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count of his journey to China, Sam Goldwyn has drawn instead upon his own rich fancy. In his colorful introspection, Sam has been abetted by Robert E. Sherwood, no mean seer himself. Perhaps the boys were piqued at Marco's own showmanship, the old explorer's prowess at adorning truth. If so, they have handsomely taken the challenge. Sam's tale is taller.

Gary Cooper plays Marco; Ernest Truex is his bookkeeper; George Barbier is Kublai Khan; Alan Hale, a rebel chieftain; and Binnie Barnes is his wife. Basil Rathbone is the snake. Gary's kissfool, the daughter of the Khan, is rendered by Goldwyn's celebrated Brooklyn Norwegian, Sigrid Gurie. Nothing like the costumes of the piece have been seen since the last appearance of Mrs. S. Stanwood Menken at the defunct Beaux Arts ball.

*Marco Polo* is actually a comedy with mob scenes. The explorer is sent from Venice to China where he ingratiates himself with Kublai Khan. Basil Rathbone, an Arab menace who is plotting against the king, has a menagerie of the usual vultures, wild boars, etc., which he nourishes with prisoners dropped from trapdoors. When Marco is caught mugging with the princess, it looks as though he's going to get it. Instead he is sent into Alan Hale's territory to be boiled in oil. He is saved by Hale's queen and is spared as long as he plays a Venetian gigolo for her. Honest, I'm not making this up—it's all in the picture.

Kublai goes off to make war on the Japanese, and Rathbone stays to make the princess. But Gary turns up with Hale's cavalry during the big forced wedding, blows up the gates with some of the new-fangled gunpowder, and drops Rathbone to the hogs. The comic strip is enacted on sets in the Hollywood night club manner; might have been taken in the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese theater, for all I know. It is about as Chinese as a Chinese restaurant. I was greatly disappointed that Eddie Cantor didn't pop up during the

## Recently Recommended Plays

Prologue to Glory (Maxine Elliott, N. Y.)

Federal Theatre production of E. P. Conkle's play about Lincoln's early life, the affair with Ann Rutledge, and his first steps away from the life of the New Salem country store.

Haiti (Lafayette, N. Y.). Rex Ingram plays the lead in this stirring tale of how one of Toussaint L'Overture's generals foiled Napoleon's attempt to restore slavery in Haiti.

One-Tenth of a Nation (Adelphi, N. Y.). The current issue of The Living Newspaper, headlining the lack of adequate housing for President Roosevelt's 33 1-3 percent, and emphasizing the need for action. Thoroughly documented, witty, and admirably produced.

The Shoemaker's Holiday (National, N. Y.). Alternating with *Julius Caesar* and produced by the Mercury Theatre, Dekker's play represents with vigor and authority the Elizabethan love of life. A bawdy and lusty comedy that must be seen.



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# ATTENTION LOS ANGELES

court ceremonies, plugging a theme song.  
From the foregoing, the reader may get the  
idea that I didn't like *The Adventures of  
Marco Polo*. On the contrary, I found it the  
most enjoyable study of Chinese history since  
the last installment of *Terry and the Pirates*.

OF all the kindly movie critics of the  
boss press, the corps employed by  
Scripps-Howard are not the least appreciative.  
When the adjectives foam from their lips it is  
a pleasing cascade for the advertising depart-  
ment. This is innocent sport, to be sure, but  
the boys are also in grave danger of acquiring  
an ideology.

Take the vast, reverberating crescendo of  
adoration the boys gave to *Snow White and  
the Seven Dwarfs*. From "that Peril of Placid-  
ity," down the line to the meanest scrub, they  
were rapturous. James Thrasher, of the In-  
dianapolis *Times*, wrote: "Unique, a fable in-  
comparably told with technical magic, arse wit,  
and a warmth of universal understanding."  
Winsor French, the *Cleveland Press*: "Com-  
pletely revolutionary." Kaspar Monahan, the  
*Pittsburgh Press*: "Of such overwhelming  
charm is the Walt Disney masterpiece that it  
is unthinkable anyone could possibly fail to  
fall under its magic spell." Westbrook Pegler,  
himself, got down on his knees and stated  
with simple piety that it was "the happiest  
thing since the Armistice."

