

**HIGH
FIDELITY's**

Silver
Anniversary
Treasury

*The best of twenty-five years from America's
leading journal of music and sound reproduction*

\$9.95

To celebrate HIGH FIDELITY's twenty-fifth year of publication, the editors have brought together in this volume fifty articles by the liveliest, most learned, and most accomplished writers to appear in its pages — the best from America's first and foremost monthly music and audio magazine. The selection is catholic, ranging from scholarly considerations of composing and performing styles to a lighthearted look at Handel's sense of humor, from affectionate recollections of Fritz Kreisler to a recording session with Leadbelly, from Mozart and Verdi to Johnny Mercer and Noel Coward, from reflections on the phenomenon of hearing to historical notes on the development of the phonograph. Every music lover and audio buff will find HIGH FIDELITY's *Silver Anniversary Treasury* the ideal combination of instruction and delight.

Among the contents of this volume:

Aaron Copland on Mozart

Gunther Schuller on Duke Ellington

Leonard Bernstein on His Mass

Colin Davis on Berlioz

Martin Mayer on Callas

J. B. Priestley on His Festival

Wieland Wagner on Richard Wagner

Van Wyck Brooks on Huneker

Robert Long on Color and Sound

Roland Gelatt on Verdi

Gene Lees on Johnny Mercer

Charles Rosen on Performance Style

Conrad L. Osborne on John Culshaw

John Culshaw on Conrad L. Osborne

Robert Lawrence on Massenet

Leonard Marcus on Bach

John M. Conly on G. A. Briggs

Glenn Gould on Glenn Gould

H. C. Robbins Landon on Monteverdi

Ashley Montagu on Women Composers

RECORDS IN REVIEW

"A Bible for Record Collectors"

No classical music lover should be without an up-to-date copy of *Records in Review*, the annual compilation of classical and semi-classical record reviews from the pages of HIGH FIDELITY.

This comprehensive hardcover volume covers vocal, orchestral, chamber, and solo music ranging from medieval times to the present. An indispensable reference work for the record collector, it includes reviews of discs, cassettes, cartridges, and open-reel tape, in both stereo and quadriphonic versions.

The contents are arranged alphabetically by composer for easy reference — and, in the case of frequently recorded composers, the reviews are further categorized according to types of music. In addition, each volume contains a special section on recitals and miscellany, as well as a complete artists' index of all performers whose recordings were reviewed during the year.

All reviews are written by members of HIGH FIDELITY's authoritative reviewing staff, who discuss the composition, performance, and sonic quality of each recording and compare it with earlier releases and so-called "legendary" performances. Without question, *Records in Review* is a "must" for every music lover's library.

\$14.95

WYETH PRESS

Great Barrington, Mass. 01230

**HIGH
FIDELITY'S**

Silver
Anniversary
Treasury

Selected by the Editors

Introduction by Warren B. Syer

Edited by Robert S. Clark

WYETH



PRESS

Great Barrington
Massachusetts

*Copyright © 1976 ABC Leisure Magazines,
Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this
book, except brief excerpts for review
purposes, may be reproduced in any form
without the permission of ABC
Leisure Magazines, Inc.*

*This book is published simultaneously in
the United States of America and in
Canada. Copyright under the
Berne Convention.*

*Printed in the United States of America.
Library of Congress Catalog
Card Number: 76-42077
ISBN 0-91165 6-01-4
1 2 3 4 5*

Table of Contents

(Date of original publication is shown in parentheses)

I. COMPOSERS AND THEIR WAYS

At the Thought of Mozart (1/56).....	Aaron Copland	3
Monteverdi and Mantua (2/62).....	H. C. Robbins Landon	5
Handel: The Imperishable Wag (4/59).....	Charles Cudworth	12
Reunion in Eisenstadt (9/54).....	James Hinton, Jr.	19
A Discursive Tour of Verdi's Italy (10/63).....	Roland Gelatt	24
The Unfashionable Generation (1/66).....	Peter J. Pirie	36
Hindemith: The Universal Musician (5/64).....	Everett Helm	42
Johnny Mercer, Master Lyricist (6/67).....	Gene Lees	48
Diary of a Young Man of Fashion (9/67).....	Peter Jona Korn	52
The Posthumous Career of J. S. Bach (1/66).....	Leonard Marcus	58
Twenty Analysts in Search of Mozart's Soul (1/56)		
	.....Nathan Broder	65
A Pox on Manfredini (6/61).....	H. C. Robbins Landon	72
A Second Look at Manfredini (4/63).....	Paul Henry Lang	77
Who Cares if You Listen? (2/58).....	Milton Babbitt	82
The Fatal Sixties (6/68).....	Peter Heyworth	89
Ellington in the Pantheon (11/74).....	Gunther Schuller	96
Why Wagner Was No Lady (3/58).....	Ashley Montagu	99
The Secret Life of a Waltz (10/75).....	David Hamilton	104

II. THE PERFORMER'S ART

Memories of Fritz Kreisler (5/62).....	Joseph Szigeti	113
Festival in the Folly (2/58).....	J. B. Priestley	117
Steinways and Steinwayism (3/60).....	Joseph Roddy	122
Conversation with Beecham (10/58).....	Lord Robert Boothby	130
Aksel Schiøtz (1906-1975) (7/75).....	Paul Moor	138
Toscanini and Furtwängler on Beethoven (4/60)		
	.....Peter J. Pirie	140
Noel (10/61).....	R. A. Israel	146
Should Music Be Played "Wrong"? (5/71).....	Charles Rosen	151
Leadbelly's Last Sessions (11-12/53).....	Frederic Ramsey, Jr.	159
"A Mixture of Instinct and Intellect" (1/65)		
	.....George Szell/Paul Henry Lang	165
Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould (2/74).....		176

III. THE MUSICAL STAGE

The Splendid Infamies of Le Docteur Véron (7/59)	.....S. J. London	195
Callas: Scala's New Queen (9/54).....	Martin Mayer	201
When Duse Tapped at Boito's Window (10/59)	.....Vincent Sheean	206
The Phantom of the Festspielhaus (11/66)	.....Wieland Wagner/Roy McMullen	214
A Plain Case for the Golden Age (10/67)...	Conrad L. Osborne	223
<i>The Trojans</i> (3/69).....	Colin Davis	233
A Reprieve for Massenet (3/64).....	Robert Lawrence	238
Leonard Bernstein Discusses His <i>Mass</i> (2/72).....		244

IV. SOME MUSICAL PUNDITS

Sour Notes on a Basset Horn (10/57).....	Jacques de Menasce	251
Huneker in Retrospect (12/60).....	Van Wyck Brooks	257
Tovey (12/61).....	George Stevens	264

V. SOUND REPRODUCTION

Hearing Is Believing? (7-8/53).....	John W. Campbell, Jr.	273
Woofers-on-the-Wharfe (3/54).....	John M. Conly	279
The Adventure of the Bodiless Virtuoso (5/58)	.....Herbert Kupferberg	285
Welte: Maestro of the Player Piano (6/58).....	Paul Moor	291
So Musical a Discord (10/58).....	C. G. Burke	296
Where Sound Sounds Best (3/61).....	Eric Salzman	300
The Role of the Record Producer		307
<i>Elektra</i> : A New Sonic Miracle? (2/68).....	Conrad L. Osborne	
The Record Producer Strikes Back (10/68).....	John Culshaw	
The Opera Reviewer Strikes Again (4/69)	.....Conrad L. Osborne	
The Color of Sound (3/71).....	Robert Long	322
Everyman's Guide to Discmanship (10/64).....	Patrick J. Smith	334
Gran'pa's Talking Machine (12/73).....	Oliver Berliner	338

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK is the work of many hands. Leonard Marcus, Kenneth Furie, and Warren B. Syer participated in the first stages of selection of the contents. Bob Maddocks is responsible for the overall design. Edith Carter assiduously read everything and helped impose a measure of consistency upon the variations in style that are the concomitant of the magazine's development through a quarter-century and several editors. (Inconsistencies remain—some deliberate and, no doubt, some inadvertent—and for these, as well as for garden-variety errors, I alone am answerable.) John Mooney pored over budget figures, Wayne Armentrout gathered and sifted production information, and Gail Kookoolis assisted in many ways. But the most important contribution is the most obvious: that of the writers whose names appear in the table of contents, and without whose exceptional qualities of mind a volume like this one would have been inconceivable.

Unlike earlier collections with a similar title, this HIGH FIDELITY treasury is principally concerned with the musical rather than the technical end of the audio spectrum. Choosing to include each of the articles reprinted here was no task at all, but choosing which, among many of equal merit, to omit was painful. I consoled myself with the thought that another of the magazine's landmarks a few years hence might prompt further culling of a past with abundant anthologizing possibilities. If so, I want to be on hand to help.

ROBERT S. CLARK
Great Barrington, Mass.

Introduction

I TAKE a special joy in writing these words of introduction to a book which encompasses the best that HIGH FIDELITY has published during the first twenty-five years of its life. Why? Well, largely because I have been so enormously happy in my working years with the publication. When I joined the staff in early February of 1953, the magazine was less than two years old (and I almost thirty); I had accepted a substantial salary cut, was responsible for a young family and was caught up in a strange commingling of feelings of rhapsody and trepidation. The fond hopes of those days for the future have never been dashed. In fact, the reality has been better than the hope. I often wonder what prosaic path would have been mine had I not responded positively, after my wife's steadfast support of my first tentative expressions of interest in applying for employment, to that then fledgling publication called "High Fidelity."

When I came aboard, the first-line people were Milton Sleeper, the publisher; Charles Fowler, the editor; John Conly, the associate editor; and Roy Allison—who was officially the editor of a couple of business publications but unofficially was clearly the technical editor of HIGH FIDELITY. Soon to join us were Roy Lindstrom (then and now our art director) and Roy Hoopes, HF's first managing editor. Claire Eddings was on staff, but not yet in the prime position of influence as Associate Publisher and Director of Advertising Sales she was later to attain.

It was an interesting group, to say the very least. Sleeper (now deceased) was an opportunistic entrepreneur who had headed up a series of marginally successful mini-publishing enterprises—and not, by any stretch of the imagination, universally loved by his staff. Fowler (now retired), a New York City expatriate and music and equipment tinkerer, brought a sense of boyish enthusiasm to the early issues which was just what was needed to lay the foundations for the future. Conly came from Washington, D.C., and probably possessed as well-balanced a love for both music and equipment as any editor in the magazine's history. His departure from the staff was hastened by Fowler's increasing resentment of that balance—it lessened the magazine's hobbyist-hardware approach and strengthened its music coverage—and by Conly's administrative weaknesses and increasing bouts with alcohol.

Allison (now President of Allison Acoustics, Inc.) was steady as a rock

and thoroughly professional (though sometimes a bit overemotional), and it was a loss to the magazine when he departed to join Acoustic Research, where he certainly could and did make a hell of a lot more money.

Roy Lindstrom, of course, is still aboard and claims he's never regretted a day of it. (That I doubt!)

Hoopes, now a free-lance book writer, made strong contributions in starting a book department, though I was never fully convinced his heart was totally in his work, and he left to accept a high-level staff position with the now defunct *Democratic Digest*.

When John Conly departed, the editorship was assumed by Roland Gelatt, a thoroughgoing no-nonsense pro who had been feature editor of *Saturday Review* (where he now labors again as editorial vice president). Roland, who more tolerated than adored high fidelity hardware *per se*, tipped the magazine's balance even further toward music. Some will say, and have said, too far—but who can speak with unchallengeable authority? Growth continued during his reign, and I found his biggest problem was a somewhat aloof relationship with his staff.

When he returned to *Saturday Review*, his then managing editor, Leonard Marcus, took over the editorial reins, and remains in that post at this writing. Leonard is a trained and experienced musician (conductor and violinist), yet he and his staff have brought a somewhat heavier audio emphasis to the pages of HF once again. In my view the present staff represents the best balance and greatest strength of any editorial team in our history. Bob Clark has settled in as HIGH FIDELITY'S Executive Editor, as has Hal Rodgers in his role as Associate Audio-Video Editor. Both are relatively new key staff members. Bob Long, Audio-Video Editor, and Ken Furie, Music Editor, are veterans in their posts. And all are backed by as involved and productive a group of associates and assistants as I've observed in all my years in magazine publishing.

During the years, HF passed from staff ownership in November of 1957 to being a member of the Billboard Publications Inc. family, and from BPI to the American Broadcasting Companies in July 1974. While these changes certainly affected staff attitudes and caused minor staff changes, I think all was for the best. The magazine, run more as a hobby than a business in its earliest days (we'd never even *heard* of a profit and loss statement then), has become more oriented to business and budgets and profits—and that has insured its strength and survival. However, thank heaven, with all of twenty-five years' triumphs and tragedies, victories and defeats, successes and failures, the essential spirit—that of striving to find and print the best writing and thinking about music, recordings, and sound reproduction equipment—has never departed. A superb staff with the essence of joy in doing what they're doing really is responsible for bringing you what you're about to read. I hope your hours of enjoyment approach in some measure the enormous pleasure we've had in putting it all together.

WARREN B. SYER
Great Barrington, Mass.
August, 1976

I. Composers
and
Their Ways

At the Thought of Mozart

by Aaron Copland

PAUL VALERY once wrote: "The definition of beauty is easy: it is that which makes us despair." On reading that phrase, I immediately thought of Mozart. Admittedly, despair is an unusual word to couple with the Viennese master's music. And yet, isn't it true that any incommensurable thing sets up within us a kind of despair? There is no way to *seize* the Mozart music. This is true even for a fellow-composer, any composer—who, being a composer, rightfully feels a special sense of kinship, even a happy familiarity, with the hero of Salzburg. After all, we can pore over him, dissect him, marvel or carp at him. But in the end there remains something that will not be *seized*. That is why, each time a Mozart work begins—I am thinking of the finest examples now—we composers listen with a certain awe and wonder, not unmixed with despair. The wonder we share with everyone; the despair comes from the realization that only this one man at this one moment in musical history could have created works that seem so effortless and so close to perfection. The possession of any rare beauty, any perfect love, sets up a similar distress, no doubt.

Mozart had one inestimable advantage as compared with the composers of later times: he worked within the "perfection of a common language." Without such a common language the Mozartean approach to composition and the triumphs that resulted would have been impossible. Matthew Arnold once put it this way: during such a time "you can descend into yourself and produce the best of your thought and feeling naturally, and without an overwhelming and in some degree morbid effort; for then all the people around you are more or less doing the same thing." It has been a long time since composers of the Western world have been so lucky.

Because of that, I detect a certain envy mixed with their affectionate regard for Mozart as man and musician. Composers, normally, tend to be sharply critical of the works of their colleagues, ancient or modern. Mozart himself exemplified this rule. But it doesn't hold true for other composers and Mozart. A kind of love affair has been going on between them ever since the eight-year-old prodigy made the acquaintance of Johann Christian Bach in London. It cooled off somewhat in the Romantic nineteenth century, only to be renewed with increased ardor in our own time. It is a strange fact that in the twentieth century it has been the more complex composers who have admired him most—perhaps because they needed him most. Busoni said that Mozart was "the most perfect example of musical talent we have ever had." Richard Strauss, after composing *Salome* and *Elektra*, paid him the ultimate compliment of abandoning his own style in order to refashion himself on a Mozartean model. Schoenberg called himself a "pupil of Mozart," knowing full well that such a statement from the father of atonality would astonish. Darius Milhaud, Ernst Toch, and a host of composer-teachers quote him again and again as favored example for their students. Paradoxically, it appears that precisely those composers who left music more complicated than they found it are proudest to be counted among the Mozart disciples.

I number myself among the more critical of Mozart admirers, for I distinguish in my mind between the merely workaday beautiful and the uniquely beautiful among his works. (I can even complain a bit, if properly encouraged, about the inordinate length of some of the operas.) I like Mozart best when I have the sensation I am watching him think. The thought-processes of other composers seem to me different: Beethoven grabs you by the back of the head and forces you to think with him; Schubert, on the other hand, charms you into thinking his thoughts. But Mozart's pellucid thinking has a kind of sensitized objectivity all its own: one takes delight in watching him carefully choose orchestral timbres, or in following the melodic line as it takes flight from the end of his pen.

Mozart in his music was probably the most reasonable of the world's great composers. It is the happy balance between flight and control, between sensibility and self-discipline, simplicity and sophistication of style that is his particular province. By comparison Bach seems weighted down with the world's cares, Palestrina otherworldly in his interests. Composers before him had brought music a long way from its primitive beginnings, proving that in its highest forms the art of music was to be considered on a par with other strict disciplines as one of man's grandest achievements.

Mozart, however, tapped once again the source from which all music flows, expressing himself with a spontaneity and refinement and breath-taking rightness that has never since been duplicated.

Monteverdi and Mantua

by H. C. Robbins Landon

VIOLENCE AND SUDDEN DEATH, beauty and learning—the expected anomalies of life in Renaissance Italy—characterize the rise and fall of Mantua, that strange and brilliant little city in northern Italy. Here, in the Po Valley, the sleepy River Mincio broadens into a huge expanse of near motionless water, in which green reeds sway slightly and the fishing boats barely rock. On three sides Mantua is bounded by this lagoonlike expanse; on the fourth there was in the Middle Ages a swampy plain that bred evil miasmas. In times of public danger, the swamp could be flooded, thus surrounding Mantua with water. The gaunt ramparts of the old fortifications—a town has existed here since Etruscan times—bear witness to the city's strategic geographical position: the barbarian hordes of the north, and later the German and Austrian armies of all centuries, poured across the mountains and past the Lago di Garda to dash themselves against the walls of Mantua, the key to central Italy and the enticing riches of Rome.

Even in the Middle Ages, when German cities were little more than fortified villages, Mantua and its sister cities in northern Italy—Verona, Vicenza, Ferrara, Padua—were beacons of elegance, art, and learning. Fabulous castles—half fortresses, half palaces of hitherto undreamed of architectural grandeur—were built by the brilliant families whose names were to become household words throughout Europe: the Estes of Ferrara, the Medicis of Florence, the Gonzagas of Mantua. Out of the bloody and tumultuous confusion of the late Middle Ages, these families arose and became all-powerful within their various geographical spheres. The great cultural rebirth fathered by Florence under the Medicis spread quickly to the rest of northern Italy. Scholars, scientists, poets, architects, painters, musicians were lavishly encouraged by their patrons, who

themselves could usually turn a pretty Latin hexameter or play a viola da gamba with professional skill. Their ladies were often spirited, witty women of charm and ability, such as Isabella d'Este, who married Giovanni Francesco III Gonzaga: the early *cinquecento* court of this couple at Mantua, to which Isabella contributed diplomatic finesse, taste, learning, and her own great beauty, became a model of Renaissance living. She was in correspondence with Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, and other famous men of her time.

But never far away from this incredible profusion of culture was the threat of violent death—by poison, by plague, by the stiletto, in the torture chamber, or by mercenary troops who stormed the cities, raping, burning, and plundering the defenseless population. Even in happier times, wife was not safe from husband, nor brother from brother, and the secret passages of the brooding castles were not infrequently the scene of fratricidal death. As night fell in Mantua, and the damp fog swirled into castle courtyards, many a guard would cross himself and hold his battle-ax more tightly as he remembered the night in 1387 when Francesco de Gonzaga had hacked to death first his screaming wife Caterina and then the cowering male secretary with whom it was suspected she was having an affair. In those days, treachery and murder were unhesitatingly employed by the ambitious and ruthless family who were to make Mantua famous.

Mantua and the Gonzaga family became inseparable in 1328 when the citizens of the city elected Lodovico, "Gentleman of Gonzaga" (a small town in the Mantuan province, where remains of the once thriving family castle can still be seen), as "*Capitano del popolo*." During the fourteenth century, while the Gonzagas waged the usual local wars against their neighbors, fate smiled on Mantua and she grew rich and prosperous. The "Reggio," or ducal palace, was built next to the forbidding old "Castello di Corte," and the two mighty complexes grew into a whole town within a town—courtyard after courtyard, garden after garden (some of them exquisitely beautiful), wing after wing. Margrave Giovanni Francesco II Gonzaga (1407-44) called the scholar Vittorino da Feltre to his court and made Mantua a world-famous center of learning. Under Giovanni Francesco's successor, the ugly and sharp-witted Lodovico III, Mantua began to assume the physical proportions it has today. Andrea Mantegna was a resident of the court and in 1474 painted splendid frescoes in the old "Castello di Corte." A few years earlier, the magnificent S. Andrea Church, which today dominates the whole city, was begun after plans of the Florentine Leon Battista Alberti (died 1472), one of Brunelleschi's followers. Raphael's pupil Giulio Romano, who was born the year Columbus discovered America, was called to the Mantuan court and left the stamp of his vigorous personality on many a building and frescoed wall. He remodeled the ducal palace, and constructed a delightful country house, the so-called "Palazzo del Tè," which often served the lusty dukes as a convenient place to meet their mistresses.

As in all cultivated Renaissance houses, music played a vital part at the Mantuan court, not only in the church but in the chamber. Isabella d'Este played the "organetto" and collected music from all over Europe, including the new vocal works by Josquin Des Prez. In the sixteenth

century, Duke Guglielmo (1538-87), who despite a wretchedly deformed body was one of the most intelligent and farseeing of the Gonzaga family, increased the number of musicians and made his court *cappella* one of the finest in Europe. Like many Renaissance rulers, Guglielmo was a man of many talents: he not only played music, like his illustrious forebear Isabella, but he also composed madrigals and church music, of which a Magnificat, printed at Venice in 1586, achieved considerable popularity in its day. Guglielmo's agents scoured Europe for new music, and wax-sealed parcels arrived often from England and Flanders, France and Germany. For some twenty years, Guglielmo was in contact with Palestrina, who wrote several Masses (recently rediscovered, by the way) and many motets for the new ducal church, Santa Barbara (patron saint of the Gonzaga family); here there were two organ lofts, as there were in S. Andrea, and double-choired church music in the new style of the famous Gabriellis—chapel masters at St. Mark's in Venice—alternated with the sober unaccompanied works by Palestrina. Finally Guglielmo tried to persuade the celebrated composer, to whom he even sent his own compositions to be criticized, to come and work in Mantua (Palestrina's terms were too high for the wealthy but rather stingy Gonzagas, and the plan fell through). Nothing daunted, Guglielmo then focused his persuasive attention on the famous madrigalist Luca Marenzio, who had sung at a Mantuan court concert in 1580 and to whom Guglielmo turned when the ducal post of *maestro di cappella* became vacant in 1583; but after three years of tough financial bargaining on both sides—in the Renaissance, neither prince nor artist felt himself above valuing a gold ducat—Marenzio's terms were also found too high and instead he joined the Medici *cappella* in Florence.

Guglielmo was succeeded by his son Vincenzo in 1587. Vincenzo embodied all the good and bad qualities of the typical Renaissance ruler: he loved art, music, and splendor—and the court coffers, carefully filled by his father, emptied rapidly as Mantua witnessed what was to be a final golden harvest of pageantry, culture, and luxurious living. Vincenzo was a patron of Galileo and the young Rubens, and freed the broken Torquato Tasso from prison and certain death; he inherited his father's passion for drama and music; and under his reign, the Mantuan court became a mecca of European musicians and poets. Licentious and sexually attractive to women, his amorous adventures and conquests were the scandal and (among courtiers) delight of Renaissance Europe. Mantuan citizens, passing by the Palazzo del Tè of a warm summer night, could hear the distant revelry, in which the tinkling sound of a harpsichord and the mellow stroke of a viola da gamba bow were often preludes to bouts of wine and pink-nipped nudity, prolonged languidly into the gray light of dawn. As the court expenses rose to astronomical heights and aghast treasury officials tried to stave off bankruptcy, the Duke, smiling his sensual smile, would order the citizens to be taxed more heavily, the court salaries to be docked. It is symbolic, one feels, that the splendid façade and mighty interior of S. Andrea are matched by the ragged bricks of the unfinished north side, where the church waits for the protective marble covering it will never have.

In 1595 Vincenzo undertook one of several enormously expensive

campaigns to aid the Emperor in his fight against the Turks. This misguided vassalic zeal for the most Christian Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Rudolph II, nearly ruined the state of Mantua. But the Duke was not going to brave the bleak and bloody Hungarian plains without music, and he took with him five musicians (most of whom were singers as well as performers on various instruments) under the direction of one Claudio Monteverdi, temporary *maestro di cappella*, who had some five years before joined the court as "*suonatore di vivuola*" (viola player) and singer. As the frigid winds moaned across a countryside appallingly desolate to Italian eyes, and as the troops lay exhausted from dysentery, elegant music sounded from the Duke's command tent.

Although Claudio Monteverdi, son of a respected physician in Cremona, had been engaged at Mantua as a player, the Duke would have been more influenced in the young man's favor by the various compositions which he had published: sacred madrigals (*Cantiunculae Sacrae*) in 1582, when he was fifteen; a set of *Canzonette* (1584); and two sets of madrigals, the first in 1587, the second in 1590. He had studied composition with the "prefect" at Cremona Cathedral, and originally he had hoped to secure a position in Milan, where he had journeyed in the late 1580s. But nothing seems to have come of this trip, and about the year 1590 (Monteverdi himself, when an old man, was no longer quite sure, and variously reported 1589, 1590, and 1591), he joined the Gonzaga *cappella*.

The history of Monteverdi's relationship to Duke Vincenzo is a very curious one. On the one hand, the combination turned out to make musical, and particularly operatic, history; the Duke seems to have liked him and, as we have seen, took him along to Hungary. On the other hand, Monteverdi was badly paid and often kept waiting months for his salary, and the Duke passed him over when the coveted post of *maestro di cappella* became vacant in 1596, giving the job to a mediocre intriguer named Benedetto Pallavicino. Altogether, as will be shown, the Gonzagas behaved very shabbily to Monteverdi; the climate of Mantua, with its ghastly winter fogs, killed his wife and made him a sick man (in a letter written by Monteverdi's father to the Duchess in 1608, we read that ". . . the difficulty is entirely the result of the air at Mantua, which doesn't agree with [my son]"); yet the town seems to have had a peculiar fascination for him, and the composer's attitude towards it, even in later years, was an ambivalent one. In December 1608 he writes "how miserable [he is] at Mantua." But he continued to write music for Mantua long after he had left the court there, and when he was near to death, he felt the need to return to the city.

During the Nineties, Monteverdi continued to publish books of madrigals, which were very popular (the Third Book soon went into a second edition) but also severely criticized by older musicians for their harmonic daring and for their supposed violation of the strict, old-fashioned rules. As the decade progressed, it was clear that a new and exciting period in music was beginning. In 1594 the two greatest musicians of the period, Orlando di Lasso and Palestrina, died within a few months of each other; and that year something was taking place at Florence which was to change the face of music for all time.

The Renaissance had turned back to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration, and in Florence a brilliant group of poets, intellectuals, and musicians were hard at work to invent a new musical genre wherein the old Greek tragedies and fables could be revived and clothed in modern garb. The "Camerata," as the group called itself, came up with recitative, in which the words of the drama were closely matched to a sung "reciting" line, accompanied by a few instruments. All during the years 1594-96 the new form was being examined, discussed, and tried out: in 1597 the "Camerata" was ready and *Dafne*, as the piece was entitled (music by J. Peri, text by O. Rinuccini), was performed during Carnival at the Palazzo Corsi in Florence. Opera was born. In the next few years *Dafne* was repeated several times and improved; for one revival new music by Caccini was substituted. (The libretto became famous: thirty years later Heinrich Schütz composed the first German opera on a text based on Rinuccini and translated into German.)

Intellectuals throughout Italy were fascinated by the new form: the "Camerata" continued to experiment, and in 1600 the second opera, *Euridice*, was produced. The text was again by Rinuccini, and two composers set it to music: Peri and Caccini (Peri's version—which included bits of the Caccini—was the one given first, while Caccini's was staged two years later). At the first performance of the Peri setting, on October 6, 1600 (in honor of the marriage of Henry IV of France to Maria de' Medici), a Mantuan singer sang the title role. Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga was present at the nuptials, probably attended by Claudio Monteverdi, who had also been in the Duke's entourage on a visit to Flanders the year before. We have no evidence of Monteverdi's reactions to *Euridice*. The agelessly beautiful subject obviously appealed to him, as we shall see, but what he thought of Peri's elegantly monotonous music with its thin accompaniment we do not know. We can reasonably surmise, however, that the experience of that October evening in 1600 planted the seed which was to bear fruit so brilliantly in Mantua a few years later.

In 1601 Benedetto Pallavicino died, but Vincenzo, who had rushed off again to Hungary to fight the Turks, made no move to advance Monteverdi. Finally, Claudio's patience snapped, and he wrote the Duke a famous and ironic letter in which he rather waspishly suggested that, after having been passed over so often, it "would give rise to a scandal" if he were not made "maestro" of the Mantuan *cappella*. The Duke seems to have been amused, and granted Monteverdi's request. In the next years the Fourth (1603) and Fifth (1605) Books of Madrigals came into being, each one becoming more popular; the Fifth reached no less than eight editions. Despite his *maestro di musica's* fame, however, the Duke kept him at near-starvation wages, so that the Monteverdi family—Claudio had married Claudia Cattaneo, a beautiful young singer, and there were two children by the time the Fifth Book of Madrigals was issued—had to receive substantial financial help from his father to keep alive. Claudia's racking cough would not go away, and gradually she became weaker and weaker; her husband was weighed down by overwork and pressing debts. Vincenzo wasted no more thought on his *maestro di musica* than on the debts piling up on the desk of the court treasurer.

Vincenzo's two sons, Francesco and Ferdinando, were also passionate

addicts of the theatre, and Ferdinando, studying at Pisa, seems to have followed avidly the activities of the Florentine "Camerata." Could not something of this sort be produced at Mantua? He and Monteverdi had long discussions, and it seemed the natural thing to choose *Orfeo* as the subject. One of the courtiers, A. Striggio, Jr. (whose father had been a celebrated musician at the Gonzaga court), fashioned the text, and a hundred years after Andrea Mantegna's death (1506) perhaps the second most important work of art in the history of Mantua was born.

