

➤➤ The Movies ◀◀

➤➤ "The Criminal Code"

AFTER a good many preliminary skirmishes, including the rather appalling *Numbered Men* and the very fair *Big House*, the movies have finally done a prison picture which carries conviction and a sizable dramatic shock. With commendable courage Columbia Pictures has stuck faithfully to Martin Flavin's stage play, *The Criminal Code*, while Howard Hawks' direction is crisp and telling. As the district attorney who is suddenly made warden of a penitentiary full of men he has convicted, Walter Huston is superlative.

The Criminal Code is a bitter indictment of the injustices and cruelties of the law. Sent up the river for seven years for an accidental killing, the boy (Phillips Holmes) learns that, opposed to the Criminal Code, is the code of the men behind the bars—a code which means death to the "squealer." You get a pretty good feeling of penitentiary life in *The Criminal Code*, from the jute mill to the endless tramping up and down steel and concrete passages by thousands of feet. There is a slight love story, a mere thread, even less than in the stage play, but this didn't worry the theatre manager when it was shown in New York. This ingenious gentleman got himself some electric lights and wrote the following in letters of fire over the front door:

A few drinks—two burning eyes and red lying lips turned a clean boy into a numbered outcast—years of hate broke him—love cured overnight—RKO second anniversary greater show month.

I call this downright insulting. Even when Hollywood makes a fine film the theatre owners insist that you and I are imbeciles.

➤➤ "Little Caesar"

Al Capone and his team of sure-shot Chicagoans have been reproduced on the screen a good many times already, but W. R. Burnett's *Little Caesar* with Edward G. Robinson shooting his way through the title rôle is about as exciting as anything you could ask for. In many ways Mr. Robinson makes the most convincing Al Capone we have yet had. Other big shots and their molls who dart in and out of the Palermo Club are Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Glenda Farrell and Sidney Blackmer. I would suggest, however, that you wear your brass knuckles to *Little Caesar*, for this film seems to bring out the sturdier and more

By CREIGHTON PEET

aggressive members of the community who have come to see a story about the Boy Who Made Good. And let me tell you that when Sergeant Flaherty's ma-

Worth Seeing

The Blue Angel: Emil Jannings as a German high school teacher who runs after a vaudeville actress.

Min and Bill: Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery in a more or less serious waterfront drama.

Morocco: Fine performances from Gary Cooper, Adolphe Menjou and Marlene Dietrich.

Laughter: Donald Ogden Stewart's dialogue makes this a delight. With Nancy Carroll and Frederic March.

New Moon: Fine singing by Grace Moore and Lawrence Tibbett in a dull operetta.

Reaching for the Moon: Douglas Fairbanks is often amusing but many of his jokes belong back in the smoking room.

Right to Love: Ruth Chatterton as Susan Glaspell's "Brook Evans." Interesting and unusual.

Royal Family: Vastly amusing nonsense at the expense of the Barrymore family. With Frederic March.

Tom Sawyer: Jackie Coogan, Junior Durkin and Mitzi Green are simply grand as Mark Twain's characters.

chine gun cuts him down at the end, the audience goes home mighty quiet and depressed.

➤➤ "Paid"

The handsome Joan Crawford is again reducing American Womanhood to tears, this time in Bayard Veiller's fourteen-year-old melodrama, *Within the Law*, now called *Paid*. It is claptrap, but resounding claptrap, and it succeeds

in re-convincing every girl in the audience that all-men-are-beasts-but-we-girls-are-really-much-much-smarter-than-they-are. *Paid* shows Miss Crawford as a sixteen-dollar-a-week clerk who is sent to the penitentiary for three years for a theft she did not commit. In jail she learns all about the law, and comes out a high-class blackmailer and crook. Finally, just for revenge, she marries the son of the man who had sent her up. Believe me, girls, that just tears the old pirate up into little pieces. I think Joan Crawford is much too good an actress for the shop-girl circuit.

➤➤ "The Man Who Came Back"

If Fox had set out deliberately to ruin Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell they could have succeeded no more completely than they have in this preposterous version of the once highly successful play, *The Man Who Came Back*. This movie is so trashy, so silly, so badly cast, so implausible and so generally junky that it should have a tremendous future among those who go in for junky things. The people who slobbered over *Common Clay*, for instance, should love it. It shows how a woman's love redeemed a drunkard and made him into a generally clean-cut hero. Somehow there is something indecent about movie "love." It should be spelled "luv" and apply only to such horrible phantasmagoria as seem to exist in the minds of many movie directors.



Columbia Pictures

MURDER IN THE DUNGEON

Prisoner Phillips Holmes and Warden Walter Huston just outside the "solitary" cells of the penitentiary in "The Criminal Code"

▷▷ Recitals ◁◁

By MARSHALL KERNOCHAN

IN THE New York music arena we have for many years beheld a curious phenomenon. This is the recital, whether it be by a singer, a pianist or a violinist. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that it is given, and is usually expected to be given, at a considerable financial loss, the object being to secure favorable press notices from well-known critics—these are to be used later on, as propaganda for the artist in securing engagements for broadcasting and for recitals in smaller cities. The number of these recitals is fabulous—through the season there are hardly ever less than two, and often as many as four or five a day. The total loss incurred by the artists, often but ill equipped to bear them, runs into figures staggering to the layman.

