

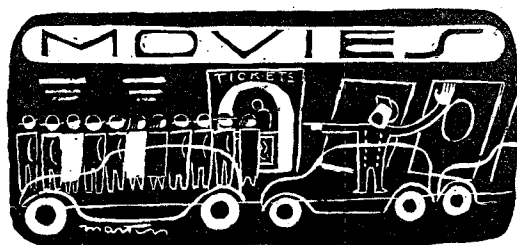
Baltic Deputy; indeed, the new film has a greater appeal because it has a half-dozen performances as compelling as Cherkassov's in *Baltic Deputy*.

The scenario writer, I. Gruzdyev, has allowed the film to follow Gorky's own episodic narrative rather than making of it a single composition. The incidents are divided by subtitles consisting of passages from *My Childhood*. Don't let this scare you, because the realization of character, the depth of Gorky himself, is in the picture.

The orphaned Gorky was brought up in the brutish menage of his grandfather who was the owner of a dye shop where all the Kashirins, his grandfather's side of the family, and the Peshkovs, Grandmother Ivanovna's branch, worked in the family enterprise. Grandfather was a mad old fool with an unbridled temper, who beat the grandchildren with soaked rods and grandmother with his fists. M. G. Troyanovsky's portrayal of the patriarchal tyrant allows us to see old Kashirin in the light of his own childhood, which occurred in the beastly environment of an earlier czardom. He beats the women and children because that is his right, because he was beaten so in his own youth. This is the way things are to Grandpa Kashirin, the piously orthodox, who inherits the medieval tradition of patriarchy.

Grandmother is shrewd and kind, a great teller of stories, who secretly worships a household fairy who can be importuned to bless the migrations of the family by receiving a bast shoe under the stove. She shapes the sensitive boy's character and shields him from grandfather's tempers. As played by V. O. Massalitinova, Gorky's grandmother becomes the noble creature she was in the affections of the author. The treacherous, loutish uncles of the boy, full of plots over the dye vats, are two vivid revelations of peasant degradation in Holy Russia. Their broods of impish kids are going through the process of becoming the sneaks their fathers are. When grandma and grandpa take young Gorky away after Uncle Mikhail, in a drunken pique, burns the dye shop, a cousin his own age makes a face at the departing boy. Uncle cuffs him vigorously and the kid in turns smacks his little sister beside him. What a sharp incidental note to show us how they released their misery on each other.

Another boyhood friend was the apprentice, Gypsy, who could dance, do sleight of hand, and sing like an angel for his little friend Alexei. D. Sagal plays the tough, lovable Gypsy in a beautiful fashion. But Gypsy is



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killed by overwork and young Alexei Peshkov (Gorky) goes on to new friends—a revolutionist who thinks grandmother's homely maxims should be written down; a wonderful gang of urchins of Alexei's own age; and a little paralytic boy who sits neglected in a basement room with a menagerie of a magpie, cockroaches, and other vermin which the lonely lad has named for the mad people he sees through his cellar window. This forsaken child, whose seraphic smile will stop your heart, dreams of someday seeing the open fields. He wants to know, if he feeds a mouse will it get as big as a horse so he can ride away to the open fields? Alexei assures him that is so and he gives his friend the precious white mouse that Gypsy left with him. One great day, when young Gorky goes out into the world for himself, the little cripple is dragged along on a wagon that has had its wheels collected in the dump by Alexei's gang. At last he sees the open fields, with a warm wind rippling the grass, and he frees his menagerie to the wind. The magpie goes away and young Alexei with it, tramping down a desolate road in the sun, leaving the old gang around the cripple in the open fields.

A Moscow schoolboy, Alyosha Lyarsky, plays the title role. In a picture distinguished, as no other in years has been, by its great acting, this lad confidently takes his place as one of the greatest. This is the triumph of Director Donskoi—this and the other child roles. *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* is a great motion picture.

