

he keeps on improving with each performance."

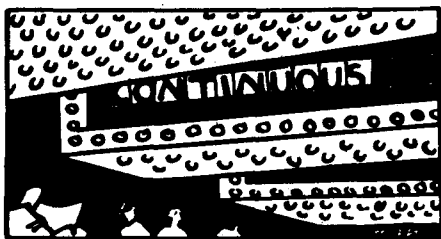
Mr. Kramm is equally happy about the way the smaller roles have turned out. "We were lucky," says Mr. Kramm with a nostalgic shiver that went far back, "to be able to get a bunch of fine actors, most of whom had worked with either Joe or me before. For instance, Kendall Clark, who plays the green-behind-the-ears psychiatrist, acted with me in the Eva Le Gallienne Civic Repertory production of *"L'Aiglon"* seventeen years ago. Incidentally, lay people think the questions that the psychiatrist asks in the final interview are unbelievably horrible. But they are absolutely authentic. Originally I had Downs answering the questions easily, but the preview audiences laughed at this. So I got hold of a psychiatrist I knew and asked him about it. He told me that the aim of that final interview is to make the patient founder if you can, and that's the way I rewrote it."

**A** **N**OTHER point questioned by some is the ending, which is said to be not definite enough. Mr. Kramm apparently has no question about it in his own mind. "I don't think it matters what happens to Jim Downs six months after he gets out," he says. "The important thing is that final moment when he breaks into tears. It is the moment of recognition, and the tears are something like that terrible shout in *"Oedipus."* In Philadelphia we followed this with another scene. It showed Jim leaving the hospital after his wife had brought his clothes and helped him to tie his tie. People didn't like it, so we cut it out. I think it proves that they don't really want a more definite ending."

With these thorny points settled, Mr. Kramm, a suddenly successful man of the theatre, stretched his arms and contemplated his own future. "From now on my wife and I are going to start taking cabs and eating at some of the good restaurants we haven't been able to afford before. We may even have this place repainted. But I'm not going to Hollywood unless its for a one-picture deal. Right now I'm starting to work on one play that has been optioned and on another that hasn't but which Eva Le Gallienne almost did back in 1933 with Charles Laughton. I've fixed it up considerably and I believe in it. You know, it isn't the first play that makes a playwright. It's the second. If my second one isn't good, they'll say *"The Shrike"* was just good luck and good acting. It's like I tell my students at the Theatre Wing. This business is nothing but heartbreak no matter how successful you get."

## SR Goes to the Movies

### TWO ADVENTURES IN ART



**P**ROBABLY the most important of recent motion picture developments is the art film, movies with art as their subject. These are not simple teaching films, not illustrated lectures on art. In them—at least, in the best of them—film art gives extraordinary life and vitality to the older arts, creating on the screen a new and valid art experience out of the elements with which it works. The late Robert Flaherty's version of *"The Titan"* a few years back was one of the first and also one of the most successful to reach American audiences, an Academy Award winner. Since *"The Titan"* we have been seeing a steady increase in both the number and the quality of art shorts. Such films as *"Grandma Moses,"* *"Van Gogh,"* *"1848,"* and *"Balzac"* have used the medium with considerable distinction, although each in a different way and for a different purpose. Their reception, both in theatres and in 16-mm, has been enthusiastic.

As evidence of the growing appeal of this form, two new art features have just put in their appearance. *"Pictura, Adventure in Art"* has already opened on the West Coast (to qualify for an Academy Award) and is now moving East; while *"St. Matthew Passion,"* the final film from Robert Flaherty, recently had its American premiere in New York and is soon to be released nationally. Of the two, *"Pictura"* will inevitably provoke the greater general interest, but both are suggestive of the tremendous possibilities that lie within this new medium.

For the uninitiated, *"Pictura, Adventure in Art"* (Pictura Films) makes an ideal introduction to art film forms and techniques. It comprises six short films—five made in Europe, one in America—which have been re-edited and tied together to form a feature. Vincent Price, an art collector as well as an actor, appears as himself throughout the picture, our guide to the "adventure." He introduces each of its sections and their all-

star narrators—Gregory Peck, Henry Fonda, Martin Gabel, and Lilli Palmer. Then follow in succession an exciting filmic interpretation of Hieronymus Bosch's *"Earthly Paradise,"* that fantastic triptych in the Escorial Palace near Madrid; *"The Legend of St. Ursula,"* built out of Carpaccio's paintings on this mystic theme; Spain in the middle of the eighteenth century seen through the art of Francisco Goya; Toulouse-Lautrec's acid portrait of Paris at the close of the nineteenth century; an autobiographical section on Paul Gauguin similar to *"Van Gogh"* (and done by the same people), and finally America's Grant Wood.

Quite an adventure to be sure, and a rewarding one. Simply by bringing art, great art, from the museums of the world to the screens of our local theatres this film serves an important function. Many of the paintings and etchings included in *"Pictura"* have never before been exhibited in this country anywhere. But in addition, the camera, with its wonderful facility for looking close, constantly reveals aspects of an artist's work that would be overlooked by any but the trained observer. And there is more. The visuals, allied to an informed commentary, as in the Gauguin section, create an impact, a significance far greater than mere words or pictures alone; while the Bosch and Carpaccio sequences, both by Luciano Emmer, one of the pioneers in art films, indicate how successfully a work of art can be dissected and reconstructed to reveal fully the artist's original intent. The theme, the emotional climate remains. But through dramatic revelation of significant details—through close-ups and cutting and music—an art experience comparable to viewing the original is produced.

