NEW MASSES



Auspices of the New Masses JOSEPH FREEMAN Chairman

What Kind of Supreme Court! Wednesday Evening, May 26, 8:30 P.M. CARNEGIE HALL

AVENUE.

AND SEVENTH

W E wouldn't usurp the powers of Mr. Justice Roberts, but—we must hand down the verdict that the chances are 5 to 4 you won't be able to attend if you plan to buy seats at the door to hear Earl Browder speak on "What Kind of Supreme Court?" on May 26, at Carnegie Hall.

STREET

The most important Supreme Court session

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City.....

since the Civil War will soon be ended. The decision on the Social Security Act is still to be handed down. The reform of the Court is the central issue in America today.

YORK

NEW

What about the "famous billionaire" Ambassador Dodd cited as a Fascist organizer in his letter to senators calling for support of the Supreme Court reforms?

Joseph Freeman, editor of New Masses, will act as chairman. Mr. Browder will answer questions from the floor.

ALL SEATS RESERVED

35, 55, and 83 Cents

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mercial art, they applied their color with the air-brush. Siqueiros had observed our American billboards. Why not use their excellent invention for a better purpose? Why in the most advanced industrial country did the artists conservatively stick to the same instruments that were used by pre-historic artists? Luis Arenal and Siqueiros experimented; they painted murals outside, attempting a new technique to reach a wider audience.

In 1934, Arenal went back to Mexico. There he helped to found a Mexican workshop for technical experiments. He worked with Mendez, Zalce, O'Higgins, Pujol, Gamboa, and later Siqueiros. They were not afraid to design posters and placards for demonstrations, to exhibit their work in trade-union halls. They accepted orders and filled them just like a carpenter or tailor shop. They had no fear of losing their individuality but were proud of their collective craftsmanship.

When the American Artists' Congress was called in 1936, Arenal was among the delegates sent from Mexico. He decided to remain in New York. Together with Siqueiros, Anton Pujol, Berdiccio, and Bracho, he set up an experimental workshop here. The lacquer paintings now on exhibit derive from this workshop. They are painted in commercial lacquers such as are used for furniture or automobiles. Difficult to handle, this medium is rich in possibilities. It is eminently suited to photographic reproduction, enabling the artist to distribute his work widely at little cost. Arenal uses an air-brush most successfully to complement the hand-brush. He maintains that there is no essential conflict between these different functions. While the air-brush cannot give the anatomic structure of organic life like the hand-brush, it is superior in creating certain textures such as fire, smoke, water, etc.

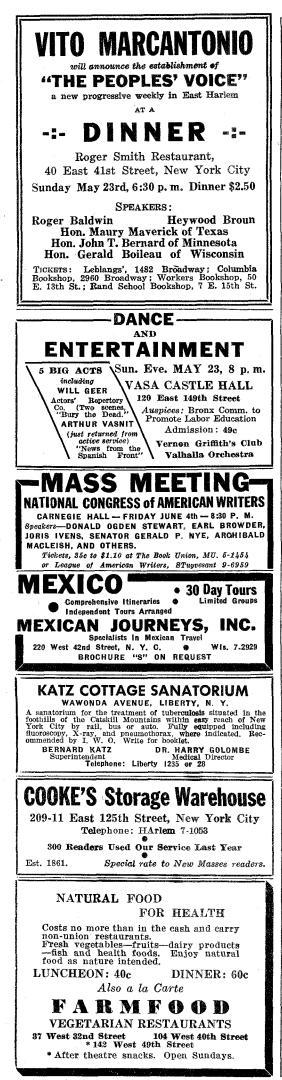
Arenal's open-mindedness and his prodigious vitality demonstrate that the younger generation of Mexican painters is carrying on the work of the first generation of revolutionary painters.

CHARMION VON WIEGAND.

THE DANCE

M ODERN dancers have had no easy time of it in the W.P.A. First there was the fight for a dance unit, then a dance theater; there was the early fight against cuts, the fight against incompetent and sometimes vicious supervision; there were delegations to Washington, strikes, picketing. If dancers never knew that their art was not something distinct and wholly separate from the business of something to eat and a place to work, they learned fast. And of all the leading dancers, Tamiris was the sole vigorous voice among all the younger people in their struggle for decent wages, decent working conditions, and a decent theater.

There were some half-hearted attempts on part of the authori⁺ is to get their dancers fore the public. *C* dide got an early run of no more than uple of performances; MAY 25, 1937



Tamiris's Salud au Monde ran for a few days, but despite excellent press reception, it wasn't until almost a year after the inception of the Federal Dance Theatre that anything in dance was given any sort of production. And when it came, it was some odd concoction of "modernistic" dance theater which strangely enough played to good houses for a good number of weeks. Which indicated more than anything else not simply an acceptance but a public eagerness for the work of the federal dance project.