Monteverdi's *Favola d' Orfeo*, though of course owing its physical existence to the efforts of the Florentine "Camerata," is a far cry from the earlier music of Peri and Caccini. When the thrilling trumpet toccata which opens *Orfeo* first sounded at Mantua on February 22, 1607, the *cognoscenti* (led by the Hereditary Prince Francesco) knew they were hearing a new kind of opera. Instead of Peri's thin accompaniment of harpsichord and two or three strings, there was a rich and mighty orchestra, some forty strong; choruses delighted the ear, and ballets the eye; Florentine recitative, Gabrieli-like intermediums for wind band, songful ariosos, and madrigalian choral textures succeeded one another with breathtaking virtuosity. "*Orfeo*," writes the Monteverdi scholar H. F. Redlich, ". . . is really the first opera in the sense of practical music-making . . . a complete image of sound, a musical cosmos which peers, Janus-like, into the past . . . as well as into the future of the Gluck-Wagnerian 'Birth of the drama from the spirit of music.'"

The Mantuan court wanted to follow up the success of *Orfeo* with a whole series of operas, and despite being on the edge of a complete breakdown (his wife had died some six months after the triumph of *Orfeo*) the tired and aging master set to work. When his next opera, *Arianna*, was staged on May 28, 1608, at Mantua, the audience was moved to tears during the famous "Lament." (Monteverdi called his lament "*la più essenziale parte dell' opera*," but its survival does not lessen the tragic fact that the rest of the score is irrevocably lost.)

As the next years came and went, the court began to owe Monteverdi considerable sums. (While the Duke had unlimited money for his mistresses, he apparently lacked funds for his musicians.) Claudio's father even resorted to writing a letter to the Duchess Eleonora in the hopes that she would intervene. It is a proud letter and a shame to the Gonzaga name: it opens, "Illustrious Lady, my son, Claudio Monteverdi, came to Cremona immediately after the Wedding Festivities in a very bad state of health, in debt, and shabbily clad. . . ."

In the midst of this financial misery and his widower's loneliness, the composer began, in 1610, to write one of his loveliest and most moving compositions: the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is almost beyond human comprehension that at this time he could speak, as he does in the "*Sonata sopra Sancta Maria*," a language of such utter purity and inner peace. In such moments as the "great" (as opposed to the "smaller") "*Magnificat septem vocibus et sex instrumentalis*," wherein the searingly beautiful old plainchant floats through and over the rich tapestry of orchestral sound, Monteverdi gave his patron a monument far greater than he deserved.

Events thence moved quickly. The Duchess died unexpectedly in

September 1611, to be followed, in February of the next year, by the profligate Duke. Francesco IV—who had helped to create *Orfeo*—mounted the Gonzaga throne. Barely six weeks after becoming ruler of Mantua, he showed his devotion to his *maestro di musica* by dismissing him from the ducal service. Broken-hearted, Monteverdi left Mantua a month later, carrying with him the sum of twenty-five *scudi* as a reward for twenty-one years of faithful service to the illustrious and noble house of Gonzaga.

It is the end of our tale; but there is a grim epilogue. Francesco died of smallpox at Christmas of 1612, to be succeeded by his brother Ferdinando, and for a few years the tottering Gonzaga court enjoyed an Indian summer of peace before the storm broke. In 1626 Ferdinando died, and Vincenzo II, youngest son of Monteverdi's former patron and the last male member of the line, followed him to the grave on Christmas of 1627. In the ensuing interregnum, the great nations fought over the Gonzagan throne, and the Mantuan War of Succession broke out. The Austrian army laid siege to the city, and on July 18, 1630, they breached the walls: in a nightmare week of burning and murdering, a large part of Mantua was reduced to ashes and hundreds of precious works of art, including all Monteverdi's manuscripts which he had left there, were forever destroyed. As a swirling pall of smoke obscured Mantua's ancient towers, still another, even more ghastly, specter appeared: in the wake of the soldiery came the Black Death, sweeping rapidly over all northern Italy and killing thousands upon thousands.

Thirteen years after the sacking of Mantua and more than thirty years after his dismissal from its court, Claudio Monteverdi, revered chapel master of St. Mark's and now, in priestly garb, nearing his eightieth birthday, decided to revisit the city. What he saw were the still blackened ruins where so many of his masterpieces had perished, the half-empty Ducal "Reggio" where he had begged for his salary, the swampy plains from which had come slow death to his beloved wife. Claudio was a very old man, and in joining the church he had renounced the things of this world. But perhaps he dimly remembered, with the indistinct mellowness of an octogenarian, the splendid first performance of the *Favola d' Orfeo*—that memorable evening when the course of Western music had been so swiftly altered.

The Imperishable Wag

by Charles Cudworth

IF YOU ARE SO BENIGHTED as to think of George Frederick Handel solely as a solemn embodiment of musical uplift, it's time to mend the error of your ways. For the greater part of Handel's life, entertainment was his lot; he was indeed a public entertainer, albeit of an exalted kind. And although the great bulk of his musical output may seem to be somber in character, yet there is a vein of humor just beneath the surface of even his gravest works—think of that last little flutter of angels' wings in *Messiah* itself, for example, or of the chorus "All we like sheep," in the same oratorio.

He was indeed a droll fellow, in life as well as art. The friend of his youth, Johann Mattheson, tells us that even as a young man Handel was "naturally inclined to dry humour" and "behaved as if he could not count five. . . . He had a dry way of making the gravest people laugh, without laughing himself!" He seems to have made a very vivid impression on nearly everyone who met him and, as a result, his lively image is preserved in numerous portraits by his contemporaries. Charles Burney and Sir John Hawkins, the two famous English music historians of the later eighteenth century, both knew him personally and have left us accounts of him. Handel's gait, says Hawkins, was sauntering and rather ungainly: "It had in it somewhat of that rocking motion which distinguishes those whose legs are bowed." Dr. Burney adds that Handel's figure "was large, and he was somewhat corpulent and unwieldy in his motions; but his countenance . . . was full of fire and dignity; and such as impressed ideas of superiority and genius. His general look was somewhat heavy and sour; but when he *did* smile, it was his sire the sun bursting out of a black cloud. There was a sudden flash of intelligence, wit and good humour, beaming in his countenance, which I hardly ever

saw in any other. He was impetuous, rough, and peremptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence; indeed there was an original humour and pleasantry in his most lively sallies of anger or impatience, which with his broken English, were extremely risible. His natural propensity to wit and humour, and happy manner of relating common occurrences, in an uncommon way, enabled him to throw persons and things into very ridiculous attitudes. Had he been as great a master of the English language as Swift, his *bons mots* would have been as frequent, and somewhat of the same kind." Another contemporary wrote: "Mr. Handel . . . was possessed of a great stock of wit and humour. No man ever told a story with more effect. But it was requisite for the hearer to have a competent knowledge of at least four languages—English, French, Italian, and German—for in his narratives he made use of them all."

Alas, we know all too little of the stories Handel himself may have told, but many a story has been told of him. Some of these are well known, others almost unknown. Many come from the pages of Burney, or Coxe's *Anecdotes*. We have a glimpse of him "sauntering" through the park, "talking to himself, so loud, that it was easy for persons not very near him to hear the subject of his soliloquies. . . ." On one occasion he was thus soliloquizing about a boy whom he had helped, but who had "turned out ill" and run away: "Der teiffel! De fater vas desheevd; de mutter vas desheevd; but I vas not desheevd—he is ein tammed shcauntrel—and coot for nutting." This seems to have been a time when the composer was not amused, but on other occasions he was quite capable of enjoying a joke at his own expense. One day he took an old clergyman friend of his, Rev. J. Fountayne, to Marylebone Gardens; as they drew near the orchestra, a new piece was struck up. "Come, Mr. Fountayne," said Handel, "let us sit down and listen to this piece; I want to know your opinion of it." Down they sat, and after some time, the old parson turned to his companion and said: "It's not worth listening to—it's very poor stuff!" Mr. Handel's reply: "You are right, Mr. Fountayne. It is very poor stuff—I thought so, myself, when I had finished it!" But he was not always quite so patient with musical pretensions on the part of the gentlemen of the cloth. One morning he was in the midst of being shaved when a fellow musician called to request Handel's permission to add his great name to the subscription list of a set of organ concertos composed by a clergyman friend. Handel jumped up in a passion and a flurry of lather, thrust the barber's hand aside, and cried out with great vehemence: "Tamm your seluf and go to der teiffel!—a barson make concerto? vy he no make sarmon?" *

Many of the best stories about him are naturally enough concerned with his public life. We are told that "he understood the art of asserting his own dignity, whilst rendering all possible deference to the noble personages with whom he came in contact." But, if Burney is to be believed, "all possible deference" is scarcely the phrase one would use to describe some of Handel's almost Beethovenian dealings with people in

* Different chroniclers' attempts to reproduce Handel's accent yield wonderful orthographical variety, but altogether they do give some idea of what it must have been like.

high places. "At the rehearsals of his oratorios, at Carleton-House, if the prince and princess of Wales were not exact in coming into the Music-Room, he used to be very violent . . . if the maids of honour, or any other female attendants, talked, during the performance, I fear that our modern Timotheus not only swore, but called names; yet at such times, the princess of Wales, with her accustomed mildness and benignity, used to say 'Hush! hush! Handel's in a passion.'" At such rehearsals, wrote Burney, "He was a blunt and peremptory disciplinarian . . . but he had a wit and humour in delivering his instructions, and even in chiding and finding fault, that were peculiar to himself, and extremely diverting to all but those on whom his lash was laid. . . . He wore an enormous white wig, and when things went well . . . it had a certain nod or vibration, which manifested his pleasure and satisfaction. Without it, nice observers were certain that he was out of humour."

But if things did go wrong, and Handel let his "great bear" of a temper loose, only to discover that he himself was in the wrong, then no one was quicker to apologize and make amends: "I pec your barton—I am a very odd tog!" he said to Burney, on one such occasion. The same authority relates how Handel, on his way to Dublin to produce *Messiah*, was detained at Chester, awaiting a favorable wind and tide. Thinking he would like to try out some of the numbers, he got together a number of local performers, among whom was one Janson, by profession a printer. Handel, having first ascertained that they could all sing at sight, handed out the music, but was soon in a fury at poor Janson's mistakes: "You sheauntrel! tit you not dell me dat you could sing at soite?" "Yes, sir," protested Janson manfully, "and so I can; but not at *first* sight!" Poor Janson! he is among the immortals, not for being a good printer, but for being a bad sight reader—or perhaps a smart hand at repartee. Perhaps it was on the same occasion that Handel fell foul of the old cellist who assured the great man that he was a good player, because "he played in church." Unfortunately he could play neither in time nor in tune, and soon Handel's "great bear" was loose and he was shouting: "You blay in de church; very well, you *may* blay in de church, for we read de Lord is long suffering, and of great kindness. You shall blay in de church, but you shall not blay for *me*!" And with that he snatched up his part books, and rushed out, swearing, no doubt, with fearsome and polyglot fluency.

It was not merely the back desks and the chorus singers who came in for Mr. Handel's sharp reproofs, however. Matthew Dubourg, his orchestral leader in Dublin, once lost his way in an unnecessarily long cadenza; when he finally did reach his final trill, he was greeted with a loud "You are welcome home, Mr. Dubourg!"—much to the delight of the audience, adds Burney. Handel even let his "great bear" loose among the prima donnas—we have all heard of how he seized the great Signora Cuzzoni by the waist and threatened to throw her out of the window, shouting, "Dey say you are a very teiffel; you must know dat I am Beelzebub, de Brince of Teiffels!" On another occasion, when a petulant tenor objected to the way Handel was accompanying him at the harpsichord, and even threatened to jump on the instrument and smash it to pieces: "Oh!" said Handel, "Let me know ven you vill do dat, and I vill advertise it; I am

sure more beoble vill come to see you jump, dan to hear you sing!" To one recalcitrant singer who objected to singing the famous air "*Verdi prati*," in *Alcina*: "You toc! don't I know petter as your seluf, vaat is pest for you to sing?" But he was not always in a passion, even with singers; sometimes the great bear merely gave a good-humored growl, as when the charming but rather featherheaded soprano Frasi told him she was going to learn thorough-bass, so that she could accompany herself. "Oh—vaat may ve not expect?" quizzed Handel, speaking in his driest vein, and knowing the lady's indolent nature only too well.

When his own favorite oratorio, *Theodora*, failed, playing to almost empty houses, he consoled himself and the artists with a "Never moind; de moosic vill sound de petter." But when, a little later, two professionals applied for what we should now call complimentary tickets for *Messiah*, he flashed out, bitterly: "Oh, your sarvant, mein Herren! You are tamnple tainty! You would not go to *Teodora*—dere vas room enough to tance dere, ven dat vas perform'." The old dry humor continued with him to the very end. In his later years, when blindness came upon him, he was in some doubt as to how he could continue with his oratorios, and Sharp, his surgeon, rather tactlessly recommended the celebrated blind organist John Stanley. Handel gave a great shout of laughter and rejoined, "Mr. Sharp, have you never read the Scriptures? Do you not remember, if the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch?"

Handel's drolleries are legion, some real, some apocryphal. And this same humor lurks beneath the apparently formal baroque lines of his melodies. Even in his music, he can "make the gravest people laugh, without laughing himself," or at least without obviously seeming to laugh. Just think for a moment of some of his avowedly comic creations: "the monster Polypheme" in *Acis and Galatea*; the boastful giant Harapha, in *Samson*; the two naughty old men in *Susanna*. These are comic characters worthy to be placed beside Mozart's immortal Barber. Polyphemus, in particular, is one of the greatest characterizations of all eighteenth-century music, and like all the best (or should it be worst?) fairy tale ogres, he is frightening as well as funny; after we have been laughing over his grotesque love-making, we suddenly realize that he is a giant, after all, liable to become dangerous and lo, he has hurled his piece of "massy ruin" and poor Acis is no more. But on the whole it is the comic Polypheme we remember, and not the savage brute.

Yet Handel's characterizations did not stop at the merely comical; he could depict madness (in *Saul* and *Orlando*); villainy (the false Ptolemy, in *Alexander Balus*); jealousy (Dejanira, in *Hercules*, and again *Saul*); bitter regret for past misdeeds, and lost glory (in *Samson*); seductive feminine charm (Galatea, Dalila, and Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare*), and so on and so on. Indeed, his catalogue of portraits is unending, for every character he encountered in his librettos he put into memorable music. His way with the words themselves was rather peremptory, of course, like his way with people: as he said to the tamest of his collaborators, Doctor Morell, "What! You teach me Music? The Music, sir, is good Music. It is your words is bad. Hear the passage again. There! go you, make words to that Music." There is another tale, perhaps spurious, of that same gentle parson being awakened in the middle of the night by the

clatter of horses' hooves and the rattle of a coach, followed by furious bangings on his door; it was Mr. Handel, come helter-skelter, on a moment's impulse, to ascertain the meaning of some obscure couplet.

Usually Handel went straight to the heart of a lyric, to its general import, rarely bothering with the exact shade of hair's-breadth word setting which so fidgets modern composers. In true baroque fashion he was out to set the general *Affekt* of a poem to music; "if some of its feet came on the wrong beat," well, that was just too bad, but it couldn't be helped. The famous chorus in *Messiah*, "For—unto us a child is born," is an excellent example of what might happen to the underlaying if words and music came into sharp conflict; it so happened that Handel wished to make use at this point of an earlier work, an Italian duet which gave just the effect he wanted. And how magnificent the resulting chorus is, if you can forgive him for starting off on the wrong foot. Always in a hurry, he sometimes let himself be carried away by one word in a lyric; one of the most engaging examples of this is his setting of "How vain is man," in *Judas Maccabaeus*. I feel sure that Dr. Morell intended this lyric for some sententious tune, reflecting solemnly on the futility of human aspirations; Handel, however, saw fit to read into the text a very different tune, more evocative of a dandy mincing down the Strand than of Morell's moralizings. It may have been an honest mistake, of course, but I'm not sure; I have a sneaking fear that Handel may have been pulling everybody's legs, and not least his librettist's. "Oh, vaat may ve not expect . . .?"

Those librettists must have had a good deal to put up with, one way or another, when Handel's "great bear" got loose among them, but on the whole they were a mediocre crew, and their sorry verses have not been improved by the passage of time. Dr. Morell was probably the best of a poor lot, but even he sometimes descended to such doggerel as: "Pious orgies, pious airs, Decent orgies, decent prayers. . . ." A "decent orgy" comes dangerously near to a contradiction in terms, I would have thought, but no matter; let us pass on, with averted glance, to "See, from his post Euphrates flies. . . ." Which makes one wonder, first, to what sort of post one could possibly tether a river, and, secondly, if perhaps the River God was expecting a letter from the local tax collector. Charles Jennens, who is supposed to have assembled the text of *Messiah*, also fancied himself a poet; one of *his* gems is in *Saul*, where he makes the heroine, Michal, announce that "A father's *will* has autoriz'd my love. . . ."

Of course, Handel's librettists cannot be blamed for the many changes in the actual meanings of words that have taken place in the last two centuries. No one in Handel's day could have foreseen the eventual sad debasement of the word "awful," which in the eighteenth century still signified full of awe; if anyone had, even Handel would not have made poor Virtue, in *The Choice of Hercules*, sing "Listen to my awful voice" no fewer than eight times in the course of one aria. Purist as I am, I think that one might make some slight emendation here; otherwise Virtue will go on unintentionally evoking some of that "heart-easing mirth" which Handel so joyously hymned in *L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso*. This brings us to some of the greater poets with whom Handel found himself collabo-

rating—after their apotheoses, naturally. I am not quite sure if we can blame Milton entirely for that curious couplet in *Samson* which announces glibly that "To man God's universal law/Gave power to keep his wife in awe. . . ." Wishful thinking, perhaps? But I feel sure that Handel must have had a quiet little bachelor chuckle when he set that earth-shaking reflection to suitably sententious music. We have seen how he could domineer over prima donnas, but he seems to have been cautious to avoid all danger of matrimonial altercations: the wily old boy didn't even have to *try* to keep a wife in awe. Milton's younger contemporary, Dryden, left one line which will always give rise to mirth in a musician's soul; what conductor can hear, without apprehension, that wonderful line in *Alexander's Feast*—"Behold, a ghastly band . . ."? Let us draw a kindly veil over this part of the proceedings and tiptoe on.

Hitherto we have mentioned only the more obvious examples of humor in Handel, in connection with vocal works, where word setting and character drawing are concerned. But it can be observed in his purely instrumental works, sometimes overtly, sometimes slightly concealed. Chief among such music comes his crowning instrumental achievement, the twelve glorious *Grand Concertos*, Op. 6. To me these concertos are full of never-failing interest and variety, much more so, say, than J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. In Handel's Opus 6, no single concerto is devoted entirely to one mood, but the individual movements, like his arias, are usually dominated by one broad *Affekt*. Thus we have playful movements (Concerto No. 2, second movement, Allegro); boisterous movements (No. 3, third movement, Allegro); jolly movements (No. 9, second movement, Allegro); mysterious movements (the opening of No. 11); some wistful movements (the second movement, Allegro, of No. 12, when it is played at the proper gentle speed); and, of course, plenty of merely vigorous movements and several examples of Handel's own special kind of stately serenity. One movement I never cease to wonder at is the three-eight Presto of No. 5. I remember reading somewhere in the pages of G.B.S. how he saw in Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata a prophetic vision of nuclear theory; I have always felt that in the whirling semiquavers of this unparalleled movement old Handel showed something of the same prophetic insight.

Some of Handel's earlier concertos (the so-called Hautboy Concertos, Op. 3) also have their humorous moments, particularly in the dances—Handel's dances are rarely stiff and formal, but have a broad and earthy life of their own; one has only to think of the *Water Music* to feel the truth of this. Some of his most delightful dances are in the "Frenchified" ballet operas of the mid-1730s (*Ariodante*, *Terpsicore*, *Alcina*): the best example of all is the Dream Music in *Alcina*, a psychological pantomime depicting a conflict between good and evil dreams—the good dreams represented by the strings "à 5," the evil by tremendous unisons; the good dreams are startled (oh delicious flutterings, preëchoing those disappearing angels in *Messiah*!) and there follows a battle, to a Lulliste *Air des Combattants*, between good and evil. My description may sound overfanciful, but Handel's music here is remarkable.

Many years ago I wrote in a play that to me Handel was The Greatest Common Denominator of all mankind. I still hold to that belief, and I

think that it is above all his gift of humor which confirms me in my opinion. Certainly to an Englishman no man can be truly great who has no sense of humor. If you are one of those who have been brought up on what one might call the messianic theory of Handel and his music, you may feel that I have been poking unnecessary fun at him. Indeed I have not; there is no stauncher Handelian in the world than Charles Cudworth. One does not laugh *at* the Great and Good Mr. Handel; one laughs *with* him.

Reunion in Eisenstadt

by James Hinton, Jr.

AT LAST, after a hundred and forty-five years of separation, Josef Haydn is together.

On June 5, 1954, Theodore Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, led a solemn procession of high officials to the base of a pedestal in the Musikverein building. On top of the pedestal was a reliquary case containing a skull. President Theodor Koerner, Chancellor Julius Raab, the Papal Nuncio Monseigneur Giovanni Dellepiane, and members of the diplomatic corps of many nations watched as Cardinal Innitzer blessed the skull. Then the reliquary was taken down, and the procession moved out the way it had come.

A hearse was waiting to receive the reliquary. With it in the lead, a motorcade snaked slowly out of Vienna and headed in the direction of Eisenstadt, a market town in Burgenland Province—in the Soviet Zone. There the body of Josef Haydn rested, cofined in a tomb in an old, baroque church. The motorcade was charged with restoring its head.

When the skull-bearers finally arrived at their goal, another service was held—this time a blessing for the remains of Josef Haydn, *in toto*, as the officials and diplomats looked solemnly on. Then the motorcade turned in the square and swept back towards Vienna. Mission accomplished.

As the big, black, official automobiles departed, one Gustinus Ambrosi—described in the press only as “an expert”—set to work putting Haydn together again. How one goes about reconnecting a detached skull is a question that only an expert—like the good† Ambrosi—can answer. It seems best to trust him, and fret no more about it. At any rate, for better or for worse, the Russians now control all of Haydn. They may have composers formalistic as he, but for a combination of decadence and formalism, Haydn as he is today can hardly be beat.

All of which is pleasant as far as it goes, but it doesn't tell how the body happened to be in Eisenstadt and the skull in Vienna. Suppose someone wonders? Well, all right, tell it again. The story of Haydn's skull has been told so many times that once more won't hurt, but don't expect any high-pressure sales talk about its being the most macabre episode in the history of blah-blah. It's pretty macabre, all right, but not all that macabre. Or maybe it depends on the construction of individual macabre-meters. I never had much trouble suppressing shudders over it, but it is a sort of kinky story.

To begin with, it is necessary to understand that Josef Haydn was in no sense a neglected genius. He was a success from the start of his career, ate better than most all through it, and was pretty generally recognized as a Great Composer long before he died. And he didn't die until he was a good, round seventy-seven years old. Composers, speaking generally, are a neurotic and sickly lot, and Haydn had his aches and pains—which he complained about with gusto, just like anyone else—but he pretty nearly always had a place to live and people to pamper him and flatter him, honors to buck up his spirits, and money to spend. True, he spent the greater part of his life in the service of the Esterházy family, wearing the Esterházy livery. But that was before the fashionable nineteenth-century conception of the creative artist as a sort of Byronic hero, standing alone on a rock, with lightning flashing and waves crashing about his feet, looking nobly into the storm for Inspiration. Haydn was a servant, in a way, but he was also a high-level servant—a kind of officer-servant, like the major-domo of the Esterházy estate. Any way you cut it, he didn't have a half bad job. Besides, by the time he died, the nineteenth century had begun, and the old man had the advantages of *both* post-Renaissance paternalism and the increasing deification of the artist. Compared with Bach, with all those big, little, and medium-sized Bachs to feed (they were his own fault, to be sure, but there were still a lot of them) and Wilhelm Friedemann, the most talented one, raking up the pea-patch; compared with Handel, in and out of debt and saddled with a flock of temperamental castrati, Haydn had a pretty mellow time of it, all told.

Taking advantage of this salubrious climate, and making use of his tremendous genius, he composed works that have led people to call him—and with plenty of justification—the Father of the Symphony, the Father of the String Quartet, and the Father of Modern Instrumental Music. And, what is more, he lived to enjoy his status. Yet, living moderately and securely, he aged. In 1803 he was seventy-one; that year he conducted for the last time—a performance of *The Seven Last Words*. In 1805, a rumor got around that Haydn had passed on. Cherubini composed a cantata *in memoriam*; Kreutzer composed a violin concerto (based on themes by Haydn); and Mozart's *Requiem* (Mozart had died early, in 1791) was sung in Paris. Then came a letter from the old man saying that he was "still of this base world." He added that had he known of the occasion in time he would have come to Paris to conduct the *Requiem* himself.

His last appearance in public was at a performance of *The Creation*, given at the University of Vienna in celebration of his seventy-sixth

birthday. Everyone was there—almost everyone. The Princess Esterházy sat next to him and put her own shawl around his shoulders. As he left the auditorium Beethoven knelt unostentatiously and kissed his hand. In 1809, with the Napoleonic armies raging outside of Vienna, he said: "Children, be comforted. I am well." Then he died. In Vienna, Mozart's *Requiem* was sung again.

All of this, I suppose, is quite beside the point. It is simply meant to call again to mind that Josef Haydn really was a great man, and that his greatness was known in his long, beloved lifetime. It is background for the unseemly comedy that followed.

Haydn's body was buried with honors in the Hundesturm Cemetery (the name of the cemetery alone is enough to strike the grotesque note) largely because of the war's unsettlements. Soon Prince Esterházy was granted permission to move the body to Eisenstadt. Times were still far from settled, though, and in 1814 Sigismund Neukomm, finding the tomb in what seemed to him a shocking state of disrepair, placed on it a marble slab with Haydn's favorite tag from Horace: "*Non omnis moriar*," set as a five-part canon.

Some half a dozen years later, the Duke of Cambridge said, as though envyingly, to Prince Esterházy, "How fortunate is the man who employed this Haydn in his lifetime and now has possession of his remains." This set the prince to thinking, and he ordered Haydn's body exhumed and re-entombed in the Eisenstadt city church, where he had in life so often conducted his masses.

Officers moved to obey the prince's order, but in process of carrying it out, they opened the coffin itself. To their enormous shock: No head! Here was Haydn, ready to be moved to Eisenstadt. But where was his head?

The officers told the prince. The prince called the police. He ordered them to find Haydn's head. The police went away. Prince Esterházy had not said "look for"; he had said "find." So, the police dutifully turned up with a head. Orders, after all, are orders, and a head is better than no head at all.

As it turned out, one Carl Rosenbaum, formerly a secretary to Prince Esterházy, had connived with one Johann Peter, a prison official, and the two had bribed the gravedigger in Vienna to open the casket and steal the head of Haydn. Their motive? Simple enough: they were interested in phrenology, as were medical friends of theirs. They wanted to measure the skull and make phrenological experiments on it. After all, Haydn was a great composer, wasn't he? And how often do phrenologists, professional or amateur, get a crack at a skull like his? Who could blame them?

Well, Prince Esterházy, for one, could—and did. He set the police on their trail. The police went to Peter. No skull. He had given it to Rosenbaum (along with a lovely baroque case that had glass windows and a satin pillow). So the police went to Rosenbaum. No skull. At least not a findable one. As it turned out, Therese Gassmann, Rosenbaum's singer wife, had taken the skull to bed with her and refused to admit the police because she was, she groaned, oh so terribly ill.

The police were in a dilemma. If they turned up without the skull, the

prince might take drastic action. But no skull. At this point, Rosenbaum offered a skull, no questions asked. He wanted money, and apparently was not at all reluctant to whittle the coin on both sides. He got little enough for his pains, but the police accepted the skull. It wasn't Haydn's skull. It was just some old skull Rosenbaum happened to have knocking around in the cupboard. But it *was* a skull.

So the wrong skull was dutifully attached to the rest of what was left of Haydn—whether by “an expert” or not has not come down in history—and there the composite skeleton lay in the church at Eisenstadt. It looked splendid. If matters had stopped there, no doubt everyone would have been satisfied. Eisenstadt would have had a complete representation of the mortal remains of Haydn, and Prince Esterházy could have rested content that he was no longer being selfish and hoarding distinguished bones. But this was not to be.

Rosenbaum finally died—as all men must, and pass to dust—leaving the *echt* skull of Haydn to his old friend and fellow grave-robber, Peter, with the proviso that it be willed by him to the museum of the Society of Friends of Music. At this point, the plot becomes a little bit confused. What seems to have happened is that Peter, on his death—presumably after having made all the cranial measurements he cared to make—willed according to the entail. But then the skull could not be found. It had been taken by a fellow phrenologist. He, on *his* death, bequeathed the skull to the University of Vienna.

Then ensued a long legal tangle, with three litigants claiming Haydn's head: the Friends of Music; the university; and the Esterházy estate. Finally—on what grounds it is very difficult to imagine—the Friends of Music were given title to the disputed object, and from 1895 until 1954, there it sat on its pedestal in the Musikverein building.

In 1932, the Haydn bicentennial rolled around, and the Musikverein offered the skull to the Esterházy family—for a price. The price was too high to be met, at least at that time, so the skull stayed in Vienna and the skeleton stayed in Eisenstadt. At the time of the Nazi *Anschluss*, there was great talk about putting Papa Haydn together again, but no action was taken.

After World War II, the Musikverein, apparently tired of the whole hassle, agreed to hand the skull over to the Esterházy family so that it could be reinterred at Eisenstadt in the nice, elaborate sarcophagus built for the headless Haydn in 1932. But just as the transfer had been arranged, the present Prince Esterházy, a Hungarian citizen, was arrested, along with Josef Cardinal Mindszenty, and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Now, at long, long last, Haydn is one again, and unless the Russians let something happen to him, there he will stay in the Eisenstadt church until judgment day comes round.