Not that there isn't room for criticism in *"Pictura."* The juxtaposition of different art techniques—painting, etching, lithography—in the Goya and Toulouse-Lautrec episodes seems unfortunate in film, although it is something we accept without second thought in any museum visit. Lilli Palmer's narration of the Toulouse-Lautrec section is unpleasantly maudlin, irritatingly patronizing. Color, of course, is missed throughout but perhaps especially so with Gauguin. And to end on Wood, even granting the producer's estimable desire to conclude with an American artist, is a regrettable choice. Surely a better artist

should have been found, one to rank with the illustrious masters with whom he must be coupled in this picture. And yet, despite these reservations, "Pictura, Adventure in Art" ranks as an important film—the first American-produced feature to bring great art to the screen on a popular level. It should be seen by everyone.

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"St. Matthew Passion" (Academy Productions) is far more special. Here painting and sculpture are used not for themselves, but to illustrate the text of Bach's mighty oratorio. Religious canvases from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, from painters as various as Bosch and Raphael, as Caravaggio and Van Honthorst, are brought together to tell through pictures the story of the Crucifixion. The results are not always fortunate. Some of the art works lend themselves all too readily to purposes of mere illustration—and invariably seem weaker than the Bach music demands. But some by their own strength seem to work *against* the score, exceeding a mere illustrative function. And many are just too sentimental and sweet to match Bach's musical austerity.

Technically, too, the film has weaknesses. Robert Flaherty in re-editing and titling the American version has done much to make it flow smoothly, but what was already in the camera he was powerless to change. Separate views remain motionless on the screen for far too long, or the camera's movement is at odds with the text. At the tense moment when Judas demands of Jesus, "Is it I? Is it I?," Bach's orchestral *agitato* is accompanied by a slow, smooth pan down a canvas. Even so, there is enough here to suggest that in stronger directorial hands than Ernst Marischka's this art technique might lead somewhere. The visual accompaniment to the beautiful aria, "I would beside my Lord be watching," for example, composed out of six fairly equal paintings, builds a simple but very affecting counterpart to the music. As to the "Passion" itself, it is well performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under Von Karajan with the Viennese Singverein and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Elisabeth Hoengen, Karl Schmitt Walter, Walter Ludwig, and Hans Braun as soloists. The voices, singing in English, are beautifully recorded; the orchestra somewhat less so. In all, the film covers about a quarter of the complete oratorio and forms an ambitious, if not altogether effective, attempt to weld two arts together—but certainly worth the attention of anyone interested in either of them.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.

# TV and Radio

## ST. GEORGE WITHOUT A DRAGON

**B**EING in an experimental mood these days, CBS has recently launched "The People Act" (in the East, Sunday nights), which is the first radio series to emanate from the laboratory of the Ford Foundation TV-Radio Workshop. "The People Act" was well birthed. Second birthed might be more exact, as the series traces a linear relationship, if I remember correctly, to a sustaining ancestor on NBC that went by the name "Living—1950." Odd that the "experimental" workshop should choose, as its first project, to work over an old friend. Not that old friends have no resurrection values; on the contrary, the principle of repeating excellent broadcasts is one that radio, and now television, has yet to appreciate fully.

Unfortunately, "The People Act" is, to date, a disappointment; and this must be said despite the fact that it is presented by a national committee of educators under the chairmanship of Dr. Milton S. Eisenhower, president of Pennsylvania State College; that its object is "to stimulate the fuller use of democracy's procedures and instrumentalities in the solution of community problems," and that it offers, to listeners who may be moved to group action for good causes, contact with appropriate social mechanisms.

"The People Act" is not effective because, primarily, it is not about people, but about convenient stereotypes of "People" which do-gooders are accustomed to trot out of the hothouse at the first sound of the "let's get constructive" bell. There are other reasons, but this is paramount.

Technically, the tape recording techniques employed are ancient radio

history, fundamental forms used unimaginatively. (These observations are based on three of the first four programs offered by the series.) The programs are dull; they command no attention. Real people are used to play "real" people in dramatized re-creations of scenes—an indefensible device, since the real people are simply bad, amateur actors. There is no premium in actuality per se. Often, it is sheer liability.

Furthermore, there is an inconsistent mixing of re-created scenes in which people "play" themselves with other scenes in which they "are" themselves. Robert Trout, the narrator, is a professional voice, not at all in key with the unpolished performances of the actuality cast. The narrative passages given him to read by writer-producer Irving Gitlin (and in the fourth program by writer-editor Fred Fried) were mechanical, terse to the point of vacuity, and incessant, disturbing interruptions of any semblance of continuity of mood.

**T**HESE, notwithstanding, are mere technical faults, not one of them above the power of strength of interior idea, situation, or revelation of character and drama, however crude. But there is no drama in "The People Act"—merely exterior episode. The programs purport to tell the stories of citizens who have organized community groups to effect needed social change. Thus, one story dealt with the women in Gary, Indiana, who destroyed a gambling syndicate; another with parents in Arlington, Virginia, who forced a reactionary school board into constructing much-needed new buildings; a third with a Mexican-American neighborhood that had won a respected place for itself in the life of Kansas City, Missouri. In all three programs there was a sort of abstract, faceless goodness generalized from an assortment of citizens who passed the microphone too swiftly to leave any impression. Yet there was no portrait of a single human being identifiable in depth by individual drive, emotion, attitude. Neither could one identify a human villain.

The achievements of the community groupings that served as material for the programs must, of a surety, be intensely human. Neighborhood councils, especially in industrial and minority areas, are overflowing reservoirs of frustration, anger, hope, courage,

