



BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

Controlled Disarmament

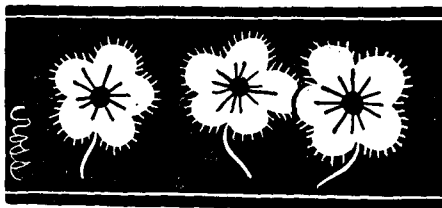
WHEN you come to think of it what could be more tedious than listening to one man croon eighteen consecutive songs at you in a foreign language you only half comprehend. Fortunately, you never come to think of it, for Yves Montand is a skilful performer with a thoroughly disarming personality.

He is as relaxed as Perry Como, as virilely graceful as Joe DiMaggio, and as quick to sense the romantic ironies of life as Maurice Chevalier. But perhaps more important than any of these things is his natural sense of gentleness. Like a good lover he never lets anything happen too abruptly. When he finishes a jazzy number, he allows the mood to linger on as he jitterbugs lightly in private reverie a few seconds before he pulls himself together for the next song.

While there is no big impact in "An Evening with Yves Montand," the whole evening always seems to have direction and design. There are nice flashes of humor in his mimicry of a saucy girl on a swing, his take-off on a polished Lon-

don gangster, or his imitation of a bad imitation of Fred Astaire. And in addition to such items as "Les Feuilles Mortes" and "C'est Si Bon," which he first introduced, there is at least one very catchy new song titled "Le Carrosse."

M. Montand is expertly accompanied by a jazz septet who play behind a gauze curtain. As he moves around between them and the audience, one gets the feeling that here is a talented star who could do just about anything superbly, but who, for the moment, is getting his kicks from singing and dancing. The kicks are partly ours.



LIKE one-man shows, revues also face the necessity of disarming us. Unless they do they become a barrel of clever

notions spoiled by a few defective ones. There are currently playing two revues whose success cannot be explained by the hilarity of their sketches or the quality of their songs. Their secret is simply that the performers make you want to like them.

The first is "The Billy Barnes Revue," which began off-Broadway last June, moved on-Broadway in August, and is about to move a third time to the Lyceum Theatre for an interim booking of three weeks. The majority of its audiences consist of people who go with no great expectation and come away raving about *their* discovery. And because its seven performers, its author-director Bob Rodgers, and its composer Billy Barnes are completely unknown, they all qualify as discoveries.

My own nomination would be Patti Regan, a sour-faced young comedienne who does a reluctant crawl and grind dance while singing "What Ever Happened To?" a few of the more perishable figures in recent American history. The show also contains some excellent take-offs on Leonard Bernstein, Christopher Plummer, Mort Sahl, Fred Astaire, and Los Angeles (the city, not the singer). And when the material lags, one can always listen to the twin piano playing of Billy Barnes and Armin Hoffman, who, I have been advised, are the best since Ohman and Arden.

Since revues feed on topical absurdi-

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ties, they cannot often stand revival. "Lend an Ear," a Broadway hit of eleven seasons ago proves the exception. As performed off-Broadway at the Renata Theatre, a slightly revised edition of Charles Gaynor's show manages not to seem dated. Still hilarious is "The Gladiola Girl," a capsule parody of the same sort of musical Sandy Wilson later treated so successfully in "The Boy Friend." And similarly amusing is the burlesque of grand opera's inane librettos, with Jenny Lou Law, Al Checco, and Charles Nelson Reilly treating us to a final burst of the versatile talent they exhibit so formidably throughout the evening.

Quite understandably, some of the numbers lapse into mere pleasantness and some of the humor seems milder than what might emerge in a sharp new topical revue, but in this form of theatre one does not inspect one's disarmament.

If David Ross's second revival of Chekhov's "The Three Sisters" at his Fourth Street Theatre seems slightly less marvelous than was his first, it is still plenty good enough. It reveals to us again the incredible artistry of a writer who somehow succeeded in creating the essential truth of life with such quality and such sense of proportion that we never doubt the inevitability of its seemingly accidental events.

—HENRY HEWES.