The tale of Haydn's head is perhaps the most elaborate of the lot, but there does seem to be something that attracts misfortune to the remains of the musical great. For instance, Bach (J. S.) was buried quietly on July 31, 1750, beside the Johanniskirche, just beyond the east wall of the city of Leipzig. There he remained for two centuries without any sort of marker. Finally, a plaque was put up on the south wall of the church. The plain fact is that nobody *knew* exactly where Bach's bones lay. In 1894,

the church was restored, and excavating workmen brought up a box containing a skeleton that was ("after exhaustive research") decided to be that of Bach. Bach or no Bach, they put it in a limestone tomb under the altar of the Johanniskirche. During the latest war, the Johanniskirche was bombed out. When digging out began a great dispute arose: should Bach be left where he was; should Bach be removed to the Thomaskirche, where many of his great sacred works were first performed; or should a centrally located tomb be built as a civic monument. What *did* finally happen about that? And—ask this only in a still, small voice—are the bones in the tomb really those of Bach?

And Liszt. Why should he have been buried at Bayreuth in the first place—except that his daughter Cosima (ultimately) Wagner said that this was "also wholly the wish of the great but modest departed"? Offhand, Bayreuth would seem a most unlikely resting place for Liszt, and there have always been agitations to move his bones (assuming that they are just bones by now) to various other places—to Weimar (because of historic associations); to Hungary (because he was Hungarian); to Rome (presumably because he became an abbé). And so on. Why not put his bones in a great rocket and shoot them into outer space; he was born "in the year of the great comet," wasn't he?

As for poor Mozart, nobody knows where he lies. He was buried in a pauper's field during a heavy snowstorm. His wife was too ill to attend. When she recovered sufficiently to search for his grave, the man who had dug it had gone away, and no one could give her any idea where her husband lay. Haydn, his head at last rejoined to his body, lies in a carved tomb. Bach—if Bach it is—has his bones made the subject of civic acrimony. Liszt is claimed by the points of the compass to which he travelled. But Mozart, the flesh and bones of Mozart, vanished at once into the earth that made them. He was and is his music, and nothing corporeal is left to obscure the fact. There is, after all, a kind of superior dignity in that.

A Discursive Tour of Verdi's Italy

by Roland Gelatt

LOGICALLY AND IDEALLY, the Verdi itinerary should begin in the flat country northwest of Parma, where the composer was born and bred and to which he returned with obstinate devotion during the whole of his long and crowded life. The focal point of Verdi's Italy is the little market town of Busseto deep in the Plain of Parma. But one cannot fly directly from New York to Busseto, or even to Parma. The choice for the jet-borne traveler is between a flight to Milan or to Rome. I opted for Rome and arrived there early in April, 118 years and six months after Verdi's first visit to that city.

He had gone to Rome, in the autumn of 1844, for the first performance of his sixth opera, *I due Foscari*, a gloomy entertainment based on a gloomy tragedy by Byron. The trip from Milan took five days—over miserable roads in cramped and stuffy diligences, with tedious delays at the borders of all the intervening states and principalities (Italy was not yet a nation—merely, as Metternich observed, “a geographical expression”) and with vexing overnight stops at indifferent wayside inns. By comparison, the Alitalia DC-8 in which I traveled touched down in Milan after an eight-hour hop from New York and then completed the flight to Rome in seventy minutes. The disparity of traveling times is symptomatic of other radical contrasts. Rome in 1844 was a city of 180,000 population (today it is about two million), as backward in its civic amenities as in its ideas of liberty and justice. Its resident Jewish population was still compelled to live in the Ghetto, near the Portico of Ottavia—“a barbarous system,” according to *Murray's Handbook for Travellers* of 1856, “only now to be met with in the states of the Church, although a relaxation of that rigid rule has been recently made, by allowing some of the most respectable Jews to have shops and counting-

houses beyond the precincts of their filthy quarter." Every office of importance—diplomatic, financial, judicial—was in the hands of the clergy, a succession of Baron Scarpas ruled the police force, and the administration of justice knew few mercies. Capital punishment in the form of *morte esemplare* still flourished. A particularly vile murderer would be flogged and hanged in the Piazza del Popolo, then cut into quarters and his dismembered body displayed upon stakes. Charles Dickens in *Pictures from Italy* describes a Roman beheading in that very year of 1844—a chilling vignette of indifferent spectators, of monks carrying a black-canopied effigy of Christ, of a pale-faced prisoner kneeling down under the knife with a leathern bag immediately below to catch his head. Before Dickens quite knew what had happened, the decapitation was over. "The executioner was holding it [the head] by the hair, and walking with it round the scaffold, showing it to the people. . . . When it had travelled round the four sides of the scaffold, it was set upon a pole in front—a little patch of black and white, for the long street to stare at, and the flies to settle on." And this was a fairly tame affair. As late as 1854 six robbers were executed on the Piazza del Popolo by being beaten to death before the crowd. All this seems a far cry from the *dolce vita* of contemporary Rome, and it requires now a considerable effort of the imagination to think of this splendidly sybaritic city in terms of despotic injustices and barbaric cruelties. It required no effort for Verdi 118 years ago. When he composed the last act of *Rigoletto*, when he invoked that vein of harsh severity which runs right through his early and middle periods, Verdi was writing of things he knew.

The premiere of *I due Foscari*, at the Teatro Argentina on November 3, 1844, was—in Verdi's own words—a "*mezzo-fiasco*," a half-failure, though the dissatisfactions on opening night were apparently more with the mediocre production than with the music itself. Nevertheless, Verdi returned to Milan without the tumult of a Roman success echoing in his ears. That came a little more than four years later with his second premiere at the Teatro Argentina, *La Battaglia di Legnano*. The circumstances were extraordinary. Italy was seething with resurgent patriotism in 1848, the year of revolutions, and the fever had infected even the Papal States. On November 24 the Pope had fled Rome in disguise to the Kingdom of Naples, and after ten weeks of dizzying uncertainty the short-lived Roman Republic was proclaimed on February 8, 1849. It was at just this period that Verdi came to Rome, carrying with him a new opera bursting with patriotic connotations—the victory of the Lombard League over Frederick Barbarossa at Legnano in 1176. The first performance took place on January 27 in an atmosphere of delirious enthusiasm. The interior of the Argentina Theatre had been festooned with the national colors. Most of the spectators were wearing them too—the men in their buttonholes, the women in their coiffures—and from the very first words of the opera, "*Viva l'Italia*," the audience went into a frenzy as only an Italian throng can. The entire fourth act had to be repeated, and at the end the composer was recalled time and again.

The Teatro Argentina is no longer festooned with anything. It is a shabby derelict, but it still stands and—with the application of a little time and determination—can still be seen. The Argentina first opened its

doors in 1732 and is now the only surviving eighteenth-century theatre in Rome. Probably the one most significant musical event in its long history was the first (and unsuccessful) performance of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1816, though throughout much of the nineteenth century it played a notable role in Rome's operatic affairs. With the opening of the larger and more sumptuous Teatro Costanzi (now Teatro dell' Opera) in 1880, the Argentina went into decline—a secondary opera house for secondary productions. It had a brief renaissance after World War II as a concert hall, but a few years ago the city authorities closed it down altogether. When we entered the building this spring, via the stage door on a back street, we had the sense of intruding on a once great lady, now very old and infirm. The air had a moldering and earthy smell; the paint and upholstery had grown dingy with neglect; the handsomely decorated ceiling was peeling away. And yet in its dim illumination the old Argentina possessed a noble aspect, and it was easy to believe that the faded yellow velvet drapes in the corridors had been fingered by the thirty-one-year-old Verdi as he stole into a box to await the verdict of a Roman audience.

Just now the Teatro Argentina is the scene of excavations. A plank has been thrown across the orchestra pit, and below it gapes a hole about twenty feet deep. At the bottom are Roman walls, perhaps of an ancient theatre. Eventually, after the archaeologists have taken their photographs, the pit will be filled in, and one of these days a restored and modernized Argentina will open its doors again, not as an opera house but as a repertory theatre. The plans and the timetable seem somewhat vague. Meanwhile, the Argentina slumbers peacefully, a silent repository of far-off memories.

To gain admission to the inside of the Argentina requires special dispensation, but anyone can view the façade, which looks out onto a busy thoroughfare, the Largo Argentina. Except for being dirtier and dingier, the façade is as Verdi knew it. The surroundings, however, would surprise him greatly. In the 1840s the theatre was hemmed within a maze of narrow streets. Since then, the wide Corso Vittorio Emanuele has been opened up to its left, and directly in front of it there is now a large piazza encompassing some extensive excavations of Roman temples. Literally hundreds of cats—black cats and white cats, calicoes, tabbies, even some Siamese—have made their homes in and amid these ancient ruins. Wherever one looks there are cats, stretched out across fallen columns, crouching under stone ledges, or sauntering through brick foundations. Verdi, who entertained a passionate affection for animals, would surely have been pleased at the Argentina's new neighbors.

Two more Verdi premieres took place in Rome, of operas that are still very much in the repertoire—*Il Trovatore*, in 1853, and *Un Ballo in maschera*, in 1859—but the house in which they were given, the Teatro Apollo, no longer exists. Old photographs show it to have been a bizarre, patchwork structure rising precipitously from the banks of the Tiber almost directly opposite the Castel Sant' Angelo. Theatres had occupied the site since 1671. The Teatro Apollo, erected in 1795, was the last of them, and its demolition came about, in 1888, because it stood in the way of a new river embankment that was to be put up. The embankment was

badly needed, for the Tiber used to inundate the lower parts of Rome with depressing regularity; as a matter of fact, the streets near the Teatro Apollo were inundated on the very night of *Il Trovatore's* first performance. Nevertheless, it is sad that the Apollo had to bow to progress. All that remains are some old pictures, and a stone fountain on the present Lungotevere Tor di Nona commemorating the spot on which the building stood. It was on a radiantly soft spring morning that I strolled down the Lungotevere to pay my respects to the departed Teatro Apollo and to photograph its commemorative plaque. Just as I was taking the picture, a handsome *ragazzino* climbed up on the fountain for a quick drink of water on his way to school. He seemed equally oblivious of my presence and the fountain's awesome historical associations.

It is time for a side trip to Naples. In truth, Naples is not much of a Verdi city, but any excuse to go there will do when the sun is shining and the air still cool. The composer's first visit took place in 1845 for the premiere of *Alzira*, a now forgotten work which had been commissioned by the Teatro San Carlo. It is, by all accounts, a thoroughly bad opera (even Verdi, in later life, called it "downright ugly") and its reception was not especially cordial. One critic suggested that Verdi was writing too much and too quickly: "No human talent is capable of producing two or three grand operas a year." He was undoubtedly right, but Verdi was not the first impecunious artist to keep on striking while the iron was hot. At all events, the Neapolitan press took a lively interest in the composer's comings and goings, much to his annoyance. The papers reported on the cafés he frequented, the singers he visited, the clothes he wore, and "a thousand other trifles unworthy"—Verdi later complained—"of a serious public or a great city." Despite his initial dislike of Naples (which he never got over), Verdi returned five years later with a much finer work—*Luisa Miller*, a domestic tragedy that presages *Rigoletto*. To the credit of the San Carlo audience, the opera was applauded with rapturous enthusiasm. Nine years later, in 1858, Verdi was in Naples again, this time with the manuscript of *Un Ballo in maschera*. He arrived in January and immediately became engaged in a four-month struggle with the Neapolitan censors. The Kingdom of Naples, ruled by a branch of the Bourbons, was an absolute monarchy of the most reactionary temper, and a work depicting a conspiracy against the life of a king abounded with obvious perils. An instructive account of Verdi's wrangles with King Ferdinand's officials can be found in the 1960 *Bulletin of the Institute of Verdi Studies*. Suffice it to say here that the composer eventually gave up in disgust, and offered the opera instead to Rome. But by that time Verdi's Peppina, who liked a warm climate, had had her winter in Naples.

Verdi stayed—as most tourists do—on the sea front, at the Hôtel de Rome facing the bay of Santa Lucia. The bay has since been filled in to form the Rione Santa Lucia, but otherwise the landmarks are pretty much as they were in the mid-nineteenth century. It is a short walk from the sea front to the Teatro San Carlo, the oldest major opera house in Italy still in active use. Since Charles III of Bourbon erected it in 1737 as an imposing adjunct to his palace (a private corridor connecting it to the royal quarters still exists), the San Carlo has never ceased to dominate

the city's operatic life. Dickens visited the theatre in 1844 and seemed particularly intrigued by the professional letter writers "perched behind their little desks and inkstands" who regularly congregated under its graceful portico. "Here is a Galley-slave in chains who wants a letter written to a friend. He approaches a clerkly-looking man, sitting under the corner arch, and makes his bargain. He has obtained permission of the Sentinel who guards him: who stands near, leaning against the wall and cracking nuts. The Galley-slave dictates in the ear of the letter writer, what he desires to say; and as he can't read writing, looks intently in his face, to read there whether he sets down faithfully what he is told." A galley slave? But this is Naples before the fall of the Bourbons, where—*Murray's Handbook* informs us—the public park is open to "the lower classes, peasants, and servants in livery" only once a year, on September eighth.

As late as 1912, according to Baedeker's *Southern Italy* (it will be evident that we spurn such modern cicerones as Fielding or Fodor), the public writers gathered under the San Carlo's arches "ready to commit to paper the pleading of the lover or the expostulation of the creditor." I regret to say that they gather there no longer. Otherwise the theatre remains as Verdi saw it, a model of handsome simplicity inside and out. Everything about the house bespeaks elegance and restraint, even the backstage area, with its profusion of marble and its large, tastefully appointed dressing rooms. The Neapolitan Bourbons may have been indifferent monarchs, but they knew good architecture. It is certain that Charles III would be immensely gratified at the care with which his lovely theatre is being maintained. But if he had approached the theatre, as I did six months ago, from across the Piazza Trento e Trieste, he might have been seized with sudden apoplexy. Emblazoned across the aristocratic façade of the Bourbons' royal theatre was a strident banner exhorting the populace to "Vota Comunista."

Busseto beckons. The temptation must be resisted to tarry, Peppina-fashion, in the south, just as the heart must be hardened against contriving a stopover in Florence, en route to the north. Florence, with only one premiere to its credit, is even less of a Verdi town than Naples. So the hired Fiat 1300 is driven ruthlessly past Giotto's Campanile and Michelangelo's New Sacristy, only a cursory divagation being allowed for a nod at the Teatro della Pergola, scene of the first performance of *Macbeth* in 1847. The Apennines are traversed, not on Verdi's rutted post roads, but via the spanking new Autostrada del Sole, past Bologna and on to Parma, which is to be headquarters for an exploration of the Verdi heartland. Until the unification of Italy, Verdi was a citizen of the Duchy of Parma, and he seems never to have outgrown his awe of its charming capital. "Parma," writes Frank Walker in his invaluable and fascinating book *The Man Verdi*, "called up in him always a vein of fierce local patriotism. He once sent to Parma for a double-bass player, to show the musicians of the Scala orchestra how a certain passage should be performed, and in 1846 he sent word to Antonio Barezzi that he should not come to Milan, which was 'no place for doctors,' but should rather go for treatment to Parma, where he would be cured." For our purposes,

however, Parma can be left behind. The time has come to head northwest towards the tiny hamlet of Le Roncole, where Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born at about 8 p.m. on October 10, 1813.

Much has been made of the monotony and drabness of the Emilian flatlands. "The Verdi countryside," says Vincent Sheean, "is about as uninteresting as any to be found in the whole of Italy." Even the composer himself, writing to Clarina Maffei from Busseto in 1858, stated that "it would be impossible to find an uglier place than this." Perhaps it is every bit that desolate in the autumn when leaden rainfall inundates the fields, or in winter as bitter winds howl across the barren expanses, or in summer when a torrid sun parches the earth and blisters the stucco buildings. But in mid-April, with an occasional fruit tree in full blossom and the foliage shimmering in the leafy softness of early spring, the vast landscape—trailing off to a serene and limitless horizon—has much to recommend it. Or so at least it seemed on the road to Le Roncole with expectations high and the intoxication of new sights tingling the senses.

The *casa natale* is a disappointment, as the birthplaces of famous men usually are. The tavern-cum-grocery shop in which Verdi spent his early years is now bereft of furnishings, and one walks through the empty rooms feeling little contact with the illiterate family that produced a musical genius a century and a half ago. There is the inevitable selection of postcards for sale and the inevitable guest book, replete with signatures of celebrated visitors; the lady in charge is pleased to show these off, including the flamboyant autograph of Benito Mussolini. Even the outside of the house defies a calling-up of things past, for the wall is pocked with a profusion of commemorative plaques and the garden blemished by a mediocre bust. Across the village square is the church of San Michele, erected in the eleventh century and rebuilt in the sixteenth, where Verdi was baptized and where at the age of twelve he was appointed village organist. This is more satisfactory, for the church—though singularly unattractive—is a functioning institution and not an empty shell. The village priest, Father Rossi, who looks as if he ought to be the captain of a soccer team, lives in quarters attached to the church. He will gladly show you around the interior and conduct you up the perilously narrow steps that lead to Verdi's organ, a dilapidated little instrument whose 780 pipes nevertheless give off a bright and cheery sound.

Busseto lies three miles to the west. Verdi was sent there at the age of ten in order to attend the local *ginnasio*, lodging first with a cobbler and later with Antonio Barezzi, the kindly and generous musical enthusiast who was both patron and second father to the fledgling composer. Barezzi's commodious house still stands in Busseto's main square; down the street one finds the Monte di Pietà, a local benevolent institution which helped defray the cost of Verdi's studies in Milan; nearby is the Palazzo Orlandi, in which Verdi and Peppina lived from 1849 to 1851, scandalizing the neighbors by flaunting a union outside the sanctity of marriage.

The Bussetani would probably be equally scandalized today. Busseto was and is a small town. You can cover it all by foot in half an hour. Our

party wandered through its quiet streets in the company of Busseto's genial young mayor. We had looked at the Palazzo Tedaldi—the building (now in poor repair) where Verdi and his first wife, Margherita Barezzi, lived immediately after their marriage in 1836—and were strolling down the Via della Biblioteca. As we passed the entrance of the Biblioteca, a face appeared at one of the upper windows and hailed the mayor. It was the chief librarian, who craved a word with His Honor. We walked up the stairs into a tranquil and muffled reading room, lined with stately gold-tooled volumes and decorated—like so much else in the Duchy of Parma—in the well-ordered style of French Empire. When the librarian learned of our interest in Verdi, he turned us over to one of his assistants—a little man in a gray muslin duster—while he and the mayor went off to confer. The assistant led us into another room, also lined with cupboards and shelves of a rich patina. Here, he told us, were housed the libraries of Don Pietro Seletti and Ferdinando Provesi. Seletti schooled Verdi in Latin and Italian grammar at the Busseto *ginnasio*; Provesi, *maestro di cappella* at the collegiate church of San Bartolomeo and director of the Philharmonic Society, supervised the boy's musical studies. For a time the two were in dispute over Verdi's future, Seletti wanting him to become a priest, Provesi a musician. Now, in this side street of Busseto, are gathered together their books, some of which Verdi undoubtedly consulted. The cupboards were filled with Provesi's compositions—hundreds of manuscripts written for the local orchestra, all neatly arranged in sturdy boxes and tied together with old silk ribbon. Here at last the past began to come alive. Leafing through this music so diligently accumulated by Maestro Provesi, one could build a bridge across the decades to Verdi's youth.

The house and farmlands of Sant' Agata, two miles to the north of Busseto, were purchased by Verdi in 1848 with the earnings from his early operatic successes. He and Peppina went there to live in 1851, and it remained Verdi's headquarters for half a century. He was constantly improving the property—planting trees, creating an artificial lake, enlarging and modernizing the villa—but he could do nothing to improve the climate. "You know Sant' Agata topographically," the librettist Piave wrote to a friend, "and you can imagine whether I am here for my amusement. . . . When it rains, I assure you, it's a case of looking at oneself in the mirror to see if one is still in human form or whether one hasn't been transmuted into that of a toad or a frog." Verdi warned a journalist, Filippo Filippi, that he would "find little satisfaction in narrating the marvels of Sant' Agata. Four walls in which to take refuge from the sun and inclement weather, amid the vastness of the fields; a few dozen trees planted in large part by my own hands; a dirty pool which I shall honor with the pompous title of lake when I can get the water to fill it. All that without plan, without architectural order, not because I don't love architecture, but because I detest discordances, and it would be a bad one to set up anything artistic in so unpoetical a place." Peppina had some particularly severe things to say about Sant' Agata. And yet she loved the place with that peculiar love-hate which so often afflicts city people in the country.

At Verdi's death the property of Sant' Agata passed to Maria Verdi,

his second cousin and adopted heir, who had grown up at the villa and had married Dr. Carrara, Verdi's solicitor. The Carrara Verdi family still owns Sant' Agata and opens it to the public between June and September. My visit in mid-April was out of season. Nevertheless, various people of importance had written to Dr. Alberto Carrara Verdi of my impending arrival and had assured me that the doors of Sant' Agata would surely be opened. Like his ancestors, Dr. Carrara Verdi is a solicitor, and shortly before noon I presented myself at the door of the house which serves as his office and home in Busseto. Yes, he had heard from our mutual friends; yes, he well understood the importance of the publication I represented; nevertheless, it was quite impossible to allow anyone to see Sant' Agata in its present condition, with all the drapes drawn and all the furniture covered with sheets. Come back in six weeks, he suggested, and everything would be at my disposition. I explained—in halting and ungrammatical Italian—that in six weeks I would be back in America and that pressing affairs would prohibit another transatlantic trip to Busseto. Then, waxing as rhetorical as I could in an alien tongue, I went on to say that I had traveled three thousand miles for the sole purpose of seeing Sant' Agata, that I would make due allowances for the drawn curtains and the shrouded furniture, but that I could not possibly leave Italy without witnessing the surroundings in which the immortal pages of *Otello* and *Falstaff* were composed. Dr. Carrara Verdi was unmoved. Smilingly but implacably, he assured me that a visit to Sant' Agata at this time of year was out of the question. I began to comprehend that streak of stubbornness in the good citizenry of Busseto which so infuriated Verdi—and which he himself possessed to an alarming degree.

One could at least gaze at the villa from outside the gate and snatch a leaf from a tree planted by Verdi. After that there was nothing to do but continue along Verdi's road for a few kilometers to the Trattoria Ongina, a simple country restaurant named after the little stream which flows past the Villa Sant' Agata and which provided Verdi with the water for his lake. The region of Parma is celebrated for its cooking. After a lunch of culatello (the sweetest, most succulent ham in the world), tortelli (envelopes of pasta filled with cream cheese and spinach), faraone (roast guinea hen), and a bottle of Lambrusco, the disappointment of missing Sant' Agata began to seem rather more supportable.

Time was running out. The itinerary stipulated attendance at a new Scala production of *Aida* four days thence. In the interim should one journey west to Genoa, where the Verdis regularly spent the coldest months of winter, or east to Venice, where five Verdi operas had their first performance? An absurd question. Genoa is a great seaport blessed with a marvelously equable climate, but Venice is one of the wonders of the world.

When Verdi first went there—in 1843, for a production of *I Lombardi*—many inhabitants were still about who could remember the dying days of the Serenissima, the independent Venetian Republic which had endured for a thousand years until Napoleon put a sudden end to it at the close of the eighteenth century. Since then the Austrians had

moved in, but Venice was still Venice. No city has remained more immune to the ravages of progress. In its external aspect at least, it looks now very much as it did when Verdi first rode down the Grand Canal, indeed as it did when Canaletto and Guardi detailed it all on canvas two hundred years ago. The Venetian interiors are something else. Verdi was wont to stay at the Albergo dell' Europa, formerly a Giustiniani palace and today a hostelry still very much in evidence. Viewed from a passing *vaporetto*, the Europa-Britannia seems redolent with mid-nineteenth-century charm, but the interior, alas, has been renovated to shiny perfection—doubtless more comfortable and efficient than what had gone before, but frustrating to the traveler following in the footsteps of Verdi.

There is nothing out of character about the Teatro La Fenice. "The first sight of the interior of the Fenice," says Spike Hughes in his chatty survey of *Great Opera Houses*, "is a breathtaking moment, for surely this is the most beautiful theatre in the world." Nobody who has been there would dispute the superlative. Like everything in Venice, it is a confection of uninhibited fantasy, a wondrously filigreed jewel of an opera house, with a color scheme—bluish green, cream, and gold—distinctively its own. And of course it is the only opera house in the world that receives all its supplies—sets for the stage, typewriters for the offices, potables for the bar—by water. On one of my days in Venice, I went around to inspect the gondola entrance (now used only on gala occasions) and found there a crew of stagehands unloading sets from the Fenice's own barge for that evening's performance.

The house was opened in 1792 and rebuilt in 1837 after a damaging conflagration. Verdi's first opera written to order for the Fenice came seven years later. This was *Ernani*, whose music—the *Gazzetta di Venezia* reported—"made such an impression that even on Sunday people came out of the theatre already humming the tunes." With this opera, which soon traveled all over Europe, Verdi began to secure an international reputation. His next work for the Fenice, *Attila*, is the only one of his Venetian commissions that has fallen into neglect, though the revivals in Italy earlier this year gave many commentators reason to believe that its neglect is unmerited. *Attila's* premiere took place in 1846, an important date in the city's history, for in that year the railway causeway linking Venice to the mainland was opened. *Murray's Handbook* for 1846 found it terribly impressive. "It may give some idea of the magnitude of the work to mention that, amongst other materials, 80 thousand larch piles were used in the foundations, and in the bridge itself 21 millions of bricks, and 176,437 cubic feet of Istrian stone; and that, on an average, 1,000 men were employed daily." In 1846 the railway had been built only as far as Vicenza. There were three trains a day, the journey took two hours and twenty minutes (it is covered now in half an hour), and the first-class fare was 8 Austrian Lira (about \$1.50) not including luggage. The effect of the railway was to deinsularize Venice and to force the aloof city at least part way into the modern world.

Verdi returned in 1851 with an opera based on Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse*. It occasioned a great commotion from the Austrian censors, who were more than usually sensitive after the revolution of 1848, in which

the Venetian populace rose in arms, expelled the occupying Austrian forces, and held out in a state of siege for many months. Verdi and the censors had much difficulty coming to terms, but eventually—with a change of title, locale, and characters—*Rigoletto* was allowed to go into rehearsal. The story of its jaunty aria "*La donna è mobile*" is well known. As Francis Toye tells it in his deliciously literate biography, Verdi "had not given the music to the tenor until the very last moment, and then only under the strictest injunctions to neither sing nor whistle it outside the theatre, whereof the whole staff had also been sworn to secrecy. Everything went according to plan. People came out of the theatre singing both words and music, and within a few days every Venetian gallant was teasingly humming them into the ear of his lady-love."

La Fenice had the honor of ushering in Verdi's great middle period with resounding and unblemished éclat. Two years later the composer was back in Venice with another masterpiece, but this time the launching fizzled. The premiere of *La Traviata* elicited from the exigent Fenice audience more laughter than applause. Verdi, at his desk in the Albergo dell' Europa, wrote to his erstwhile pupil Muzio: "*La Traviata* last night a fiasco. Is the fault mine or the singers'? Time will show." A year later the impresario of another Venetian opera house, the Teatro San Benedetto, had the idea of reviving *La Traviata* in costumes of the Louis XIII period. This time it was a riotous success. To a friend, Verdi wrote: "Everything that was heard at the Fenice is now being heard at the San Benedetto. Last time it was a fiasco; this time it is a furor. Draw your own conclusion!" Since then the San Benedetto has had its name changed to the Teatro Rossini; bereft of a stage, it has defected to the films.

One more time Verdi responded to a commission from the Fenice, with *Simon Boccanegra* in 1857. This too was a failure on opening night, the audience showing an "almost bitter" indifference to the efforts on stage. Thereafter Verdi composed no more for Venice. When the president of the Fenice invited him in 1858 to write another opera for the theatre, Verdi replied that "it would be better for me to leave this honor to somebody more fortunate and more deserving than I of the approval of the Fenice's public." This letter, along with scores of others from Verdi written neatly on the fashionable Bath paper of the period, is filed away in the theatre's archives. The Fenice, unlike most other Italian opera houses, seems never to have discarded the slightest scrap of paper. Even the fire of 1836 spared the room in which its records and correspondence were stored. As a result, the Fenice has a mine of precious documents. The studious archivist who presides over this material in a cheerful room behind the top gallery pulled out for me all the material relating to Verdi. There are his letters to the Fenice management from the early 1840s on, working manuscript scores of all the operas, and draft versions of Piave's librettos showing his various changes made in an attempt to placate the censors ("*libertà*" crossed out and "*verità*" substituted in its place, for one example). From this repository of ancient aspirations and long-extinguished controversies you can look out over the rooftops of Venice and hazily re-create in the mind's eye the distant, gas-lit Lombardy-Venetia of Verdi's middle years.

The route from Venice to Milan is dotted with beguilements—Padua's arcaded streets, Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico, Verona's church of San Zeno Maggiore—but the *prima rappresentazione* at La Scala is inexorable. It is necessary to push on, past vast acres of pink-blossomed orchards glowing in the early sun, to our final destination: the bustlingly prosperous city in which Verdi tasted his first and last triumphs and in which he experienced his fondest hopes and his blackest despair.

Nowhere, not even in Rome, is the contrast between our day and Verdi's more acute. The motorized, skyscrapered, efficiently paced Milan of 1963 bears only the scantiest kinship to the city of Verdi's youth—a provincial outpost of the Austrian Empire whose oil-lit streets were habitually filled with prostitutes, thieves, and drunken revelers. Verdi was eighteen when he first took up lodgings there, a shy but determined student of music from Busseto. He returned seven years later, in 1839, with his young wife Margherita and their surviving infant son (a baby girl had died the year before). The boy died in Milan that same fall; Margherita lived long enough to see her husband's first opera, *Oberto*, produced at La Scala; then she too died. Verdi stayed on, dejected and discouraged; saw his second opera fail miserably; and then found himself suddenly the toast of Milan following the production of *Nabucco* in 1842. In the next few years he journeyed, as we have seen, to Rome and Naples and Venice, but his home base was Milan, and he invariably scurried back with all possible speed. The city was—then as now—Italy's musical headquarters and the place par excellence for a rising young composer to manage his affairs. But Verdi was never an enthusiastic Milanese. The standards of the much-vaunted Teatro alla Scala impressed him not at all; and after the Scala's slipshod production of *Giovanna d'Arco* in 1845 he was to wait more than a quarter century before writing another note for that theatre. By 1848 he had had enough of Milan. He bought his property at Sant' Agata and did not set foot in the city again for twenty years.

