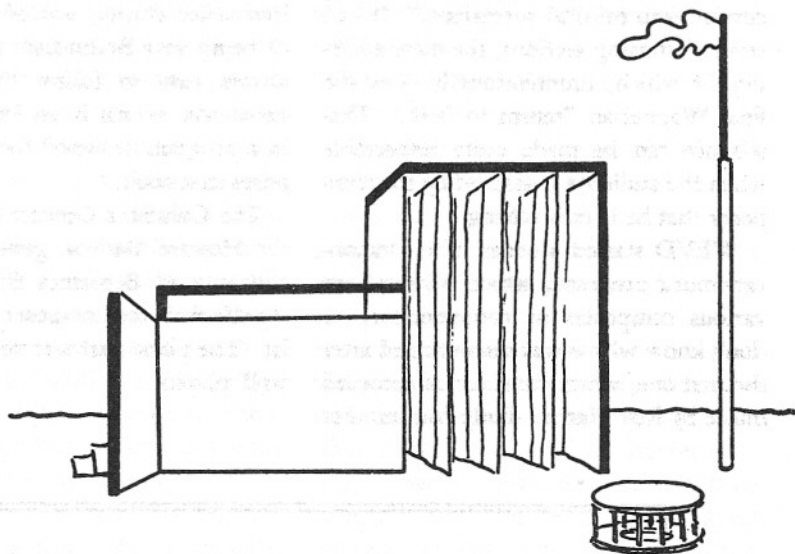
MARTHA GRAHAM's tremendous inventive power and all the elements of her creative forces are fully con-

catenated in the new large dance, *Every Soul is a Circus*. In this work she has brought her admirable capacity for selec-



COLUMBIAD -
A Detail

Décor For
MARTHA GRAHAM'S NEW DANCES
Designed By
PHILLIP STAPP



SKETCH FOR EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

tion and self-criticism to the pitch of perfection. The circus she creates is one of silly behavior and ridiculous situations, its theme, the desire of woman to be the apex of a triangle, the beloved of a duet, who, as the spectator of her own actions, becomes the destroyer of experiences necessary to her essential dignity and integrity. It represents the fullest consummation of Miss Graham's conceptions. She has unified her entire dance vocabulary into a simple and direct theatrical means of projection and communication. The perfection of her technic, the subtlety of gesture and movement, the warmth of personality make this performance a piece of the most poignant clowning seen in the dance. The two male partners of the triangle, Erik Hawkins and Mercier Cunningham, are admirable assistants. Cunningham's quality is not unlike that of a Picasso clown. The purity of his style, the grace and beauty of his movement are a happy contrast to the severity and chameleon-like versatility of Graham and Hawkins.

Paul Nordoff's music is the most finished work Miss Graham has had written for her since Louis Horst's moving score to *Primitive Mysteries*. I regret the lack of musical imagination during the more satirical movements; musical parody does not exist or make its point by the mere insertion of outmoded styles. Nor is an imitation of the later Scriabin sufficient to create an aura of mystery and black magic. The subtle and imaginative inflections of Miss Graham's miming (and a very great mime she has proved herself to be) deserve more than the obvious musical mixtures of this music. But taken as a whole, the score is expertly articulate, full of variety and expressiveness.

The new solo dance, *Columbiad*, to music by Louis Horst, seen against an inspired set by Philip Stapp, is deeply felt, imaginatively, brilliantly presented. Despite its heroic mood, I cannot help feel that this is a retrogression to a more intellectually controlled inventiveness rather than the expression of direct emotional reaction to a fundamental creative impulse. There is a tendency for the recapitulated sections to seem ineffective, because of a too rigid series of patterns which govern the main big form. But the moving force behind this dance is so vital, and the instinct for proportion so correct, that the architectony again makes clear the evocative quality of Graham's genius.

Of the older dances, *Lamentation* and *Frontier* remain the most concrete testimonies of her greatness. *Primitive Mysteries* is the most sensitive, tender creation, a breathtakingly beautiful and noble accomplishment. Seen through the maze of contemporary emotional confusion its spiritual significance appears re-vitalized. *American Document* also becomes more impressive. The Native Figure in the Indian Episode is a remarkable dance, and the poignant duet in the Puritan Episode reveals Hawkins as a superb performer, a splendid technician and an intelligent interpreter of Graham's choreography. There is sometimes a slight disparity in his interpretation of the style so particular to Graham's art. Her movement is imbued with that anonymous, fluent expressiveness which comes only after a creative artist has liberated himself from the rigidity of formal technical discipline. Hawkins' proficiency, the result of ballet training, is not yet so free.

