

# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

*Filming a novel of bourbon oppression—A World's Fair community center—American folk music*

**W**ARD GREENE'S novel of murder, trial by prejudice, and lynching, *Death in the Deep South*, reaches the screen under the title *They Won't Forget* (Warner Bros.). It is an outstanding and powerful motion picture, ably directed and produced by Mervyn LeRoy who also has *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* to his credit.

The story is simple and direct. A murder is discovered. The janitor of a southern schoolhouse, a Negro, is immediately suspected, and the police proceed to get a confession from him. It isn't important to check the janitor's story. "Don't figure it is necessary," says one blue-coat. "Give me one more hour with him, and I'll have a confession." But the district-attorney, with an eye on the coming elections, has other ideas. Convicting a Negro would be too easy, too much in the ordinary run of things. And so a net of circumstantial evidence is woven to prove that the northern school-teacher, an outsider in the community, is guilty of the rape and murder of the victim who was one of his pupils. He is tried by a prejudiced court, prosecuted by the politically ambitious district-attorney, convicted by a crooked jury, and lynched by a mob.

The director turns his camera on the frightened, bulldozed witnesses. He depicts the sensationalism of the yellow press which uses the case to build circulation and, at the same time, helps to incite the lynching.

One of the outstanding things about the film is that there are no big stars to hinder the story. If ever one needed confirmation that a competent director can put over what he has to say without "stars," this film supplies that proof. Most of the actors have only played "bit" parts. The only big name is that of Claude Rains who plays the part of the ambitious district-attorney with great skill and conviction. And while I'm discussing the cast, it is important to mention that Clinton Rosmond who plays the Negro janitor contributes one of the nicest bits of acting that has been seen in a long time. When he is being questioned during the trial, it is obvious that he is being intimidated to falsify his testimony. Trapped in his lies by the defense attorney's question: "And you're scared right now, too, aren't you?" he answers: "Well, you see, ah's colo'd, an' . . ." Clearly and brutally the intimidation of the Negro is brought out.

Naturally this film will be compared with *Fury* from which Mervyn LeRoy borrowed much. The director has also utilized material from the Scottsboro trials, as, for instance, in the scene in which the district-attorney introduces the murdered girl's clothes as evidence of the accusation. But in spite of the fact that the line of the story is straighter in the current film, in spite of the fact that the victim is lynched and the district-attorney questions the man's guilt only after the lynching, *They*

*Won't Forget* doesn't have the impact or the emotional drive that gave *Fury* all its force. It certainly doesn't have the directorial skill or imagination that went into the making of *Fury*. One must, however, give the director credit for a very powerful and extremely imaginative dramatization of the actual lynching.

To a certain extent the film loses some of its force because of the many concessions to censorship and the general Hollywood antagonism toward realism. On the other hand, it proves very conclusively how powerful a medium the cinema is. The book itself suffered from a certain superficiality and surface treatment. Thus, in spite of the fact that the film treatment is milder and less factual than the book, it is an immeasurably more powerful social document. *They Won't Forget* deserves our complete support.

*Easy Living* (Paramount): A Cinderella story with so much slapstick that is ridiculous, and unbelievable, and exaggerated, that it becomes a burlesque on itself. Edward Arnold as J. P. Ball, the banker, who gets mixed up with the shopgirl who finally marries Ball's son, has never been better. And Jean Arthur, as the shopgirl, contributes her best and, very surprising, her most human performance. The slapstick is loud and violent. No matter by what standards you judge films, this is a very funny one.

PETER ELLS.

