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down she has never relinquished her yearning to be a Stork Club heroine. She doesn't know it, of course, but in due time she bares her psyche to an analyst who lets her in on it. The interviews with her doctor are managed in three dream sequences that would have given Freud a permanent hangover. Each is a visual caress, but scientifically a kindergarten exercise. She becomes the glamor girl never encountered on land or sea and in the final dream she achieves a blend of cheesecake and mink that not only sums up her desires but the gimmikry of the picture. She gets to know what she wants, picks the proper mate, turns over her business to his masculine ministrations, and the angels sing loud and melodiously.

Thus from within its voluminous folds peeks the social note of the film. One woman decides to become a leader in business, not because she feels women have a place in the world of commerce, but as an escape from the "normal" pursuits of womanhood. It is held as an axiom, in *Lady in the Dark*, apparently, that a woman cannot be attractive and successful at the same time. I suggest that the social philosophers who have to do with such ideas look around Hollywood itself and note how many easy lookers are doing right well in the film industry.

Technically the movie is very persuasive, but they'll never persuade me that Ginger Rogers is a plain-looking gal suffering from past snubs, especially when her eyes, in close-up, turn out to be such a beautiful technicolor blue. The film makes a fundamental blunder, moreover, by overdressing all the women who surround her. They come off as tasteless frumps, and any man with half an eye would pick the Rogers girl, tailored suits and all, without a moment's hesitation.

By far the film's greatest single contribution is to return to public life, Ginger's legs, hidden away the many years since her dancing as Fred Astaire's partner.

I HAVE just seen *Sahara* for the second time, an experience confirming my belief that this is the finest war film to date. I make this statement in full recognition of all the fine recent pictures, including *Action in the North Atlantic*, *Destination Tokyo*, *Casablanca*, *Hangmen Also Die*, and many others. *Sahara* is distinguished by exceptional camera work, fine direction, the best kind of acting that obtains in Hollywood, a reasonable plot, and tight writing. All good films have these attributes, but this has something more—its handling of the Negro.

From the very beginning, the Sudanese Scout, who is meant to represent all Negroes of the United Nations, assumes qualities of leadership never before accorded to a Negro in the films. Not only is he endowed with a knowing ability upon which the expedition depends for its safety, but he

demonstrates the discipline of only the most responsible of leaders.

More important yet, I believe, is writer John Howard Lawson's purpose to have the Negro serve as the symbol of democracy in the fight with captured Nazis. When the Nazi has to be disarmed, the Negro does it—not just a white soldier of "superior" race, whom the Nazi would have preferred. Again, when the Nazi escapes, the Sudanese goes after him, chokes him with his bare hands, and gives up his life in the effort. These actions are deliberate. The Negro, says *Sahara*, is able, disciplined, reliable, courageous, capable of leadership, and would gladly give up his life to further the cause of democracy.

The film also demonstrates a sound policy of collaboration between writer and director. John Steinbeck, author of *Lifeboat*, protests that he meant his Negro to have an important part in the film, instead of the meager role assigned to him. Granted. Had Steinbeck been able to work on the picture during its production, much of the mischief might have been averted. In happy contrast, the sharp synchronization between plot requirement and production fulfillment that characterizes much of *Sahara* was made possible only by director and writer working closely together.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

Sign on a local theater marquee:
"Ten Stars Cry Havoc."

Community Concert

RUDOLF SERKIN recently presented a program of outstanding piano music before a large community audience that filled the Theresa Kaufmann Auditorium of the Ninety-second St. Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York.

The size of the audience and its enthusiastic appreciation of the music indicates the need for more local concerts of this type. There is no reason why all performances by outstanding artists in New York should be centralized in two or three leading concert halls in Manhattan. There are audiences in all parts of the borough—as well as in other boroughs—who will attend, support and enjoy good music by good artists.

The dramatic highlight of the concert was Mr. Serkin's energetic performance of Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata* in which he brought out the work's emotional intensity. He was less successful in interpreting the contrasting mood of the beautiful *Andante*. His rendition of Mozart's *Variations on a Theme by Gluck*, though precise, was cold and lacked the elegant grace inherent in the composition. The playing of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* was over-intellectualized. Only at the end of the wonderful *Fantasy* did he give expression to its great range of moods, which wander

from dreaminess and introspection to brilliant, dramatic outbursts. The rendition of the *Fugue* failed to drive relentlessly to the great climax of tonal volume and emotional power that Bach apparently intended. Schumann's *Carnival*, portraying a variety of moods and incidents, was performed with tremendous technical facility, although at times with insensitivity to some of the composition's emotional nuances. However, Mr. Serkin succeeded in bringing out the character of some of the more delicate passages at the beginning of the work where he showed that he can play a real pianissimo. But often he gave the impression that he belongs to that school of performers who play the piano as though it were mainly a percussion instrument. Although admiring his technical brilliance, one wishes he would express more of the emotional warmth and sensitivity demanded by many of the compositions he plays.