Let us suppose that a young artist is about to give a recital. He would, of course, not do so if he did not believe himself in possession of technic and ability, which it is his hope to demonstrate. He must engage a manager and hire a hall, both costly items. Next, he must face the fact that it never occurs to the average music lover to attend a recital by an unknown artist—so, if he would avoid an empty hall, the house must be papered. Free tickets are distributed broadcast to a list of music lovers supplied by the manager, who also secures the attendance of the critics. The recital, then, is purely a financial liability, except for advertising purposes, which offer, on the average, a doubtful reward. Why should this be so, when the performer is technically good, as is generally the case? The answer usually lies in the artist's lack of intelligence or knowledge of psychology. He is unable to realize certain essentials which have been firmly grasped by the few successful ones.

TO MAKE a favorable press, the critics must be not merely forced to attend, but also interested. They are human, and if they be interested, so will the audience. To achieve this desirable result the artist should pin it in his hat that, having acquired his technic, he must forget it. No one is interested in his technic, least of all the press, who will take it for granted in these strenuous competitive days. His performance will be listened to mainly in the hope that it will give emotional pleasure. He should, then, select music which has the power to do this, using his technic to put his emotional message across—if the latter be

absent, the recital is doomed from the start—but if he possesses it, and is able to express it, his technic will receive far more favorable notice than if he merely tries to dazzle the audience with pyrotechnics whose whole reward is a success analogous to that of a circus juggler or acrobat.

Forgetting this, the young artist often plays "grateful" music, that is, music which has little intrinsic value, having been composed by pedagogs to show off their pupils' technic and whose sole virtue is that of being adapted to the instrument. Nearly all violin or 'cello recitals by young artists, for instance, contain numbers by such musical carpenters as Vieuxtemps or Popper, whose trite measures, however desirable they may be as "teaching pieces," should remain in the classrooms where they belong—in the concert hall they merely arouse feelings of ennui in the musically minded who seek bread and not dry husks.

THE reefs of failure are piled high with the wrecks of careers based on much technic and little musicianship. The true artist is one to whom technic is never the master; to him it is but a tool necessary to self-expression. The few of whom this can be said are those who fill a concert hall at will. A technical slip is as nothing to these, for they do not make those artistic slips which alienate their public.

The artist who would give a recital should see to it that he picks a program every number of which is musically interesting to himself, otherwise he cannot expect to awaken the interest of others. Also, where possible, he should avoid the stereotyped pieces whose zest is blunted by familiarity. In the literature of music there is no lack of beautiful fresh material; there are only musicians who seem much too lazy to seek it out.

IF THE budding artist, then, base his plan of campaign on such principles as the foregoing, he need feel no worry about the press notices. His interesting programs published in advance will have power to attract, and his audiences will depart stimulated and refreshed. The critics will show a friendlier disposition: they will not feel that they have merely sat through "just another recital." In this way alone he may gain the golden apple, in place of the all too frequent raspberry.

Gramophonia

Notable New Recordings

SIBELIUS surely should be appointed official composer for the Outlook and the Association for the Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. On the subject of prohibition in Finland (and it would seem that it works quite as it does here), he said, "My only consolation in witnessing such lamentable specimens of imbecility lies in my unalterable belief that, in spite of them all, humanity, however gradually, continues to progress." Who said great musicians necessarily were half mad?

Levity aside, the Columbia Company should be the recipients of unstinted gratitude from music lovers for having given us the first recordings of Sibelius' first two symphonies, *No. 1 in E minor, Op. 39*¹, and *No. 2 in D major, Op. 43*², both played by a Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dr. Robert Kajanus. Many people talk of the Jan Sibelius as a contemporary Brahms. At any rate these superlatively fine records will give us a chance to study at our leisure a comparatively neglected master of the orchestra whose name means nothing to far too many Americans other than as the composer of the somewhat maudlin and very hackneyed *Valse Triste*. They also serve to demonstrate beyond question that the symphony is far from being an outmoded form of expression. It is only that to use it the composer must, as Sibelius, have something to say.

Of perhaps more topical interest is the appearance on a Victor record of what is commonly called *The Mad Scene* from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, sung by Lily Pons³. Mme. Pons is the latest addition to the coloratura ranks of the Metropolitan Opera Company and her first performances have been greeted with unbridled enthusiasm by those who like that sort of thing. From this record (but *why* didn't they give her something a little more interesting to start with?) she seems to have an easy, true and clear voice, refreshingly free from affectation.

Another record marking the American debut on disks of a most musicianly singer is Beethoven's *Adelaide*, sung for Brunswick by Heinrich Schlusnus⁴, a German baritone of whose direct, understanding and truly beautiful style I hope this is only the first example. Polydor have issued many of his recordings of Schumann, Strauss, Schubert and Wolf which Brunswick could do far worse than to re-press here. O. C-T.

1. Columbia Masterworks Set, No. 151.
2. Columbia Masterworks Set, No. 149.
3. Victor 7369.
4. Brunswick 90104.