ABOUT the second year after college the most iconoclastic college man begins to feel Old Gradism creeping up on him. He wants to go back to the storied elms, get himself a snootful, and tell the boys at the house what hell-raisers there were in the old days. I succumbed to the feeling myself last week. So I had a vicarious Alumni Homecoming by dropping in the Criterion to see *Campus Confessions*. I came out cured of school-days nostalgia. The moral, and a heavily moral tale it is, of this saga of Old Middleton is expressed in the dulcet speech of the coed journalist, as she reproaches the bookish hero: "Playing and rooting are also part of the college." That, anyone who has seen the hired hands of an American university thundering down the greensward to the reverberating enthusiasm of the scholars cannot deny. The menaces of the picture uphold the idea that college is an institution of learning but they succumb prettily during the big game to the body-beautiful faction led by Betty Grable and Hank Luisetti, the potent basketball star.

FRED ASTAIRE has a captivating grin and imaginative feet and Ginger Rogers is captivating all over but why I should have more than an esoteric interest in their new dances is a question begged by *Carefree*, their latest. The most notable shots are of some slow-motion dancing in a dream sequence with the edges of the screen faded off into white like a vignette in a sentimental nineteenth-

century novel. The picture is about psychology, which seems to be quite a parlor game in Hollywood. Ginger Rogers proves herself again to be a capable farceuse, better than the material she has in the picture.

JAMES DUGAN.

Phonograph Recordings

ALL portents in the phonograph-recording field point to a flood of significant releases this fall and winter. But before that gets under way, I should get caught up on the outstanding records of the last three or four months, many of which may have escaped the casual record buyer's attention during the hot weather and which are altogether too good to be missed entirely. In this review I shall not have space to discuss the moderns, but they will be taken up in a later issue.

Beginning with Bach, of course—and ordinarily we might stop there too, but the recent disc editions do him considerably less than justice. The fifth volume of the Bach Society, completing the forty-eight preludes and fugues in Edwin Fischer's piano performances (Victor), Yella Pessl's Fifth and Sixth English Suites for harpsichord (Victor), and the Fourth Sonata for unaccompanied 'cello, played by Archambeau (Musicraft) are only fairly good. The one real gem in the batch is Landowska's harpsichord version of the Second English Suite, incongruously but happily stuck in to fill up the Bach Society Vol. 5. If you like the chorale *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* as well as I do, take fair warning and avoid the new Cailliet transcription, played by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Victor). But if you've got a rather low regard for son Carl Philipp Emanuel (who was once esteemed above his father), you should hear the *Magnificat* by the University of Pennsylvania Choir under Harl McDonald (Victor) to get a new slant on C. P. E.'s true stature. It's the best work of his I've ever heard.

Mozart fares considerably better, with first prize going to that well known Mozartian scholar Benny Goodman, joining up with the Budapest String Quartet in the Clarinet Quintet (Victor), playing it straight and superbly. Close behind come the sonatas for piano solo (No. 14 in C-minor) and for two pianos (D-major) played by Gieseeking for Columbia and by Grace Castagnetta and Milton Kaye for Timely; the Symphonies No. 29 in A-major and No. 38 in D-major (*Prague*) played by Beecham and the London Philharmonic and Bruno Walter and the (former) Vienna Philharmonic for Columbia and Victor respectively.

Similarly Haydn gets a better break than Handel. The former's Symphony No. 93 conducted by Beecham (Columbia) is one of his finest; Symphony No. 88 (old No. 13) is almost equally good, but here Toscanini's flawless performance—the first appearance of the NBC Symphony on discs (Victor)—was

recorded in the infamous Studio 8-H, which, if you remember the broadcasts, is so dead acoustically that not even the maestro can come to real life in it. Haydn is also represented by a fine flute trio in D-major, starring René Le Roy (Musicraft), while Handel has only two entries: a rather dull violin sonata in A-major (Musicraft) and a pretty good harpsichord suite—the one with the “Harmonious Blacksmith” finale (Columbia).