IN REREADING my review of Elie Siegmeister's fine concert of American Ballads, I realized I reviewed the program rather than the concert. For the performance was received with great enthusiasm by the audience, who insisted upon and received many encores. To me, it was one of the most thrilling and inspiring concerts that I have heard in a very long time. One can only hope that Mr. Siegmeister will present us with more and longer concerts in the near future.

PAUL ROSAS.



THE one hundred-twentieth anniversary of Bedrich Smetana's birth was recently celebrated with an American premiere, in concert version, of his opera *Dalibor*.

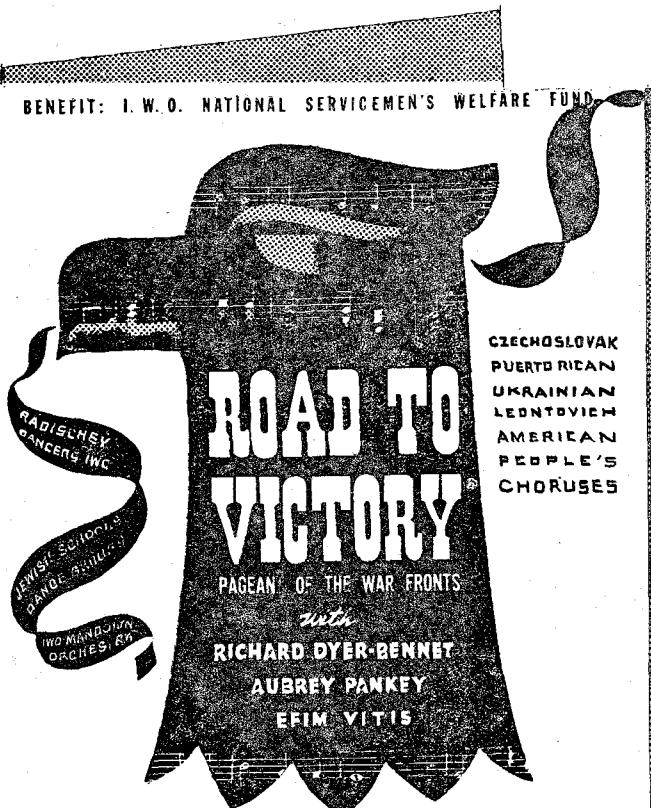
The story concerns a Czech national hero, who becomes the leader of the people's struggle for emancipation. Such a subject would seem ideal for Smetana, a composer so deeply rooted in the folk music of his people. However, the anticipation of the work was more exciting than one's reaction to the performance. Some of the best thematic material was never developed to what could have been its true potential.

The artists and chorus struggled hard, but a concert version of any opera, especially a practically unknown work, suffers from tremendous handicaps. Because there is no stage action there is little flesh and blood. It is not helped by substituting the gray and black tones of the piano accompaniment for the colorful complexities of a real orchestra. Only the greatest opera could possibly survive this type of presentation. Nevertheless the intense nationalism, the local color, the extensive use of folk material that pervades this work afford sufficient basis for wanting to hear *Dalibor* performed as the composer intended.

B. T.

A group of operas heard at the Metropolitan Opera House will be reviewed soon.

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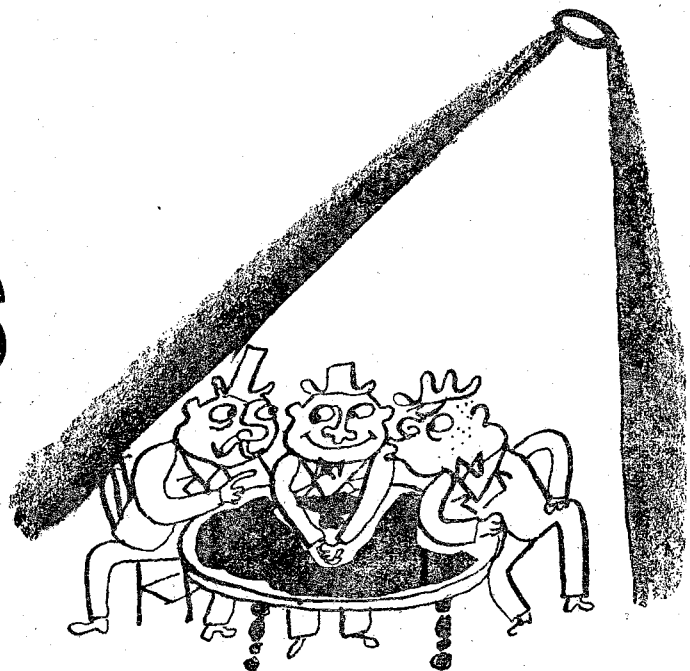
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IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

JOHN L. SPIVAK'S LOWDOWN ON A CONSPIRACY



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