Nevertheless, there followed a lapse—and what with the imminent threatening abolition of the entire W.P.A. apparatus, it looked as if the whole thing would blow up before a modern dancer got a decent showing, and with it whatever prospects there had been for a federally subsidized modern dance theater.

Whether How Long Brethren? ('Tamiris's brilliant suite now at the Nora Bayes Theatre in New York) will change the prospective gloomy picture of tremendous cuts in W.P.A. appropriations isn't predictable. But if the audience that has come every night, to greet these seven Negro themes of protest with as spontaneous a burst of approval as has ever been witnessed in the dance theater, is any index, then there'll be more, not fewer, federal dancers; more, not fewer, federal dance productions. And it is in the nature of some sort of justice that it is Tamiris who has so stirred the press and the federal authorities (for they have been moved), and who is filling the W.P.A. theater with a new and enthusiastic audience-not strictly a dance audience, but, on the contrary, people who have never seen in dance anything but incomprehensible gesture.

Simple in line, simple in pattern, almost literal and simple in its rhythms, *How Long Brethren?* is in the nature of a pageant. Its seven episodes are seven stylized movements such as cotton picking, "walking de street," the familiar chug-chug of the railroads. Its groupings are simple: there are no startling effects in the piece, there are no subtle abstractions; Tamiris has given herself back to her early free-swinging syncopations.

And this is all in praise. Tamiris has captured a folk manner in all this simplicity. Not a naïveté, but a searching quality moves her compositions. Short, sharp phrases tell the story of a rising rebellion against "nothin' to eat," "Cap'n kill my buddy." And a stirring, ironic, jazz-running climactic "Let's go to de buryin'" forces the composition to the militant promise that lies in the firm unity of "Too long, brethren, too long," which rings the curtain down on one of the finest choreographic works seen this or any season.

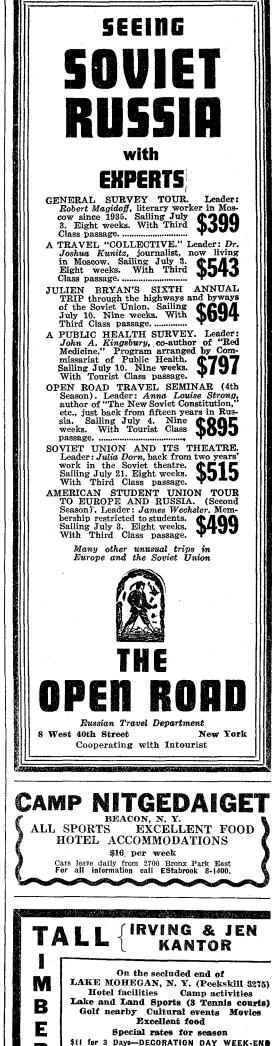
Tamiris has worked consistently with themes of proletarian origin, but here she has tapped a rich vein and realized as never before the brilliance of its thematic substance.

The work of the W.P.A. orchestra, the beautiful singing of the Negro chorus, the excellently performing group of well-equipped dancers, the magnificent dancing of Tamiris herself, must not be missed.

New York saw three ballet troupes per-1

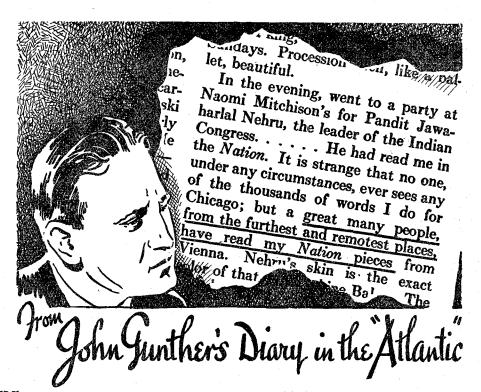
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NEW MASSES



30

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orm during Acade the familiar Ballet Russe; be American See et, which performed this ear only incidentally with the Metropolitan Opera House: and the comic Trudi Schoop (to be revolved to xt week), who made her first American appearance last season.

There was nothing very new in the seasonal farewell performances of the Ballet Russe. Massine's Scuola di Ballo was revived and Nijinsky's L'Apres-Midi d'un Faun and the Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique (Massine's choreography) were repeated.

Massine's School of the Ballet has one of those thoroughly complicated Commedia dell' Arte plots. The story, however, might be boiled down to "love and art conquer," or "the swindler swindled." In any case, it is a swift-moving ballet, has some good comic touches, allows for a number of excellent passages in technique, and altogether is one of the happier (theatrical) works in the repertory of the Ballet Russe. Ideologically slight, it nevertheless does point to the choreographer's distrust of the business of trade, and should not be without value in developing the thesis of the pre-bourgeois nostalgia that permeates the whole ballet school of daneing.

