

good deal of the inevitable large male chorus. The rest of the sound track shows more imagination. The juxtaposition of shouts, horses' hoofbeats, mass cheering, cannon detonations and general uproar seems carefully arranged. One device is particularly fortunate. The White general's palace headquarters are surrounded. He cowers in his office listening to the approaching din as the enemy army forces entrance to the building. He covers his ears. The sound track is cut. Complete silence for a few seconds. He uncovers them. Even louder hubbub. Again he shuts it out and again there is no sound. . . . Apart from the scores, which vary from film to film, the sound tracks of Soviet pictures are almost uniformly good. At least, of those that reach foreign countries. The Russians have a beautiful sense of the incongruities inherent in reality. They seem to love sounds for their own sake. Sometimes they continue endlessly with even the

most repetitious ones unaided by music, if it suits their dramatic purpose. (Especially the noises made by trains, both puffing and whistling, the sound of marching feet and battle cries.) Anyone who has seen *Peasants* will remember the murder scene. The kulak regards his wife's body with increasing horror. Suddenly snatches of a wild Asiatic song are heard from far away. Someone is singing in a distant street of the village. Nothing changes in the kulak's countenance. Only the audience has heard the sound. The music has absolutely no bearing on any part of the film, save that it provides a moment of intense poetry with its suggestion of the violent contrast between life and death. This is one example in many. I mention it to show the kind of dramatic possibilities which lie in subtle handling of the sound track, a thing Hollywood has not yet begun to attempt.

OVER THE AIR

By CONLON NANCARROW

ALTHOUGH I have not seen *Ghost Town*, I listened to the broadcast, and I do not believe that any amount of brilliant staging could transform this bad music into a good ballet. In his own field Richard Rodgers is excellent, but why was he chosen to write for the Monte Carlo troupe? Maybe he doesn't belong to the one-finger school of composers; certainly his score gave that impression. It sounded as if he had turned over an indiscriminate collection of tunes to a staff of arrangers to be whipped into

shape. Working backward on the logic of this selection for an "American ballet" one might get the following steps: Gershwin was very American; Gershwin was a Broadway composer; Rodgers is a Broadway composer.

WQXR has presented several men in programs of their own music. The first of these was the Hollander, Julius Hijman, who played his *Sonatina* for piano and, with Sigurd Rascher, his *Sonatina* for saxophone and piano. Both were unpretentious and well written. Facile

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-