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to see the Japanese officials, the performance being over, turn around and go home.

“TOO YOUNG TO KNOW” (Strand) says that marriages made at too young an age land on the rocks. It also wants to know whether a child should be left in the home of kindly foster-parents it has got used to or yanked back under the parental roof. All the arguments on the subjects are voiced with an impartial lack of knowledge.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

"The Tragic Jest"

IN RUSSIA, during the first decade of the century, bloody pogroms were followed by the official prosecution of charges against a Jew for the ritual murder of a Christian child. This fantastic case aroused world-wide indignation and in the face of it the Czarist court was forced to acquit its intended victim.

With the bitterness of this outrage in his mind the great Jewish satirist Sholem Aleichem wrote a savage comedy, *The Tragic Jest*, which has become a classic of the Jewish Theater. Like Arthur Miller's powerful current novel, *Focus*, it makes its point by having the weight of anti-Semitism fall, through a "tragic jest," on a Christian.

It is this play that the Jewish Theater Ensemble of the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order has put on as its second offering, following its brilliant production of *The Downfall of Haman*, a festival play dealing with the defeat of an earlier Hitler in Jewish history. Produced as a pantomimic musical comedy, *Haman* was well suited to the talents of the director, Benjamin Zemach, the noted choreographer. For *The Tragic Jest* they are not quite right. The ballet-like movement and the over-gestured acting in some of the roles detracts from a sense of reality.

Nevertheless, there is an attractive saving spirit in the performance, and for that and the timeliness and power of Sholem Aleichem's satire the play is well worth seeing. It is being given in week-end performances at the Barbizon Plaza Theater in New York.

I. S.

Milhaud: Twenty Years

MILHAUD's *Suite for Violin and Orchestra*, which Zino Francescatti performed at a concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra on November 20, and the *Suite Francaise* and *Le Bal*

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Martiniquais, which the composer himself conducted at the New York Philharmonic concert of December 6, are separated by a gap of more than twenty years from his famous *Creation of the World*. I speak of the older work here because a performance of it by Leonard Bernstein and the New York City Symphony enabled me to hear it on the same evening as the violin suite.

Much has happened in France since Milhaud startled the musical world with this adaptation of jazz and established the reputation of the "Six." Much has since happened to the "Six." The Nazi occupation, the war, and the movement of French Resistance have profoundly affected them—notably Poulenc, Auric and Milhaud. Their sense of responsibility to the people of France, their contact with them and their patriotism have been strengthened and deepened.

Under the impact of great events, Milhaud has turned back to the storehouse of French folksong (as in the *Suite Francaise*), and to West Indian native music (in the *Bal Martiniquais*). Both works are the products of a patriotic revival.

Yet, though the emotions which prompted them are praiseworthy, the results are disappointing, chiefly, I feel, because they are treated in a trivial and flashy manner, out of all keeping with the great events which inspired them. The materials are not sufficiently transfused. The same is true of the violin suite, which attempts to recapture the spirit of eighteenth-century music. It is sad but instructive to reflect on the fact that none of these compositions attains to the originality, freshness and intensity of the *Creation*.

BOHUSLAV MARTINU's new symphony (the Fourth) was given a magnificent interpretation by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra at a recent New York concert. The full resources of that incomparable body of musicians were required to meet the demands for massive sonorities and delicate tracery; and if these were all that a symphony needs, Martinu's composition might be considered first-rate. But wonderful sound effects and brilliant and decorative devices do not alone suffice. The something moving and convincing that the composer seems on the point of saying, remains unsaid, except in a few isolated and striking fragments. The main body of the work appears devoid of a central and unifying design.

FREDERIC EWEN.

December 25, 1945 **NM**

Records

VICTOR, too, now and then offers something unusual. Lovers of Bach and of the harpsichord will be happy to learn that the *Goldberg Variations* are now available to them in the recordings of Wanda Landowska. (DM-1022, six twelve-inch records.) Furthermore, they will be delighted by the technical artistry displayed and the mechanical excellence of the records. The harpsichord is not the most grateful instrument for a virtuoso, but in this performance Miss Landowska exhibits the mastery and understanding which endows this great work with fresh meaning.

Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra likewise come up to expectations in the *Rossini Overtures*. (DV-2, four twelve-inch records.) These are "unbreakable" records, and the unforgettable performance of the overtures to *The Barber of Seville*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *La Cenerentola*, etc. (the labels are unreasonably polylingual) is enhanced by the almost complete absence of surface noises.

For the rest, Victor's most recent output runs along conventional lines. Claudio Arrau's interpretation of the Schumann Piano Concerto (DM-1009, four twelve-inch records), in which he has the assistance of Karl Krueger and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, is too dry and crisp for my taste, and the recording does not hold a candle to that made by Alfred Cortot some fifteen years ago. Yehudi Menuhin plays the Bruch Violin Concerto with real feeling and a rich and beautiful tone and is very competently supported by the San Francisco Orchestra led by Monteux. (DM-1023, three twelve-inch records.) And, finally, let me recommend James Melton's *Operatic Program* of arias from *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, *Manon*, *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger*. Here is a rare and magnificent voice, employed with distinction and musicianship. (M-1013, three twelve-inch records.) F. E.

Pittsburgh: 1945

(Continued from page 16)

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