

desert Gunga Din. From there on she has a busy time being more noble and self-sacrificing than either Dr. Mel Ferrer or Cornel Wilde, the local potentate sponsoring Ferrer's medical activities. Eventually, of course, the two friends find themselves competing for her favors, but always in a grand and gentlemanly way. All in all, "Saadia's" chief virtues would seem to lie in its colorful Moroccan backgrounds, its handsomely photographed desert scenes, its authentic (and often unflattering) costumes, and a suitably weird incantation scene. Once these National Geographic aspects are out of the way, however, the film tends to become just a bit tedious.

A bit unsettling, too. There are so many English accents in the cast that you wonder if perhaps Morocco hasn't suddenly become part of the British Empire.

* * *

Back in the days when 3-D was the coming thing, someone at Paramount seems to have hit upon a rather charming idea—a musical comedy take-off on the Westerns with smartly designed, highly schematic settings that would float in midair and use the new dimension to emphasize space. Somewhere along the way the 3-D aspects of "Red Garters" were quietly dropped, but the sets remain as works of high imagination and daring. Houses are suggested by their pastel-colored frames. Moving from exterior to interior is accomplished by passing through a skeletal door while the background scrim changes from outside yellow to an inside lavender. The whole effect is bright and free, ideally suited to the liberties that the plot apparently intended to take with the Western formula.

Unfortunately, the writer's imagination rarely rivaled the designer's. An occasional touch, like the grave lifting of hats whenever "the Code of the West" is mentioned, evokes a moderate chuckle, but most of the time the script is straining for laughs that just aren't there. Rosemary Clooney, with her sunny, bouncy personality, often manages to inject some fun into the proceedings as she shouts out a song, and Nick Castle has staged a number of neat and vigorous dances. On the other hand, Guy Mitchell as the singing cowboy hero confused me completely. Although he seemed to be playing his part straight, he bears such a marked resemblance to Buster Keaton that I was forever waiting for him to take a pratfall. It might have helped, at that.

—ARTHUR KNIGHT.



TV AND RADIO

A Twist of the Wrist

I AM about to offer another suggestion on how to improve television programs. I guess I am about the most suggestive critic in the TV business, for all the good it does me. Truer word was never written than in a letter I received only this week: "Your suggestions in *The Saturday Review* for improving television programs are so right and so brilliant that I am surprised the men in charge of television don't follow your wonderful advice."

What is amazing is why the men in the business can't see what, according to her letter, is so obvious to my mother. But of course she's eighty-one and wise beyond her years. Incidentally, her views on television are sharp and to the point. She prefers radio because she can conjure up her own impressions of what Arthur Godfrey looks like. So television gets very little of her failing eyesight. But she is quick to add that her two small granddaughters, Hedra and Judy, are crazy about television.

"They sit in front of the set night and day," she told me over long distance one evening.

"Good," I said. "May I speak to them?"

"They went to the movies," she replied.

Which in a rather circumambulatory route brings me to a point I want to make. When they went to the movies they saw a picture which had been favorably reviewed by the critics on the local papers. Just as in New York we go to the theatre to see a play which has been enthusiastically received by the Broadway critics. With movies and theatres we have that guide to help us choose the entertainment we want to see.

In television an hour drama is presented with little fanfare and no advance criticism. We take pot luck, and often as not we are watching some dreary run-of-the-mill program on another channel when by the fateful twist of a wrist we might have found a gem in amongst the slack that goes to make up so much of our television programming.

It was with just such a fateful twist of the wrist that I found such a gem on (of all places) Channel 7 some nights ago.

It was a Thursday night. I came across the opening announcement that Kraft Theatre was about to present an hour's play. I remembered reading that Kraft, usually seen on

Wednesday nights, was now presenting two plays a week, having recently purchased an additional hour on Thursday nights. I also remembered that Kraft plays are usually below the standard set by the Philco and Goodyear Playhouse or Westinghouse's Studio One, and I was about to hunt for something else when the title of the play appeared: "A Delicate Story," by Ferenc Molnar. I paused for the hour.

It turned out to be the most refreshing pause I ever took. Here a cast of actors headed by Eli Wallach and Gabby Rodgers artfully presented one of the most enchanting comedies ever seen on television. And a group of the most engaging supporting players headed by a fabulous E. A. Cushman transformed my set into the theatre at its finest. I would have been desolate had I missed it.

