

GERTRUDE LAWRENCE

In A New Musical Play

The King and I

with YUL BRYNNER
DOROTHY SARNOFF

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Wednesday & Saturday at 2:25: \$4.20 to 1.80.

Pulitzer Prize & Critics' Award Musical Play

**MARTHA WRIGHT
GEORGE BRITTON**

IN
South Pacific

with MYRON McCORMICK

MAJESTIC THEATRE, West 44th St.
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PAINT YOUR WAGON

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Dances by AGNES de MILLE
with TONY BAVAAR and NOLA FAIRBANKS
Scenery OLIVER SMITH Costumes MOTLEY
Musical Director FRANZ ALLERS
Lighting Peggy Clark Orchestrations Ted Royal
Production Associale BEA LAWRENCE
Entire production directed by DANIEL MANN
SAM S. SHUBERT Thea. W. 44th St.
Evs. 8:30. Mats. WED. & SAT. 2:30

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HENRY FONDA
IN
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FILMS

THE SATURDAY REVIEW

25 West 45 Street, New York 36, N. Y.

to pay because of having so raised the standards of intelligence in satiric musical comedies. There are other possible explanations. As a people, we are no doubt as sentimental as we were twenty years ago, but we are no longer so simple. The cruel barrage of events during these two decades has seen to that. Conditions of the recent past and threats of the future have forced us to acquire a sense of the preciousness of time we did not formerly possess.

When there is so much to be said about our Government and the issues of the present, we resent not having these points made as wittily and tellingly as only Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Ryskind could make them. They do make them in the first half of "Of Thee I Sing" but not in the second. Even in the first half we find it hard to believe with our old assurance that "Love Is Sweeping the Country."

It would take a lot more rewriting than occasional lines about Stassen, Warren, General Vaughan, Dewey, Rita Hayworth, or mink coats to bring "Of Thee I Sing" up to date. Although it still has its hilarious moments, much of its hilarity belongs to the past. That it seems dated during so much of the second half is one way of measuring how much we and the world have changed since that memorable December night in 1931 when first it astonished and delighted us.

—JOHN MASON BROWN.

Russian Symbolist

CHEKHOV THE DRAMATIST. By David Magarshack. Auvergne, New York. \$4.50. Mr. Magarshack contends that Chekhov's plays have almost always been misinterpreted by actors, directors, and critics, and he attempts to prove his point by the use of excerpts from Chekhov's letters and comparisons between early and late versions of the playwright's scripts.

Since directors and actors know the problems of their trade and the practical necessity of handling audiences first-hand, they are seldom able to make much use of an author's abstract ideas in their work. Chekhov's symbolism, his notion of using some of his characters as chorus or counterpoint, and his belief that "The Sea Gull" and "The Cherry Orchard" should be played as ludicrous comedies are difficult to translate into theatrical results. (This is, perhaps, why some of the people who talk the most intelligently about the theatre flourish least in it.) However, there is no denying that Mr. Magarshack's book is a valuable aid to anyone reading or seeing a Chekhov play.

—HENRY HEWES.

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SR Goes to the Movies

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FRENCH FILMS?

THE simultaneous release of four new French films in New York seems to emphasize just how few have actually been seen here in the past year or so. At one time the words "French film" and "foreign film" were practically interchangeable. Since the war, however, English and Italian pictures have increasingly been edging in, often securing extended playing time in the most desirable theatres. And now, with the Government-enforced separation of American production, distribution, and exhibition, Hollywood movies are regularly turning up in houses formerly associated solely with foreign pictures. All of this means, of course, greater competition for French films. No exhibitor now books a French picture simply because it is French; not with the star-studded Hollywood product available to him, not with British pictures around that have all the advantages of foreignness without the necessity for strip titles. A French picture has to have extra merit these days to find a theatre—or at least some readily exploitable box-office personality or theme.

But this is only part of the reason why so few Gallic importations have been visible of late. A further explanation is to be found in France itself. Production costs in France, as in Hollywood, have risen astronomically through the past few years. And whenever that happens there is an overwhelming tendency on the part of producers to play it safe, to use established stars and directors in time-proven stories, to avoid experiment. The small Government film subsidy in France, as is so often the case, seems designed to encourage mediocrity and stereotyped production. As a result, French films have fallen off both in quality and quantity. There have been a few exceptions since the war, even a few exceptional films. Jacques Tati's recent "Jour de Fête" had the verve and freshness of shoe-string experimentation about it. Max Ophul's silken "La Ronde," as smooth a studio production as ever was made, won audiences by its sheer perfection. "La Vie Commence Demain," yet to be released in this country, is an exciting, provocative examination of today's arts and sciences in relation to the world of tomorrow. But in general the vigor, the creativity, even some of the taste that distinguished the French cinema of the late Thirties seems to

have burned itself out. At the moment, we can be grateful that our exhibitors are choosing for us only the best.