## THE FINE ARTS

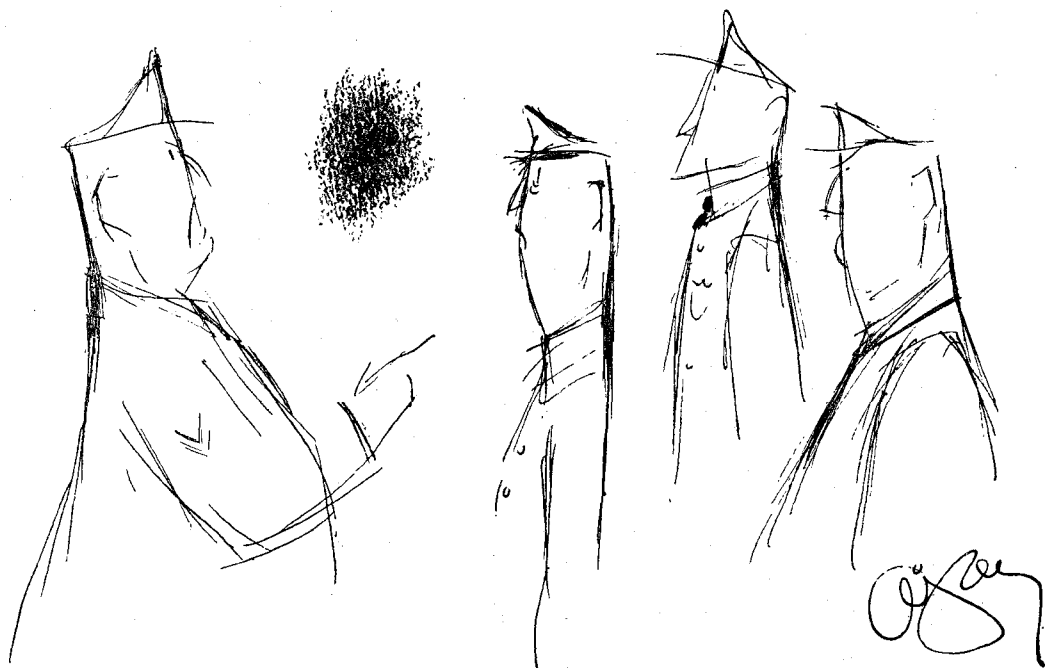
**B**Y FAR the most exciting exhibit in the large and well-selected summer show which the Museum of Modern Art has opened in its temporary quarters on West 49th Street, New York, is the project for a community

center for the coming World's Fair presented by the Architects', Painters', & Sculptors' Collaborative. Oscar Storonov, young architect who received honorable mention in the international design competition for the Palace of the Soviets, has done a complex of three buildings united by a large circular open-air swimming pool surrounded by a colonnade. He has been aided by a group of fifteen mural painters, members of the National Mural Society, and six sculptors, who have provided elaborate decorations as an integral part of the plan.

The idea of creating a community center for the World's Fair as an example of what our cities need for their cultural development was the spontaneous effort of artists dissatisfied with contemporary conditions. They had learned that the economic plight of so many artists in the United States, which has been crucial since the depression, was related in part to the fact that the artist did not function practically and actively in present-day social life. Formerly the best artists produced chiefly for rich patrons, and the general public was deprived of the benefit of their work. Now these progressive artists, eager to reach the larger public and aware that many municipal governments throughout the U.S.A. are embarking on better-housing projects, decided to create an ideal community center for educational and recreational activities. The result is this interesting model designed for a community with a population of 100,000.

Storonov has worked in the international functional style, uniting three diversely shaped buildings centered on the swimming pool.

