

posers were forced to write only simple and easy music, that they had to use folk tunes exclusively for their material, that they had to refrain from any of the experiments of the "modernist" schools.

The Sixth Symphony and the Quintet answer these charges point by point. Far from being "written down" to the public, the Symphony is a highly austere work, requiring concentrated listening. Both works are strictly modern in their harmonies, although using dissonances only when they are called for by the musical language and emotions of the work. Although both works are thoroughly Russian in idiom, actual folkish tunes appear only in isolated spots, and are treated with the utmost imagination and subtlety. The Quintet, in its "classicism" of form, is not only something of an innovation for Russian music, but follows a path laid down by the "advanced guard" of the moderns, and to my ears goes most of them a good step better. Instead of borrowing classical forms, like the "fugue," to hide a withdrawal from the world (which I find in Stravinsky and Schoenberg, or in the "classicism" of T. S. Eliot's poetry), Shostakovich penetrates to the true, inner music-making spirit of classicism in the language and emotional expression of our time.

What actually did the *Pravda* criticism say? It claimed that Shostakovich was writing in too facile a style, that he was failing to enlarge his human and emotional scope, that in parts of "Lady Macbeth" he was stooping to actual vulgarity, that he was indulging in the pseudo-revolutionary practice of thumbing his nose at all art of the past. It was an article whose implications struck at much "radical" music of other countries. Like the academicians they hated, these musical rebels were upholding form as the whole of art. The only difference was that the academicians cherished the form of past music, ignoring its content, while the rebels searched only for a new form and language that would sound opposite to the past, not seeing that a new content would suggest its own changes.

The *Pravda* criticism was written out of a deep sense of responsibility toward Soviet music and Soviet composers, and out of a desire to see them grow. It was written in a country which had set a shining record for giving its artists great audiences, new forms to work with, rising directly out of the new needs of people, and great opportunities for growth. And its wisdom is fully proved in the present pair of works. They are fully as "modern" as the First Symphony, but modern on a new level, with a warmth and humanity that happens unfortunately to be rare in so much of modern music.

The performances of both works are splendid. Stokowski, Miss Rivkin, and the members of the Stuyvesant Quartet are not only fine technicians, but they have made a special study of modern idioms. Both albums come with understanding and illuminating notes on the music; the Victor by A. Veinus, and the Columbia by Nicholas Slonimsky.

MARTIN MACK.

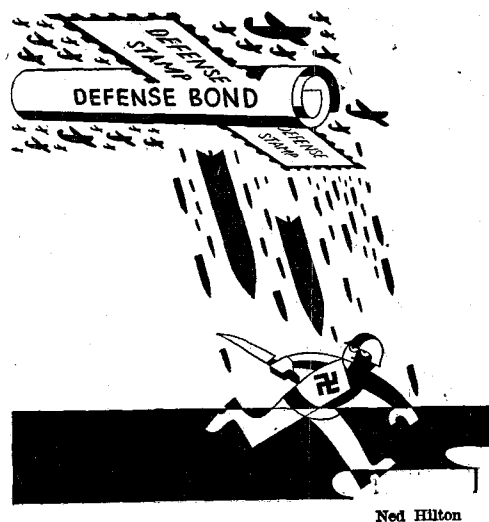
The Shadow

Leslie Howard as anti-Nazi Superman.
... "Design for Scandal."

PERHAPS a film like *Mr. V* is basically a wish-fulfillment. It is not very likely that a shy British professor of archeology, disguised as a scarecrow, ever could succeed in smuggling captives out of a Nazi concentration camp. But it is pleasant to dream that he could, and pleasant to see him bluff Dr. Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry into taking him on an obsequious tour of Dachau. When these adventures are presented with the deft direction and drolly understated acting of Leslie Howard, the result is a film delightful and heartwarming, if only because we wish the real-life job were as easy as that.

Prof. Horatio Smith is an inconspicuous fellow with a trick of fading into the background. What infuriates the Gestapo is that, when he fades, several important prisoners invariably fade with him. The professor's rescue work is accordingly frequently interrupted, especially by a charming young woman who, in turn, rescues him from his somewhat sterile romantic love for the statue of Aphrodite Callipygia. Finally forced by the declaration of war to leave Germany, the professor vanishes before the eyes of the Gestapo, leaving behind him a trail of cigarette smoke in the air and a grim promise: "Don't worry, I'll be back. We'll all be back."

This is a fairytale, but it has solid fact behind it, though its Gestapo officials are a little too gentle and gentlemanly for belief; their chief waits for evidence before making arrests, lets minor enemies escape scot-free, and is willing to carry on a battle of wits with the professor instead of clubbing him to death. *Mr. V*, indeed, wants you to laugh derisively at the Nazis rather than fear them. The rabby officials of the Propaganda ministry, the ratty Gestapo subordinates, the hoggish Gestapo chief who insists that Shakespeare was a German—all these are brilliant satire. In one superb moment a German government spokesman, angrily denying rumors of the rescues, trumpets, "And, furthermore, in Nazi Germany nobody can be saved by anybody!"