This leaves me a little bewildered. Here is  
a picture described by a longshoreman friend  
of mine on the Chelsea docks as "just a big  
Mickey Mouse" winning plaudits fit for  
Shakespeare. How come?

Scribe French gives us a possible clew:

"Disney has opened up limitless new vistas  
and incredible possibilities, and just at the  
time when [get ready for my italics—J. D.]  
*the motion picture industry has been feeling a  
crying need for new material free from social  
implications.*"

JAMES DUGAN.

## Pre-Anschluss Austrian Music

WITH the Vienna Philharmonic a thing  
of the past, peculiar interest is attached  
to its recent recordings, made, of course, before  
the Nazis' mailed first cracked down. It still  
lives under the capable hands of Weingartner  
in Beethoven's First Symphony (Columbia,  
and preferable to the bombastic Victor version  
by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Or-  
mandy) and Bruno Walter—conducting from  
the piano—in the Mozart D major Concerto,  
K. 466 (Victor).

*Bach*: Columbia and Victor each offer a  
double concerto, the former that for two vio-  
lins in D minor, with Szigeti and Flesch, the  
latter that for two pianos in C major, with  
Artur Schnabel and his son Karl Ulrich. The  
first tops the previous best set (Menuhin and  
Enesco, Victor) by a slight margin; the latter

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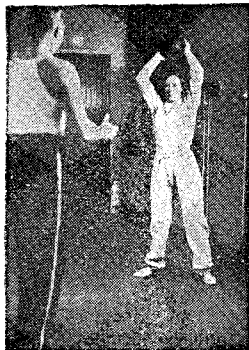
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is good only if you're not familiar with the original two harpsichord version—excellently recorded but unfortunately only available in the expensive L'Anthologie Sonore series.

**Brahms:** A rich feast of unfamiliar works recorded for the first time. Musicraft does the complete *Liebeslieder* vocal waltzes and the Clarinet Trio in A minor; the Friends of Recorded Music (associated with the *American Music Lover* magazine) do the Piano Sonata No. 2 in F sharp minor, played by Arturo Loesser; and Victor presents Casals and Horszowski in the second 'Cello Sonata, Op. 99.

**Mozart:** Skipping for the time being Victor's special series of New Friends of Music chamber works (Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann), we have two G minor Symphonies from Columbia. One is the early work, No. 25, K. 183, played by Wallenstein's Sinfonietta in its recording debut. Not at all the orthodox Mozart, it's a real discovery on discs or off; unfortunately it's given a rather harsh and "dead" recording, a real pity for the performance is crisp and assured and the set has the unique merit of including a complete miniature score of the music. The big G minor, No. 40, played by the London Philharmonic under Beecham, comes as close to perfection as any orchestral set I know: reading, playing, and recording are not only flawless, but profoundly exciting. Unquestionably this is the outstanding phonographic triumph of the year.

**Wagner:** If you must have *Parsifal* along with Easter eggs, you can do much worse than with Stokowski's versions of the Prelude and *Good Friday Spell* (Victor). The recording is mightily impressive and the playing remarkably straightforward.

The biggest current item is one that is tantalizing to hear and more tantalizing to write about. Not that it isn't good: the Glyndebourne Festival Company and the H.M.V. engineers have done a superb job with the complete—well, practically complete—*Don Giovanni* (Victor, 3 albums), but the work runs to twenty-three discs and sets one back, at list prices, exactly forty-six bucks. The complete—really complete—*St. Matthew Passion* (also 3 Victor albums, No. 2 appearing on the March lists and No. 3 on those for April) will cost \$53.00 in toto, but that's not so aggravating, because no true Bachian will want the whole business. The soloists continue to ruin an otherwise commendable performance, but there are perhaps a few individual discs for chorus and orchestra only that are worth buying singly.

ROY GREGG.

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**L**AST year, Trudi Schoop brought her Comic Ballet from Switzerland to present *Blonde Marie*, a dancing comedy of errors after the manner of Molière's *Bourgeois*

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