THE rest of the week I searched the television columns for a review of the play or at least some brief salutation with perhaps a mention of the director whose name I had missed in the credits, so enraptured had I been with the performance. But there was not a word.

And why should there have been? The play was over. It had been a one-night stand, as it always is in this medium, the quaintly picturesque Swiss settings of this delicate little love story by now lost among the rubble of some TV warehouse.

And so belatedly I come to my suggestion, which is simply that television plays be reviewed against some future date in the season when the best reviewed plays be brought back for those viewers who missed the fast opening-closing night's performance. And what better time for a re-run of those plays than in a Summer Kraft Theatre, or Philco or Goodyear or Westinghouse, to take the place of the drab replacements which too soon will begin to inhabit the screens of our living rooms.

Sensible suggestion, isn't it, and simple to follow? But somehow suggestions from professional television workers are held in low esteem. Not so critics of the theatre. Remember the caustic Percy Hammond? During World War I his paper took him off theatres to send him to Europe to write about the war.

"My God!" shrieked a Broadway producer, "suppose he doesn't like it!"

—GOODMAN ACE.

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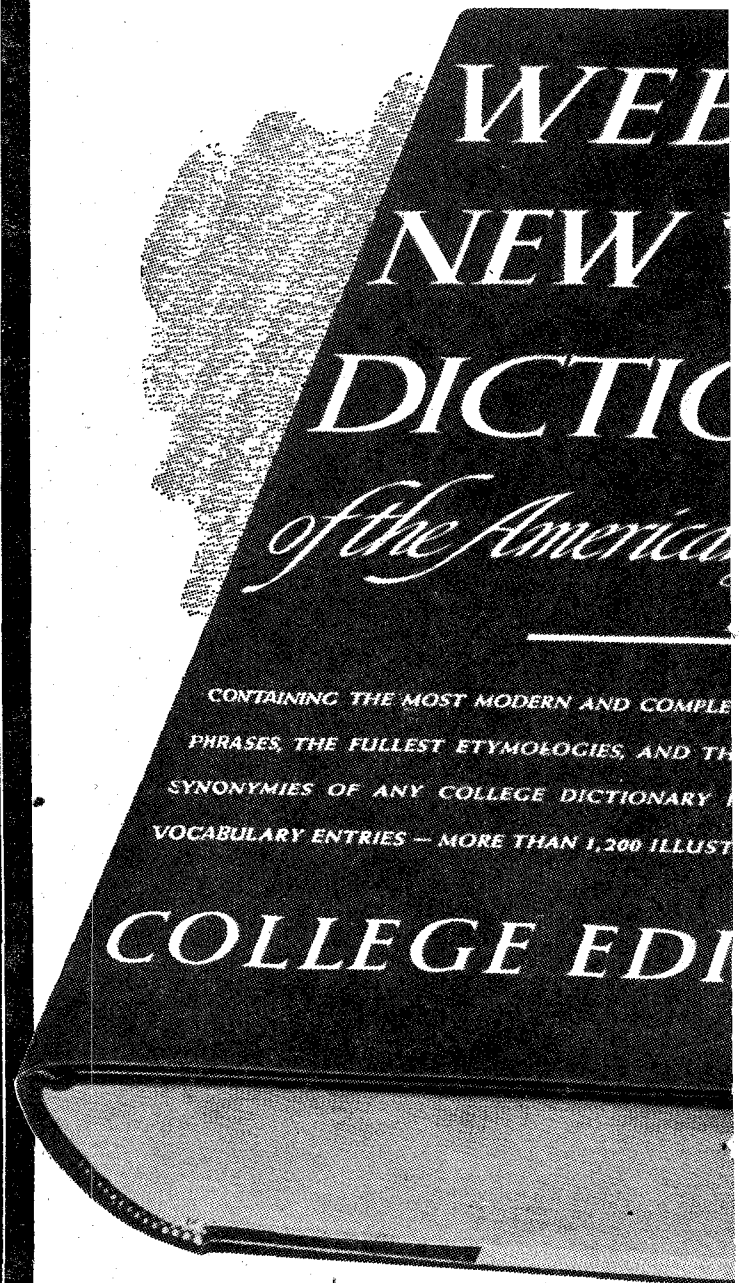
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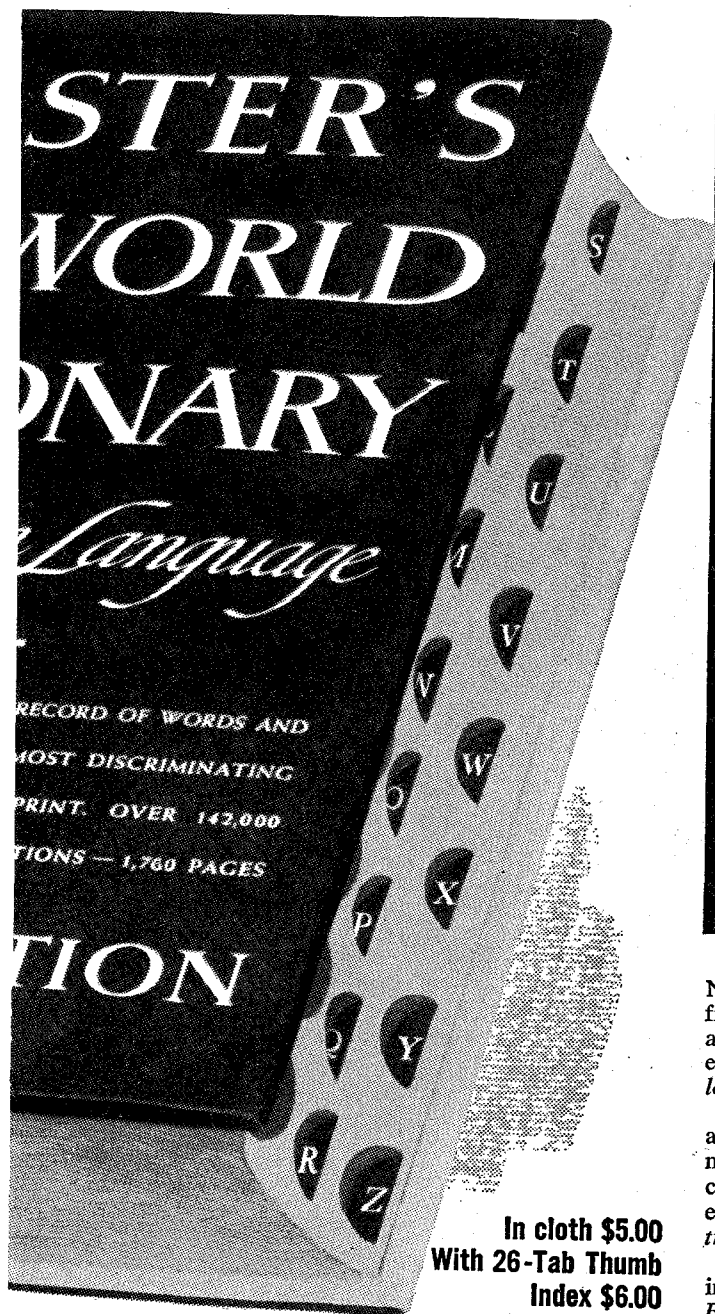


