

work its magic, if any, without benefit of the audience's consciousness.

Perhaps one should not be too hard on Auric for his labors at Elstree and Teddington. The alternative appears to be the kind of thing that Hubert Bath has done for *They Were Sisters*. This is the stuff that soap-operas are made on, and it gives James Mason another opportunity to play a Byronic hero. Mr. Bath's music stems directly from the 1920 cue sheets by Roberts, Reisenfeld and Axt. There are at least a half-dozen romanzas, a few airs de ballet, a scène dramatique, all of them so constructed that the orchestra inevitably finds itself sitting on a diminished chord at scene's end. This is particularly effective when accompanied by a harp arpeggio.

III

One Hans Haug has the sole music credit in *Portrait of a Woman*, a

French picture made by Jacques Feyder in Switzerland in 1943, with Françoise Rosay in a multiple role. This is, again, the world of the small-budget film. It required Mr. Haug to be modest; but instead he was stingy, not only in the amount and size of the music, but in invention as well. The longest musical sequence, for the unhappy teacher's walk through her deserted school, is hardly more than a series of chords with neither linear nor harmonic interest. Somehow it reaches a climax, fortissimo, in the upper registers of all the instruments. But it is reached much too soon, and Mr. Haug can think of nothing better than to repeat the same chord over and over again until the scene fades.

It is at this point, after having spent many hours with foreign films, that Hollywood and its music seem not to be so bad after all.

## OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

JACQUES de Menasce's *Second Piano Concerto* received a brilliant American premiere over CBS, with Jacques Abrams as soloist and Bernard Herrmann conducting the Columbia Orchestra. This proved to be especially effective on the air for its elegant clarity, streamlined patterns and subtle orchestral inventions. Throughout the four compact movements the serious content is projected with a well-sustained wit and a sensitive charm, comparable in more lyric moments to the finesse of Berg.

The opening Allegro is scored with vigorous energy. The middle movements, *Cortège* and *Minuet Variations*, have a processional-like dignity and grace. The finale, based on a Hebrew tune sung during the Passover, moves with a slow intensification of pianistic force to a formidable expression of strength in the coda.

The annual CBS concert under League of Composers' sponsorship opened with Robert Ward's *Jubilation, an Overture*, a work of sustained motion, bright lyrical passages

and Hanson-like harmonies. Berezowsky was represented by his *Toccata, Variations and Finale* for string quartet and orchestra. The *Toccata* shows an almost baroque skill in the suave weaving of independent melodic strands. It is broadly spacious and unusual in its deliberate pace. The *Variations* are marked by a sobriety that dominates, but does not conceal, a strong, emotional sensibility. The scoring is sometimes almost extravagant in its rich sonorities and mellifluous harmonic progressions. Some of the pastoral sections recall certain wide-spread sweeps of Mahler's brush, though on a smaller scale and in a less theatrical manner. In the *Finale* the brilliant quartet writing and the orchestral power are wisely reserved for the impressive joyous cadence.

Copland's *Concert Suite from "Rodeo"* is a four-movement piece distinguished by superb orchestration, exact timing and balanced proportions. This music has wit, strength and a wistful tenderness which no other living composer can match.

Another new concert suite, Norman Dello Joio's *On Stage*, was given a premiere by the CBS Orchestra with guest-conductor Daniel Saidenberg. It seems especially good for radio performance — attractive music which displays in some of its lighter moments the humor and gentle irony of a fresh and personal imagination. One section has an expressive line for solo flute, finely drawn and magical in charm.

Kodaly's *Peacock Variations* for orchestra also received its American premiere over CBS. This very light fantasy is composed of sixteen variations and a finale which vaguely suggest the gradual opening and beauty

of the peacock's outspread tail. The variations increase in instrumental richness. It is a familiar pattern, but one effective enough for the simple impressionistic purposes of the score. A most attractive variation is the flute and piccolo duet, with harp and mixed woodwinds in the background. Warm in sound, it projects two thinly-etched lines with utmost clarity.

The only disappointing CBS broadcast was devoted to Kabalevsky's *First Piano Concerto*, with Vera Brodsky as soloist. This is an even less rewarding work than the same composer's *Second Piano Concerto*, reviewed here recently. A long and lush romance is narrated by an exotic piano to a somewhat patiently static orchestra. The composer has a taste for a magnified type of salon music.

### III

The American premiere broadcast of Shostakovich's *Ninth Symphony*, as performed at the Berkshire Music Festival by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was ABC's most ambitious offering during the summer months. But the work as a whole is far too heavy-handed to make a good radio impression. More rewarding over ABC were fine performances of Roy Harris's *Violin Sonata* and Cecil Effinger's *Interlude* by Josef Gingold and Johanna Harris. The *Sonata* is one of Harris's most imposing chamber works and possibly the most brilliant. There are four rather large movements whose linking factors are subjective, not thematic, except in a certain harmonic sense. Tonality in this score is almost purely consonant, but treated in an exciting manner that produces strong unities and bold contrasts. The sizz-

ling finale is one of the most light-fingered and daring technical accomplishments in American chamber music. Effinger's *Interlude*, a lyric expression of considerable warmth and sincerity, is formed of one broad sweeping curve.

William Schuman's *Symphony for Strings* was done by Robert Shaw and the NBC Orchestra. The athletic rigor of the first movement is unrelied and culminates in a bombastic cadence. But the slow movement is one of the best pieces Schuman has done. Very simple in style, motion and melody, less so harmonically, it is eloquent and handled with expressive dignity. The same program also included Peter Mennin's *Folk Overture*, a conglomeration of noisy, unimpressive sounds which exposed little talent and no taste.

One of Benny Goodman's shows over NBC gave us a nice surprise, Alan Schulman's *Rendezvous with Benny* for clarinet and string quartet. The sonorities are sometimes over-rich, the harmonies too Delian, but the piece has a fluid style, clever rhythmic treatments with cello pizzicati and effective unison passages.

But another NBC broadcast tried to sell America's radio audience a bill-of-goods labeled *Cow Town Suite* by Don Gillis and *The Symphonic Story of Jerome Kern* by Robert Russell Bennett. The Gillis piece is stale and very dull, on a level with our poorest travelog movie music. Bennett's is merely a slightly dressed-up dance band arrangement of a medley of Kern's popular tunes.

WNYC gave us a piano recital by Vivien Harvey with an *Introduction and Toccata* by Arthur Shepherd and one of Samuel Barber's *Excursions*. Shepherd's work is a movement from his *Second Piano Sonata* which stands up very well alone. It is a strong and moving composition with interesting rhythms and tight thematic organization. This station also broadcast a program of violin and piano music from one of the Brooklyn Museum concerts. Tibor Zelig and Joan Slesinger played a *Sicilian Suite* by Herbert Haufrecht, an unpretentious score which is clear in tonality and simple in its materials. My own *Sonatine*, a short piece in four movements, was also given an excellent performance.

## THE TORRID ZONE

By COLIN MCPHEE

THE SUMMER has not been brilliant from the standpoint of recorded jazz or swing. Neither Victor nor Columbia nor Decca has released anything of the slightest significance. The few records of interest

have been produced, as usual, by small companies like Commodore, Blue Note, Dial and others still less familiar. It seems as though there were a tacit conspiracy on the part of the large ones to ignore if not an-