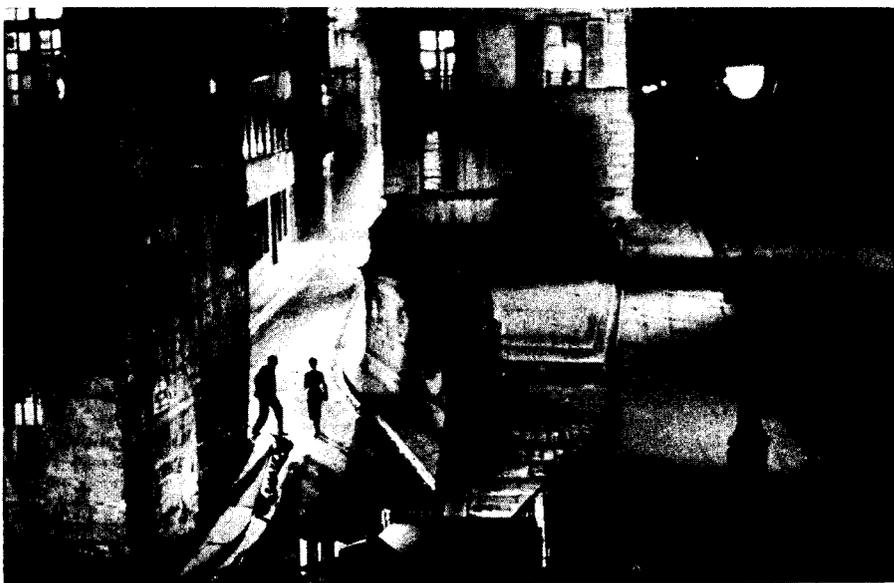
And of the new imports, certainly among the best is Julien Duvivier's "Under the Paris Sky" (Discina). One of the leading lights in the French revival of the Thirties, Duvivier became famous through "Un Carnet de Bal" for a *portmanteau* type of picture with many sections ingeniously threaded together. Here he tries it again, orchestrating a bizarre assortment of lives into a sort of city symphony of Paris. His film starts as the city wakes up. And as the day progresses the lives of utter strangers begin to cut across each other for better or for worse. An old woman wanders through the city begging money to buy milk for her cats. A child runs away from home, setting off down the Seine on a voyage to Mauritania and the Canary Islands. A young girl arrives in Paris to make her fortune. Her friend, a model, worries about her fiancé who is taking his final examination in medicine that afternoon. A worker is celebrating his silver anniversary with a sit-down strike inside the factory walls. And a mad sculptor stalks through the city, a killer.

All of these themes Duvivier manages to manipulate with considerable agility. Sometimes it is the commentary, spoken in English by Duncan Elliott, that ties the separate stories together, sometimes a simple encounter. But always there is a sense of fate

directing the chance meeting and a careful balancing of youth and age, life and death, joy and sorrow. It is life shaped by art rather than simply the random reflection of a teeming city, and Duvivier proves himself still the skilful technician in the juxtaposition of his many types. He has cast his picture judiciously, Christian Dior has clothed it handsomely, and Paris itself—the stalls of Montmartre, the graceful bridges over the Seine, the steep white stairs to Sacre-Coeur, the granite arches of the Place des Vosges—provides an ever-fascinating background for its absorbing and varied incidents.

The French enthusiasm for seeing the many facets of a comic situation, drawing from it all its humor and all its sting, underlies the action of Jacques Becker's slight but sprightly "Edward and Caroline" (Commercial) and gives it a special flavor. The story, what little there is of it, centers about two delightful young people, the boy an unsuccessful concert pianist, his pretty wife a girl of good family. There are quarrels and misunderstandings, flirtations and seductions, all laced with warm, human perceptions and wry commentaries on temperamental artists, on degenerate high society folk, and on life in general. Daniel Gélin as Edward is small, dark, and unhandsome, but filled with charm; and Anne Vernon is a lovely, effervescent Caroline. It's a light, gay, graceful, and strikingly handsome production.

These same virtues are conspicuously lacking in "The Prize" (Classic), and this is the more surprising since the film is a Marcel Pagnol adaptation of one of Maupassant's better known short stories. Basically, it is a good satiric theme. A group of ex-



"Under the Paris Sky"—"a mad sculptor stalks through the city."