

A series of viola and piano recitals featuring William Primrose was offered by C.B.S. The most distinguished work heard here was Roy Harris' *Soliloquy and Dance*, beautifully performed with Johana Harris as pianist. Arthur Benjamin's *Sonata for Viola and Piano* is a brilliant, entertaining exposition of extremely slight and undistinguished material. From a purely instrumental standpoint, the viola writing is colorful and fascinating; a good use of the piano in strongly punctuated forte sections serves also to sustain a somewhat obvious excitement and energy; but the

total effect of the work remains negative and, for me, inconclusive. Primrose and Vladimir Sokoloff, whose musicianly accompaniments deserve credit, also gave us Hindemith's fine *Funeral Music*, appropriately grey in texture and grave in its awareness of mortality.

III

WNYC presented the Roth Quartet in a splendid performance of Shostakovich's *String Quartet*, Opus 49. The work is a suave and neat little score and, for me, represents the most unpretentious and genuinely simple effort of this uneven composer.

THE TORRID ZONE

By MERCURE

AT Nick's down in the Village you can hear some of the best jazz in town. Brad Gowan's band of seven is hot and pure enough to satisfy the most exigent. Around the bar the fans trade rare records between numbers; they lean over the rail in front of the orchestra; they hang on every note. A youth sits transfixed, beneath the bell of Pee Wee Russell's clarinet, drinking in the stream of sound like a plant absorbing water. Styles are discussed, but, as a friend of mine says — he has been selling collector's items for years — there is more interest in the names of the performers than the music. Seems to me I've heard that song before. Jam sessions still have their following, and can be heard at Nick's, and at Jimmy Ryan's, too, on Sunday afternoons, and on Monday nights at the Village Vanguard. There is less talk and more reaction at Roxy's and the Paramount, of course, where the youngest generation has been making

news. A recent letter from a hep-cat to *PM* read ominously . . . "If you think the show when Harry James was at the Paramount was something, wait till you see what we do when Jimmy Dorsey opens at the Roxy."

Up in Harlem, at the Apollo, things are more orderly. Count Basie, Earl "Father" Hines, Louis Jordan and Charlie Barnet have all appeared in the past six weeks, and from time to time you can see a fine tap routine. Barnet's band is unusual, some of the players are colored, some white. Their playing is *ffff* throughout and brings down the house. Ethel Waters is at the Strand with Jan Savitt's band, but she is rather a disappointment to hear. Her performance is pale. Her style, though delicate and sensitive, is always on the sugary side; it only seems to come to life in those songs which are not to be sung at the Strand. Decca has just brought out an album of selections from past record-

ings but without her best numbers.

Reissues are about the only feature of interest in records right now. Victor and Decca have just put out Duke Ellington albums that cover a period of some fifteen years. The Duke's taste for the lush and exotic, for tomtom and stifled, growling trumpet, has less appeal today. At times his music is imaginative and poetic; *Mood Indigo* still has its original nostalgic charm. At others — in the arid *Black and Tan Fantasy* — it is bombastic and empty. Perhaps the best in the set is the earliest, the *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*, with the eloquently raucous trumpet of Bubber Miley. Another album of the late twenties is *Red Nichols and His Five Pennies* (Brunswick-Decca) with (among others) Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller and Gene Krupa. This includes *Tea for Two*, *The Sheik of Araby*, and *I Want to be Happy*. The freshness of style and performance of these stars, then all young and playing together, is still a delight. It was a time when the colored jazz bands dominated the scene, and the style of the Nichols band was something quite unique. A two-record album of Pine Top Smith, boogie-woogie pioneer, takes us a step further, and saves from oblivion choice examples of that specialist's technic (Brunswick-Decca). The notes that come with these albums give the necessary perspective; they establish the records, many of them long out of circulation, as the classics they are. Although now fifteen years old, many of these gems seem less dated today than much art-music of the same vintage.

The Rainbow Music Shop in Harlem is the center for the best selection of race records in town. Before the end of the month this shop will become dis-

tributors for a new recording company, Apollo, which, in spite of Petrillo and shellac shortage, manages to put some race records on the market. These will include Georgia Peach, revivalist, Vivian Elley, blues singer, and spirituals by the Gospel Singers. Race records still appear under Decca and Bluebird labels. *McGhee Special* by Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy has fine trumpet playing by Howard McGhee, now with Barnet. *Pearl Harbor Blues* by Doctor Clayton and *Gonna Follow My Baby Blues* are worth listening to.

What we ought to have now are more songs by Lil Green, whose erotic voice makes her records go as fast as they come in. Here is a rare and beautiful style. The voice is nasal, sensual, insinuating, at times wonderfully sweet, with an intonation racy and exciting. She is almost unknown below 110th Street; two weeks at Café Society and two weeks at the Apollo seem to have been her only appearances. Her records grow scarce, and if you can get hold of *You're Just Full of Jive*, *Why Don't You Do Right*, or *Romance in the Dark* you're in luck. Lil Johnson's (not to be mentioned in the same breath) *Get 'Em From the Peanut Man* (Okeh), which rings the changes on a certain subject with shameless zest is still to be had uptown if you ask for it.

Harlem is bitter about the closing of the Savoy and the social implications involved. Many famous bands made their first appearance here; the latest dance-steps were tried out in the Savoy before anywhere else. Some think the shutdown order won't be for long, others fear the closing marks the end of an era. In the meantime they are packing them in at the Golden Gate.