When Verdi came back in 1868, on a short visit to meet his idol Alessandro Manzoni, Milan had changed spectacularly. The Austrians were gone and the city had spread far beyond the sixteenth-century walls which had still enclosed it in 1848. The Scala no longer fronted on a narrow, cobblestoned street; now it looked out on a wide piazza and was connected to the Duomo by the impressive Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. Verdi liked the transformations, as is clear from a letter he wrote at the time to his publisher and agent in Paris. Little by little Milan won him back. The masterpieces of his old age—*Otello* and *Falstaff*—were entrusted to its theatre. And there he died, in his permanent suite at the Grand Hotel, on January 27, 1901, at ten minutes to three in the morning.

The Grand Hotel still stands, at the corner of the Via Manzoni and Via Borgonuovo, and its *portiere* will willingly show the rooms Verdi occupied—unless the hotel is fully booked and the hallowed quarters pressed into service (“Business is business,” he smilingly explains). The furnishings throughout the Grand are authentically turn-of-the-century, though the rates—as I discovered on the morning of reckoning—are depressingly up-to-date. Near the hotel is the Via Bigli, where Verdi's

and Peppina's devoted friend Countess Maffei held court for the intellectual and artistic leaders of the Risorgimento. Near and yet so far. It is hard to recapture the ambience of nineteenth-century Milan amid the clatter of the Common Market. Prosperity has made this city the envy of all Italy, but it is no place for nostalgia.

The Verdi—Giuseppe and Peppina—are buried in a crypt in the Rest Home for Musicians, which the composer founded in the last decade of his life and which has existed ever since on the generous endowment he left. It is a noble undertaking and the worthiest of memorials, but it is a not very attractive building in a not very attractive quarter. Though the Verdi traveler should pay it a visit, the object of his wanderings is not there. For that he must go to La Scala, to the theatre which first discovered Verdi and ultimately glorified his name.

Nothing but the outer walls remain of the structure Verdi knew. On August 15, 1943, an RAF attack on Milan turned La Scala into a shambles. But it was rebuilt soon enough, according to the original plans of 1778, and its spirit rekindled in a gala dedication concert under the direction of Arturo Toscanini—a living link with the Verdi of the 1880s and 1890s. By 1963 the living links had become exceedingly tenuous: a few old men who as boys had received a kindly pat or word of greeting from the aged composer. But the essential link, the musical one, was as strong as ever.

The *prima rappresentazione* began on the dot of 8:45. Up from the huge pit floated the prelude to *Aida*, those seventeen bars high in the strings which so often sound feeble in volume and wiry in tone. There was nothing feeble or wiry about the sound at La Scala that night. The finish and precision of the orchestral playing were such as is rarely met with in the opera house. Then the curtain went up to reveal a plushy Victorian extravaganza—an Egypt of tasseled and brocaded elegance, bathed in a dusty, golden glow. Against this sumptuous backdrop the young director Franco Zeffirelli deployed his forces to emphasize the central conflict in *Aida*—man versus society, private passion colliding with unyielding ritual. Everyone on stage—the magnificent cast, the hordes of supernumeraries, even the horses—knew precisely what to do. Nothing had been left to chance; evidences of imagination and forethought were everywhere. Afterwards, walking down the Via Manzoni to the Grand Hotel, one realized that a Verdi pilgrimage could not have ended on a more fitting note. Better than all the plaques and statues, Verdi would have thought, is an evening of opera illuminated with affection and care.

The Unfashionable Generation

by Peter J. Pirie

ONLY THIN SMOKE without flame, from the heaps of couch-grass, yet this shall go onward the same, though dynasties pass." Thomas Hardy wrote in the confidence that the changes between 1850 and 1950 would be no more than those wrought between 1750 and 1850. We know now that he was wrong. In the last hundred years not only the changes in our physical world but in our modes of thinking have been greater than in the whole of human history before.

We no longer write of the heaps of couch-grass, nor do we sing of the passing of the seasons. It has been less than sixty years since Schoenberg wrote his first atonal work, the Opus 11 Piano Pieces, but since then the speed of change has been traumatic. Tonality is not yet ended—among living composers, Shostakovich and Britten come immediately to mind—but for a time, at least, the battle for serialism was intense and bitter. In the midst of this revolution a whole generation of composers stood apart. They are charged with having "turned shudderingly away" from the spirit of the times, with persisting in outworn patterns of thought and technique, with remaining concerned with nature when the accepted subject of art had become artifice. These are "the unfashionable generation," for whose cause I propose here to put in a plea.

There is, actually, no logical reason why a composer "must" use a given technique. Composers tend to evolve their own language, as an integral part of what they have to say, and adoption of methods foreign to their own nature betrays itself in a basic insincerity of the work so created. For many of the composers I shall discuss, the use of any language but their own would have been quite impossible, no matter how intrinsic to the times that language might be. Besides, the work of Britten and Shostakovich has proved that this question of techniques is

only part of the story. So, really, is the matter of music inspired by nature. Although it is true that nature music usually involves the use of certain late-Romantic techniques, there is no law against it—like the matter of atonalism, it is surely a question of taste. Even today, there are still country men.

Far more important in accounting for the unfashionable generation is their placing in time. Not only did they become involved in an intellectual and spiritual revolution that they were not by temperament completely able to embrace, but the political events of their world hit them hard also. They were Europeans, and the war of 1914-1918 broke at the beginning of their careers. Two English composers of promise did not survive: George Butterworth (1885-1916), who was killed in the Battle of the Somme, and Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), who was gassed and went mad. Thus at the very beginning of their career the members of this generation met disaster, a disaster repeated twenty years later with the Second World War, disrupting their lives in the crucial late middle years. There is more to it than this too; for many of us who lived through the grim decades 1918-1939, during which their best work was written, the whole period is one we would prefer simply to forget.

It would be possible to compile a long list of these unfashionable composers, but it is in England that their plight may be seen at its most typical and extreme. This country, at the turn of the century, had just begun a musical renaissance, for the first time since the death of Purcell producing composers of significance. The forgotten generation in England is the one that succeeded Elgar and Delius, and I would like to concentrate on three men from this group to represent them all. They are John Ireland (1879-1962), Frank Bridge (1879-1941), and Arnold Bax (1883-1953).

There have been greater composers in England than John Ireland, but none so completely English. Just as the comparatively minor Fauré is more exclusively French than the major figure of Debussy, so Ireland is without the eclectic element we find in a composer like Elgar. In Ireland the pure Saxon strain—lyrical, evanescent, wistful—tends to be almost his entire matter. A pupil of Charles Villiers Stanford, he quickly outgrew the watered-down Brahms of his teacher and developed his own individual voice. "The rainbow comes and goes, and lovely is the rose"—the deep pessimism that was a part of Ireland's nature, and which can be heard in his fine Cello Sonata and in the second of his three Piano Trios, found consolation in the beauty of the English countryside; such pieces as the *Concertino pastorale* and the *Downland Suite* are a distillation of the English spirit. Yet that same countryside has also an atavistic darkness with which Ireland felt an affinity; we see, for instance, the ambiguous, sinister aspect of the Dorset countryside, with its great prehistoric earthworks reflected in the symphonic poem *Mai-Dun*. He wrote one of the best light piano concertos of our time, in rather the same style and weight as Rachmaninoff's Third, and a number of distinguished songs and short piano pieces. His hard and powerful Piano Sonata is impressive, and so is the suite of three pieces called *Sarnia* (after the Roman name for Guernsey), which is a compendium of his expressive range: the dark and sinister *Le Catiaroc*; the wistful *In a May Morning*; and the

brilliant *Song of the Springtides*. He was painfully self-critical, and destroyed more music than he published.

More eclectic was Frank Bridge, who was Benjamin Britten's teacher. The first reaction of anyone hearing Bridge's music for the first time is to remark how like Britten's it is, and, indeed, Britten derived many of his fingerprints from his teacher. But the personality is distinct. Even in Bridge's earliest music, which at a superficial glance resembles salon music, there is a streak of strangeness, an otherness or enchanted darkness. It can be heard in his first Piano Trio, and in the *Two Poems* of Richard Jeffries; his early suite, *The Sea*, has never quite left the repertory in England. The look of salon music is misleading, for the radical streak was stronger in Bridge than in any other English composer of his generation—towards the end of his life he was writing music that was virtually atonal. He was a great professional; when hardly more than a boy he had played in the Joachim Quartet, and Sir Henry Wood used to rely on him to take emergency performances at the Promenade Concerts, since he could conduct any modern work in the repertoire at sight.

It is the combination of wild and dark imagination with cool professionalism that makes Bridge's music fascinating; it is seen at its best in his four String Quartets, which are among the finest ever written by an Englishman. He had enchanter's nightshade in his veins, and his last compositions, such chamber pieces as the second Piano Trio and the magnificent *Phantasm* for piano and orchestra, are intensely individual. The *Phantasm* is a work of great originality, particularly in scoring and harmony, from which some of Britten's latest works, notably the *Cello Symphony*, have taken a great deal. Britten was also fascinated by the overture *Enter Spring!*, one of Bridge's last works and a fascinating concatenation of glittering color. Bridge died in 1941, and his name was swallowed up by the War. But Britten remembers him with affection and admiration, and has been programming his work in concert; he and Rostropovich play the Sonata for Cello and Piano together, and Britten usually includes the lovely tone poem *There Is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook* in the Aldeburgh Festival programs. Today, indeed, Frank Bridge's name is being heard again, as is also that of Arnold Bax.

Few artists have ever challenged fate as Bax did. Yet the man himself was shy, gentle, and self-effacing. He was held in great affection by all who knew him, and inspired one of the most startling and moving openings to an obituary notice that can ever have been written: "Dear Arnold Bax!" (*Music & Letters*). Possessed of great technical gifts, he expended them lavishly, pouring out music from his seventeenth year until his death just before his seventieth. The sheer size of his output militates against familiarity with it, and has led to the accusation that he was unself-critical. Another way of dismissing him is just to write "Celtic Twilight" and leave it at that. He was fond of Ireland, but only his early works were Celtic in spirit, and he destroyed most of them, including three or four symphonic poems and a symphony. He belonged, in fact, to an old Surrey-Sussex Quaker family. His lavish early music quickly hardened and simplified, and sonata form, for chamber combination or orchestra, began to obsess him. Between 1922 and 1939 he wrote seven symphonies; the Second, Fourth, and Seventh were performed for the

first time in America, the Seventh being commissioned by the American people.

Unlike the other English composers of his generation, Bax studied not with the conservative Stanford but with the progressive Frederick Corder. Corder's gods were Strauss and Wagner, but there is little of them in the characteristic early works of Bax. Here, in the compositions of before-1920, the obvious influences are the Russians Borodin and Balakirev and (especially in the piano music, including the first two of Bax's four Piano Sonatas) Liszt. These influences he worked slowly through, until by the end of his career, in such things as the Violin Concerto and the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, there is little of them left. He was a prodigious pianist, but made it a point never to play or conduct in public—though he once recorded Delius' 1892 Violin Sonata with M. Harrison.

Bax's sensitive spirit and intoxicated sense of beauty were at war with a terrible honesty that observed and grieved over this world's pain. The conflict rages unceasingly in his symphonies, in the vast, stormy Piano Quintet, and in such things as the symphonic poem *November Woods*. He loved the far north, pine forests, mountains, and tempestuous seas; and there, among surroundings of wild and stormy beauty, often working in his overcoat in the depths of the northern winter, he wrote his mature works. He greatly admired the poetry of William Butler Yeats, and the spirit of his music has much in common with Yeats's later poems. So too it has with the music of Sibelius, but there was no direct influence. Bax's complex textures are very different from those of the Finnish composer and the relationship is one of close affinity rather than direct influence.

It will be seen from the above brief account of his music and its nature that he flew in the face of the most typical manifestations of the modern spirit; and if it were not for the bleakly tragic nature of so much of his music, works that no one could accuse of being escapist (but many do, in ignorance), one might say that the charges against the unfashionable generation are justified in Bax. Even here, in this bleak and stormy music, his approach is one of *heroic* tragedy, in an age which insists that heroic tragedy is dead. The recklessness of Bax's challenge lay in his insistence that this was not so. Like Beethoven, he remained true to his experience, which told him that the beauty of the world was no less real than pain, and that the significance of man as a being lay in his refusal to accept evil as the final fact of life or dully to accept the flux of events as wisdom. His belief in the validity of the challenge of mind and idealism was a part of the defiance, along with his lavish orchestration, the technical difficulty of his music, and the unfashionable nature of his radical, but not atonal, harmonic idiom.

Bax's first three symphonies form a single process, and are thematically linked; the brutal, curt First, the vast and tragic Second, and the Third, in which the conflict ends, for the time being, in supernal peace. His Fourth is an outburst of almost irresponsible gaiety, and the composer admits an extramusical inspiration—wild seas bursting over rugged coasts on a windy, sunny day. His Fifth has a legendary aspect, and is beautifully constructed. But I should like to discuss here his Sixth, as speaking for all the unfashionable generation.

The conflict at the heart of Bax finally explodes in his Sixth Symphony. In no other work of his does the head-on collision between beauty and brutality express itself more forcibly. In the first movement the contrast is between a grinding ostinato topped with a barking brass phrase and episodes of a beauty exceptional even for Bax, which alternate in startling contrast; this contrast has led to difficulty before, but by its simple acceptance, with no attempt at softening the impact, a new synthesis is here achieved. One is reminded of Mahler, who in his Sixth Symphony (there can be no question of influence) uses much the same stark opposition, and in Bax too the simple contrast between major and minor is deployed. The legend of Bax's prolixity dies hard; in this symphonic movement, as in most of his others, all the material can be derived from the opening phrases, transformed with Liszt-like ingenuity to fit the varying circumstances of the conflict. The movement ends with the conflict unresolved. The slow movement, as so often in Bax, is a troubled dream, an uneasy interlude. A solitary trumpet, crying a sad tune with a Scots snap, indicates Morar, Inverness-shire, the environment of so much of Bax's work. The last movement is a daring formal experiment: Introduction, Scherzo, Epilogue. The clarinet theme of the Introduction also undergoes transformation in the movement, but the main business is the tigerish Scherzo, with its demonic rhythm, its sudden angry harshness. Once again there is a drastic contrast; the Scherzo mutters into silence, to be followed by a trio of such startling simplicity that the point is at once made. When the Scherzo resumes, it is with terrifying ferocity; and we remember that, like Vaughan Williams' Fourth and Walton's First, it was written during the middle 1930s: "None shall break ranks/Though nations trek from progress."

Bax's scoring, always masterly, reaches in this movement a point of great virtuosity—the sheer tension of the sweeping, leaping, vanishing climaxes builds up remorselessly. The harmony becomes more acrid, the percussion noisy; with a feeling of awe we notice that the heavy brass are contributing only an occasional note to the staggering uproar. When they do enter, with a bitter transformation of one of the Symphony's noblest themes, the roots of the earth are torn up, and we have a sense not merely of the breaking of nations but of the passing of worlds. The air is full of the flying debris of themes, which slowly sink into unearthly light; with heart-rending eloquence the horns sing their song of renewed youth and loveliness as the Symphony fades into luminous silence. . . . Bax asks to be judged by the highest standards. Personally, I think that by all but the very highest standards, he stands.

Within a few years of the Sixth Symphony's completion the Second World War broke out, and the ranks of the unfashionable generation were scattered, their work regarded as no longer viable. But are the charges against them valid?

To make explicit what I have implied: Granted that the official revolution and especially atonal and serial music have added greatly to the scope of our art, does it necessarily follow that all other music written after 1911 was stillborn? The facts—*Daphnis et Chloé*, *Mathis der Maler*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, *Peter Grimes*, the works I have here described—indicate otherwise. Logically, one can say that Schoenberg enriched the

art; one cannot say that his music invalidated the music of others. There is no mainstream of music, and greatness can never be absolute; variety is one of the greatest virtues of art. Tonal music continues to be written and to be listened to. And perhaps in time it may even be no crime to be a nature-composer—say, when Messiaen has finally completed a symphonic catalogue of all the bird song in the world. Today, in England especially, the forgotten names are beginning to creep back. Men still burn couch-grass on the downs behind Storrington; and outside The White Horse I see the tall shy wraith of Arnold Bax. To hold a hand uplifted over fear; and shall not loveliness be loved forever?

The Universal Musician

by Everett Helm

I KNEW PAUL HINDEMITH under many different circumstances—as lecturer and as conductor; across the luncheon table and at orchestral rehearsals; playing the viola and relaxing among friends. But the scene that remains most vividly in my memory took place in the Rectory of Frankfurt University in early 1949. There were only a few witnesses to the ceremony in which His Magnificence the Rector bestowed some kind of an honor or citation (I forget exactly what it was—Hindemith received an honorary doctorate from the same university some years later) on the fifty-four-year-old composer.

The Rector, in full academic regalia, spoke briefly of Hindemith's accomplishments. Hindemith's reply was halting, like that of a schoolboy who is so overawed that he can hardly speak. Looking at the floor, his voice almost cracking with emotion, he stammered out something to the effect that he had never dreamed that he would be given such an honor. As a Frankfurt youngster who had never been able to attend the University, he had regarded this august institution from a remote distance. He could hardly believe that the present distinction was being bestowed upon him, and he would do his best to deserve it. At this point he stopped, so visibly moved that he couldn't continue.

This is the only time I ever saw Hindemith at a loss for words.

The episode just related occurred during the official tour of Western Germany made by Hindemith under Department of the Army auspices. As Theatre and Music Officer in OMGUS (Office of Military Government, U.S.) I had the pleasurable task of looking after Hindemith and his wife Gertrud, arranging their schedules, providing them with transportation, shepherding them to concerts and lectures and, best of all, chatting with them during "off" hours. Hindemith was not the only

artist whom I had to look after, sent over by Washington as part of the cultural program, but he was by far the most illustrious. And, by an equally great margin, he was the most agreeable, most co-operative, most amenable to reason, and most understanding of the difficulties involved.

The Germany which Hindemith found on his return to Europe after the war was neither the Germany of his youth nor the one on which he had turned his back in 1936. In 1949 it was a Germany divided not only geographically into American, French, British, and Russian zones of occupation, but also, within each zone, divided psychologically between conquerors and conquered—between the occupying powers and the native population, the haves and the have-nots. The occupation was a small, comfortable, PX-equipped, smug and often arrogant island, surrounded by the large world of a beaten and beaten-up people.

For visiting firemen, the temptation to stay packed in occupational cotton was great—for most, indeed, irresistible. There were social pressures at work too: "fraternization" was still looked upon askance, and the sheer physical problems of venturing into the "real" world of the destroyed country were considerable. Yet Hindemith insisted on looking up old friends, sitting in once familiar cafés and eating in once familiar restaurants (when they were discovered still to be operating in the midst of ruins and rubble). He acted as he did, not with condescension but entirely naturally, and the impression this made on the Germans was tremendous.

With the same naturalness, Hindemith met and talked with German students—at a time when the younger generation felt *really* lost and when every contact with the outside world was hungrily sought after. Hindemith listened to their questions, even when they were naïve, and with infinite patience tried to give honest answers. Only once did I see him lose his temper. That was after a public lecture in Wiesbaden (SRO and hundreds turned away) when one of his questioners from the floor made some silly remarks about modern music which seemed to have a National Socialist flavor. Hindemith exploded, and for a moment the atmosphere was more than tense.

I mention these things because many stories are told about how difficult and short-tempered Hindemith could be. I have seen that side of his nature too, but Hindemith was not what I would call an irascible man. With sincere people he was sincerely patient; with poseurs, flatterers, bigots, and dolts he could be unpleasant indeed. Affectation was anathema to him. And most of all, perhaps, he was irritated by mediocrity giving itself airs.

Hindemith came up in life, and in his art, the hard way, and his early experiences quite naturally formed his character and his entire attitude towards art and artists in general and music and musicians in particular. While still in his teens he earned his living by playing in café and dance bands, at the same time studying at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. At the age of twenty, he lost his father and became the breadwinner for his family. And at the same age of twenty, an obviously gifted young man proficient on several instruments and an excellent violinist, he won the taxing and important job of concertmaster in the Frankfurt Opera.

He had long since begun to compose, and already had written numerous piano pieces, sonatas for violin and clarinet, two string quartets, a piano quintet, a cello concerto, a *sinfonietta* for small orchestra, and a *Singspiel*.

In the same year that he joined the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra, Hindemith began playing second violin in the string quartet of Adolph Rebner, who had been his teacher; later he switched to viola. This period was interrupted in 1917 by his induction into the German army. About his military service, Hindemith later wrote: "I was a member of a string quartet which represented for the colonel of our regiment a means of forgetting the hated military service. He was a great friend of music . . . his most burning desire was to hear Debussy's String Quartet. We practiced the piece and played it for him with great emotion at a private concert. Just as we had finished the slow movement, the radio officer reported the news of Debussy's death. We didn't finish the performance . . . we realized for the first time that music is more than style, technique, and the expression of personal feeling. Here, music transcended political boundaries, national hatred, and the horrors of war. At no other moment have I comprehended so completely in which direction music must develop."

While in the army, Hindemith developed a capacity, which he retained throughout his life, to compose under any and all circumstances. During 1917-18 he wrote his first published works. The honor of being his first publishers goes to Breitkopf & Härtel—who also have the dubious distinction of being uninterested in going on with the young "radical." In 1919, Hindemith wrote what turned out to be a "fateful" letter, addressed to Herr Geheimrat Strecker, then in charge of the house of B. Schott's Söhne in Mainz, and "taking the liberty" of sending some compositions and criticisms. From that time, every one of Hindemith's works was published by Schott.

It would be hard to find a more remarkable record of loyalty, good will, and understanding between composer and publisher. At a time when most publishers considered Hindemith a bad risk, Schott accepted every new work, without question. Later, when Hindemith had become world-famous and could have given his work to any number of other firms, he refused to do so. New compositions of the 1940s appeared provisionally with Associated Music Publishers, Schott's representative in America, and were later returned to the Schott catalogue. These ideal business dealings were firmly cemented in the warm personal relationship that existed for many years between Hindemith and the Strecker family. Until his death in 1958, Wilhelm Strecker, in particular, was Hindemith's close friend. In the 1920s and early 1930s the two of them used to go off on extended hiking trips together, exploring all parts of Germany with knapsacks on their backs. A man of great culture and a remarkably fine human being, Strecker had considerable influence on Hindemith, and in some instances on Hindemith's work, and I recall the great affection with which the composer always spoke of "Willi."

With the backing of Germany's most important music publishers, with a fully developed technical equipment, with an already extensive experience in making music, and—most important of all—with something

very definite to say, the twenty-five-year-old Hindemith entered the 1920s with a great deal in his favor. But very soon the bombs began to burst, and they continued bursting for the next sixteen years (until "The Hindemith Case"—the title of Furtwängler's article of November 1934, in which the great conductor defended Hindemith against Nazi charges—was resolved by Hindemith's voluntarily leaving his homeland). The first explosion came in 1922, with the performance of his trilogy of one-act operas, which evoked the criticism: "*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, a completely unintelligible piece of nonsense; *Nusch-Nuschi*, a piquant *cochonnerie* for decadent old lechers; *Sancta Susanna*, a perverse, truly immoral affair." This is a fair sample of the kind of criticism that greeted the appearance of new works by Hindemith forty years ago. The *Kammermusik*, Op. 24, No. 1, was described as "music of such lascivety and frivolity as only a very specially constituted composer could produce . . . one hears sounds of flogging and beating, laughing and screaming, groaning and flushed elation, howling and bawling. . . . It is the most depraved, wicked, and at the same time realistic music that can be imagined."

But there were other voices as well. As early as 1922, the important *Berliner Illustrierte* wrote: "A full-blooded musician speaks in this music—one who subscribes to no specific trend, who considers himself neither a daring rebel against diatonicism nor, even less, a musical reactionary." Influential critics took up the cudgel on Hindemith's behalf, among them Adolf Weissmann, who stated: "One would do well to hammer the name of Paul Hindemith into his brain; this young man is someone to be reckoned with." Other reviewers wrote in such terms as "the strongest music of recent years" and "fully convincing ideas, which one may call those of a genius."

Thus the battle was joined, and Hindemith's name became a symbol in the controversy raging around modern music. On the international scene, Hindemith was soon recognized as the leading German composer of the younger generation. Together with such "modernists" as Milhaud, Bartók, Malipiero, Honegger, and a number of other "representative" composers of the time (some of whom are now quite forgotten) Hindemith appeared regularly in the annual programs of the International Society for Contemporary Music. He was also active from the start in the Donaueschingen Festivals for Contemporary Music, which from 1921 to 1927 played such an important role in European musical life.

No less important in spreading Hindemith's name were the concerts of the Amar Quartet (often billed as the Amar-Hindemith Quartet), which Hindemith joined as violist in 1922. For several years he toured Europe with this group, playing well over one hundred concerts in one year (1924). Most of the concerts included at least one of Hindemith's own works. He also began to make increasingly frequent orchestral appearances as viola soloist and as conductor.

That Hindemith managed to compose as much as he did during this period of constant travel is something of a miracle—a miracle of energy, will power, concentration, and technical skill. He was one of those fortunate composers who could work at the drop of a hat and under conditions that another would find impossible. Béla Bartók remarked on

Hindemith's happy facility of being able to compose while waiting at the station for a train that was late. Certainly it explains the prodigious amount of music Hindemith turned out in spite of his enormously active life as a practicing musician.

But perhaps "in spite of" is the wrong expression; "in addition to" or even "because of" might be more appropriate. For Hindemith was the very opposite of an ivory tower composer. He found inspiration (a word he disliked, by the way) in doing—in being personally involved in the making of music. Many of his works were written with a specific purpose in mind—for a given performer, concert, festival, or organization. Hindemith was, by his own admission, a composer of *Gebrauchsmusik* in the best sense of the word. Art for art's sake was a concept foreign to his temperament and one which irritated him no end. So did music that was awkwardly written. Hindemith's enormous technique of composition included the exact knowledge (generally from first-hand experience) of what every instrument can and cannot do. He liked to consider himself an artisan and was often heard to say that composing was like making shoes: the most perfect master of his craft will produce the best shoes—and the best music.

This was the main thesis of his teaching as well, an activity which he began in 1927, when he was appointed to the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, and continued—for thirteen years (1940-53) at Yale—until 1957, when he retired from the faculty of the University of Zurich. In connection with his pedagogical activity, he became deeply interested in the theoretical bases of composition and published a number of books on theory and composition. In these works he maintained his firm belief in tonality as the indispensable basis of composition—a point of view which involved him in heated controversies with the votaries of twelve-tone and serial music.

The latter-day tendency of avant-garde circles to dismiss Hindemith's music as old-fashioned and/or academic is a curious inversion of Hindemith's earlier status, when he was damned for being a rebel and, in Hitler's Reich, boycotted as a "Kultur-Bolschewist." True, Hindemith's work reflected little of the innovations that were going on around him as the result of serial practices. On the contrary, his later compositions are, in the harmonic sense, more conservative than his earlier ones, as a comparison of the two versions of *Das Marienleben* clearly reveals. But time has not yet rendered its verdict, and it may well be that Hindemith's "reactionary" music will outlast much now regarded by arbiters of musical fashion as more "important."

Certain it is that Hindemith is the greatest German composer of the generation following Richard Strauss. (Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern were all Austrians.) In his "back to Bach" neoclassicism, he established early in his career a line of musical thought that has had enormous influence on the musical development of the twentieth century. And following this line unswervingly to the end of his days, Hindemith created such masterpieces as *Cardillac*, *Mathis der Maler*, *Nobilissima Visione*, the string quartets, the Requiem, *Das Marienleben*, the violin and viola concertos, the many orchestral works, and a host of chamber music pieces for all conceivable combinations. Every one bears Hinde-

mith's personal stylistic signature, and every one is a lesson in craftsmanship.

Hindemith was perhaps the last German composer who can be included in the succession that begins with Bach and includes Beethoven, Schubert (whom Hindemith loved passionately), Schumann, Wagner (whom Hindemith did *not* love passionately), Brahms, and Bruckner. And he was, in an age of specialization, one of the last specimens of the universal musician: performer, teacher, theorist, conductor, composer, and (above all in his opera *The Harmony of the Universe*) philosopher. His life was an extraordinarily full one; his works remain as a summation of one of the principal directions of twentieth-century music.

Johnny Mercer, Master Lyricist

by Gene Lees

THE MOST EXACTING literary form I know is that of the song lyric. The tight syllabic structure of haiku poetry is easy compared with that of the song lyric. For in the lyric, the writer is locked into the metrics of the music—unless the lyric is written first, though as a rule the best songs aren't written that way. The need for a flawless inflectional match of syllables to melodic line further complicates the matter. Mismatches are grotesque—as in the *Star-Spangled Banner*, which contains the notoriously unmusical line, "the bombs bursting in air."

In the twentieth century, all the best lyricists in the English language have been American. Since William S. Gilbert, the British haven't produced one really first-class lyricist, though Noel Coward's songs are clever. America has produced some really remarkable lyricists, including Howard Dietz and Tom Adair. But the best, the very best, of American lyricists have been three men: Cole Porter, also an excellent melodist; Lorenz Hart; and Johnny Mercer.

Porter's work was rather special, reflecting his origins among wealthy people and his habit of circulating among them. Thus his perspective was limited. He tended to view the world from a high place, as his song *Down in the Depths (on the 90th Floor)* unwittingly tells us. The brilliant Lorenz Hart had a much greater range, but was occasionally guilty (perhaps because of the pressures attendant upon writing Broadway shows or perhaps because of his drinking) of sloppy craft, as in the song *She Was Too Good To Me*, wherein a good idea is awkwardly executed. Mercer's work shows as wide a range as Hart's, and in some ways more; and among several score of his songs that I know by heart, I cannot think of a single example of careless craft.

Mercer is a subtle writer. He can be dryly funny, as in "When an

irresistible force, such as you, meets an old immovable object like me, you can bet as sure as you live, something's got to give. . . ." It is the simple interjection of that word "old" that brings this to life. (One of his songs is called *Affable, Balding Me*.)

