

undoubtedly have had more music. One wonders what would have happened to the tenderly humorous scene of love-making. Where Walton does use music, he writes unobtrusively and with a seemly reticence. His underscoring is modest and sensitive. But when the sound track is cleared for a major musical effort, Walton is quite prepared to abandon "modest stillness and humility . . . stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood." His battle music, beginning with the

march of the French cavalry, accelerating to a gallop and finally reaching a tremendous climax in the clash of arms, is a sequence of surpassing splendor and excitement. It is not only pictorial, in the manner of Prokofiev's famous *Battle on the Ice* from *Neusky*; it refuses to be circumscribed by a framework of brutality; it flows over into the same heroic emotional areas where Shakespeare found the words and sentiments for Henry's great speech before Harfleur.

## IN THE THEATRE

By S. L. M. BARLOW

AT one of those Sunday lunches on Long Island recently a Rumanian delegate asked me if I had read Robinson Jeffers' *Medea*, and a dowager leaned across the table and said, "O, that's the play I saw at the Century where the man marries his mother . . ." I had hoped that the Old Vic was making more impression than that, for most of our producers and actors could, and undoubtedly did, profit from a visit to our visitors.

When Sada Yakko, the great Japanese tragedienne, acted at one of the early Paris Expositions, Coquelin insisted that all the members of the Théâtre Français go to see her and to study. (The language difference was somewhat greater than at the Old Vic where only a few of the actors and none of the actresses escaped local and often barbarous accents. I counted four pronunciations of the word "Shrewsbury" in the first five

minutes of *Henry IV*, part two.) It is not a question of going to scoff and remaining to pray, for there are at least two companies now on Broadway—I would select *The Glass Menagerie* and *I Remember Mama*—where the producing and acting are as fine. It is a question of observing other individualities and other methods of team-work; a course of sprouts which the United Nations are undertaking and which the world needs.

The music of the Old Vic partook of the general competence. To begin with the orchestra was good, and admirably led by Herbert Menges, with discretion and accent. His own music for Shakespeare was effective; and the selections he made, mostly from Handel, of music contemporary with Sheridan formed a delicious background to *The Critic*. Anthony Hopkins is a young British composer, best known to date for radio and movie scores. His music for *Oedipus*

was pertinent. None of the scores stood out as a brilliant work, but had it done so the production as a whole would have been thrown off base.

*Call Me Mister* is a grand show. It is extremely well acted and produced; it is full of funny, really funny, sketches; the lyrics are a delight, except in the sentimental numbers where Harold Rome is far from first rate. In fact, the score is about the only disappointing thing in the show, and at that is revived by Lehman Engel's able conducting. Even so, the second number, a song called *Going Home Train* is one of the most touching I've heard. Seen, rather, for the marriage of music, words, acting and set is perfect. The comic songs are almost all excellent, and ably put over. The dances, too, credited to John Wray, and danced by Karnilova and David Nillo, leave nothing to be desired. I should like to linger over the better skits: *Military Life*; *The Red Ball Express*, with its tail-flick of social comment; the razz given the swells of the Air Corps, and the final going-over given to Congress. Just go and see it, but with forgiveness in your heart for those sentimental lapses of Harold Rome.

*On Whitman Avenue* is noted because it contains one song by Paul Bowles — a lullaby. This for the record. I am glad I can mention it as the play furnishes an excellent, provocative evening in the theatre. It is tense and well acted; it does not rant; and it has been panned unwarrantably by the press.

The real musical meat of the month was the premiere of Gian-Carlo Menotti's new opera (chamber opera, to be exact), *The Medium*, produced at

Brander Matthews Hall by the Columbia Theatre Associates. The single set, very effective, was designed by Oliver Smith; the costumes by Fabio Rieti; and the orchestra of twelve instruments and percussion was directed by Otto Luening. At one hearing it is difficult to be discerning about subtleties; but it may emphatically be said that Menotti did what he set out to do with real effectiveness. From a small orchestra he drew the exact quantity of support needed, often with exciting and original means. The continuous texture of the music was admirably woven to suit his story, and that required a constant shift from the eerie to the emotional, from the remote to the personal. Arias were used sparingly, and then appropriately, to elucidate the psychology of people definitely in need of analysis.

The idea is stunning: that of a medium suddenly induced to believe in her own frauds and thereby terrified into committing murder. (Was it Aldous Huxley who, after the First World War, wrote a play in which Sir Oliver Lodge was visited by his ghost-son?) The recipient of the bullet is a mute, a foundling who expresses himself through the dance (remarkably performed by Leo Coleman). Menotti's preoccupation — both in *Sebastian* and in *The Medium* — with deaf-mute slaves, and their invariably untimely ends, is a cause of wonder. Perhaps the servant problem in *Mt. Kisco* is acute. Be that as it may, he has definitely given us an exciting and unusual study in the musical macabre. Almost every note is like a dry powder in a trail leading to the catastrophe. *The Medium* has real significance as a departure.