

Guarnieri. Of course it was done for fun only, but the entertainment value remains so unamusing that the total is almost completely ineffectual.

The Music Hall Symphony of the Air (N.B.C.) presented a stunning performance by Dougherty and Ruzicka, duo pianists, of Casella's *Puppet Polka*. This cleverly scored piece is only a charming, dissonant toy but as good in its small perfection as any work I've heard by this highly uneven composer.

Mutual offered a performance by Erich Leinsdorf and the Cleveland Orchestra of Martinu's *Second Symphony*. This is a light, lyric score and not pretentious in content or development. It has a curious and disconcerting mixture of styles sug-

gesting what approaches schizophrenia. On the one hand there is a neo-classic manner, perhaps the most pronounced and well developed side, and on the other a misty impressionism. It has moments of fine work and well achieved sections of intelligent and communicative expression, but as a structural whole it is unpleasantly marred by meanderings of weak, coloristic lightness.

Columbia presented three choral pieces by Hindemith, settings of Rilke poems. Beautifully performed by Robert Shaw and his splendid Collegiate Chorale group, these expert little pieces achieve a genuine charm and lightness rarely heard in Hindemith's more ambitious projects.

## THE TORRID ZONE

By MERCURE

C ARNEGIE Hall was jammed for the recent Ellington concert; even the stage was filled, with seats at two-fifty. Outside of the much-heralded *New World a-Coming*, there was little that was new on the two-hour program, but the fan-audience was perfectly happy to listen to the long string of record-length three-minute pieces they already knew by heart. The band got off to a fair start with *Take the A Train*, grew sweet and intimate for *Moon Mist* and *Sentimental Lady*, jumped in *C Jam Blues* and *Rockin' in Rhythm*. High spots were the solos of Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown, Jimmy Hamilton and Ray Nance; the low-spot — the Duke's new composition, florid, lush and formless. Somehow, the concert was dim

and tepid; both audience and band were on their best behavior; hands that elsewhere would have been clapping to the beat were clutching programs and program-notes. It's not easy to dispel the pall of Carnegie Hall.

It did not take me long to thaw out an hour later at the Brooklyn Palace (down near Coney Island) where Lionel Hampton's band gave out to a very different kind of crowd. This Brooklyn Savoy was already jumping; the dancers had reached a state of ecstatic frenzy, and screamed for joy as the band began *In the Bag* or *Flying Home*. Hampton on the vibraharp is still terrific in the hot numbers, charming and restrained in the slow ones. His vitality, intelligence and musicianship have

made his the band of the year. The incredible energy and drive that he put into his solos (drums, piano or vibraharp) in such records as *Jack the Bell-boy*, *Central Avenue Breakdown* or *Buzzin Round with the Bee* have been transferred to his band, made up of almost equally brilliant men. Their agility and sense of tempo never fail to galvanize. Hampton, too, will have a Carnegie Hall concert this month, which I look forward to with misgiving.

The culmination of the jazz invasion of the art-temples will be reached in the concert arranged by *Esquire*, which takes place soon at the Metropolitan Opera, an all-star event studded with names like Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Mildred Bailey and a dozen others. Town Hall is a more sympathetic spot for transplanted swing, and the recent five o'clock concert run by Eddie Condon was both casual and enjoyable. The group was small, the musicians specialists; and at the end there was some group-improvisation that was both relaxed and musical. Lee Wiley's voice, which is neither here nor there, seemed all right for the little cluster of songs by Gershwin, whose music has about the same quality for me.

Uptown at the Apollo, Sister Rosetta Tharpe brought down the house as usual with her swing spirituals. She has a remarkable style. Her voice is robust and authoritative. She sings with conviction the revivalist lines that for the most part she wrote (with the music) herself. She has a fine sense of rhythm and a subtlety of intonation that reminds you of Lil Green. Rather than risk the hazards of a strange band she accompanied herself with guitar, and every word, every nuance got

across so that she stopped the show.

The re-opening of the Savoy has been like the end of a dimout; silence and disgrace are forgotten, and the place once more is in full swing. At the Heat Wave on 145th street there is the five-piece band of Louis Metcalf (and his Calves); on Tuesday nights musicians drop in for jam sessions; some nights are frantic, but you must be prepared to take pot-luck. Downtown at the Vanguard in the Village there is Albinny Jones blues-singer and greatest, according to Dan Burley in the *Amsterdam News*, since Bessie Smith.

### III

The record at the top of the present list is the Benny Goodman Quartet playing of *The World is Waiting for the Sunrise* (Columbia). This has all the quiet charm and radiance of the earlier Goodman recordings with small ensembles, with some fine piano playing by Mel Powell. Victor re-issues Ellington's *Concerto for Cootie* under the title *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*, with the Strayhorn arrangement of *Chloë* on the other side. James P. Johnson's *Impressions* (Asch) runs the gamut of the whole-tone scale. The other side, *Boogie Stride*, has a little more character; neither is a contribution. Of far greater interest for their life and promise are the Beacon recordings (made a few months back) of Deryck Samson, a Negro youth of seventeen with an unusual piano technic. The few records he has made are uneven, but his *Boogie Express* has a clarity and feverish drive that is unique. The piece is marred by a couple of technical stunts, but the coda is a knockout. The Jazz Information recordings of Bunk Johnson's Jazz

Band, made in New Orleans, are a recreation of an early jazz-style. At the moment they are of more documentary interest than a source of pleasure. Meanwhile the jukeboxes north of

110th street give out the increasingly popular *Deacon Jones* and *Ration Blues* of Louis Jordan. The first is pretty archaic, but the second is deep in the groove.