He can be distantly, wistfully lyrical, as in *Laura*. In this case, he was given the theme from a motion picture, and he was stuck with the title. Within these rigid limitations, he managed to evoke strikingly our lost youth and the vague, evanescent dreams by which most of us manage to work our painful way through life: "Laura is the face in the misty light, footsteps that you hear down the hall; the laugh that floats on a summer night that you can never quite recall. And you see Laura on a train that is passing through. Those eyes—how familiar they seem. She gave your very first kiss to you. That was Laura—but she's only a dream." That glimpsed image of a woman's face in the window of a passing train is one of the most haunting I know.

Lost youth figures again in a wonderful Mercer lyric—again written to a film title, and again to a melody already completed—in *Days of Wine and Roses*. This unusual lyric (it consists of only two sentences) contains the longest structural arch I have ever found in a song. "The days of wine and roses laugh and run away, like a child at play, through a meadowland toward a closing door, a door marked *Nevermore*, that wasn't there before. The lonely night discloses just a passing breeze, filled with memories of the golden smile that introduced me to the days of wine and roses, and you." Those who think that this is only a love song miss the point of it. It is lyric that illustrates a principle of T. S. Eliot's—poetry can communicate before it is understood. Mercer wrote it in minutes.

Has anyone evoked sexual excitement more graphically, yet more tastefully, than Mercer did in *That Old Black Magic*? And consider the vivid picture of the American fall he painted in *Early Autumn*. "When an early autumn walks the land, and chills the breeze, and touches with her hand the summer trees, perhaps you'll understand what memories I own. There's a dance pavilion in the rain, all shuttered down, a winding country lane, all russet brown; a frosty window pane shows me a town grown lonely. . . ."

Mercer's mind leaped overseas to evoke, in his lyric for *When the World Was Young*, the sad weariness of an elegant French trollop who defiantly tells us, "I like what I am, I like what I see," and then finds her composure cracked for a moment as she asks, "But where is the schoolgirl that used to be me?" Then she remembers: "Ah, the apple trees, and the hive of bees, where we once got stung; summers at Bordeaux, rowing the *bateau*, just a dream ago, when the world was young." When I asked Mercer about this lyric, he said, "Well, you know, it was just a translation." I know the French lyric of this song, *Le Chevalier de Paris*, and Mercer's outclasses it.

But America is Mercer's homeland, and he captured the restless rootlessness, the sad itinerancy, of this country with sharp brevity in a song that begins, "Free and easy, that's my style. How-dee-do me, watch me smile. Faretheewell me, after a while, 'cause I gotta roam. And any place I hang my hat is home. Sweet'nin' water, cherry wine, Kansas City, Caroline—that's my honeycomb. . . ."

Mercer understands not only America's land and moods, but its language. After writing such an elegant example of pure English as *I'm Old-Fashioned* (the music was by Jerome Kern), he could reach up to his elbows into current Americanese in the 1940s to come up with *Ac-cent-chuate the Positive*. Some actors can read a telephone directory and make it interesting; Mercer took the name of a railway and wrote an interesting song around it, *On the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe*.

Johnny Mercer was born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1909. He began writing small poems when he was about ten years old. "I liked to listen to all the old songs on records," he said. "We had the old cylindrical records then. I remember that one of the songs was *When It's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy*. A lot of the songs made me cry."

Mercer had a childish fling at learning the trumpet, and with several other boys organized a band. It broke up after a few tries, "I think because some of us had to go to a boy scout meeting, or something." Sent off to prep school, he wrote there a song titled *Sister Susie, Stretch Your Stuff*. "The boys all said it sounded like *Red Hot Mama*, and it did. I was kind of notorious in school, for a fifteen-year-old. If I saw a real cute girl, I'd try to write a song for her."

Mercer intended to be an actor, and eventually found his way to New York. "That's a long story, though," he said. "Can we skip it?" "No," I said. Mercer looked for parts, went on writing songs. Eventually he met Eddie Cantor, who liked a comedy song he'd done, asked him to write "two or three more choruses" and then submit it to him again. "I wrote about twenty choruses," Mercer said. "We exchanged correspondence quite a lot. Cantor never did do the song, but his encouragement meant a lot to me."

About this time, the Theater Guild was doing the third *Garrick Gaieties*. The producers turned Mercer down as an actor, but bought one of his songs, called *Out of Breath and Scared to Death of You*. In the *Garrick Gaieties* chorus was a girl named Ginger Meehan. Mercer suggests that he was rapidly smitten; Ginger, who is now a gray-haired gracious woman with youthful eyes and an even more youthful voice, corrected him: "He was interested in every girl in the show *but me*." In any case, *Out of Breath* was a hit, and Mercer and Ginger were married on the strength of it. They've been married well over thirty years now; the daughter Johnny celebrated in the song *Mandy Is Two* is now twenty-eight.

Shortly after the *Garrick Gaieties* encounter, Mercer won a singing contest with the Paul Whiteman band. Whiteman gave him the don't-call-me-I'll-call-you treatment. A year later, Mercer was still waiting. But in the meantime he and Hoagy Carmichael had written a little thing called *Lazy Bones*. Then Whiteman called. Mercer joined the band, sometimes singing duets with the late trombonist Jack Teagarden. On the impetus of recordings and growing publicity, he was invited to go to Hollywood, where he was signed by a film studio to an odd double contract as a songwriter and performer. The writing soon took precedence over the performing, however, and Mercer began the production of the long stream of songs (1,500 so far) that has added so much to America's perception of itself.

Mercer took time out from Hollywood to write seven Broadway shows: *St. Louis Woman*; *Li'l Abner*; *Foxie*; *Texas, Li'l Darlin'*; *Top Banana*; *Saratoga*; and *Walk with Music*. But the majority of his work was written for films. He worked his way through a spectrum of composers from Kern to Henry Mancini, Michel Legrand, Johnny Mandel, and, lately, the youthful Johnny Williams.

There is one more of Mercer's accomplishments that must be mentioned. In company with Glenn Wallichs and with the financial backing of Buddy de Sylva, the songwriter who had turned movie producer, Mercer in the 1940s founded a company called Capitol Records. Later he sold all his shares in the firm and has no connection with it now. The sale made him a millionaire, though he'd have been one anyway, on his earnings from his songs.

Mercer writes less than he used to, though he still is quite productive. He lives in Westwood, a wealthy area of Los Angeles just west of Beverly Hills. He stays in perceptive touch with the work of younger lyricists, and in the course of a long evening's conversation with me ticked off with precision and yet sympathy the virtues and faults of all of them. "Most of them just don't dig deep enough," he said. His taste in music is broad, though it leans heavily towards jazz. There's a pixie quality to his appearance, which is youthful. His voice has the vibrant woody edge that made his 1940s recordings as a singer so delightful; and he retains a soft remnant of a Georgia accent. He quit smoking some years ago. His friends say there is a mirror inversion to his personality: sometimes, when he is drinking, the fey and charming wit that fills his songs turns into a brilliant but murderous invective of which everyone has a healthy fear. Obviously aware of this, he gives up alcohol periodically; when he was with me, he drank sparingly.

Like most sensitive artists, Mercer keeps something of himself perpetually private. "There is a part of him that even I don't know," said Ginger, who obviously is still nuts about him.

Mercer takes the lyric form extremely seriously, as one might anticipate from the quality of his work. He considers that the best of American lyrics are true poetry. "The lyric gets to so many people," he said. "Some of our songs are wonderful, I think. They get even to uneducated people. . . . Everybody learned from Jerry Kern. He was Big Daddy, as Victor Herbert was before him. . . . I started out just wanting to be a success, but you reach a point where you begin to feel responsible, to yourself, and to those who like you. You have to go ahead and just write your best. There will be those who understand, and think what you do is important poetry, and there will be others who will simply be pleased, and enjoy it, and that's fine. . . . I try to keep my work honest, and clean."

There are three groups of people who appreciate the lyric form: those who write them, the singers who perform them, and the public. For this reason, Mercer commands the total admiration of the profession, and he is a rich man. But his genius—and I think what he has is genius—is critically unsung.

But he doesn't worry. *He knows. He knows.*

Diary of a Young Man of Fashion

by Peter Jona Korn

January 12, 1987

"New Friends of Old Music" had their opening concert last night—all Boulez program. Good Lord, what slush! All those sweet tinklings of chimes, cow bells, and whatnots, interrupted by an occasional boinnng! on the vibraphone—mélange for young lovers, if you ask me. Quite pretty in spots, but hardly significant. Not bad for background music—if you like background music, which I don't. The program notes stressed how terribly avant-garde this was considered thirty years ago. Well, I guess those mid-century audiences scared easily.

January 27

More phone calls from the Guggenheim office—I keep explaining to them that I spent the whole year turning Bulgaria upside down for one lousy little compo-computer—absolutely fruitless. The least they could do before sending a composer to a strange country is to check whether basic equipment is available. How did they expect me to compose, manually?

It was bad enough when my own computer broke down last spring, just one day after Janos Wooff had called to tell me that I had been picked for the 1986 Bison City Symphony Commission. He wanted something radically new and thought that "Non-Music for No Orchestra" might be a provocative title. Splendid idea, I told him, not being one to quarrel with a conductor who has just given me a \$5,000 commission, and I would get busy on it immediately—phhhht! goes the computer. Luckily the Frisch Foundation, with the help of that special emergency grant the Froehlich Foundation had given *them*, shipped me a replacement immediately. Unfortunately the Frisch Foundation has no branch office in Bulgaria.

February 2

That Providence has chosen me to be the greatest composer of my time! The very thought makes me shudder with humility.

February 19

The parametrical possibilities of Differentiated Soup Slurping (D.S.S.) seem to be approaching the point of exhaustion. True, we have yet to probe the acoustic range of the Large Ocean Creature Sphere (Shark's Fin Soup, Whale Blubber Broth, et al.) and this may yield sonorities that are fresh and new. But we must look ahead! Mapleton suggested the experiment of juxtaposing D.S.S. and his own technique of B.T.D. (Bath Tub Drip), but Kretzer-Hennicoff pointed—quite correctly, I thought—to the manifest impurity of mixing sounds of internal and external moisturization. Now, slurping bathtub gin appeals to me as a logical synthesis worth closer consideration. . . .

February 24

Congress is trying to cut composers' subsidies again; the Pepperoni-Kitsch Bill is before the House Committee now. We are optimistic that it will be killed—far too much expert testimony against it. Yesterday, Kolsprossen, one of our more enlightened musicologists, blasted the proposed legislation by testifying that great composers were never appreciated in their own time. Those "economy-minded" congressmen got an earful when he cited some musico-historical data: Bach spent his life in total obscurity as a village organist, not living to hear a single major work of his performed; Mozart, between the movements of symphonies he had composed for dinner music, was forced to wait on tables; Beethoven became deaf when the audience, during the premiere of the Ninth Symphony, booed so loudly that both his eardrums were ruptured; an irate listener pushed Schumann off a bridge into the Rhine; Stravinsky died in abject poverty.

Geoffrey Major, that arch-reactionary critic, tried to puncture Kolsprossen's testimony by trotting out the old chestnut about "Esoterica," the group of enterprising young composers who, some years ago, bought the Kurli-To Shoe Chain for \$300,000, every penny saved from foundation grants and government subsidies accumulated in less than five years. He tried to confuse the issue by claiming that what he called "leading legitimate composers" could earn but a fraction of that sum in a lifetime. He read off a list of some twenty names, none of which I have ever heard, asserting that all these composers had left "a sizable and comprehensive *oeuvre*" as compared to the approximately one dozen works the seven members of Esoterica had produced between them by the time they went into the shoe business.

Who gives a damn whether so-and-so has written nine symphonies and a dozen ballets, plus a drawerful of chamber music? I am convinced that one momentary vision ("flash dream," I call it) by a gifted young composer of advanced orientation is worth more than all the academic claptrap turned out by a so-called "legitimate composer" and that he should be paid accordingly.

March 7

No mention of me in the New York papers in over six weeks! Must find a new gimmick! Considering crossword puzzles in music notation—the X-98-computer should be able to manage that, with all its fancy buttonology. First movement: horizontal; second: vertical; finale: diagonal; the center is free. I will feed the idea to a couple of musical gossip columnists and see how they play it up.

This is the big problem: one never knows what will catch on and what won't. I should really devote more time to ladies' fashion magazines—they seem to be first to sense what is in and what isn't.

I must try to find the last issue of FAD—they always have a column—yes, here it is [pasted into diary]—

PEOPLE ARE GABBING ABOUT:— —Selma Wentwich's new poem "Tlppx tyll h22° —" urbane, witty, yet not without that touch of heavy-handed nostalgia so abundant in much of her recent work, as in these lines: "drrpp ddrpp dddrp 4&4&; huiiiiiitsz—prtz z ? ! ??/? ?? (drrrp) ????!?? ? drp cyllym cyllym (prd ?) & NEVeR trrrtz % % % % % % -!"— —the Tuesday Morning Concerts, more insistent than ever in their emphasis on audience exclusion; those who find 3:30 a.m. a convenient time for a concert are greeted by locked doors and must enter the auditorium through a hatch in the roof. This tends to limit the size of audiences markedly; last Tuesday's numbered three, all critics, all from the same paper.— —the moon.— —the "Muetschli," a new dance from Switzerland.— —the sudden decline of interest in multi-lingual parrots.— —the string of surprise victories by the Malaysian team at the recent Winter Olympics in Miami.— —Roger Paxton's "A Fun Requiem."

March 8

Loneliness is my lot.

March 10

I could have cheered all night—I have found it, no, *it* has found *me*—the new technique that will change music in a measure to stagger all imagination: TOTAL INDETERMINACY!

Unlike such shopworn devices as once fashionable aleatory, T.I. will permit performers to play not only *what* they wish, but *when* and *where* they wish to do so. The bass clarinetist could, for instance, turn up at the Poughkeepsie Airport on a Friday at noon, while the celeste player might decide on the Fort Hamilton Parkway IND Station the following Monday morning. On his way home he could conceivably bump into the conductor as he gives *his* performance on the 42nd Street shuttle. This would eliminate any possibility of a predetermined public: those who want to hear the performance and those who actually do would be two entirely different entities.

Both the space and the time encompassed by one single performance would be theoretically without limit; interplanetary traffic eliminates, of course, all geographic restrictions, and the time limit dictated by a player's life span could be suspended by making performance privileges hereditary.

One performance reaching out over thousands of years and millions of

miles—think of it! I am positive that it will not be called immodesty if I state that T.I. is the greatest musical advancement ever conceived, and that it will render all previous music hopelessly obsolete!

March 26

Troubles: Fairlane, who teaches composition at Rhode Island State, reports that students suddenly ask for instruction in nineteenth-century techniques. The musicologists say the composers should teach it, and the composers say this is strictly of historical interest and none of their business. There seems to be a lot of name calling, with very adverse publicity attached, and as usual it is the poor composers who get blamed.

Everybody appears to be shocked and surprised to learn that today's composers have established a new vocabulary and are much too busy to waste their time on obsolete techniques, which they have of course never bothered to learn—no more than a modern interpreter would concern himself with the study of ice age dialects.

March 31

Rapunzel, Rapunzel!

April 14

Kretzer-Hennicoff rang me up—very excited—Feramors was at his house this very moment, and would I like to meet him? Naturally, I rushed over, not wanting to miss my opportunity of getting to know the most significant violinist of our time!

Feramors is a true visionary, a prophet totally unencumbered by custom, tradition, or other outmoded concepts. Before evolving his new theories he had attempted to trot the regular concertizing circuit, but with little success. Press and public had rejected him, unable to comprehend that what they called his "faulty intonation and ugly tone" were not, as one ignorant critic put it, "a total absence of feeling for music" but rather the opposite: playing the violin in a traditional manner was completely inadequate to his particular needs, and in a wider sense, as he later said himself, "not suited to express the mood of our perilous age." He was, of course, quite right: who wants sweet and lilting, on-pitch sound at a time when a mass invasion from Pluto is an imminent threat?

It was an experience to meet the man face to face and to learn at first hand so much about his revolutionary ideas. To escape the "slavery of the interval," as he calls it, the violin must be tuned at random, in other words not tuned at all. Any semblance of what used to be considered "string tone" must be expurgated. To be sure, this has been done extensively by earlier composers, but none of them has gone so far as to demand that a blindfolded listener must not be able to suspect for one instant that the noises he hears are emanating from a violin.

It is one of his basic premises that the bow—in the rare moments where it is used at all—must never be drawn across the strings. Rather, it is tied to a post and the violin is drawn over *it*. Attaching a specially designed and patented "Vibrator" to the upper portion of the arm which is holding the instrument produces a shaky, wheezy sound which F. calls

"nuvobrato." He does it to perfection, as those present at K.-H.'s apartment were privileged to witness. He must have held one single note, nuvobrato, for well over three minutes. It was a revelation!

Another device consists of tying not the bow, but the neck of a violin, to a post and "bowing" with the back of a hairbrush. In this technique, "fingering" is replaced by "fisting," "elbowing," "mouthing"; even spitting at a string will produce an interesting variance of pitch and tone color.

Feramors brought a friend whom he introduced as "the most brilliant younger composer of our time"—which I thought rather tactless in view of my presence. We got to talking later; he told me that he was still writing his Opus 1 (he has destroyed all earlier efforts, he said) which he calls *Tone for Tuba*. He has great difficulty deciding whether he should release it in its present form, or whether it should be coupled with an antithetical *Second Tone for Second Tuba*. I rather liked him, but I did feel that there was something vaguely charlatanish about his manner. Most brilliant younger composer of our time—my foot!

May 3

Foreign royalty check held up because of big argument following the 1983 Darmstadt performance of *Nilnilnil*. I have insisted that royalties and rental fees must be figured strictly according to the performance time designated by the composer—in the case of *Nilnilnil* exactly twenty-seven minutes and eleven seconds of silence, no more, no less. If they want to make a cut, they must still pay the full fee.

All this is of course complicated by that idiotic copyright suit of Gorneczek who maintains that I have plagiarized his precious *Mors* (eighteen minutes flat—how unimaginative!), who himself is being sued by Hubschrauber, whose *Immerstillerimmerruhig* nobody plays anyhow, who in turn is worried about the heirs of John Cage. . . .

May 11

Somebody sent me a review from Walla Walla—the Dillinger Quartet performed my *Intravenous* there recently. The local critic finds my music "interesting" but muses that it "lacks beauty." Who in hell is entitled to decide what is beautiful (how I hate that word!) and what isn't?! My music—WHATEVER I WRITE—is beautiful because I say so! I am a beautiful person, ergo anything I produce is beautiful; it's that simple. When I smack my beautiful lips, it is a beautiful sound. When I blow my beautiful nose, *that* is a beautiful noise. When I—but why go on?

Beauty, or what people's lazy minds call beauty, is really just a matter of habit. For some reason it was decided long ago that a snow-covered mountain was beautiful and that a skid row alley wasn't. Nuts, I say. I find mountains incredibly boring and utterly bourgeois, but alleys meaningful and *real* and abounding in social significance, and that to me makes them very beautiful.

If two blue eyes in a girl's face are beautiful, why are three blue eyes not fifty per cent more beautiful? If brown blotches are beautiful on a butterfly, why not on the girl's nose? If shiny black hair is beautiful when it grows on her head, why not when it sprouts from under her fingernails? Nothing but habit, and habit is the enemy of progress!

May 27

Sickening headlines in all evening papers: "Black Tuesday of the Art Market." What is worse, it's true. Trouble has, of course, been brewing for a long time, and now it has boiled over: at least three known instances where cheap imitations, concocted in a few seconds with one of those twenty dollar "Drip-olators," were sold, as "genuine Pollocks," to allegedly knowledgeable collectors for high prices; and a couple of hushed-up scandals where the reverse happened.

Mondrians, Motherwells, and other early twentieth-century masters are being forged by the truckload, and nobody can tell the fakes from the genuine ones. More and more African states are concentrating on gorilla-made paintings as their chief export item and are flooding the market. Slop Art—the new technique of arranging kitchen residue on canvas—is practiced by one housewife in every four. As a result, prices are tumbling. Dozens of art dealers have been forced to close and to return to their former jobs in Las Vegas.

May 28

Why couldn't I keep a pet woodpecker? To hear his hypnotic call at all hours would be ever so delightful. Perhaps he could be trained to participate in live performances—I wonder if anybody has thought of this? Or am I—again—the first?

May 29

NATURALLY!! It took our friend Geoffrey Major less than twenty-four hours to turn Tuesday's tragic events to his purpose. "Now for the Music Market" is the most vicious column he has yet published.

"The public does not like this so-called music," he screams, as if the public has ever known what's good for it, or ever will, unless it is made to swallow its medicine by force. There is always just a tiny, tiny group of people who *really know*, and who use this knowledge to mold public opinion in accordance with their enlightened judgment—a handful of adventurous composers, a couple of progressive critics, one or two musicologists, and a few wealthy patrons who encourage these efforts. The public is a stupid beast, and the true artist must at all times be utterly contemptuous of it, lest his integrity suffer!

June 5

Hardly slept all week.

June 7 (noon)

The phone keeps ringing—Barnsdall, Mystolio, Hennicoff, Glutz, others, each with a different tale of woe. The whole movement is collapsing; rats are leaving—disgusting!

June 7 (evening)

I have come to a decision: I must be practical. First thing in the morning I shall call Peter Frisch and ask, casually, if the Foundation might consider a grant for basic research on triads and the possibilities of their practical use in musical composition. Who knows—it may be the first step towards the language of the new avant-garde!

The Posthumous Career of J. S. Bach

by Leonard Marcus

FOR DECADES musicologists have been trying vainly to convince us, the music-listening public, not to lump together all pre-Bach music as "pre-Bach music." Look, they say, simply look at that fine pre-Bach . . . er, that fine music written before Bach's time. Consider how vast it is in quantity, how many separate ages it encompasses, how great a variety it demonstrates. There were, the authorities rightly point out, the earlier baroque composers like Buxtehude and Torelli and Corelli, not to mention Vivaldi and Monteverdi and even the Gabriellis. And before them, there was the whole Renaissance with Des Prez and Dufay and Ockeghem, and before *that* there was Machaut and *ars nova*, and let's not forget the Gothic with Pérotin, and. . . . And so forth back to Orpheus. But still the music lover, in his divine, omnipotent ignorance, divides the sea of music into two parts: a rivulet of "ancient" music, which is primarily of historic interest to him and therefore little performed, and an ocean of living music, which speaks directly to him. Johann Sebastian Bach, of course, is the watershed.

But is it really our ignorance? Or is it that Bach, the most gigantic figure in music history, stamped the future of music in his own image? For two and a half centuries of music, the "common-practice" period, composers all spoke the same harmonic language. They even spelled all the words alike. This period lasted until the Stravinsky-Schoenberg revolution in our own century and, although some composers, such as Scriabin or Debussy and Ravel, chose "non-common-practice" languages, these soon came to dead ends. This universal language was not only developed by Bach, but brought to its peak by him. One will hardly find a harmony, either assonance or dissonance, in the works of, say, Richard Strauss or Mahler that cannot also be found somewhere in Bach—most of

them, probably, in the final B minor fugue of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Book I). As for radical use of dissonance, Bach's fugue will outpoint almost any pre-Ives work offered in combat. Even Beethoven's last quartets, with a harmonic language "farther out" than any before Bartók, can boast of few clashes not contained there.

"With my prying nose," wrote music critic James Huneker half a century ago in *Old Foggy*, "I dipped into all composers, and found that the houses they erected were stable in the exact proportion that Bach was used in the foundation." Still, it may be asked, how could Bach have become the foundation for the future if he remained "unknown" for so long? Everyone has heard of the famous concert at which a twenty-year-old Mendelssohn resurrected Bach—in 1829, nearly eighty years after his death—with a performance of the monumental *St. Matthew Passion*. Bach's own generation had all but ignored him as a composer, even though he was Europe's most famous organ virtuoso. The following generation treated him as a strapping lad treats his aging father, with patronizing smiles, for by then Bach's polyphonic style was not only dead but—what is more surely fatal—unfashionable. If somebody mentioned "Bach" in public, he would have been referring to Carl Philipp Emanuel or, in England, to Johann Christian. The "real" Bach did not stand up until Mendelssohn's concert, and even Beethoven by then had died. Bach's posthumous history, in fact, gave the original basis to the popular legend: "An artist is never appreciated until he has been dead a century."

Except that even in Bach's case, it's simply not true. The generations that ignored him were the generations of the *public*—a public having little opportunity to hear the thundering masterpieces of this supreme tone-architect. But the composers and musicians—ah, they knew their J. S. Bach well. These composers nurtured Bach in their own circles as Masons guard from the laity their secret lore and icons. They pored over his music and lovingly passed it on from teacher to pupil. Haydn, who was already eighteen when the older composer died, got to know Bach's works intimately. It was a major event in Mozart's life when he came into contact with Bach's music through Baron Gottfried van Swieten. As a child, Mozart had studied Bach's art through the piano pieces, but at Van Swieten's house he was awakened to the whole world of German polyphony. Mozart immediately set to work transcribing some of Bach's fugues for string quartet, and his own music suddenly took on the deeper, darker, Bachian coloring. It initiated a "minor-mode" time of his life, and what resulted were a C minor fugue for two pianos, K. 426 (later supplied with an Adagio and arranged for string quartet), the D minor and C minor piano concertos, K. 466 and K. 491, the C minor piano sonata and fantasy, K. 457 and K. 475, and the G minor piano quartet, K. 478. Mozart's wonderment increased even more when, a few years later on a trip to Leipzig, he heard Bach's motet *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*. Bach was to remain Mozart's spiritual companion through the final, incomplete Mass in C minor and the D minor Requiem.

It must be admitted that Mozart was also taken by Handel's music at this time. He added wind parts to *Messiah*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Ode to St. Cecilia*, and *Alexander's Feast* for performances at the Baron's house.

Sociologists will note that Handel's reputation, if hardly his music, is still often placed on a par with Bach's. During their lifetime Handel had much the greater renown, of course, and for various reasons his partisans have kept his name well polished. The British scholar John Alexander Fuller-Maitland's 1902 volume of *The Oxford History of Music* was titled "*The Age of Bach and Handel*," and nearly every comprehensive music history since has had to include a chapter with that heading. It is unfortunate, since Handel does not fare too well in the comparison. Still, we must be tolerant of the British in their touting of their immigrant son; they are hard put to foster anybody else.

As for Beethoven, he was weaned on Bach when he was a student of Christian Neefe. Later, as a composer of thirty, he even tried to encourage his publisher in issuing Bach's works. "Your intention [to do so]," Beethoven wrote, "rejoices my heart, which beats wholly for the majestic art of this father of harmony." And, as anyone will remember who has read the preface to Czerny's still popular edition of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, it is based in large part on how Czerny recalled Beethoven playing these preludes and fugues.

If I could choose one great musical event at which to have been present, that 1829 concert would surely be it. What a moment it must have been! The event was well attended, but few had come to hear Bach. It was, rather, Mendelssohn, darling Felix, whom everybody had come to see—and perhaps even to hear—conduct. Imagine sitting there, prepared to suffer through hours of music by some forgotten composer who had somehow captured Felix's fancy, and then being overwhelmed by the opening of the *St. Matthew* Passion, with its inexpressibly powerful dirge building up to the entrance of the two choruses, crying, pleading, shouting at each other while a third, angelic choir of boys penetrates through the massive sound. Berlioz, who with Debussy was one of the few important musicians who could take Bach or leave him, heard the work fifteen years later and had to admit: "It took my breath away." I know that, for myself, it would almost be worth having been deprived of Bach's music during my own youth to have had him first presented to me, unsuspecting, in such dramatic fashion.

At any rate, the concert over, Bach was installed as the nineteenth century's Romantic god. While the classical composers had adored him for his purity, the Romantics worshiped him for his thunderbolts. His presence for the rest of the century was so oppressive that at times it became detrimental. Everybody had to write fugues, even Berlioz, and fugal writing was inimical to the Romantic spirit—especially when many of the Romantic composers, again like Berlioz, apparently could not write a decent one. Schumann tried his hand when he was in his mid-thirties, producing, among others, six on the notes of the magic name B-A-C-H (B is German for B flat; H is German for B natural). They are among his poorer efforts. But Schumann did benefit from his attempts at creating angular, Bachian fugue subjects and passagework. Although he was not able to use the resulting themes fugally, he did harmonize them in his own idiom and, as a consequence, added a strong backbone to such works as the *Manfred* and *Faust* Overtures, the cathedral scene in *Faust*, and the third, fourth, and fifth movements of the *Rhenish* Symphony. Liszt

too wrote a fugue on B-A-C-H and is said to have known all forty-eight preludes and fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* by heart. More recently, such composers as Max Reger and Walter Piston have written B-A-C-H fugues.

If the classicists had tried to monopolize Bach, the Romantics exerted themselves to expropriate him. Schumann wrote that "the whole so-called Romantic school (of course I am speaking of Germans) is far nearer to Bach in its music than Mozart ever was; indeed, it has a thorough knowledge of Bach. I myself make a daily confession of my sins to that mighty one, and endeavor to purify and strengthen myself through him. . . . In fact, to my mind Bach is unapproachable—he is unfathomable." And, again, Schumann says: "In the course of time the distance between sources diminishes. Beethoven, for instance, did not need to study all that Mozart studied—Mozart, not all that Handel—Handel, not all that Palestrina—because these had already absorbed the knowledge of their predecessors. But there is one source which inexhaustibly provides new ideas—Johann Sebastian Bach."

That's how it is with Bach. Each generation finds in him the dynamism behind its own energy. Whether it be the classicists broadening the rococo, the Romantics overwhelming classicism, the later Romantics opposing the earlier Romantics, the Wagnerites attacking the Brahmsians, the Brahmsians counterattacking the Wagnerites, or the more recent contrapuntalists Schoenberg, Hindemith, and neoclassical Stravinsky smashing the nineteenth century, each has waved pennants emblazoned "Back to Bach." And each has then awaited the ominous next generation, invading under the same banner.