Ray Green's score for *American Document* is musically satisfying, sincere and

transparent. Most music for the dance, I am convinced, is padded and over-complicated; it is governed by isolated patterns of movement. Green is one of the few composers for the dance who accomplishes his task effectively; he knows how to adapt a flexible musical phrase to an extended phrase of movement. The style of his music is refreshing in its simplicity and candor. Too much emphasis on only one or two tonalities throughout creates a monotony which is further heightened by a stubborn pedal device; there is also a lack of flow in the bass, no real movement; only accompanying figures, pedals and ostinati, which produce a sameness of texture. Composers for the dance are bound to the piano keyboard, and they seldom allow the left side of the piano to function; it is perpetually playing accompaniments for the right. A more contrapuntal idiom would have enhanced the beauty of the music. Mr. Green's music for *American Document* nevertheless breathes honesty.

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The American Ballet Caravan was seen to its finest advantage during the Christmas dance festival. Its most effective presentation is *Billy the Kid* to the tender, sensitive and beautiful score by Aaron Copland (represented in this revival by a two-piano arrangement). The music, in the popular style of Mr. Copland's latest works, admirably accompanies the extraordinary choreography created by Eugene Loring.

Loring has a gift for contrapuntally motivated choreography. When his sense of proportion is not obscured by a too rigid plan in the scenario, the results are very moving and theatrically effective. In the new ballet, *City Portrait*, Mr. Loring's inventiveness is brilliantly displayed but

it is also sacrificed to the demands of an incoherently constructed scenario, and the constant hammering of a hodge-podge musical score. The portrait projected is of one fraction of a city's populace; Mr. Loring has expressively choreographed the drabness we find in the more sordid sections of our cities. Intellectually he has done his task well, but no communicative value is transmitted to the audience. Unless one had read the complete program notes before the performance, it would be impossible to grasp the distinction between a Drug Store Cowboy, the Street Orator and the Hungry Drunk. They are characters in the program book, but on the stage they are confused, the variety of colloquial gestures invented by Loring does not clarify the quandary which exists in the scenario. The costumes by Forrest Thayer, Jr. are adequate but not wholly successful in relation to the set, the choreography or the music. Expressively somber, they only make even more depressing the lack of plot, monotony of movement, and unimaginativeness of the story.

To aggravate the disparity of effect, Henry Brant has written a score which the program notes describe as "full of contemporary rhythm of city indoors and out; the noise of street bands and mechanical pianos." That in itself is fine — there is nothing more admirable than beating the rhythm of one's age, but one does this by a true grasp of the basic musical needs and its application to all the other parts which produce a unified artistic structure. Is a city seen as a complicated maze because the music commences à la Mozart, shifts to a Viennese waltz, and then to "swing"? Has this score an unsuspected subtlety? Later on, there is a duet danced to the atmosphere of Bach, a few mea-

tures of the Beethoven *Moonlight* with wrong notes added. Paper is inserted into the sounding board of the piano, the strings of the piano are struck with the hand—all excellent sonorities in themselves, but not all the mechanical pianos and hand organs in the world play as many wrong notes as Brant has inserted into his score. Reparations are badly needed to alleviate the incongruities of *City Portrait*.

Of the Ballet Caravan's troupe, Gisella Caccialanza is the smoothest performer, a delightful dancer with a most gentle humor. She is an excellent foil for the virtuosity of Lew Christensen and the beauty and finish of Marie Jeanne.

III

Sai Shoki, the new Korean importation, is a dancer of nobility, delicacy and technical finish. Her program included several court dances representing the ancient classical forms to the accompaniments of court music recorded for her in Korea. In the more programmatic dances, I felt less authenticity but more creativeness. *Melody of the Jade Flute* and *Sleeve Dance* were excellent examples of movement stylized to suit theatrical purposes and satisfying as entertainment. When recordings were not used, percussion groups emphasized the energetic *Sword Dance* and the *Three Traditional Rhythms*. As accompaniment the percussion is employed mainly to exaggerate the sudden quick movements of the wrists or torso. She has the ability to adapt an almost lost art to needs of the contemporary theatre, giving to movement, pantomime and music their full entertainment value.

Carmalita Maracci, (formerly of Uruguay), is a vital newcomer, an extraordinary technician and original creator. The excitement her dancing aroused is a tribute to the energy of a very vibrant personality and a sureness of execution. It is good to witness the debut of an artist who knows the full meaning of integrity. Maracci's dances are severed from the more traditional dance forms, but she has probed the primitive Iberian dance and molded her sensitive reactions to it in a series of dances which, because of their variety, intensity of feeling and perfection, create a profound dramatic truth. The original music written by her accompanist, Antonio Albanese, was far more integrated and dramatically suited to the style of her dancing than were the pieces by well known Spanish composers like Granados, Albeniz and Turina.

At the Hollywood Theatre, La Argentinita and her ensemble presented all the entertainment required to fill a program of authentic Spanish dancing. La Argentinita is a pure artist. There is no pretense, no seeking for effect, no complexity in her choreography. She achieves the necessary variety, subtlety and dynamism of Spanish folk dancing by subordinating technical virtuosity to the simple formal requirements which vitalize authentic Spanish rhythms. With the assistance of Antonio Triana and Pillar Lopez, two equally formidable performers, La Argentinita manages to extend the boundaries of Spanish dancing beyond its traditional restrictions and into the larger sphere which embraces all great art.