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MUSIC TO MY EARS

Orff and Stravinsky According to Stokowski

PHILOSOPHIC reflections are not commonly the product of an evening's entertainment in the opera house or concert hall, but in juxtaposing Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex" and Orff's "Carmina Burana" for the opening bill of its new season in City Center, the New York Opera Company has permitted an immediate contrast between two major art movements of the day, as well as providing one of the liveliest evenings in its history. To make the auditor's evening complete, the company turned over its musical resources to Leopold Stokowski, with Paul Sylbert to supervise the staging for "Oedipus" and John Butler in charge of choreographing "Carmina Burana."

Though Carl Orff was an obscure schoolteacher in Bavaria when "Oedipus" was first performed in 1927, and the blackout of German musical activities during the Nazi and war years deterred the spread of his works, "Carmina Burana" has now caught up with it, so far as public knowledge and appreciation are concerned. "Oedipus" had a staged performance in New York as long ago as 1931 under the same Stokowski, but this was the first time locally for "Carmina" to be staged as well as sung.

Despite the differences in their backgrounds, there are some points of resemblance worth noting. Each has a Latin text, and each may be performed on the concert stage without action. More particularly, each respects the modern passion for pastiche, for a mingling of elements, with Stravinsky going back to the oratorio-opera style of the eighteenth century (Bach and Handel especially) for his stylistic allusions, Orff taking his where he finds them. If a broad distinction is tolerable, Stravinsky's reconstruction progresses from the head, in a game of "find the influence" (the winner gets nothing for his pains, it seems to be, but self-satisfaction), whereas Orff's rejuvenation stems from the heart, with little or no regard for gamesmanship. There is no doubt at all which represents the greater level of intellectuality; but there is just as little uncertainty which conveys more that is generally pleasurable, communicative, and generally successful. In terms of whether it is preferable to be popular or profound, Stravinsky aims higher, but Orff hits his target dead center.

The elements which went into making his marksmanship apparent were all of

the first quality, beginning with Stokowski himself, who is just as effective (if not so theatrical) in the opera house as he is in the concert hall. Excellent orchestral playing and choral singing put a firm foundation under the solo efforts of John Reardon, John Alexander, and Reri Grist, a graduate of "West Side Story," who sang her music with lovely sound and charming style.

Working within a simple but effective scenic background by Sylbert, Butler has managed to mirror the wide-ranging moods treated by Orff with the imagination and judgement to make the dance a stylized counterpart of its verbal impulses, sacred and profane. With Carmen de Lavallade winding sensuously, artfully, decoratively through the various sequences as a truly "moving" spirit, Veronika Mlakar as her beguiling alter-nate, and Scott Douglas and Glen Tetley as their male opposites, he states a theme of action susceptible to infinite variation. His liveliest, most lithesome moments came, properly, in the section entitled "The Tavern" (a good subject for a thirteenth-century Kefauver Committee), but there was a fine lyric latitude in "The Court of Love" as well.

In its way, the presentation of "Oedipus Rex" against a fresco-like drop bearing lettered suggestions of the characters' names was as carefully planned by Sylbert. It differed in detail from the plan of production outlined in the score, but the spiritual affinity was sufficient. With Wesley Addey as a well-spoken narrator (Jason Robards, Jr. withdrew after the dress rehearsal presumably because of illness), Richard Cassilly providing a strong voice for Oedipus, and Claramae Turner an equally suitable one for Jocasta, the enterprise had all the visual and aural elements it could reasonably ask.

It comes, of course, to a grandiose climax of cool, calculated tragedy, with some memorable musical moments along the way. But it has an uncomfortable disparity of elements not molded into a single musical sound: a narrative spoken in a modern tongue (here English, originally Jean Cocteau's French), a choral and solo text in Latin (the orchestra speaks mostly Russian). Stravinsky explained his preference by contending that the "dead" language could be manipulated for sound values only, without respect to intelligible meaning. But his practice is repeatedly otherwise, with dramatic purpose imparted to such phrases as "gloria, gloria" or "dixit,