What is it that makes Bach so universal? In all of art, only Shakespeare can compare with him. And, like Shakespeare, Bach stirs the blood whether played in modern dress or in costume. The B minor Mass has been sung by chamber choirs of thirty—and less—and it has been sung by mammoth choruses of a thousand. (I would venture to suggest that this work—which I believe to be the supreme creative expression by one human being since the beginning of civilization—could well be sung by the whole number of the earth's inhabitants.) The violin concertos can be stunningly performed as piano concertos, as the composer indicated when he thus transcribed them for keyboard. A listener will be excited by the *Art of Fugue* performed by any combination of instruments; Bach did not even indicate which instruments he had in mind. The organ works reached a generation of listeners as orchestral transcriptions by Leopold Stokowski or Ottorino Respighi—and, considering the muddy sound of most organs and the echoes they produce in their auditoriums, those transcriptions presented the all-important musical lines more clearly than they could usually be heard in the original. Nobody needed to be surprised when the 1964 recording "Bach's Greatest Hits" became a best seller in the field of jazz. Drums and bass were added, but the notes sung by the scat singers had all been written by Bach. A subsequent recording in the same vein was issued, but it incorporated music by other masters and was not as successful. Universality is the only free pass to unlimited guises and, like most free passes, it is not transferable.

This kind of universality does not obtain in the work of other major

composers. One could hardly imagine a successful "arrangement" of a Mozart sonata or a Beethoven symphony. Our piano arrangements of orchestral works are mainly studies and playthings for conductors and other students of the symphonic literature. The pleasure one derives from playing them comes from knowing the original and imagining the sound of the orchestra as one plays the microcosmic version. It would never turn up on a concert program, except perhaps as a tour de force. And while we may be fascinated by a Handel concerto grosso or a Brahms piano quartet in the orchestral transcription of a Schoenberg, here it is the interaction of two great musical minds that challenges our interest. Schoenberg's transcriptions are more Schoenberg than Handel or Brahms.

A truism defines a musical masterpiece as a work in which every note is in the right place and none can be changed without detracting from the music. Yet neither scholars nor performers are in agreement among themselves as to how Mozart's ornaments are to be played, and we know that Mozart and Beethoven both improvised from their written notes. As for Bach, scholarly arguments still rage over what the correct notes actually are, and Bach improvised at least as much as he wrote down. Well-known editions of Haydn's scores allegedly contain thousands of wrong notes. I dare say that today not one listener in a thousand, if indeed any, has ever heard a single Beethoven symphony performed with all the notes exactly as they appear in the score. Yet we have all been stirred by "nonauthentic" versions of such music and recognized them as masterpieces. How, then, do we do so? Because of their wide vision, their originality, and their inexplicable strokes of genius.

In the music of Bach, these three touchstones reach their epitome. His vision embraces all mankind—if not in the limited German Protestant purpose of much of his work, at least in the music that resulted from it. No atheist could fail to be caught up in that terrifying, desperate shriek of "*Kyrie eleison*" that opens the B minor Mass. Already in the first measure, as the bulk of the chorus stops in dreadful silence, the sopranos are heard soaring with ecstatic agony to the next outburst. It is all very brief, and suddenly the chorus is gone as the orchestra prepares a fugal foundation of solidity for its return. When the chorus finally reappears, its "*Kyrie eleison*," although now utterly resigned, is an expression of such consummate faith in the Almighty's compassion that we feel He hardly has any choice. Compare this with Beethoven. Beethoven—democratic, humanistic Beethoven—whose embrace was always for humanity ("*Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!*") struggled for the unattainable with such superhuman will, especially in his last works, that the music became disembodied, supra-human. . . . Bach, whose thoughts were always with God, composed the most human music of all, and every shade of human passion—joy, comfort, ecstasy, awe, resignation—is present in his art. With Beethoven we touch the stars, but with Bach we are men.

Bach's strokes of genius are myriad. The Germans have a picturesque word, *Einfall*, for an inspiration that just seems to "fall in" from nowhere. Almost every measure in Bach contains an awe-inspiring *Einfall* to which the sensitive listener inevitably responds, "How did he

ever think of *that*?" There are the themes themselves, each so different from the others; there are the unexpected turns of harmony, of phrase, of thematic entrance. Play the *Well-Tempered Clavier* or the *Art of Fugue*, and they fly from your fingers until the air is saturated. One example—again from the B minor Mass—should suffice. After the Dionysian orgy that is the Gloria, the orchestra (supported at first by the chorus) continues to play a series of sequences that for all the world sounds like transitional, or "filler," material. Suddenly voices are heard floating along with the sequences and, before you can believe it, this "non-theme" has become the subject of a choral fugue. Such moments are present in the music of all the great masters, but—although Mozart is a close second—nowhere do they pile up on each other so thickly as in the works of Bach.

I can still remember my own first contact with Bach's music. It was as a high-school freshman, and I played violin in the school orchestra. Once we were given the Third *Brandenburg* Concerto to read, and the pleasure we all felt as we scraped away made it for us the memorable musical event of the semester. On subsequent days we switched parts (the Third *Brandenburg* is written only for strings), and I ended by playing each of the three violin and three viola parts. Every new part was as thrilling to play as the previous one. The independent, self-sufficient voices, combining to form the whole, was such a revelation to us that we would call "*Brandenburg*" each time the teacher entered to begin the class. How we all despised those piano students in the school who had to struggle with their Bach and became bored by him. To them he connoted little more than dutiful exercises, to prepare for the music yet to come. We string players knew better. He was for us our joy and our emotional release.

One looks at a Bach *Gesellschaft* monopolizing a library shelf and wonders how one man in a single lifetime could possibly have written down all those notes. Considering that there is hardly a less than first-rate thought in the whole canon, the books take on a mesmerizing capability. If somebody were to ask me the cliché-ridden question as to what single published work I would take with me to a desert island, I would not hesitate before specifying the *Gesellschaft*. If I had to be stranded with a single recording, it would be Scherchen's pre-stereo performance for Westminster of the B minor Mass. (Not the later stereo one—I could hardly believe it was by the same conductor.) I would also hope to be able to sneak in the old *Brandenburg* No. 6 recorded by Karl Haas (again a Westminster disc, of about the same early-Fifties vintage) and the London Baroque Ensemble.

With all the lip service paid by performing musicians to Bach, it is not very easy to get to hear his music "live." In the larger metropolises the situation has been improving during recent years. But in the smaller cities the few Bach performances are relegated, along with the avant-garde, to special "off-the-beaten-track" concerts—if they are given at all. Visiting virtuosos, of course, leave Bach home. Which of them would withhold his Brahms, Tchaikovsky, or Beethoven concerto to offer one by Bach? Regular orchestral concerts all but ignore him. There are few opportunities to hear even the *Brandenburg* Concertos, not to mention

the powerful Cantata No. 50, the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Musical Offering*, or the *Art of Fugue*, all among the most thrilling experiences available to a music lover. I remember being shocked by one very famous conductor when I asked him why he never played anything by Bach at his concerts. "Oh," he replied, "once you've heard one Bach fugue, you've heard them all."

You might as well say it of conductors.

Twenty Analysts in Search of a Soul

by Nathan Broder

MOZART, who was buried in a pauper's grave and whose widow had to apply to the Emperor for relief, was still, as a composer, successful. When he died many of his works had been published and had achieved widespread distribution, and his biggest hit was at that moment enjoying an astonishing run in Vienna. It was his bad fortune (and ours) that he had no lucrative post at a time when there were no copyright laws and when publishers did not give their composers royalty contracts. As was customary in those days, most of his publications were pirated, and Mozart seldom received any payments for his operas other than the fee for writing them. But so popular were his compositions, and so powerful an attraction was his name when attached to a piece of music, that we find Franz Niemtschek complaining, only seven years after Mozart's death, about the multitude of arrangements and of works by other men being palmed off as by Mozart.

This popularity never diminished. On the contrary, it spread so far and so quickly that Constanze Mozart could report proudly, in 1828, that her first husband's works were heard with delight in the Philippines. And so it has continued to this day, confirming the prophecy made by Schlichtegroll in the first biography of Mozart, published in 1793: that "he established a reputation that will not decline as long as a temple of the muse of the tone-art will stand." But if the attitude towards Mozart is one of universal admiration, it has not always been one of unmixed adulation; he has not always been admired for the same reasons; and even in our own time admiration has not always been accompanied by understanding. To trace these fluctuations and developments is the purpose of what follows.

Franz Niemtschek was a Bohemian musician who met Mozart when

the master visited Prague. In his biography of Mozart, published in 1798, he stresses the composer's originality. When *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was performed in Prague, he tells us, everyone was astounded by the new harmonies, by the original, hitherto unheard of, treatment of the wind instruments. He goes on in this vein: the *Prague* Symphony is full of surprising transitions. In every new work of Mozart's that appears one is struck by the novelty of the style. Even those works that people regard as failures show the "power of his pathbreaking spirit." Some say: "But Mozart's works are so difficult, so serious, complicated, and offer so little for the ear." The difficulty in his works—Niemtschek replies—is not deliberate, it is only a consequence of the greatness and originality of his genius. From an opera to a simple song, from a symphony to an easy little dance, his works bear everywhere the stamp of the richest fantasy, the most penetrating feeling, the finest taste. They give the art of music a great impetus, a new direction—which, however, Mozart's imitators, like all imitators, dissipate and spoil.

There, in a nutshell, is the late-eighteenth-century attitude towards Mozart's virtues and defects, as transmitted by an intelligent and sensitive musician of the time. The complaints about the difficulty and complexity of his music are confirmed from other sources. Nissen, Constanze's second husband, reports in his biography of his predecessor that in Vienna Mozart's instrumental music was considered too hard to play, and too confused, since everyone could not grasp it immediately. On the other hand, an anonymous critic writing in a German annual for 1794 complains that nothing can be performed with success unless it is by Mozart. Not that Mozart does not deserve this success, says the writer, but let us not go overboard: his symphonies, "despite all their fire, their pomp, and their brilliance, nevertheless lack that unity, that clarity and transparency which we rightly marvel at in Haydn's symphonies." And, he adds, anyone who compares Mozart's writing for the voice with that of other good composers will find defects in it. This latter opinion, incidentally, was shared by the French, according to Niemtschek. In England, Mozart was known principally for his instrumental works until about 1810, when—says the London *Examiner* in 1812—"a society of amateurs, who were capable of perceiving where true merit was to be found, laudably exerted themselves to diffuse the delight his vocal works had given themselves."

With the turn of the century came the first waves of the flood of Romanticism that was to inundate Europe for generations. Curiously enough, it is the literary figures and the philosophers of this early period who are most deeply affected by the emotional power of Mozart's music. It will be remembered that Goethe thought so highly of *The Magic Flute* that he wrote a libretto intended to serve as a sequel to it. And it was his profound admiration for *Don Giovanni* that caused Goethe to say that Mozart was the man who should have composed *Faust*. Stendhal, that "romantic realist," cannot get enough of Mozart. To this precursor of Proust in the minute dissection of the emotion of love, Mozart above all other composers has the masterly ability to paint the different shades of love in music. And what he finds most moving in Mozart's operas (he scarcely mentions the instrumental music) is their all-pervading melan-

choly. To him Mozart is seldom gay—even in *Figaro*! He is “the union of an exquisite ear with an impassioned heart.” Despite Stendhal’s limited knowledge of music, he does not hesitate to launch into criticism: “Mozart is an inventor from every point of view and in the fullest sense of the word. He resembles no one else, while Rossini is always a bit of Cimarosa, Guglielmi, Haydn, and goodness knows who” (*Life of Rossini*, 1814).

There is a revealing moment in Pushkin’s *Mozart and Salieri* (1830), a poetic dialogue based on a legend that has long been discredited. Mozart is about to play something new for Salieri. Pushkin makes him say:

*Just imagine someone—well,
Let’s say myself—a trifle younger, though—
In love—but not too deeply—just enamored—
I’m with some lady—or a friend—say, you.
I’m cheerful . . . Suddenly a glimpse of death,
The dark descends—or something of the sort.
Now listen.*

George Sand was moved to an encomium the first part of which could easily have served as the motto of Alfred Einstein’s recent book: “Here he is, the master of masters! He is neither an Italian nor a German. He is of all times and of all lands, like logic, poetry, and truth. He can cause all passions, all feelings, to speak in their own tongue. Never does he seek to astound and confuse you, he enchants you unceasingly. Nothing in his works gives you the impression of effort. He is learned and his knowledge is not perceptible. He has a burning heart, but also a proper spirit, a clear mind, and a calm glance. He is great, he is beautiful, he is simple, like nature.”

It was *Don Giovanni* that made the deepest impression. That arch-Romanticist, E. T. A. Hoffmann, devoted to it one of his fantastic tales (in the *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, 1814). This may still be read with profit, for embedded in the exuberant imaginativeness of the prose is a penetrating psychological study of the characters in the opera. The same masterwork inspired the Danish mystic and philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, to write a long essay in which aesthetics and analysis are mingled (extracts and a commentary may be found in W. J. Turner’s *Mozart*). His reverence for the master, and a typically Romantic, almost Russian self-abasement, lead him to write: “And I shall ask Mozart to forgive me if his music instead of inspiring me to great deeds has turned me into a fool who has lost the little sense he had, so that I now spend my time in melancholy, humming softly what I don’t understand, what hovers round me like spirits day and night. Immortal Mozart, you to whom I owe everything, to whom I owe it that once again my soul has lost itself in wonder, yes, is thrilled to its depths, to whom I owe it that I have not gone through this life without being deeply shaken, that I have not died without having loved, even though my love has been unfortunate!”

Such was the attitude of writers and philosophers in the first half of the nineteenth century. That of the composers and critics was somewhat different. There is still no diminution in their love of Mozart. In fact, I

know of no composer of any consequence, active in the more than a century and a half since Mozart's death, who did not consider him among the greatest of the masters. But the early Romantic composers were facing an entirely new set of aesthetic and technical problems. They had to come to terms with the upheaval touched off by the revolutionary music of Beethoven, with the currents sweeping in from Romantic literature and drama, with turbulent political events and the rising tide of nationalism. Few of these composers were historically minded, and most of them had the usual indifference of any actively creative epoch towards what it considers the worn-out style of the preceding generation. And so we find them unaware of those elements in Mozart's music that aroused the emotions of his contemporaries, and misunderstanding and criticizing those of his procedures that did not conform with the new outlook. Buffeted by the storm and stress of the new forces enveloping them, they looked back upon Mozart as upon a distant hill of Olympian serenity, overshadowed by the close, dark, and craggy mountain of Beethoven.

This new approach is summed up by Robert Schumann. "Cheerfulness, repose, grace, the characteristic traits of the ancient works of art, are also those of the Mozart school," he wrote. To him the G minor Symphony was a work of "Grecian lightness and grace." Berlioz called Mozart "this angelic genius, whose brightness was slightly dimmed by intercourse with Italians and contrapuntal pedagogues." He storms against the "wretched vocalises" that "disfigure" some of Mozart's "brilliant work." If these "vocalises" had for eighteenth-century audiences the effect of emotional intensification—or, as Berlioz puts it, "if it be said that this was the taste of the time"—"then so much the worse for the time and for us." The great music historian August Wilhelm Ambros, in an early essay (1855), compares Mozart to "an innocent child, who laughs and cries in one breath, without our having to ask him why." It is wasted effort, says Ambros, to look for a line of psychological development in Mozart's symphonies, quartets, and so on.

There were, of course, die-hards. Perhaps the most prominent of these was Alexandre Oulibicheff, a Russian dilettante and diplomat of conservative tastes who organized concerts in Nizhni Novgorod (one of them included a work by Palestrina!). Oulibicheff published a three-volume biography of Mozart in 1843. It was written in French, soon translated into German, and achieved relatively wide dissemination. The first volume is devoted to the life, the other two to the works. Volume II begins with a 200-page summary of the history of music. For the author's aim is nothing less than to show that Mozart was predestined to bring to complete perfection an art that was imperfect up to his time. (This idea was echoed by Eugène Delacroix, who wrote in his *Journals*: "Mozart is really the creator—I will not say of modern art, for now already no more of it is being produced—but of the art carried to its summit, beyond which perfection does not exist.") Some of Oulibicheff's analyses of the works are very sensitive (it was his probing for the psychological values in the G minor Symphony that called forth Ambros' remark about "wasted effort"), and occasionally he shows remarkable insight, as when he calls the quartets dedicated to Haydn "a miracle of composition, in

which the sublime art of Bach, revived, is allied to all the enchantments of modern music."

But Oulibicheff was out of step with his times. Schumann's view (which was shared by Mendelssohn and others) became practically official when it was taken over and developed in the great biography of Mozart by Otto Jahn (1856-59). Jahn had set out to gather material for a life of Beethoven. Looking into Beethoven's predecessors, he found the available books on Mozart unsatisfactory, and he turned his attention to the earlier master, investigating with tireless energy every aspect of his life and work, examining all the documents he could get his hands on, and questioning such people as were still alive who had had any contact with Mozart. The result was the first of the monumental biographies of composers, a work that served as a model for such later products of similar scope as Thayer's *Beethoven* and Spitta's *Bach*. It digests and presents in orderly fashion a great mass of material gathered from all sorts of sources, and every subsequent worker in the field is indebted to it in one way or another. But Jahn was a prisoner of his time. He painted an idealized portrait of Mozart as a figure of "classic" perfection, an imperturbable master in whom "the fermentation-process of the passions is not laid bare in the work of art but, after it has thoroughly overcome everything impure and gloomy, calls forth pure, perfect beauty."

From this there developed a view of Mozart as a sort of joyful cherub, or rather Cherubino, the eternal adolescent, who poured forth gay and innocent music unsullied by passion and of a pure and perfect form. This view reigned until well into our own time. Wagner's many comments about Mozart all stem from such an attitude. As with Berlioz, his own very different aesthetic outlook led him to criticize Mozart for what he regarded as technical weaknesses. He complains about the eternal half-cadences and other clichés in Mozart, after which he proceeds to compose his own eternal deceptive cadences and develops wonderful devices that will become the clichés of the generation following *him*. For the storm-tossed Tchaikovsky, Mozart's music was a haven of refuge. "Perhaps," he wrote, "I love Mozart because as a child of my time I am broken and morally sick, and seek surcease and consolation in his music, which expresses the joy of living of a great and healthy personality not yet eaten up by introspection."

Don Giovanni was still a stumbling block. It was hard to reconcile that strange work—whose chief protagonist, as Bernard Shaw pointed out, "was the first Byronic hero in music"—it was hard to reconcile it with the serene and angelic Mozart. Wolf-Ferrari was moved to ask, naïvely but seriously, "Mozart can be charming when he has to; but if he is to be regarded as *only* charming . . . how is one to account for the *Commendatore*, for example, where joking is no longer possible?" But the attitude of the whole Romantic and post-Romantic era was summed up at the end of the nineteenth century by Romain Rolland, when he wrote: "Mozart remains for us an eternal source of peace. In the midst of the confusion of passions which, since the Revolution, have roared over all the arts and have agitated music, it is sweet to take refuge sometimes in his serenity, as at the summit of a harmoniously formed Olympus, and to contemplate from afar, in the plain, the combats of the heroes and the gods of

Beethoven and Wagner, and the vast sea of the world with its tossing waves."

In 1906 a German musicologist named Alfred Heuss published an article called "The Daemonic Element in Mozart's Works." In it he called attention to the sudden, unexpected outbursts of dark emotions in many compositions that were regarded by Heuss's own generation as merely "sweet" and "beautiful" but that had had a powerful and moving effect on listeners of an earlier time. He also traced the influence of such works and passages on the music of Beethoven. This article spurred further investigation into the "daemonic" qualities of Mozart's music, as well as a re-examination from a more realistic point of view of Jahn's idealized portrait of the man. In Arthur Schurig's biography (1913), the Romantic picture of Mozart is savagely debunked, and all the warts and blemishes that Jahn had carefully painted over are mercilessly exposed. In his crusading zeal for the "truth" Schurig adds a few new blemishes for which there is little justification.

At the same time the works are examined from a new standpoint in the first two volumes of the great study by Wyzewa and Saint-Foix (1912). In these penetrating analyses full value is given to the emotional qualities of the music and to the Romantic elements in what the Romantic composers regarded as the most classic of the masters. Like Schurig, the German daemon-chasers inspired by Heuss sometimes went too far, and a German scholar found it necessary to warn that not every turn to the minor reflected the darker forces in Mozart's soul. The new approach, but stripped of its exaggerations, is embodied in the monumental revision of Jahn's biography by Hermann Abert (1919-21). Here Mozart, the man, is presented with all his sublime qualities as well as his frailties; his music is discussed, as it was by Wyzewa and Saint-Foix, from the standpoint of its meaning to its contemporaries; and it is placed in an objective frame that reveals its every facet—a frame that could only have been built in a generation that was freed from the prejudices of the Romantic era.

Those prejudices have lingered on, especially outside of the German-speaking countries. In Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber-Music* (1930) there is a fine essay on Mozart by Abert. It is followed by a comment by the editor, which reads in part: "One feature in [Abert's] article will strike many readers as a divergence from the point of view usually held by Mozart lovers, myself among the number. The composer has frequently been compared with Raphael, whose qualities of exquisite refinement and serenity of outlook he is generally supposed to possess—a nature 'profound yet limpid, all humanity with the simplicity of a child,' as Gounod said; but Dr. Abert reads into his music qualities associated more often with Michelangelo: tragic intensity, sullenness, even 'demoniac fury,' and this will, I think, excite the astonishment of some of our readers." And, to choose one example among many that are available, anyone who has heard Koussevitzky's performance of the G minor Symphony will have an excellent idea of the dainty, angelic plaster figure that represented Mozart to much of the nineteenth century.

What is the "true" Mozart? Every period, no doubt, will have its own ideas about that. To those of us who have been driven by the spell of his

music to try to understand his character and the workings of his mind there is some truth in all the views outlined in this article. Tenderness, delicacy, and divine innocence are in his music, but so are dramatic power and polished sophistication. Pure decoration and profound insight into human character, sublime gaiety and dark passion, playful joking and noble seriousness, serenity and emotional upheaval—all of these and many more are essential qualities of a body of music of which the world has not since seen the like.

A Pox on Manfredini

by H.C. Robbins Landon

HERE WAS A TIME, not so long ago, when Highbrows, would-be Highbrows, the Westchester Set, and the Madison Avenue Boys played recordings of Mozart. The *most* knowing among them played—in those last golden days of 78—imported HMV or Telefunken pressing (“the surfaces are so much better”) bought at New York’s Gramophone Shop; as the martinis were served, it was the smart thing to remark, casually, as one dropped the pickup on the disc: “This is a rather pleasant Telefunken record which that incredibly rude salesman at the Gramophone Shop dug up for me; it’s Von Benda and the Berlin Philharmonic doing Mozart’s Symphony No. 32, in G, Köchel 318. What a pity no one gives it here; but what can one expect with people like Toscanini and Koussevitzky. . . .”

The Alajalov *New Yorker* cartoon of a room full of Bright Minds all talking at once, with scraps of the conversation flying about, naturally included someone chattering about “Mozart.” As time went on, however, the Mozart cult suffered two setbacks: the first was those vulgar LPs, so cheap that everyone could buy them, thus spreading Mozart to middle-brows and even to the Middle West; the second difficulty was that, for any musician, it was disgusting and sacrilegious to play Mozart as background music—even faintly musical people on Fifth Avenue felt there was something about Mozart that, unless you turned the volume down to near-inaudibility, kept on intruding into that third martini. You *had* to listen; and that wasn’t the idea of music for a cocktail party.

After 1949, when the Haydn Society emerged, a few “advanced” Easterners took up the early Haydn symphonies and the late Haydn masses. This didn’t last long, either; you can’t use the *Nelson Mass* as background music: too loud, too much D minor (a bad key to drink to), too many trumpets. And again, you start listening.

Then some genius on Madison Avenue discovered barococo* music: *the* music to drink to, to talk across, and to make clear that you were the highest of Highbrows and the smartest of the Smart Set. I should have seen it coming when, in 1952, I returned from Vienna to New York and was invited, one hot summer evening, to the chic apartment of a couple in the (you guessed it) advertising business. The rooms were just right—two or three well-chosen abstracts on the wall, the furniture and drapes worked out in rhythmic color designs (red-gray-red-black-gray—a few years back they would have called it “our Mozart Rondo room”), Kafka and Auden on the table, filter cigarettes in the Japanese boxes. And as the martinis were served, I noticed that you didn’t use gin to make martinis any more, you used vodka; and you didn’t play Mozart quartets on the phonograph, you stacked a pile of LPs on the changer—Albinoni, Geminiani, Corelli, Locatelli, and, of course, the father-figure of barococo music: Antonio Vivaldi. As I sipped the first new-style martini, I listened with delight to the crisp patterns of a concerto grosso; as the evening wore on and the figurations in the violins (over that nice, springy, “walking” bass-line) went on and on, conversation, smoke, and vodka soon surrounded the phonograph in an indistinct haze. The music became scarcely audible, and I found myself barely listening as the record changed, every twenty minutes or so, and a new concerto grosso doodle-deedled its barococo way from groove to groove.

Now, ten years later, I see with growing astonishment the space devoted to concerti grossi in each Schwann catalogue. I see with even more astonishment that the barococo sickness is really international. In Vienna, where until after World War II Bach was scarcely played except in the circles of a few fanatics, Renato Fasano and the world’s most barococo strings (with that harpsichord you practically never hear in a hall seating 3,000 people but which gives such an authentic *settecento* flavor) play to sold-out houses; in Salzburg, an all-Vivaldi concert during the festival is sold out and cheered; in London, Kiel, Paris, and of course all over Italy, they play whole evenings of Locatelli or Barsanti or Torelli or Geminiani—and people come in droves. Vox—the father of Ye Compleat Concerti Grossi sets (all twelve Manfredini Op. 3, all twelve Torelli Op. 8, all twelve Corelli Op. 6, etc., etc.)—made their albums models of luxurious presentation: whole little books of analytical notes were offered with the records. With Op. 8 by Torelli, they included a thirty-six page booklet (“Giuseppe Torelli and the Early Concerto,” “Giuseppe Torelli: Life and Cultural Environment,” “The Concertos of Opus 8”) with pages of illustrations, facsimiles, and fifty-one engraved musical examples. Nothing since the old prewar HMV Society sets had ever boasted such a lavish presentation.

I can see it coming: the full-page, four-color magazine ad with the Bright Young Couple under the Christmas tree. He is holding up a bottle of imported Russian vodka (the diplomats’ drink); she, in tapered slacks with the right foot delicately toed outward, is grasping a “handsome recording complete with a free reproduction of Masaccio’s *S. Peter Baptizing a Disciple*” (it’s very fashionable to have Renaissance pictures

*Barococo: an artificial marriage of the words “baroque” and “rococo.” In fact, the music described is transitional, in that while it is firmly rooted in the baroque, many of its elements were to be adopted by the preclassical masters, i.e. the world of rococo.

on the covers of your barococo albums) and is exclaiming in tones of utter rapture: "Darling! It's Manfredini!"

If you start to analyze a Manfredini concerto, you will find nothing inept or wrong. The composer was a solid craftsman and, like almost every Italian musician of the time, he knew what he wanted and how to get it. The concerto grosso form, in Manfredini's hands, might be a model—formally speaking. The trouble with Manfredini is that we have so many better works in the same form by other composers. It seems that we do not have, in music, the same tolerance for the "also were's," the second-string artists, as we do for painters. A work by a *Kleinmeister* in the visual arts is admitted; it is rare that music's *Kleinmeister* are accepted. Perhaps we are overcritical of what we hear; but perhaps too, a Manfredini is *not* on the same level as a Renaissance or baroque painter of the second order. Manfredini's structure is impeccable, but when you examine half a dozen of his concerti grossi, you see that they are all of the same fabric, turned out in a variety of attractive colors which at first hide the threadbare pattern and the lack of any real creative imagination. And there are not those flashes of genius which generally dart through even a second-rate work by a first-rate composer.

Do I exaggerate? Perhaps, but not much. The fact remains, however, that something has gone wrong with our musical values as far as barococo music is concerned. No one denies the documentary value—especially for schools of music—of complete recordings of concerti grossi; I hope Vox and Epic sell thousands. The point is that a series like Manfredini's Op. 3 is just not first-rate music judged by any standard—historical, musical, or (and this is the most important criterion nowadays) musicological. Certainly I cannot possibly see any purpose in recording all twelve works; for historical purposes one or two would have been quite sufficient; and for the general music lover, I am afraid that there are several thousand compositions which would more profitably fill the twelve or fifteen minutes of listening time that a Manfredini concerto requires.

It will be thought that I am an enemy of concerti grossi: but this is far from the truth. No one enjoys Vivaldi's *L'Estro armonico* more than I; but I feel very strongly that the emotional and intellectual content of the average concerto grosso is too limited (and, I think, *purposely* limited by its composer) to permit a present-day musician—filled as he is with Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Schoenberg, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Webern (to tear through our musical culture in three lines)—to want to hear a dozen Locatelli or Barsanti or Stradella or Torelli concertos in one sitting. The left-wing crowd in Britain (of the *New Statesman* type) have, I am told, declared war on the present craze for Vivaldi and consorts. One of the most perceptive of this group was visiting me in Italy not long ago and I—having just finished some research on Vivaldi—was arguing that composer's case. We finally ran into the question of the Great Goberman Project, the complete recording of all five hundred (or is it now six hundred?) Vivaldi concertos. My friend dug in his heels:

"Listen, Robbie," he began firmly, "let's get our bloody values straight. We've just had the whole of Vivaldi Op. 3 [*L'Estro armonico*] on the BBC Third Programme. Mind you: I was much struck with its

originality, and how much difference there was between the various works. They are brilliantly written. But, look here: it's completely *unintellectual*, small-boned music. It's not *thinking* music like Mozart or Haydn or Bartók or Beethoven. Of course that's why the Italians like it: an easy way to enjoy old music; you lie back and relax. You can't *relax* to a Mozart quintet or the *Missa Solemnis* unless you're an idiot."

"The Italians do," I said (not meaning it nastily).

"Yes, because the Italians are not intellectuals at all—how could they be with this sun," said my friend, pointing out the French windows to the blazing Tuscan afternoon. "And that's the whole secret of this great fuss nowadays about Vivaldi. It's easy music. It's precisely the right music for half-intellectuals and snobs; moreover, you'll notice it's the homosexuals' delight—bright, brittle, fast-moving, surface glitter."

He got up and walked to the piano and, standing over the keyboard, began to play *Art of Fugue*.

