

is no Americana, pleasant or acidulous, but a stately Oriental legend, a pantomime interspersed with words and music. The colors and costumes and scenery are opulent, often stunning; but the voice (from the tomb) is the voice of Maxfield Parrish though the hand is the hand of Robert Edmond Jones. There is a score by Raymond Scott — out of Cio Cio San by the Tambourin Chinois — with harp, celesta and glockenspiel predominant. All it needs is a dulcimer. A galaxy of good actors strive to retain the Chinese atmosphere on the stage, but in the pit, under a thin glaze of celadon, the music is not millet but corn. Neither Mary Martin nor Yul Brynner can sing the songs, such as they are, assigned to them. In fact, it is sad to relate that as far as *Lute Song* is concerned, Confucius say, "The curtain went up to denote a long, long lapse of time."

St. Louis Woman at one stage of its career was a stark folkplay, by Arna Bontemps and Countee Cullen, with some of the vitality and the touching quality of the first, unencumbered *Porgy*. Then the Hollywood backers looked upon it and found it too simple for their tastes. Mamoulian was called in to dress it up and stuff it, and he did. He might have let it die before he stuffed it.

Yet the good is there, the pulse and emotion, but struggling for air. The music, by Harold Arlen, is largely orchestromony, with a few barometric reminders of *Stormy Weather*. Under the Midas touch from the West Coast, the score was inflated and Lemuel Ayers's sets were cluttered with crowds. Pearl Bailey is a knock-out; she sings the two best songs in the show, putting them over as a mistress of the art. In these two songs, the lyrics by Johnny Mercer are up to standard.

From these four musicals there emanates a conviction that the revulsion from sugar, from the *Desert Song* or *Prince of Pilsen*, has now itself become a cliché. Just inflated noise and rhythm do not create that response in the audience which a "musical" must have. Only a *tune* will build a scene, fortify the moment, capture the house. "Musicals" are geared to work on your emotions, not your nerves. In today's list, only Berlin is in the right path (of Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers, of Berlin himself). Fresh lettuce comes before the dressing. The nourishment is not in the vinegar. *Billion Dollar Baby* is a hit because it is so slick; but *Annie* is memorable, permanent, effulgent because Berlin has given Ethel Merman words and music to sing.

THE MUSICAL PRESS

By FRANI MUSER

HAPPY augury of France's reviving musical vitality was the recent arrival of the first post-war issue of *Le Revue Musicale*. Its familiar format quite unchanged, its various

departments still intact, the magazine is one more testimony to the peculiarly indestructible character of French tradition. Articles on Lully, La Lande, Berlioz and Mozart remind us that

the French have always been able to make the past unantiquarian, part of the present, a continual source of critical reference.

What is not quite clear, and what for the moment concerns us most, is the relation of *La Revue Musicale* today to that contemporary French musical thought which will be the source of France's continuing musical life. Errors of fact in reporting can only testify to the handicaps under which the editors labor in the present circumstances (although to list Paul Klee as a South American composer seems hard to excuse on any grounds) Robert Bernard devotes a large part of his editorial to a defence of his connection, during the occupation, with a Nazi sponsored or at any rate approved musical journal, *Information Musicale*. He exonerates *La Revue Musicale* from any relationship with the suspected sheet, and calls on classical allusion (not to be like Gréboille who jumped in the river to get out of the rain) to plead his own personal cause. Elsewhere in the magazine, however, rather extravagant attempts to whitewash both Strauss and Furtwängler reveal the difficulty of breaking habits of opportunistic conformity. We hope that all such confusion will disappear, for on that will depend the revival of international prestige which *La Revue Musicale* is right to expect.

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Nuestra Musica, a note in its leading editorial explains, is "in the first place the music which we ourselves write, and then that which we admire." This small but very elegant

new magazine (it even comes wrapped in a tissue-paper dust-jacket) is published by a group of Mexican composers: Jesus Bal Y Gay, Carlos Chavez, Blas Galindo, Rodolfo Halffter (the editor), J. Pablo Moncayo, Adolfo Salazar and Luis Sandi. Emphatically denying that they constitute an esthetic "school," they state their common desire to contribute to the musical development of Mexico through the focussing of attention on their national achievement, the expression of their national point of view.

The three main articles of the first issue bear out the latitude of the definition of *Nuestra Musica*: a report by Carlos Chavez on Blas Galindo, illustrated and followed by a list of works; a discussion by Bartok of the rich and varied folk resources of the outlying districts of Hungary, and the ways in which he and Kodaly used them, subtly implying a corollary to the situation of the composer in Mexico; a witty and penetrating investigation by Adolfo Salazar of a "pequeño problema musicologico," the origins of the Chaconne — a form linked by literary reference to a wild native dance of Mexico.

If this be national propaganda, it is indeed of unusual interest, on a pleasantly cosmopolitan and sophisticated level. And if a small boxed admonition to its readers not to relax until every Mexican citizen can read and write may remind us of similar nationalist exhortations, in no other way does *Nuestra Musica* hint at naivete, at Mexico's recent emergence as a significant musical force.