If the lines are neat, the direction is neater. There is a fine irony, for instance, in the close-up of a poster on which a blonde maiden beckons: "Come to romantic Germany!" while, somewhere out of sight, we hear Hitler making a speech. The one serious flaw of *Mr. V* is a political superficiality which mars the logic of its anti-Nazi stand. Leslie Howard, in the character of Mr. Smith, declares explicitly that history is made, progress is achieved, by a few outstanding geniuses—the artists and scientists he is rescuing. In other words, the people don't matter and only great men are worth saving. Ignoring the very existence of the German people, *Mr. V* consequently ignores the real issues of the war and the real horror of Nazism. It must, nevertheless, be given credit for its anti-Nazi intentions, more credit for its delectable light touch, and special credit for such acting as Mr. Howard's and that of Francis Sullivan as the Gestapo chief.

SACHA GUITRY's *Nine Bachelors* is technically adroit, decorated with amusing lines and a remarkably clever satirical musical score. The film nevertheless makes itself unpleasant by its vociferous insistence that dishonesty is the best policy. The view of human nature is the view one expects from a jaundiced eye; all Guity's characters buy and sell one another, and his hero boasts of being a pimp. The bachelors of the title are a group of disreputable old men who gladly agree to marry foreign women, thus giving them French citizenship, at a flat rate of 25,000 francs; the money once paid, the old boys leave the phony Bachelors' Home and appear to embarrass their wives, with grotesque results. In the meantime the organizer of the deal marries, by a trick, the "Countess" on whom he has had his eye; she accepts him and the French citizenship that goes with him; and we leave these two charming people together. The old men, though caricatures in appearance, are well acted.

"DESIGN FOR SCANDAL" is distinguished chiefly by the emergence of poor Walter Pidgeon, after 10 these many years of competent acting, as a glamour boy; as such he is compelled to take a shower bath in at least partial view of the audience, and to describe himself as irresistible to women. The script works hard at being funny; the actors work harder; both fail. Mr. Pidgeon and Edward Arnold, in desperation, shout, gesticulate, and grimace without helping matters. Only Rosalind Russell remains her cool, though martyred, self. In *Design for Scandal's* one effective scene, Miss Russell is mercifully freed from dialogue and allowed to posture before a mirror in an imaginary sarong. The rest of the time she's a lady judge, and the imbecilic other characters tell you she has brains but not beauty.

As for the director: someone in the film makes a long-distance telephone call. Close-up of telephone; close-up of telephone wires; close-up of phone operator making connections; close-up of another telephone operator making another connection; close-up of butler,

at the other end, announcing, "A long-distance call for you, sir." This is not known as slow motion photography, but should be.

JOY DAVIDMAN.

Stage Blitz

A new play about London under the fire of bombs.

"**H**EART OF A CITY," Lesley Storm's little play about London under the blitz, is a well intentioned effort to portray the courage of the British people—and in general it is an effective effort. The reasons for this are manifest in the obvious sincerity of Miss Storm's drama. She has made no attempt to *exploit* her characters or her situations—but has succeeded, in fair measure, in understanding both. The result is a stage full of very real people who are characters rather than rubber stamps standing for ideas.

You may feel that the juxtaposition of a group of chorus girls against the background of war horror is an obvious one, and you will be right. So is the juxtaposition of the theatrical tradition, "The show must go on!" against the idea of "Carry on, thumbs up!" etc. For it is true that Miss Storm's play runs to obvious clichés and traditional symbols. But the honesty with which she has projected these symbols, plus the creation of some real people, almost make up for the obviousness.

Under the hail of bombs the little Windmill Theater of London was the only show shop to remain open. It housed a topical revue full of ambitious young people trying to make theatrical careers for themselves. They have various emotional tangles, but these problems, correctly, become subservient to the necessities of war work for morale, and the need for real determination among all the people of London. There is much humor in these people—the redheaded showgirl whose happiness is achieved when she is named correspondent; the soubrette who wins a Royal Air Force pilot; the "highbrow" chorus gal whose horn-rimmed spectacles contrast so violently with her scant and sexy costume; the bird-brained strip-teaser whose friends are all foreign agents. There is also a heartening absence of phony "heroics." True, a good deal of rather sticky sentiment is involved, but the ideas Miss Storm projects are all valid, even though they do not probe very deeply into the meaning of the war or the forces from right to left, organized (and unorganized) who are in the battle.

In the leading roles Gertrude Musgrove, Margot Grahame (who gave so fine a performance in *The Informer*), Frances Tannehill, and Beverly Roberts are very human, very likable. Lloyd Gough contributes some fine understanding work in the role of a weak character whose failure to understand the issues of the war destroys him long before a Nazi bomb completes the job.

For an unpretentious image of ordinary human beings at war, *Heart of a City* has the

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(No. 6)

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