

Theatricals Music Features

ROSAMOND JOHNSON, TODD DUNCAN ARE INCLUDED IN GERSHWIN MEMORIAL

By LOU LAYNE

George Gershwin, whose musical compositions bear the unmistakable stamp of Americanism, was influenced to a large degree by the Negro idiom. That is incontrovertible fact. It is only natural, therefore that in a collection of tributes to that great composer whose untimely demise shocked the nation little more than a year, that flavor should be preserved.

This was only too evident to Merle Armitage, California impresario, to whose care was entrusted the editing of an impressive memorial to Gershwin in the form of the virtuoso-composer's close friends and associates; for when the book was published last Tuesday ("George Gershwin," Longmans, Green and Company, \$5) it included the names of J. Rosamond Johnson, one of the foremost of our exponents of that Negro idiom, & Todd Duncan, whose remarkable singing voice and historic ability have won for him world-wide acclaim as a true interpreter of that music.

Johnson and Duncan (both of whom are incidentally outstanding members of the Negro Actors Guild of America) were closely al-

lied with Gershwin, principally through the Gershwin Heyward folk-opera "Porgy and Bess," and it is mainly of that association they have written.

Names easily recognized everywhere have combined to produce this volume from Irving Berlin representing Tin Pan Alley to Walter Damrosch and Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony orchestra. Also included are the contributions of Paul Whiteman, (another Guild member), Olin Downes, outstanding music critic; Arnold Schoenberg, modernist classical composer; Rudy Vallee, Leonard Lieblich, Jerome Kern, DuBose Heyward, Sam H. Harris, Rouben Mamoulian, Eva Gauthier, and Ferde Grofe. In all there are 36 of these memoirs, not to mention two reprints of articles by Gershwin himself, which combine to give a well-rounded picture of the man, the composer and certainly not the least in importance, the artist.

Just as the Negro influence is present in his work, so too it is with his paintings, illustrations of which are included in the volume. This is borne out by his canvases titled "Negro child," done in 1933, and "Negro Sculpture," of a year later. Particularly foreful of his brush are portraits of Arnold Schoenberg, one labeled "Emily," and his "Self Portrait in Checkered Sweater."

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'Consensus of opinion maintains and the illustrations uphold the contention, that if Gershwin had so chosen he could have earned for himself a reputation as an American painter which might have equalled or surpassed the position he holds in the musical world.

Armitage has done a splendid work on the volume. In his role as editor he must have worked prodigiously to prevent the picture of the youthful Gershwin from becoming a jumbled mass of contradictions. As it is, we follow in charming patchwork the meteoric rise of a youth who was entranced by a schoolmate's playing of "Humoresque," his first lessons on a piano Mother Gershwin bought "because my aunt had one," his immersion into Tin Pan Alley as a piano pounder in Remick's plugging department at \$15 a week. We recall somewhat poignantly that in '23, he composed a 1 act opera, "135th Street," based on Harlem life, and once again we witness the rush with which he composed the fist of his "Big Four," the "Rhapsody."

The years that followed brought an endless succession of Broadway shows and films, highlighted by his more serious works, the other three included in the "Big Four," "Concerto in F," "An American in Paris," and "Porgy and Bess."

It is this reviewer's regret that at the time he was too young to appreciate it, but he does remember having attended several years ago a performance at New York's Remy Theatre when Gershwin, playing the "Concerto," was headlined. He remembers the tall easy-going, somewhat gangling figure which strode to the piano in the center of the stage, and in ever so delightful manner played not only upon the black and white ivories of the keyboard, but on the heart-strings of his audience as well. For those who have never been able to get any closer to the Gershwin whose music is in the heart of every American music-lover, this volume is a welcome bookshelf addition—for through his friends we have been given the opportunity to know him.

KINGS OF SWINGS

LEROY "STUFF" SMITH
Leroy Smith—"Stuff," to countless swing fans through the nation—is twenty-eight years old and was born in Portsmouth, Ohio. "Stuff" plays violin, guitar and banjo, and learned to swing out on these instruments while working as a barber at Massillon, Ohio, left barbering to lead a small colored band in a Buffalo night spot. Charles E. Green, president of CRA heard "Stuff's" swing violin playing and brought him to New York where an engagement at the Onyx Club followed and it was here that "Stuff" gained his national reputation as a swing artist. "Stuff" is the composer of "Ise a Muggin'," and "It's Wonderful" has been featured on the March of Time reel; made several movie shorts and has recorded for Brunswick and Decca; in radio has guest shots with Paul Whiteman.