"I'm sorry," he said dreamily, as he worked into the fourth voice and the room began to be filled with the somber D minor peace that only Bach knows how to write; "all this Vivaldi business—the five hundred concertos on 292 LPs—is just nonsense. Degenerate. It's another symptom of our civilization's sickness; five minutes before twelve; how Spengler would have laughed. . . ." And we moved off to politics and other *Weltprobleme*.

One of the principal reasons for this lopsided adoration of barococo music is, I think, intimately bound up with the advent of LP. When I was in college, we used to save up our dollars and get lovely baroque music on 78s: that Bruno Walter set of the Corelli *Christmas Concerto* (the ornaments all wrong, but how sensitively played!); an Arthur Fiedler single 12-inch Victor of the *Christmas Symphony* by G. M. Schiassi (died 1754)—sophisticated and utterly delightful preclassical music; or that exquisite HMV recording of a Dall'Abaco B flat Concerto Grosso with Edwin Fischer and his Chamber Orchestra; and, one of the greatest sensations of my youth, the practically unobtainable Vivaldi A minor Concerto for Two Violins from Op. 3, with the Concertgebouw Orchestra—a Telefunken set that a Harvard colleague of mine obtained from Argentina (this was towards the end of the war). Nowadays, my young New York friends can stroll around the corner and get twelve of everything baroque: instead of having to choose among a dozen first-rate products (as was the case when one bought baroque music twenty years ago), one is now served up with two hundred choices.

After this conversation with my British friend, I thought I had better go into the concerto grosso question more thoroughly. To this end, I went out and bought \$100 worth of Corelli, Vivaldi, Geminiani, Locatelli, Manfredini, Torelli, Pergolesi, Sammartini, Albinoni—all in gorgeous packages with reproductions of old Italian masters; most (if not all) played with careful attention to ornaments, cadenzas, realization of the harpsichord continuo, etc.; and accompanied by analytical notes which (as I have suggested above) are models of presentation and annotation (if not, always, of English style). Every evening for a fortnight I sat down—often with the scores—and played through a total of 208 concertos. Naturally, this is a big dose, and it might be thought that any category of music would not stand up to 208 servings. Yet there have been periods

when we played Mozart (usually live) night after night; and I can quite cheerfully face the prospect of hearing two hours of Beethoven string quartets every night for as long as they last; or Schubert; or Haydn; or Handel; or Bartók. Moreover, this playing of concerti grossi every night for two weeks must be being duplicated in many houses throughout America: if not, how could the purchasers of all that barococo even get through the music at all?

I ought to preface my summing-up by saying that my own life has been, and will continue to be, devoted to music. This has to be said because there are, after all, people who would be bored to death by any 208 pieces of old music. It also has to be said because I approached my barococo marathon—if with any preconceived notion—with curiosity and with the expectation of much pleasure.

In a word, I was horrified. Corelli, Vivaldi—yes, of course (not to speak of Handel, where barococo is transformed into great music); but the dreary horror of an evening with Signor Manfredini! I simply cannot for the life of me comprehend what ghastly perversion has brought us to the pitch where we sit around the phonograph, deadly serious and intent, listening to fourth-rate concerti grossi which never should have left that dusty archive shelf. To me this is the absolute negation of music: it is the point where musicologists (most of whom don't like music anyway) have triumphed. Groaning under their Teutonic footnotes—and often expressing themselves in a language only faintly resembling that generally conceded to be English—they have elbowed their way into our musical culture: talked record companies into recording hundreds of LPs of endless, jogging preclassical trash; persuaded all the snobs and musically semiliterate to buy these records and to fill up concert halls whenever these touring Italian chamber orchestras come to play two and one-half hours of music whose original function must have been *Tafelmusik*.

So we land where we started: much of Manfredini's music was probably first played to the accompaniment of clinking spumante glasses and fashionable conversation: he was paid, no doubt, to entertain guests of the prince, or count, or baron, as they lustily attacked their *pollo al mattone* and roasted *colombi*. Thus, cynically speaking, we have reinstated Manfredini in our twentieth-century culture: music to drink (and eat) to. Instead of chianti or soave, it's vodka martinis, and instead of *colombi*, it's Ritz crackers with anchovies. And as the guests move about, balancing their glasses and cigarettes and canapés, chatting brightly with each other, Manfredini floats from the corner, barely heard above the party uproar, obligingly made welcome.

The fact that much of our most beloved music, like Mozart's serenades and Handel's *Water Music*, was written, more or less, as *Tafelmusik* should not lead us to copy the manners of the aristocratic patrons who commissioned it. Even if Herr Haffner clinked his glass and munched his *Tafelspitz* to the tune of Mozart's Symphony K. 385, there is no excuse for our doing so. Music that is worth anything cannot be made to function as pleasant background noise. It is therefore symptomatic that our neurotic civilization goes out of its way to find an old music sufficiently snobbish to be "U," sufficiently old to be respectable, and sufficiently boring not to need listening to.

Something has gone horribly wrong somewhere.

A Second Look at Manfredini

By Paul Henry Lang

THE RIPPLES caused by H. C. Robbins Landon's "A Pox on Manfredini" are still discernible in the correspondence columns of this journal long after that article's appearance. That so many readers are concerned with the issues it presented is gratifying indeed, and the author is to be congratulated on the interest he generated. Certainly, it is not my intention to quarrel with Mr. Robbins Landon, but rather to discuss the problems which are at the bottom of the whole affair.

The historian endeavors to resuscitate bygone art; it is his main task. He uncovers the conditions that determine historic styles, illuminating the work of art from every possible angle. Insofar as those conditions can be reconstructed, he can make his contemporaries conscious of them; but he cannot conjure up the instinctive empathy felt by men of another age. We hook up a transformer, so to speak, to the old work of art; and if we can convert the electricity it generates to our voltage, our mental apparatus begins to hum. But the transformer cannot re-create the atmospheric conditions in which the old art breathed. From the distance of a couple of centuries a composer, for instance, tends to recede into the general style of his time, and to many of us these old masters all seem to have composed the same sonatas, the same concertos, and the same operas. Yet they are individuals, and once we become familiar with their differing styles and procedures we can recognize their individuality.

Every artistic expression has a relation to its time which is lost if we are unable to establish our own relationship to that time. For a century and a half it was held that only with Bach and Handel do we really enter the domain of unquestionably living music; the result of this presupposition was the impossible historical category of "pre-Bach" music. There

are many persons who listen to the "Princes of Music" of the sixteenth century, Palestrina, Lasso, Victoria, and Byrd, with respect and even awe—all the books say they were great composers—but few discern behind this music a human countenance or even shades of variation: Gloria sounds pretty much like Credo, Kyrie like Agnus Dei. Lully, Couperin, Kuhnau, and all the others are pleasant enough, but they appear to wear a common garb and look alike; no message seems to emanate from them beyond a certain innocent charm. But when we hear "I know that my Redeemer liveth," or the second *Brandenburg* Concerto, there is not the slightest doubt in our minds that this is "our" music, by composers we "understand" and whom we could not mistake for anyone else. But ought we to be so sure? On the one hand, there are many universally admired pieces in Handel's works that were lifted bodily from older composers now declared dead; on the other, what does the *Art of Fugue* convey to the music listener who is accustomed to "original invention" and "meaning"?

The prevailing opinion—and not only among laymen—is that this old music lacks subjective expression and therefore fails to convey the type of satisfaction we are used to. But why should we assume that because more recent music is of a different kind it is superior and more highly developed? No one would maintain such ideas with regard to painting or literature. The medieval painter who used no perspective is no longer considered "primitive"; his superimposed layers are recognized as a valid concept. Nor do we speak of pre-Voltaire or pre-Swift literature. This old music does have subjectivity and expressivity, though not in the nineteenth century sense: all contemporary documents prove that in pre-Romantic music individuality was felt and understood. The trouble is caused by the modern listener's inability to perceive the earlier composer's inner, unified vision. He must reconstruct this vision from the small details which are not inner truth but largely facts that must be quarried from the cold foreign past.

The older masters took their departure from the *métier*, from the collective universal, which guided them serenely, whereas with the advent of the Romantic era the great artist arose from real or imagined opposition to the norm. There were many plodders among the old composers, to be sure, as there have always been in every field of human endeavor, and there were also many who worked humbly as mere artisans, without fanfare and even without a desire to be different from their colleagues. They were not troubled with any impulse to unravel the mysteries of the universe; rather they directed an eye at the manners and experiences of their day, worked within the musical fashion, and were not isolated from the popular taste. But they often ended by being overwhelmingly powerful individuals whose every utterance is unmistakably their own. Only a few decades ago a Buxtehude, and a Vivaldi, and a Charpentier were nothing but names in textbooks; now they have been recognized as great composers because we have become conversant with their style and principles and have begun to distinguish the individual within the uniformity of the reigning style.

Seventy or eighty years ago even the experienced and famous musicians who prepared the first complete edition of Bach's works, the

celebrated Bachgesellschaft edition, were completely baffled by baroque music. They knew neither the literature nor the style, and therefore accepted everything in Bach's handwriting as genuine. They did not realize that Bach copied many a score by other composers, both earlier and contemporary, which he found interesting. As a result the old Bach edition is studded with all sorts of compositions by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century masters whom, ironically enough, Bach regarded with admiration but we declare passé. It was only later that scholars discovered that all of Bach's harpsichord concertos, to quote one example, were actually composed by Vivaldi, Marcello, and others.

Today we realize that no art is understandable from a knowledge of historical facts alone; it must be experienced through a perception of its style—not only analyzed but felt and divined. It is not so much the historical facts (which to the layman are always the mark of scholarliness) as the historical connections that are most important. The minute we attempt to explore the historical connections, then we are entering the area where the idea is to be found—and idea, no matter how relative, leads to style.

An obvious question arises at this point: what is the relationship between musical instinct and musical value? That they do not necessarily coincide is evident. Our musical life shows a gulf between what the general public likes and what the initiated consider the highest manifestations of music. But we should not accept without suspicion the articles of faith of the epicureans who at the drop of a hat trot out nothing less than the *Art of Fugue*. They believe that artistic value is as evident in their choices as the trademark of a famous manufacturer. For the moment let us disregard the fact that our knowledge of baroque music is still very sketchy, that an immense treasure of scores, containing many masterpieces, is still to be made known and available. But we do have a fair number of publications and recordings, among them many by minor composers. Musicians, editors, and advisors to record companies, whose acquaintance with "old" music is rather recent, find themselves in a world whose language they speak imperfectly, and it is for this reason that they are preaching a cult of indiscriminate proliferation. But there is another and much worthier reason for making the minor composers available: they can be enjoyed not in neglect or defiance of the approved great masters, but in simple acceptance of the fact that altogether enjoyable art can be created by musical poets who are not exactly thought-ridden. At certain times a minor composer who knew no high ecstasies or profound griefs falls easier on the ear than a towering genius. One may question the profundity or the accomplishment, but there is no denying the entertainment.

Essentially taste is a convention, often a very unreasonable convention, and like every convention it is changeable—in art it must change. In a certain sense, taste is a form of social etiquette and lack of taste is often nothing else than the liberation of new territories for creative imagination. In Manfredini's time, the marks Mr. Robbins Landon is distressed not to find in that composer's music would have been considered lacking in taste—but the historian, working backward and armed with hindsight, must beware of converting migrations of taste into aesthetic arguments.

Finally, there is the question of the relationship of invention and imagination, which in the case of our still little understood field of music are terms subject to different interpretations. The difficulty for us is that the ratio and quality of these two elements are not constant; they change, often radically, within a generation or two. How can we otherwise explain that an excellent musician such as Gounod could find Bach's C major prelude from the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* a piece lacking in invention but presenting imagination in the "accompaniment," to which Gounod furnished his dubious *Ave Maria*? The notion of "invention"—and hence to our unscientific aesthetics, the "expressive"—is purely arbitrary and in itself irrelevant unless stylistically qualified. Because the old masters are strong in the handling of their materials, and because this ability of theirs can be quickly appreciated whereas their soul is often hidden, it may appear to some that they had nothing but a well-settled uniform technique. Not only Mr. Robbins Landon but many an otherwise able musician considers the baroque the age of musical statutes and bylaws observed meticulously by everyone—except Bach and Handel. One thing is certain, though, and several HIGH FIDELITY correspondents who took up *l'affaire* Manfredini are fully aware of it: in this music it is not the strength of the emotional expression and the dynamic enrichment that determines artistic value. If this were so, Bach's *Musical Offering* would be surpassed by Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Piano Concerto. It is function and design, the "working-out" or manipulation of musical substance that leads to masterpieces in this old music.

But even music much closer to us shows that "invention" was not always synonymous with "originality," and that "imagination" must be sought elsewhere. The *Jupiter* Symphony and the Fifth of Beethoven both start out with very ordinary clichés plucked from the public domain—but see what happens to the clichés by the application of imagination! Surely, Mr. Robbins Landon, who knows his Haydn and who has done so much to make this great and neglected master come to life, is aware that most of his wondrous symphonies and quartets were hatched with the motto *creatio ex nihilo*. This was the eighteenth-century precept: the question was how soon the creative spark would strike the imagination. Look at the beginning of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This stupendous symphonic structure still begins with "nothing"—a few tentative intervals that do not even fix the tonality—but then we can virtually witness how imagination forces the raw matter to coalesce into an idea. This process was alien to the Romantics. They had to begin with a substantial and fully formed musical idea, an approach which of course represents a totally different, though equally valid, aesthetic concept. Unless we understand these aesthetic premises and refrain from applying our own, we are unable to fully understand the artistic intentions of the composer and may even altogether misjudge the music, as Berlioz did Haydn's or Tchaikovsky Bach's.

There is no denying, however, that Mr. Robbins Landon's strictures are at least partly justified. Certain commentators, broadcasters, and record editors, seeing that a vital literature originated in the baroque era, lump together the living music with the dead, advocating their views with the same superciliousness that the party of the 24-carat masterpieces

exhibits. They take us into their confidence, though they have little to confide, pouring into our ears a copious flow of thin music. It is a kind of make-believe by which the blessed past is projected into the prosaic present. This anomaly should be protested, but it would be sad if, as Mr. Robbins Landon only half facetiously suggests, the baroque concerto could serve only to make martinis more potable.

There are indeed abuses in this as in any other area of music, but the abuses need not be abused quite so sweepingly. Whatever means a scholar may adopt, his concern is always with a cultural tradition which it is his business to transmit. I am afraid that Mr. Robbins Landon, on the contrary, satisfied himself with an incongruity to be exploited. If so, I am sure he misjudged his HIGH FIDELITY public. As one of this audience I too enjoy a fine piece of cheerful vituperation, but "A Pox on Manfredini" suffers from a quality that is not a sign of imaginative criticism but of sensational impatience.

Who Cares if You Listen?

by Milton Babbitt

THIS article might have been entitled "The Composer as Specialist" or, alternatively, and perhaps less contentiously, "The Composer as Anachronism." For I am concerned with stating an attitude towards the indisputable facts of the status and condition of the composer of what we will, for the moment, designate as "serious," "advanced," contemporary music. This composer expends an enormous amount of time and energy—and, usually, considerable money—on the creation of a commodity which has little, no, or negative commodity value. He is, in essence, a "vanity" composer. The general public is largely unaware of and uninterested in his music. The majority of performers shun it and resent it. Consequently, the music is little performed, and then primarily at poorly attended concerts before an audience consisting in the main of fellow professionals. At best, the music would appear to be for, of, and by specialists.

Towards this condition of musical and societal "isolation," a variety of attitudes has been expressed, usually with the purpose of assigning blame, often to the music itself, occasionally to critics or performers, and very occasionally to the public. But to assign blame is to imply that this isolation is unnecessary and undesirable. It is my contention that, on the contrary, this condition is not only inevitable, but potentially advantageous for the composer and his music. From my point of view, the composer would do well to consider means of realizing, consolidating, and extending the advantages.

The unprecedented divergence between contemporary serious music and its listeners, on the one hand, and traditional music and its following, on the other, is not accidental and—most probably—not transitory. Rather, it is a result of a half-century of revolution in musical thought, a

revolution whose nature and consequences can be compared only with, and in many respects are closely analogous to, those of the mid-nineteenth-century revolution in mathematics and the twentieth-century revolution in theoretical physics. The immediate and profound effect has been the necessity for the informed musician to re-examine and probe the very foundations of his art. He has been obliged to recognize the possibility, and actuality, of alternatives to what were once regarded as musical absolutes. He lives no longer in a unitary musical universe of "common practice," but in a variety of universes of diverse practice.

This fall from musical innocence is, understandably, as disquieting to some as it is challenging to others, but in any event the process is irreversible; and the music that reflects the full impact of this revolution is, in many significant respects, a truly "new" music. Apart from the often highly sophisticated and complex constructive methods of any one composition, or group of compositions, the very minimal properties characterizing this body of music are the sources of its "difficulty," "unintelligibility," and—isolation. In indicating the most general of these properties, I shall make reference to no specific works, since I wish to avoid the independent issue of evaluation. The reader is at liberty to supply his own instances; if he cannot (and, granted the condition under discussion, this is a very real possibility), let him be assured that such music does exist.

First. This music employs a tonal vocabulary which is more "efficient" than that of the music of the past, or its derivatives. This is not necessarily a virtue in itself, but it does make possible a greatly increased number of pitch simultaneities, successions, and relationships. This increase in efficiency necessarily reduces the "redundancy" of the language, and as a result the intelligible communication of the work demands increased accuracy from the transmitter (the performer) and activity from the receiver (the listener). Incidentally, it is this circumstance, among many others, that has created the need for purely electronic media of "performance." More importantly for us, it makes ever heavier demands upon the training of the listener's perceptual capacities.

Second. Along with this increase of meaningful pitch materials, the number of functions associated with each component of the musical event also has been multiplied. In the simplest possible terms, each such "atomic" event is located in a five-dimensional musical space determined by pitch-class, register, dynamic, duration, and timbre. These five components not only together define the single event, but, in the course of a work, the successive values of each component create an individually coherent structure, frequently in parallel with the corresponding structures created by each of the other components. Inability to perceive and remember precisely the values of any of these components results in a dislocation of the event in the work's musical space, an alteration of its relation to all other events in the work, and—thus—a falsification of the composition's total structure. For example, an incorrectly performed or perceived dynamic value results in destruction of the work's dynamic pattern, but also in false identification of other components of the event (of which this dynamic value is a part) with corresponding components of

other events, so creating incorrect pitch, registral, timbral, and durational associations. It is this high degree of "determinacy" that most strikingly differentiates such music from, for example, a popular song. A popular song is only very partially determined, since it would appear to retain its germane characteristics under considerable alteration of register, rhythmic texture, dynamics, harmonic structure, timbre, and other qualities.

The preliminary differentiation of musical categories by means of this reasonable and usable criterion of "degree of determinacy" offends those who take it to be a definition of qualitative categories, which—of course—it need not always be. Curiously, their demurrers usually take the familiar form of some such "democratic" counterdefinition as: "There is no such thing as 'serious' and 'popular' music. There is only 'good' and 'bad' music." As a public service, let me offer those who still patiently await the revelation of the criteria of Absolute Good an alternative criterion which possesses, at least, the virtue of immediate and irrefutable applicability: "There is no such thing as 'serious' and 'popular' music. There is only music whose title begins with the letter 'X,' and music whose title does not."

Third. Musical compositions of the kind under discussion possess a high degree of contextuality and autonomy. That is, the structural characteristics of a given work are less representative of a general class of characteristics than they are unique to the individual work itself. Particularly, principles of relatedness, upon which depends immediate coherence of continuity, are more likely to evolve in the course of the work than to be derived from generalized assumptions. Here again greater and new demands are made upon the perceptual and conceptual abilities of the listener.

Fourth, and finally. Although in many fundamental respects this music is "new," it often also represents a vast extension of the methods of other musics, derived from a considered and extensive knowledge of their dynamic principles. For, concomitant with the "revolution in music," perhaps even an integral aspect thereof, has been the development of analytical theory, concerned with the systematic formulation of such principles to the end of greater efficiency, economy, and understanding. Compositions so rooted necessarily ask comparable knowledge and experience from the listener. Like all communication, this music presupposes a suitably equipped receptor. I am aware that "tradition" has it that the lay listener, by virtue of some undefined, transcendental faculty, always is able to arrive at a musical judgment absolute in its wisdom if not always permanent in its validity. I regret my inability to accord this declaration of faith the respect due its advanced age.

Deviation from this tradition is bound to dismiss the contemporary music of which I have been talking into "isolation." Nor do I see how or why the situation should be otherwise. Why should the layman be other than bored and puzzled by what he is unable to understand, music or anything else? It is only the translation of this boredom and puzzlement into resentment and denunciation that seems to me indefensible. After all, the public does have its own music, its ubiquitous music: music to eat by, to read by, to dance by, and to be impressed by. Why refuse to

recognize the possibility that contemporary music has reached a stage long since attained by other forms of activity? The time has passed when the normally well-educated man without special preparation could understand the most advanced work in, for example, mathematics, philosophy, and physics. Advanced music, to the extent that it reflects the knowledge and originality of the informed composer, scarcely can be expected to appear more intelligible than these arts and sciences to the person whose musical education usually has been even less extensive than his background in other fields. But to this, a double standard is invoked, with the words "music is music," implying also that "music is *just* music." Why not, then, equate the activities of the radio repairman with those of the theoretical physicist, on the basis of the dictum that "physics is physics"? It is not difficult to find statements like the following, from the *New York Times* of September 8, 1957: "The scientific level of the conference is so high . . . that there are in the world only one hundred and twenty mathematicians specializing in the field who could contribute." Specialized music on the other hand, far from signifying "height" of musical level, has been charged with "decadence," even as evidence of an insidious "conspiracy."

It often has been remarked that only in politics and the "arts" does the layman regard himself as an expert, with the right to have his opinion heard. In the realm of politics he knows that this right, in the form of a vote, is guaranteed by fiat. Comparably, in the realm of public music, the concertgoer is secure in the knowledge that the amenities of concertgoing protect his firmly stated "I didn't like it" from further scrutiny. Imagine, if you can, a layman chancing upon a lecture on "Pointwise Periodic Homeomorphisms." At the conclusion, he announces: "I didn't like it." Social conventions being what they are in such circles, someone might dare inquire: "Why not?" Under duress, our layman discloses precise reasons for his failure to enjoy himself; he found the hall chilly, the lecturer's voice unpleasant, and he was suffering the digestive aftermath of a poor dinner. His interlocutor understandably disqualifies these reasons as irrelevant to the content and value of the lecture, and the development of mathematics is left undisturbed. If the concertgoer is at all versed in the ways of musical lifemanship, he also will offer reasons for his "I didn't like it"—in the form of assertions that the work in question is "inexpressive," "undramatic," "lacking in poetry," etc., etc., tapping that store of vacuous equivalents hallowed by time for: "I don't like it, and I cannot or will not state why." The concertgoer's critical authority is established beyond the possibility of further inquiry. Certainly he is not responsible for the circumstance that musical discourse is a never-never land of semantic confusion, the last resting place of all those verbal and formal fallacies, those hoary dualisms that have been banished from rational discourse. Perhaps he has read, in a widely consulted and respected book on the history of music, the following: "to call him (Tchaikovsky) 'the modern Russian Beethoven' is footless, Beethoven being patently neither modern nor Russian. . . ." Or, the following, by an eminent "nonanalytic" philosopher: "The music of Lourié is an ontological music. . . . It is born in the singular roots of being, the nearest possible juncture of the soul and the spirit. . . ." How

unexceptionable the verbal peccadilloes of the average concertgoer appear beside these masterful models. Or, perhaps, in search of "real" authority, he has acquired his critical vocabulary from the pronouncements of officially "eminent" composers, whose eminence, in turn, is founded largely upon just such assertions as the concertgoer has learned to regurgitate. This cycle is of slight moment in a world where circularity is one of the norms of criticism. Composers (and performers), wittingly or unwittingly assuming the character of "talented children" and "inspired idiots" generally ascribed to them, are singularly adept at the conversion of personal tastes into general principles. Music they do not like is "not music," composers whose music they do not like are "not composers."

In search of what to think and how to say it, the layman may turn to newspapers and magazines. Here he finds conclusive evidence for the proposition that "music is music." The science editor of such publications contents himself with straightforward reporting, usually news of the "factual" sciences; books and articles not intended for popular consumption are not reviewed. Whatever the reason, such matters are left to professional journals. The music critic admits no comparable differentiation. He may feel, with some justice, that music which presents itself in the marketplace of the concert hall automatically offers itself to public approval or disapproval. He may feel, again with some justice, that to omit the expected criticism of the "advanced" work would be to do the composer an injustice in his assumed quest for, if nothing else, public notice and "professional recognition." The critic, at least to this extent, is himself a victim of the leveling of categories.

Here, then, are some of the factors determining the climate of the public world of music. Perhaps we should not have overlooked those pockets of "power" where prizes, awards, and commissions are dispensed, where music is adjudged guilty, not only without the right to be confronted by its accuser, but without the right to be confronted by the accusations. Or those well-meaning souls who exhort the public "just to *listen* to more contemporary music," apparently on the theory that familiarity breeds passive acceptance. Or those, often the same well-meaning souls, who remind the composer of his "obligation to the public," while the public's obligation to the composer is fulfilled, manifestly, by mere physical presence in the concert hall or before a loudspeaker or—more authoritatively—by committing to memory the numbers of phonograph records and amplifier models. Or the intricate social world within this musical world, where the salon becomes bazaar, and music itself becomes an ingredient of verbal canapés for cocktail conversation.

I say all this is not to present a picture of a virtuous music in a sinful world, but to point up the problems of a special music in an alien and inapposite world. And so, I dare suggest that the composer would do himself and his music an immediate and eventual service by total, resolute, and voluntary withdrawal from this public world to one of private performance and electronic media, with its very real possibility of complete elimination of the public and social aspects of musical composition. By so doing, the separation between the domains would be defined beyond any possibility of confusion of categories, and the

composer would be free to pursue a private life of professional achievement, as opposed to a public life of unprofessional compromise and exhibitionism.

But how, it may be asked, will this serve to secure the means of survival for the composer and his music? One answer is that after all such a private life is what the university provides the scholar and the scientist. It is only proper that the university, which—significantly—has provided so many contemporary composers with their professional training and general education, should provide a home for the “complex,” “difficult,” and “problematical” in music. Indeed, the process has begun; and if it appears to proceed too slowly, I take consolation in the knowledge that in this respect, too, music seems to be in historically retarded parallel with now sacrosanct fields of endeavor. In E. T. Bell’s *Men of Mathematics*, we read: “In the eighteenth century the universities were not the principal centers of research in Europe. They might have become such sooner than they did but for the classical tradition and its understandable hostility to science. Mathematics was close enough to antiquity to be respectable, but physics, being more recent, was suspect. Further, a mathematician in a university of the time would have been expected to put much of his effort on elementary teaching; his research, if any, would have been an unprofitable luxury. . . .” A simple substitution of “musical composition” for “research,” of “academic” for “classical,” of “music” for “physics,” and of “composer” for “mathematician,” provides a strikingly accurate picture of the current situation. And as long as the confusion I have described continues to exist, how can the university and its community assume other than that the composer welcomes and courts public competition with the historically certified products of the past, and the commercially certified products of the present?

Perhaps for the same reason, the various institutes of advanced research and the large majority of foundations have disregarded this music’s need for means of survival. I do not wish to appear to obscure the obvious differences between musical composition and scholarly research, although it can be contended that these differences are no more fundamental than the differences among the various fields of study. I do question whether these differences, by their nature, justify the denial to music’s development of assistance granted these other fields. Immediate “practical” applicability (which may be said to have its musical analogue in “immediate extensibility of a compositional technique”) is certainly not a necessary condition for the support of scientific research. And if it be contended that such research is so supported because in the past it has yielded eventual applications, one can counter with, for example, the music of Anton Webern, which during the composer’s lifetime was regarded (to the very limited extent that it was regarded at all) as the ultimate in hermetic, specialized, and idiosyncratic composition; today, some dozen years after the composer’s death, his complete works have been recorded by a major record company, primarily—I suspect—as a result of the enormous influence this music has had on the postwar, nonpopular, musical world. I doubt that scientific research is any more secure against predictions of ultimate significance than is musical composition. Finally, if it be contended that research, even in its least

"practical" phases, contributes to the sum of knowledge in the particular realm, what possibly can contribute more to our knowledge of music than a genuinely original composition?

Granting to music the position accorded other arts and sciences promises the sole substantial means of survival for the music I have been describing. Admittedly, if this music is not supported, the whistling repertory of the man in the street will be little affected, the concert-going activity of the conspicuous consumer of musical culture will be little disturbed. But music will cease to evolve, and, in that important sense, will cease to live.

The Fatal Sixties

by Peter Heyworth

FOR AS FAR BACK as there is recorded history, prophets of doom have announced the imminent end of the world, and music has of late had more than its fair share of such jeremiads. I am not going to add to them; creativity is almost as necessary to human existence as sex, and I see no danger that either will cease to find a means of expressing itself.

But there is a big difference between "the end" and "an end," and the complacent assumption that what we are now witnessing is merely one more chapter in the uninterrupted evolution of Western music, with Cage and Stockhausen in the roles once played by Beethoven, Wagner, Debussy, and Schoenberg, seems increasingly glib and untenable. What I want to suggest here is that we are today confronted with the most decisive break in the development of Western music since the monodic revolution at the beginning of the seventeenth century; that this break was for almost half a century masked by the curiously two-faced roles that both Schoenberg and Stravinsky have played in the music of their time; and that the extent to which they succeeded in their struggle to uphold a dissolving order is a measure of their inability to provide the post-1945 avant-garde with any point of departure that it can accept as valid. To put it crassly, we are living in a period when one music is dying as another is in the painful process of birth.

To argue that we are today confronted by an almost complete break with the past is, of course, to find oneself in strange company. From time immemorial down to Mr. Henry Pleasants, innovations have been greeted with similar cries; in generation after generation conservatives have failed to understand that decay is as surely the price of growth as birth is inseparable from death. But in the past, musical development has

arisen out of a complex yet organic relationship between the generations. While young composers have with one foot kicked their elders in the teeth, they have until now not hesitated to put the other foot firmly on their predecessors' shoulders for a hoist into the future. Even a composer as revolutionary in the context of his time as Wagner is unthinkable without Beethoven and Weber, just as Schoenberg could not have existed without Wagner and Brahms.