Timely's *Eighteenth-Century Symphonies* album was released quite a few months ago, but I think it escaped attention in these pages. It's altogether too good to be skipped, for Max Goberman's Sinfonietta provides skillful first editions of unusual and attractive works by Locatelli, Pergolesi, and Carl Stamitz. The best records recently of old music are the Telemann Harpsichord Fantasias played by Dr. Wolff (Columbia) and an album of Flemish, French, and Italian madrigals (*Vocal Music of the Renaissance*, Musicraft) sung by Arthur Lief's Madrigalists. And at last the famous *L'Anthologie Sonore* collection, edited by Dr. Curt Sachs, has been made reasonably available to those who can't shell out \$20 for a complete volume. Now any record can be bought singly (at \$2). Perhaps the best to start with are the Bach two-harpsichord concerto (two records), Handel oboe sonata, or the Gabrieli music for brass instruments—but almost everything in this remarkable series is of really exceptional interest.

From the standard orchestral repertory the following are all admirably played and recorded: Beethoven's *Leonore No. 2* and *Egmont* overtures, and the early Triple Concerto, all conducted by Weingartner (Columbia); excerpts from Berlioz' *Damnation de Faust*—including the Rakóczy March—conducted by Beecham (Columbia); Brahms' *Academic Festival* overture conducted by Bruno Walter (Victor); Liszt's *Les Préludes* and Schumann's Second Symphony conducted by Ormandy (Victor); the Rossini-Respighi ballet *La Boutique Fantasque*, conducted by Eugene Goossens (Victor); Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and Sibelius' *Finlandia*—the best of myriad versions—conducted by Beecham (Columbia).

ROY GREGG.

The Photograph as Art and Document

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS, by Walker Evans. Museum of Modern Art. \$2.50.

FEW people pay real attention to photographs; it is rarely demanded of them. Under its mendacious title, *Life*, for example, supplies us regularly with scores of snappy photos which can, and should, be seen while turning the page. Its two million copies weekly have corrupted our taste into a desire for hasty titillation; the under-angle shot, the debutante in season, and the very bedroom (exclusive)

of the well known diplomat, taken candid with all his little habits. *Life* pays—and it has been able to take talented, young, and technically agile photographers and twist them into its pattern of snobbish vulgarity. The very real pressure of this success, Walker Evans has resisted with all the force of his art.

Our attention is compelled in these photographs by a combination of reticence, delicacy, and a bitter surgical honesty; then what seems the most casual element becomes, as we study it, an irreducible point of the photograph. Look at the remarkable “Girl in Fulton Street,” where the central figure is the half-turned head with its masklike hat in the style of 1929. The face itself has a tragic and almost ferocious sensitivity, as if it were a kind of self-portrait of the artist; yet see the other details: the three anonymous hats of the men just beyond, a steel arm of a crane, and especially the edge of the store window on which the girl is leaning, where the mixed and illusory reflections provide a kind of strip of confusion against which the girl's face looks back with such intensity.

This method of providing a marginal area of contrast runs through many of the photographs, especially in the first group of fifty. By this means, Walker Evans reveals a certain hideous miscellaneousness of American life: the used cars abandoned on a field; a confused and helpless back room, revealed through an open door; the tires, tubes, and spare parts displayed on the front of a garage; and the magic advertising words, the names, the signs, ubiquitous, ugly, meaningless, and powerful. Inside this macabre world, the photographer has isolated a series of American faces. Few are seen with pity; some are too brutal (the legionnaire with the mustache), some too brutalized (the Negro dock-worker); but mostly the effort of the artist has been simply to expose, and that is a great deal.

Here the special quality of photographs, that they are also *facts*, gives to every ingenuity and sensitiveness of the photographer the merciless edge of truth. It is this quality which makes the collection such an appalling record of America. Perhaps Evans, in the second portion of the book, wished to contrast the square wooden boxes of company towns, with the involuted, delicate fantasy of certain American architecture. But the latter, placed side by side with the harsh force of the streets in which workers live, become dead, pleasureless relics, ornate as tombstones. The real force of the book is not in the photographs of scrollwork, but in the faces and the interiors, as individual as faces, of Alabama and Connecticut, in the somber, lyric “Factory Street in Amsterdam, N. Y.,” in the “Church of the Nazarene,” which concentrates, in its burning contrast of black and white, the religious hysteria and the degrading poverty from which it springs.

Such photographs as these have, beyond their artistry, the stature of documents and if we wish to understand ourselves we must look at them.

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