Charms Audience



MISS LUE SWARTZ

Famous "One Woman Show" artist, who charmed an audience of the National Baptist Convention in St. Louis recently with her dynamic portrayal of the character of Sojourner Truth in the interlude of the "Pageant of Progress" which was one of the features of

the convention. Miss Swartz is a national officer of Zeta Phi Beta sorority and Dean of Women of Douglass University, St. Louis. She plans a "One-Woman Show" tour this fall and winter.

—(Calvin Service).

DON REDMAN

Don Redman, famed as a saxophonist, singer and arranger, has long been nationally known as an outstanding colored band attraction for the band has been heard the past summer at The Surfside Club Long Beach, Long Island and are noted for their engagements at Connie's Inn, New York and with the Mills Brothers on the coast-to-coast NBC network.

tainier, in the new thriller, Lawrence Hawley, Reginald Fenterson, and Edward Thompson have powerful supporting roles.

Hollywood Productions is the other company, recently organized and starting off at the Murray ranch with "Bronze Buckaroo."

Making new movie history, 20 little colored babies aged from six to ten months old worked at Fox Western studio last week in the Jones Family feature, "A Bundle of Joy." They were all selected and cast by Chas. Butler of Central Casting bureau, and all received pay checks of \$8.25 per day, whether they knew they were being paid or not. Transportation was furnished by the studio to and from their homes, and trained nurses were with them at all times in accordance with California laws. Hattie McDaniels has an important featured part in the film. Mel St. Clair is the director.

In "Kentucky," at Fox, Westwood, a number of well known screen players worked last week including John Lester Johnson, Ed Short, Robert Jackson, Dan Marlowe and Nathaniel Badger.

In "Stand Up and Fight," at M.G.M., Clinton Rosamond, who leaped into the limelight there in "They Won't Forget," has been allotted the featured role for colored. Other colored players in the film included Jesse Graves, Wade Duncan, Ed Allen, Ted Collins, and Jesso Clark.

HIGH SCHOOL DEVELOPS

FINE PROGRAM OF NOONDAY ACTIVITIES

St. Louis, Oct. 13 (ANP)—Three years ago, at Sumner High school Principal Brantley, impressed at the great interest shown by 75 boy and girl students in a noon-day table tennis match, decided to capitalize on this interest and broaden the noon-day activities of students. The program as outlined by him and developed by the teachers has won Sumner High city-wide commendation. Assisting the principal in perfecting the noon-day activities were Messrs. Hudlin, Fox, Thornton, Beckett, Garrett Jackson Payne and Beatty; Miss Parker and Mrs. Grady.

F. B. I. ASSISTS STUDIO AUTHORS ON G-MEN DATA

In order to make their story as authentic as humanly possible, the five writers of "Dick Tracy Returns," Republic serial secured every available bit of data they could from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D. C.

Many weeks were spent studying this information before Barry Shipman, Ronald Davidson, Rex Taylor, Franklyn Adreon, or Sol Shor ever began on the actual writing of the script.

That the extensive preparation was well worth while is evidenced by the type of script the writers turned out. "Dick Tracy Returns" is the most exciting serial yet to be devised by these crack writers.

Starring Ralph Byrd, the story deals with his adventure while on the trail of an arch-criminal family, the Starks. Pa Stark and his five sons, Trigger, Slasher, Dude Champ and the Kid cause the G-Men no end of trouble until Dick Tracy is assigned to the case. After many perilous exploits, the ace of the FBI finally succeeds in bringing the entire gang to justice.

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John: Yes, I had a narrow escape.

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Gossip of the MOVIE LOTS

By HARRY LEVETTE FOR ANP

Hollywood, Oct. 21—With the war scare over at least for the time being, all the major studios have plunged into production that many thought would have to be held up while millions of theatre patrons the world over count their pennies and carefully spent them for bare necessities instead of movie tickets. Both colored companies functioning at present started shooting this week, Million Dollar Productions on "Gang Smashers" with Nina Mae McKinney in the role of a feminine detective who uses not only her beauty and while to run apparently immune vice barons to earth, but also her deftly handled pistol.

Nina is "Laura," a cabaret en-

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