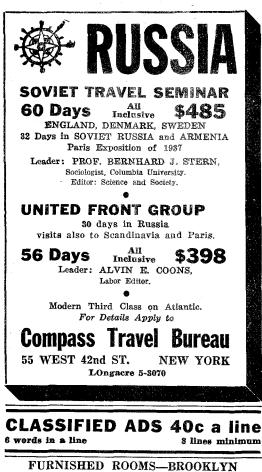
L'Apres-Midi d'un Faun (Debussy's music) is slight, sensuous; it moves lightly in the tenuous fields of a symbolism concerned with the faun and his loves, and fades. The composition is possessed of some excellent choreographic material which demands an assertive precision that Lichine did not quite succeed in giving. The ballet is of course completely a dream-world affair, completely in the spirit of wishful thinking and escape.

As to the Symphonie Fantastique, the autobiographical dope-dream of Berlioz, the prison scene in which the condemned composer is executed is still one of the ballet's brightest spots both for its excellent group movement and for its burlesque on the courts (not "nine old men," but an equivalent number). There's a bit of good satire, too, in the mock religious scene in which, before the priests sanctify the spirit of the deceased composer, the devils have their own inning at pulling the leg of the churchly rite. In both cases, however, it is interesting to note that the attacks are never directed at anything but the smugness and the hypocrisy of the order (the courts in the first instance, the church in the second), typical of liberal attacks on the "manifestations" of an order, typical of the "bohemian" attacks on "respectability." The hysteria of the masses of people (in the prison scene) indicated the choreographer as well as the composer had as little faith in them as he had in the "judges." and equal contempt for both. His satire was certainly not inspired as social protest, but evidently in complete line with bohemian selfrighteous self-pity, self-righteous justification, and self-righteous contempt.

Considered historically, this ballet (contemporary with Gautier and Louis-Phillippe, the citizen-king), may be seen readily as a development from a reactionary viewpoint. Its escapist and defeatist attitudes are obvious (it begins with an overdose of an opiate—ends with

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MAY 25. 1987



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death); and it is axiomatic that, if not at all times, certainly in times of political duress, bohemianism is certainly not a force for progress.

Of the American Ballet, as a corps the dancers have improved remarkably from the viewpoint of technique. Thematically, its work still leans heavily to the nostalgic. Apollon Musagete (first New York performance) is a high-school mural. The Tschaikovskyinspired Le Baiser de la Fée (The Fairy's Kiss-first American performance) is a fairy tale, romantic after the traditional "yearning" school. The Card Party (world premiere), much publicized and much vaunted, is a collapsing deck, is neither Alice-in-Wonderlandlike in comedy or satire, nor is it in the slightest sense more than the story of love (the "heart" family, from the ace down) conquers all. Stravinsky, who provided the musical score for each of the ballets, has done (politely) considerably better. It must be said for George Balanchine (choreographer of the three works), however, that there was nothing in the evening that approached quite the ephemeral nonsense of Errante (produced in 1935) nor the pseudo-American football ballet (of the same year). Among other things, he has learned to limit the choreography to the technical capabilities of the dancers. And even if much of his ballet is considerably reminiscent of Roxy's and the Music Hall, still the work is not overburdened with tinsel histrionics and is pleasant if only for that reason.

OWEN BURKE.

Forthcoming Broadcasts

(Times given are Eastern Daylight, but all programs listed are on coast-to-coast hookupe)

- Farmers' Union. Guest speakers under the organization's auspices, Sat., May 22, 1:30 p.m., N.B.C. blue.
- Cordell Hull. The secretary of state on "The Next Step for Trade and Peace," Sat., May 22, 8:45 p.m., N.B.C. red.
- Relief. National Conference of Social Work, with speakers including Paul U. Kellogg, Aubrey Williams, Jane Hoey, and others, on "What Next in Federal Relief?" Tues., May 25, 10:30 p.m., N.B.C. blue.

Education. National Education Association program, "Equal Opportunities for Every Child," Wed., May 26, 6 p.m., N.B.C. red.

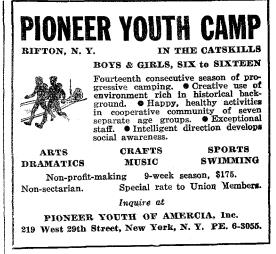
Recent Recommendations

MOVIES

(We are omitting the listing of recommended films for the duration of the strike in the Hollywood studios.—The Editors.)

PLAYS

- Professor Mamlock (Daly, N. Y.). Family of German-Jewish physician is caught in maelstrom of Nazi regime. A fascinating study of the psychology of changing human nature.
- Babes in Arms (Schubert, N. Y.). Pleasant and talented cast of youngsters in amusing, tuneful Rodgers and Hart musical.
- Excursion (Vanderbilt, N.Y.). Thunder on the left in comic vein by Victor Wolfson. Power (Ritz, N.Y.). The Living Newspaper's pow-
- erful and amusing attack on the utilities racket.



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