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6

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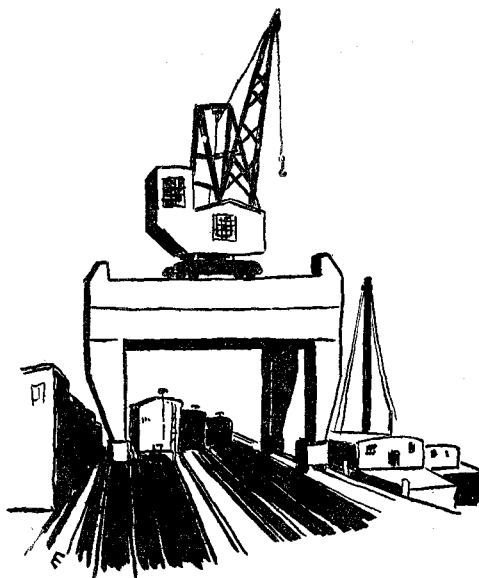
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tion: public entertainment, study, and sport. In the first building, heading the colonnade, is a modern 2000-seat auditorium to be used for theatrical performances, public meetings, and movies. An L-shaped building contains the library, scientific laboratories, art gallery, and workshops where amateurs may learn applied arts and crafts. A large V-shaped building houses an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, and cafeteria and is adjoined by an outdoor tennis arena. A nursery and playground for children is provided for mothers who wish to spend time at the various activities. The classic ideal of a sound mind in a sound body has inspired these artists in the selection of recreation, sport, and study.

The mural painters who participated are well known artists: Marion Greenwood, Leo Katz, Hugo Gellert, Harold Lehman, Monty Lewis, Ryah Ludins, Howard L. Irwin, Michael Lenson, Jacob Burck, Anatol Shulkin, Stuyvesant Van Veen, Max B. Starr, and Clara Fargo Thomas. They have chosen to depict such subjects as industry, power, sports, labor, food, etc. Unfortunately the style of large pictorial murals seems at variance with the purist form of the architecture, which is far better suited to the geometric patterns of Mondrian. Lack of integration between the plastic arts and architecture is no new phenomenon and can be resolved only by just such coöperative efforts as this new group is attempting. In this first instance, due to lack of time, many of the mural painters did not know or see the architectural model for which they designed their murals, nor did they work sufficiently together so that their mural compositions would harmonize. The sculptors have been more successful in designing with the architect in mind, particularly the sculptures of José Ruiz de Rivera, whose floating marble islands to be used as rafts and diving boards serve both a practical and anæsthetic purpose in the whole design of the circular swimming pool. Other sculptors contributing include William Zorach, who has made a large fountain in the shape of a Greek pediment, Minna Harkavy, Concetta Scaravaglione, Aaron Goodelman, and Isamu Noguchi. A provocative experiment is Louis Fer-

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Whatever may be the defects of this first collaborative effort, these artists have taken a pioneer step and pointed the way toward beautifying our cities and serving the community.

CHARMION VON WIEGAND.

### NATIVE SONG

WITH little to attract me to the concert halls, I've jumped with gusto on J. Rosamund Johnson's new book, *Rolling Along in Song* (Viking, \$3.50), a follow-up to the famed *Book of American Negro Spirituals* and *Second Book of Negro Spirituals* by the same author and publisher. There are a number of spirituals here, but the eighty-seven songs include also ring shouts, jubilees, work songs, plantation and minstrel ballads, levee pastimes, examples of jail house songs, street cries, rag-time, and blues, topped off by a more elaborate "musical episode" called *De Chain Gang* that traces the day of a Negro convict in a synthesis of such songs as "Gwine Down That Lonesome Road," "Water Me from the Lime Rock," "Workin' on de Chain Gang," "You Gotta Bus' dis Rock," etc.

I should have liked a lot more of the work songs and street cries in the place of some of the more familiar Foster and other minstrel airs, but publishing exigencies and Mr. Johnson's attempt to make "a chronological survey of American Negro music" probably dictated the present set-up. And as the book is less a historical document than it is a batch of grand tunes for home and group enjoyment, the contents are nicely balanced and suited to their purpose. The collection is something of a smaller *American Song Bag*, but the musical standards are considerably higher, although Johnson's settings, like those in the Sandburg anthology, are harmonized in rather rough and ready fashion. Some look pretty clumsy on paper and undoubtedly would horrify a pedant, but they lie well under the amateur pianist's fingers and are a joy to play and sing.

I'm still looking for the great day when we'll get something even better than good homespun settings of such native material, but until an American Bartók or Kodály comes



Darryl Frederick