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Rubinstein's Chopin, Cantelli's Dallapiccola, etc.

PIANISTICALLY, March came in like a lion—which is to say, like Artur Rubinstein, whose reappearance in a Chopin program exhausted the capacity of Carnegie Hall, also whatever colleagues happened to be present. Such professionalism as Rubinstein represents is, perhaps, almost beyond endurance when coupled to such works as the "Andante spianato and Polonaise," the Etudes in E minor and D, the B flat minor Sonata, the A flat Impromptu, the Ballade in the same key, etc. Virtually the only thing that did not perform according to expectations during the evening was the piano bench, which had to be changed midway.

Rubinstein has the rather mansized burden of beginning as a paragon and being expected to "take it from there." That is to say, if practically anyone else played just the "Andante spianato and Polonaise" as eloquently as he did it would be cause for banner headlines. But it is to Rubinstein's credit that he does not try to tell us new (and perhaps false) things about this eminently familiar literature; rather he tells us the old, true things in a way enriched by his superlative tone-production with its manifold shadings and refinements. That calls for balance and restraint. It also calls for a virtuosity in the mere production of sound which permits Rubinstein, if he should so prefer, to call himself the Caruso of the keyboard.

At that it seems to me a Chopin program shows less than the best of Rubinstein simply because it shows less than all of him. One day I should like Rubinstein to give a retrospective program, reviewing forty years of public performance and offering the things he added to his repertory—Falla, Villa-Lobos, Granados, Debussy, Ravel, etc.—at five-year intervals. It would still, no doubt, begin and end with Chopin—but there would be some powerful memories along the way.

MEDELSSOHN'S "Italian Symphony" has had more concentrated attention than in any week within memory when it was heard five times, from two orchestras, both conducted by Italians. Despite the chasm of fifty years that yawns between Arturo Toscanini and Guido Cantelli, the latter's version with the

Philharmonic was not noticeably inferior, in vitality and animation, to the former's. That Cantelli managed to convey a first-rate conception of the work (save for a slightly flabby scherzo) in his appearances with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony, despite the less than kind competition, bespeaks his rising authority as a musician and interpreter in his own right. Fortunately, he was not called upon to challenge Toscanini simultaneously in Strauss's "Don Juan" and the "Oberon" Overture of Weber, both of which simply soared out of sight in the playing of the NBC Symphony.

Cantelli's second program was a wholly symmetrical evening of music making, beginning with a Rossini overture, continuing with the air-cleansing Mendelssohn, progressing to the suggestive strains of Luigi Dallapiccola's "Marsia" excerpts, and concluding with Debussy's "La Mer." He had conducted the Dallapiccola previously with the NBC Symphony, but the concert-hall premiere confirmed previous estimates of the composer's musicality and taste, without settling wholly the question of his originality. It is, after all, hard to write ballet music on a Grecian subject (especially one involving flute playing) without invoking Ravel's "Daphnis" or Debussy's "L'Après-midi" at some point or other. But Cantelli showed us that Dallapiccola had done his work in a substantially unfettered way, and with some splashes of orchestral color that the Philharmonic players realized impressively well. The concluding "La Mer," straightforward and tightly disciplined, brought a rousing end to one of the best concerts Cantelli has yet given in New York.

A program composed of Rachmaninoff's "The Bells" and Prokofiev's "Alexander Nevsky," such as the Philadelphia Orchestra presented on an early March evening in Carnegie Hall, must, of necessity, have more reason than meets the ear. That is to say, if you bring a chorus across Jersey to New York, it might as well sing two works as one; and it is merely the better part of wisdom for them to perform two works the orchestra has recorded.

However, it is questionable that the taste to which the Prokofiev is

interesting would also be interested in the Rachmaninoff, and vice versa. As an illustration, in tone, for a notable film, the Prokofiev score was of superior merit. Presented merely as disjointed elements of a so-called cantata, it provided opportunity for some virtuoso singing by the Temple Choir, but not much more that was musically valid. Lorna Sydney sang the mezzo part intelligently, but without properly centered sound or really dependable intonation. Mack Harrell was outstanding in the Rachmaninoff, for which David Lloyd and Frances Yeend were the other singers. Considering the many choral works in which such talent could be utilized, it seemed carrying practicality to an extreme to restrict them to these two.

THOSE who remember Donald Dickson as one of the most promising bass-baritones in the Metropolitan company of the early Johnson period could be pardoned a more than casual curiosity when he reappeared in a Town Hall recital lately after a considerable absence. On the one side of his scale was that early promise, on the other side, his prominent career in radio (vis-à-vis Charlie McCarthy and others). Plainly enough, Dickson is now a serious artist again, but one wonders if it isn't a question of too little, too late.

To be sure, Dickson can produce quantities of loud sound, but there is little resonance in the voice. He made more than a little effort to vary the production from Handel's "Hear me winds and waves" to Brahms's "Blauen Augen," for example, but the sound persisted in being more the same than different. Dickson also sang a Copland group and one in French (in addition to another in English). Otto Seyfritz was the helpful pianist.

Rudolf Bing's reasonable action in moving to curb the untoward "enthusiasm" of the standees who have turned recent performances of "Trovatore," "Aida," and "Forza" into a contest of favoritism for individual performers, was a welcome reminder of the "old" Bing who seems to have been in abeyance lately. By diminishing the number of standees admitted, thus making it easier to police those who are present, Bing made possible a vigorous "Trovatore" with the Milanov-Penno-Barbieri-Warren cast, but without the rooting for one at the expense of the other. Fausto Cleva showed his contempt for the values involved by turning his back, literally, on the applause that was tendered him prior to Act III. Of course, it wasn't much applause; but then, neither is it much of a back.

—IRVING KOLODIN.