A relationship such as this, so characteristic in its tensions of that between father and son, appears to exist no longer for composers such as Stockhausen and Cage. Their starting point seems to be a virtually complete rejection of the past and, lest I am accused of exaggeration, here are Stockhausen's own words: "Therefore no recapitulation, no variation, no development, no contrast. For that presupposes shapes (*Gestalten*), themes, motives, objects which are recapitulated, varied, developed, and contrasted . . . all that I have given up since the first serial (*punktuellen*) works." In comparison to Stockhausen, Boulez is relatively traditional in his thinking. But when in 1952 he penned the fateful phrase "*Schoenberg est mort*," he was giving notice that the composer who for almost half a century had been revered and detested as the very fountainhead of the avant-garde was of little relevance to the creative problems of his generation.

That Boulez's simple phrase should have detonated such an explosion of rage and shock is a measure of how, since the first dodecaphonic scores had appeared in the early Twenties, attitudes to Schoenberg had hardened to a point where they bore little relevance to the real significance of his music. For his supporters he was still a Moses leading them into a Promised Land. For his detractors he remained a bogeyman determined to stand music on its head. In the heat of battle neither side faced the fact that his serialism, however new in technique, represented less a revolution than a heroic act of conservation.

The case of Stravinsky was less extreme but not altogether dissimilar. If his neoclassical works from *Pulcinella* to *The Rake's Progress* today seem to offer few problems, until at least 1945 they were regarded by musical conservatives as bloodless abstractions that set out to rob music of the emotional expressiveness traditionally held to be its special characteristic. If Schoenberg was seen as a revolutionary tearing apart the fabric of Western music, Stravinsky was viewed as a scavenger picking out its heart. Both in their very different ways were considered anti-traditionalists, and between them they dominated the entire period from the outbreak of the First World War to the end of the Second.

Needless to say, neither camp recognized the claim of the other to possess the key to the future. Just as Stravinskians chose to see Schoenberg's career as the death agony of the German Romanticism they affected to despise, as out-of-date and out-of-tune with the crisp new world of the Twenties, so Schoenbergians on their part retaliated by depicting Stravinsky as a mock-modernist smarty-pants, dressing up in the clothes and mannerisms of the past. And Schoenberg himself even went as far as to write a canon on an acid little rhyme referring to "*Der kleine Modernsky*."

Stravinsky had shown early interest in *Pierrot lunaire*, and the two

composers had fleetingly met on the occasion of one of its performances, in Berlin in 1912. But thereafter their paths diverged and when, exceptionally, they both happened to be present at an International Society for Contemporary Music festival in Venice in the Twenties, they moved around like pope and antipope under a heavy escort of followers and admirers. Later in life they lived for years within a few miles of each other in Los Angeles, but there again there was virtually no personal contact (one exception was a chance meeting at Franz Werfel's).

Thus the world grew used to regarding these two crucial figures as opposing poles of the musical scene; and thus, when in the mid-Fifties Stravinsky started to adapt to his own purposes the serial techniques long regarded as synonymous with Schoenberg and his school, an elaborate network of technical and psychological reasons had to be woven to account for a reversal of alliances that seemed almost as startling as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. In fact, to anyone prepared to look below the surface it finally revealed what had for so long been masked by the polemics of both camps: that Schoenberg and Stravinsky had both been striving, each in his very different way, to shore up a dissolving order. That Stravinsky should have finally aligned himself with Schoenberg in a matter of technique is thus less surprising than it seemed a decade ago.

Of course, almost all composers of consequence have two heads: one that turns back to the past and one that looks forward to the future. Composition never takes place in a vacuum. Inevitably, it emerges from an experience of the world of which the music that surrounds a composer in youth is an essential part. If Beethoven opened the door to the tremendous landscape of the Romantic symphony, his earlier works are part of the classical world of Haydn. If Bruckner paved the way for Mahler he himself drew sustenance from both the lyricism of Schubert and the formal counterpoint of Fux and Palestrina. If Wagner's immense harmonic exploration reached to the very threshold of panchromaticism, his roots lay in the thematic flexibility of late Beethoven and the unpolluted forest streams of *Der Freischütz*. No man is an island and that goes for composers as well as lesser mortals.

But, at any rate after 1918, the relationship of both Schoenberg and Stravinsky to the past was quite different from the instinctive nourishment that most composers draw from their predecessors. Each in his own way had found himself up against a brick wall and each in his own way sought to call in the past as an answer to the problems of the future.

As heir to both Brahms and Wagner, Schoenberg had inherited the rich but dissolving world of German Romanticism, and in the works he composed between 1909 and 1914 he wrote its fascinating yet frightening final chapter. In scores such as the Five Orchestral Pieces, *Erwartung*, and *Pierrot lunaire* he explored a strange and wonderful world never before penetrated by music. But in the process he became aware that he had stretched chromatic harmony to a point where it could no longer exercise the structural functions it had fulfilled in sonata form.

For all the daring adventurousness of his early works, Schoenberg was haunted by the sublime achievements of his great forerunners from Haydn to Brahms. He was acutely aware of the harmonic crisis into which he had plunged Western music, but far from rejoicing in it (as a

true revolutionary might have done) he thirsted for some means by which he, like his predecessors, could be sure that in a given situation one note was better than another, not merely on subjective grounds but as part of an objective principle of order. From this long search for a new means of musical order he finally surfaced with twelve-tone technique, and it is highly significant that no sooner had he done so than he should immediately have started to write works in the classical forms which he had been obliged to abandon once he had broken through the tonal barrier in his Second String Quartet of 1908. Dramatic works apart, the overwhelming majority of Schoenberg's works from 1925 to 1946 carry titles that clearly reveal their classical ambitions.

Stravinsky's heritage was more constricted. But that made it easier for him to exhaust its full potentialities in the three pre-1914 ballets that culminated in *The Rite of Spring*. Like Schoenberg, he had stretched his inheritance as far as it would go. Henceforth he elected to seek his own salvation, and he did so by severing his Russian links and casting himself on the more spacious musical traditions of the West. It is widely supposed that Stravinsky ceased to be a Russian composer owing to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. In fact he had by 1914 gone into voluntary exile and his residence in France and Switzerland was the outward and visible manifestation of an inward state of mind on which the Revolution merely put a seal. But Stravinsky had the misfortune to enter Western music at a time when it had been shaken to its foundations by the impact of Debussy and Schoenberg, and as a result he conceived no major works between *Les Noces* (1914) and *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918). It is intriguing that these fallow years to some extent overlap a similar period when Schoenberg wrote no major works except the unfinished rump of *Der Jakobsleiter*. In fact both composers were seeking a new basis for composition.

Unlike Schoenberg, Stravinsky felt no mission to save the world. He simply wanted to give expression to his prodigious creative potency and, having outgrown his Russian inheritance, he was confronted with all those problems of style and manner that most composers are able to take for granted. As the resources of Western music of the Twenties inspired no confidence, he sought shelter where he could find it—in the past. And so his time-wandering began. Like a cuckoo he dropped his eggs in any convenient nest. As the waters rose, he leaped from one remaining patch of dry ground to another, and on each he deposited something very like a masterpiece. So, indeed, he has continued until the Requiem Canticles of 1966, for his recent dodecaphonic scores involve no essential change in his manner of working, but merely an extension of technique.

Thus, though Schoenberg and Stravinsky started their long journeys through the twentieth century from different and even mutually hostile points of the compass, their paths converged in a common neoclassicism, on which Stravinsky's adaptation of Schoenbergian serialism merely put a seal. It would be silly to underrate the immense differences of upbringing, style, and temperament that continued to divide them. Yet each in his own way had been forced by pressure of the predicaments they had confronted to pursue parallel courses. Both had gazed into an abyss of total freedom—Schoenberg's harmonic as a result of his own

exploration, Stravinsky's stylistic as a result of his severance from Russian tradition—and both had quickly put down the lid on what they had glimpsed. In a period of incipient disintegration both felt the need of classical procedures to hold together scores of length and substance. In a word, whatever details may be new in this or that work, the basic cast of their music after 1918 was conservative. I intend no snide derogation in that word. On the contrary, that their conservatism enabled both to compose a formidable series of masterpieces (though it seems improbable that Schoenberg's dodecaphonic scores will be rated as highly as the music he wrote before 1914) is its justification.

But if Schoenberg and Stravinsky solved their own problems, in the process of doing so they left an awkward heritage to the avant-garde which has emerged in the last two decades. Needless to say, this also implies no blame: the business of composers is to compose, not to provide steppingstones into the future. But by their heroic efforts to keep the skies suspended, they had evaded the crisis rather than met it. In the late Forties and early Fifties composers like Boulez and Stockhausen—who rejected neoclassicism and all its works, whether Viennese or Parisian in flavor—found themselves confronting the full implication of the situation that had faced Schoenberg and Stravinsky over thirty years earlier.

For a while Webern seemed to offer a promising channel of exploration, for his highly individual use of dodecaphonic technique was relatively free of the neoclassical elements in Schoenberg's serial music and was therefore felt to show a greater unity of style and technique. In 1949 Messiaen produced his historic *Mode de valeurs et d'intensité*, in which he subjected not merely pitch, as Schoenberg had done, but duration, rhythm, and dynamics to serial manipulation. Messiaen himself rapidly recoiled from the implications of his brief piano study. But Boulez and Stockhausen seized on it as a means of controlling a score in every aspect, and by mating it to Webern's *pointillisme* produced *punktuelle* scores, such as Boulez's *Structures* and Stockhausen's *Kontra-punkte No. 1*, in which each note had its own specific, predestined characteristics.

The demands of this extreme intellectualism were as severe on the performers as on the listeners, and one result was to cause Stockhausen to look towards the electronic studio for accurate realization of the subtle gradations of dynamics and rhythmic subdivisions it entailed. Shortly afterwards (about 1954), in the rehearsals of *Klavierstücke VI* with David Tudor, it appeared that certain accents could not easily be matched to the given durations. To avoid ambiguity Stockhausen wanted to rewrite the passages concerned, but Tudor persuaded him that the alternatives should be left open. Thus the aleatoric principle was planted in the totally determined world of *punktuelle Musik*. Another element was a growing awareness that the game was not worth the candle, that the effort of imposing so complete an intellectual control did not seem to be justified inasmuch as the order it provided was less perceptible to the ear than to the eye. And so there took place a gradual retreat from the attempt to solve the formal crisis that Schoenberg had grappled with as early as 1909 by controlling each note in every particular.

It was perhaps at this moment, in the mid-Fifties, that the profundity of that crisis became most apparent. Since then Stockhausen (who with

Boulez's virtual—and, one must hope, temporary—retirement as a composer has increasingly emerged as a central figure) has embarked on a series of works in which one traditional element after another has been jettisoned. *Klavierstücke XI* (1956) combined order and non-order; *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956) merged voice and electronic sounds; in *Gruppen* (1955-57) the constituent elements were no longer individual notes but "groups," and following the path trodden by Varèse the lines between music and sound began to become increasingly vague. In *Carré* (1959-60) the notion of voluntary listening was introduced in the sense that enjoyment of one section was made quite independent of enjoyment of another. In recognition of the fact that in much of his music the ear could no longer perceive the relevance of individual notes but only general characteristics such as fast, loud, or dense, the idea of "*statische Form*" was introduced for sections of music that were intended to be grasped only as complexes of sound and hence stand in sharp contrast to the fully determined notes of *punktueller* form.

Stockhausen, indeed, seems to show hardly more concern with the details of his works, as opposed to their broad outlines, than he expects from the listener. As he has himself written, "Boulez's aim is the work, mine is the impact." Composition for Stockhausen seems increasingly to be a matter of determining what he calls the "model-character" of a work; and once the general characteristics of its sections or "moments" have been arrived at, he seems content to leave the detailed work to a disciple. The notion of a work as a fixed, objective entity is foreign to his more recent musical thinking.

In contrast to this seeming unconcern with the detailed impact of a work is Stockhausen's attempt in *Kontakte* (for piano, percussion, and electronic sounds) to build up his sound material from scratch out of the common denominator of a basic vibratory impulse, electronically determined. By these means he hopes to realize what he refers to as "the underlying unity of musical time," in the sense that every element in the score is structurally interrelated. Yet here again, one is confronted by a baffling paradox: on the one hand a total intellectual control of a work down to its last detail, on the other an apparent abandonment of any attempt to present an order perceptible to the ear. For *Kontakte* is built up from "Moment-forms"—"each of which," Stockhausen has written, "exists for itself. The musical events do not take a determined course from a fixed beginning to an inevitable end. A moment is not merely the result of what has happened or the cause of what is about to occur. Rather it is a concentration on the here and now."

That is a very remarkable statement, for it implies a rejection of what most of us have hitherto supposed to be the very essence of music: its ability to impose order on time by relating one event to another. Yet it is a precise enough description of what most listeners experience in *Kontakte* or in that astonishing neo-Dada sonic circus, *Momente II*, which in its 1965 form is Stockhausen's largest and most fascinating achievement to date—a work in which any distinction between music and sound has finally disappeared (Stockhausen's claim, not mine!).

I do not write about these developments in order to attack them. On the contrary, though I certainly do not "understand" them in the usual

meaning of the word, there is much in them that I find exciting, stimulating, and even, at moments, beautiful. In any case, like other mortals, a critic has no choice but to accept the period he lives in even if he doesn't like it. My aim here is merely to debunk the notion that all this is no more than another chapter in an uninterrupted development—and to suggest that the profundity of our present musical crisis stems in part from the extraordinary holding action carried out by Stravinsky and Schoenberg, who, by postponing a break, inadvertently built up the pressure behind it.

In any development in music, it is often what is new that first strikes the ear; what is traditional becomes apparent only later on. That Webern, Debussy, pre-1914 Schoenberg, and (in recent years) Varèse are all in some degree founding fathers of the new music may be true enough in a limited way. But the proportion of what has been contributed by the past seems infinitesimal compared with what, for instance, Beethoven contributed to Wagner or Wagner to Schoenberg. I fancy that many years will pass before we begin to perceive traditional elements in Stockholm. Something has come to an end. Something is being born. . . . God knows just what or what relationship it bears to our troubled times.

Ellington in the Pantheon

by Gunther Schuller

WHAT IS THERE left to say about the art of Duke Ellington after a lifetime of successes caressed in superlatives and now, since his death, after months of I-knew-him-too tributes by musicians and fans alike?

Very little, I suppose—except that as usual, and perhaps understandably, much more attention has been given to the man, the charismatic Ellington personality, the inveterate traveler of thousands of one-night stands, Ellington the tune writer, than to his compositions. Admittedly, it is hard to talk about music in words: music, especially Duke's music, speaks better for itself, and talk *about* music is often necessarily subjective and impressionistic. On the other hand, there are some things to be said about all great music that are more objective and factual than we sometimes care to admit. For greatness is not altogether accidental, altogether intuitive or mysterious. Much of it results from simple hard work, selflessly applied energy, and a fierce determination to learn and apply what has been learned.

If I dare to include Ellington in the pantheon of musical greats—the Beethovens, the Monteverdis, the Schoenbergs, the prime movers, the inspired innovators—it is precisely because Ellington had in common with them not only musical genius and talent, but an unquenchable thirst, an unrequitable passion for translating the raw materials of musical sounds into his own splendid visions. But that is still too general, something that can be said even of minor composers.

What distinguishes Ellington's best creations from those of other composers, jazz and otherwise, are their moments of total uniqueness and originality. There are many such flashes in his *oeuvre*, and it is a pity that they are virtually unknown to most non-jazz composer colleagues.

Perhaps this is due to the fact that you cannot go into the nearest music store or library and obtain the orchestral scores of Duke Ellington. There is no Ellington *Gesamtausgabe*, alas, although this is something that should become someone's life work. However, even if such scores existed, they still would not readily disclose the uniqueness of which I speak. For Ellington's imagination was most fertile in the realm of harmony and timbre, usually in combination. And as played by some of the finest musicians jazz has ever known, the specific effects produced in performance and on records are such that no notation has yet been devised to capture them on paper.

Nevertheless they exist—alas, *only* on records, and they are none the less real for that and no less significant. The opening measures of "Subtle Lament" (1939), and the second chorus of "Blue Light" (1939)—both wondrous harmonic transformations of the blues; the muted brass opening of "Mystery Song" (1931); the last chorus of "Azure" with its remarkable chromatic alterations; or the total orchestral effect of the first bridge of "Jack the Bear" (1940), not to mention the uniquely pungent harmonies of "Clothed Woman" (1947): these are all moments that can literally not be found in anyone else's music. They are as special and original in their way as the incredible D minor-D sharp minor mixture and instrumentation that opens the second part of the *Rite of Spring* or the final measures of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*.

Citing musical examples can give only a severely limited impression of the total effect in performance. For finally it is the unique sound of a Tricky Sam Nanton, a Cootie Williams, a low-register Barney Bigard that transmutes those harmonies into an experience that even master colorist/harmonists like Debussy and Ravel could not call upon from their orchestras.

It was part of Ellington's genius—what I called earlier his fierce determination and unquenchable thirst—to assemble and maintain for over forty years his own private orchestra, comprising musicians more remarkable in their *individuality* than those of any symphony orchestra I know. Not since Esterházy had there been such a private orchestra—and Esterházy was not a composer. But like Haydn, who practiced daily on that band of Austrian/Hungarian musicians to develop the symphonic forms we now cherish, so Ellington practiced on his "instrument." This is a luxury we other composers simply do not know, and the whole experience of writing consistently for a certain group of musicians is a phenomenon we have never savored.

In Ellington's case, collaboration of such intimacy and durability was bound to produce unique musical results. These can be heard on literally hundreds of Ellington orchestra recordings in varying degrees of "uniqueness." When that alchemy worked at its best, the result was such as cannot be heard anywhere else in the realm of music.

A large statement? Preposterous? Check it out for yourself. The originality of Ellington's harmonic language, with its special voicings and timbres, gives the lie to the often-stated suggestion that he learned all this from Debussy and Ravel. Rubbish! This is no more tenable than it is to say that Debussy and Ravel sound alike, even if they both use ninth chords. Like these masters, and others such as Scriabin and Debussy,

Ellington always found a special way of positioning that chord, of spreading or concentrating it, of giving it a unique sonority that cannot be mistaken for any other's.

Like Webern, he limited himself to small forms—a few notable exceptions notwithstanding. In fact it was not entirely by choice in Ellington's case, but the three-minute ten-inch-disc duration was simply imposed on jazz musicians for a variety of technical/practical/commercial/social/racial reasons. What matters is that he took this restriction and turned it into a virtue. He became the master in our time of the small form, the miniature, the vignette, the cameo portrait. What Chopin's nocturnes and ballades are to mid-nineteenth-century European music, Ellington's "Mood Indigo" and "Cotton Tail" are to mid-twentieth-century Afro-American music.

In his inimitable way the Duke towered over all his contemporaries in the jazz field and equaled much of what is considered sacred on the non-jazz side.

He is gone now, alas. Yet his music lives on and is still with us—at least on recordings.

Why Wagner Was No Lady

by Ashley Montagu

MANY YEARS AGO Anton Rubinstein wrote, in his *Music and Its Masters*, "It is a mystery why it should just be music, the noblest, most beautiful, refined, spiritual and emotional product of the human mind, that is so inaccessible to woman, who is a compound of all these qualities." The mystery remains. There have been great women singers, but not really many great instrumentalists, although the contemporary presence among us of Wanda Landowska and Myra Hess suggests the possibility that women instrumentalists of the first rank may become more frequent in the future. Women, it should be remembered, only in our own era are beginning to emerge from a long period of social and economic subjection.

But, it will be rightly urged, there have been great women novelists and even poets during this same period, and we may even allow a painter or two; but there is no composer of even second-rate rank among women. What is the explanation?

I don't know what the explanation is. No one does. The most frequent conjecture has been that women just don't have what it takes—the genius of musical composition, it is held, being *homme* and that of appreciating it essentially *femme*. Another theory has it that since woman is essentially emotional by nature, she does not experience the necessity of replicating her emotions, the emotions being part of herself, and as natural to her as breathing. "She feels its influences, its control, and its power; but she does not see these results as man looks at them. He sees them in their full play, and can reproduce them in musical notation as a painter imitates the landscape before him. It is probably as difficult for her to express them as it would be to explain them. To confine her emotions within musical limits would be as difficult as to give expression

to her religious faith in notes. Man controls his emotions, and can give an outward expression of them. In woman they are the dominating element, and so long as they are dominant she absorbs music. Great actresses who have never been great dramatists may express emotions because they express their own natures; but to treat emotions as if they were mathematics, to bind and measure and limit them within the rigid laws of harmony and counterpoint, and to express them with arbitrary signs, is a cold-blooded operation, possible only to the sterner and more obdurate nature of man." These words are from George Upton's *Woman in Music*, and were written in 1880. I think there is more than a little that is of value in what he says, but I am sure there is more involved in the composition of music than the ability to treat emotions as if they were mathematics. Note an apparent paradox: women, it appears, are unable to mathematicize their own emotions, but apparently they are perfectly able to teach other persons to do so.

It is generally agreed that the greatest living teacher of musical composition is a woman, Nadia Boulanger. For many years Mme. Boulanger has been head of the American Conservatory of Music at Fontainebleau. Among her pupils have been such eminent contemporary composers as Aaron Copland, Marc Blitzstein, Roy Harris, Darius Milhaud, Walter Piston, and Virgil Thomson. This remarkable woman celebrated her seventieth birthday last September [1957].

Nadia Boulanger has dismissed her own early attempts at composition as "useless music." She is *not* a composer, but a teacher of composers. Her knowledge of music is said to be unequaled. Why is it, then, that she is not as distinguished a composer as she is a teacher of distinguished composers?

The answer must be that she lacks the necessary qualities—whatever they may be—that make a composer compose. She has had the opportunities and she possesses more than the necessary technical equipment, but she has excelled as a teacher only and not as a composer.

As for these necessary qualities that make a composer compose, what are they? Again, no one knows. We can not, therefore, say what their distribution may be in each sex. It is possible, but not at all probable, that women simply do not have them at all. What, then, *can* be the explanation of the fact that no woman has ever created an important and enduring work in music?

Let us try to unscramble this particular mystery. I cannot promise that we shall succeed.

As a social biologist, that is, as a student of man as the product of the interaction between his biological character and his social experience, I have had occasion to think long and earnestly over the differences in achievement between the sexes. Are males by nature better endowed than females? Is there any biological basis for the sexual differential in achievement which is everywhere observed? The answer to both questions is in the negative. Indeed, upon examination of the evidence the indications are nearly all in favor of the female and against the male.

As is well known, sex is determined by chromosomal structures known as sex-chromosomes. All females carry in their ovaries thousands of ova containing exclusively so-called X-chromosomes. The male sperm cells

carry sex-chromosomes of two kinds: about fifty per cent of the spermatozoa carry exclusively X-chromosomes while the other fifty per cent carry exclusively so-called Y-chromosomes. When an X-bearing sperm hitches up with an ovum, the resulting fertilized egg contains two X-chromosomes, and this invariably develops into a female. A female is double-X. When a Y-bearing sperm fertilizes an ovum the result is an XY egg, and this always develops into a male. The X-chromosome is a complete chromosome, well upholstered, well proportioned, and sort of top-drawer looking. The Y-chromosome, on the other hand, is called a chromosome at all only by grace of the fact that it was discovered and named by a prejudiced observer, a male; for it is the merest iota of a thing, difficult to see through a microscope, and we now know that it is virtually empty.

The consequences of this difference in the chromosomal structure of the sexes are of the first order of importance, for they determine the very lives of their carriers. The 2-X chromosome system of the female provides her with a complementary set of building blocks, so to speak. Where one chromosome may be deficient in certain kinds of bricks, the other is almost certain to be able to supply them. Not so in the case of the male. If he acquires from his mother an X-chromosome which is deficient, say, in certain building bricks for vision, there will be nothing in his Y-chromosome to compensate for the deficiency, and so his vision will almost certainly be affected. That is why males are eight times more frequently color-blind than females, for example. That is also the reason why males often are afflicted by hemophilia and females seldom are. This, also, is the explanation of the female's greater constitutional strength, her greater physical resistance, her superior emotional resilience, *und so weiter*. And that "*und so weiter*" covers a great deal.

The female, then, undoubtedly is biologically equipped with an hereditary endowment superior to that of the male. It surely does not seem possible that she is in any way lacking in any potentialities with which the male is endowed. Where would they be in the male's chromosomal structure, a structure which he obtains chiefly from his mother?

Well, the male is taller, heavier, and bigger-boned, on the average, than the female—where does he get the potentialities for these physical traits from? If we assume that something in the Y-chromosome is responsible, then following the same line of reasoning we might argue that something in the Y-chromosome is responsible also for the male's musical achievements. I think this extremely unlikely in view of the virtual emptiness of the Y-chromosome.

A more likely explanation is to be seen in the fact that the male's metabolic rate is from five to six per cent higher than that of the female's, and that gradients of growth are determined by the sexual composition of the developing egg along different metabolic rates, yielding in the one case an organism that grows at a faster rate, and therefore *eventually* becomes larger than the slower growing organism. The analogy from size will, therefore, not do.

Are we then to argue that the male's greater musical achievement is due to some deficiency in him which the female lacks? That the capacity for musical composition is due to some imbalance in the male, like the

imbalances of the organ systems of the body which keep the organism in its steady states? Or like the sound of silence, which is so soothing not because of what is there but because of what is not?

And this brings us to the periphery of a possible explanation. It is: that what women *are* it is given to only a few men to achieve; that, as Rubinstein and Upton were on the very edge of implying, women are in themselves music, earthly harmonic systems that make the music of the world, whose greatest compositions lie in the creation of harmonic human beings attuned to the unuttered music that is in the soul of everyone. The most beautiful music in the world is made by the loving mother to her child, and it is no accident that the loveliest and most moving songs of the human spirit, in all cultures, take the form of lullabies; and that much of the world's music constitutes the projection of that love, a love that has been inspired by women.

In short, I am suggesting that the male is impelled—when possessed by the necessary genius—to utter in music what he is unable to express in himself; that it is, indeed, due to a lack in the male that he is caused to express himself in the only way he can, namely, through the creation of music as a substitute for the expression of those inner harmonies with which the female is naturally endowed.

As is well known, genius in music often expresses itself quite early, and when it does so it is invariably in boys. There is no record of a single musical girl genius. It would seem highly probable then that, since there are usually more girls alive at any one time and more of them receiving musical instruction than boys, there is a genuine genetic basic for the sex difference in compositional musical ability. On a genetic basis we have already seen that the deficiencies are all with the male, so that what we call compositional musical genius must be due to a colligation of qualities which never assume a similar form in the female. If this is true, then it is possible to predict that there will never be a female composer of the first rank. But "never" is a long time, and the little genes in the chromosomes are labile and inherently capable of much variation; hence, a female composer of the first rank is not an impossibility—she is simply a strong improbability. If and when she does make her appearance, she would, upon the present theory, be a biological freak. But the theory I have outlined above may be wrong. I am not enamored of it.

I have long been impressed by the fact that on intelligence tests women, in general, do better than men. Everyone ought to know that when little girls and boys enter school at about the age of five years the girls are about two years mentally ahead of the boys, and they tend to maintain that advantage. Until recently the only tests on which girls did not do as well as boys were those relating to arithmetical and mechanical abilities. In the last few years females are beginning to do as well as males on these tests. Why? Presumably because there is greater freedom in the air for females than there ever was before. In short, the increase in opportunity to participate in activities that were formerly considered to be the exclusive domain of the male may be held largely accountable for the improvement in these test scores.

Is it possible that with the increase in opportunities throughout the world that somewhere, sometime, a great female musical composer will

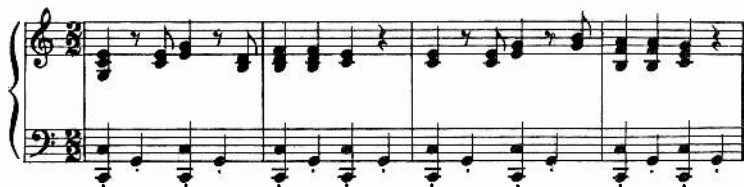
make her appearance? It is possible, but for the reasons I have given above I think it highly unlikely.

If music be love in search of a word, it is a language with which every woman is born, but which men must learn. Women speak this language in their being. Men, in their being, can at best speak it only to a limited degree. It is only in becoming that some men can express themselves in this language, by a sort of periphrasis, in music.

The Secret Life of a Waltz

by David Hamilton

THE FIRST SOUNDS we hear in Johann Strauss's *Emperor Waltz* are surely those of marching, rather than dancing, feet. The steady alternation—one, two, one, two—of soft string chords leads to a modest tune, its lightly military rhythm underlined by the rustle of the snare drum. Four bars in the woodwinds are answered by a pendant in



the violins, then repeated in a slightly fuller setting (with the merest *soupeçon* of a martial gesture from the trumpet), answered by a different pendant. Indubitably a march, but on a very special scale: perhaps a bird's-eye view of the parade ground, or toy soldiers at drill—the specific metaphor doesn't really matter, rather the sense of distance and of proportion that it conveys.

Two bars of vamping trumpet and snare drum lead to another tune, still tiny and cheerful, not unrelated, in its trills and general shapes, to what has gone before. Then a fuller sound—a throbbing in the bass, melody in strings, horns, and bassoons—transforms the initial march tune into something broader, more sweeping. Insistent fanfares urge it into a crescendo. Now the original march is close upon us, in the full splendor of C major, and its pendant swings down proudly in the violins before the putative marchers move away, fading into quiet plucked-

string sounds and eventually leaving behind only an echo of rhythm on the snare drum—over which, however, our ears surely supply the remainder of the melody.

Listen to it again, up to this point. March music, no doubt, but hardly a march in the sense that, say, *Stars and Stripes Forever* or even *The March of the Siamese Children* is a march—literally music to march to, spread out in fairly long, cohesive spans of symmetry and repetition to permit large groups of people to cover a good deal of ground, in whatever attitude of aggression, jubilation, or even stealth. No, this is a poetic evocation of a march scene, its dimensions compressed, its elements brief, even fragmentary, its contrasts extreme. In little more than six eight-bar sentences, Strauss has turned an almost pastoral mood into imperial pomp and back again with the simplest of means. "Real" marches are essentially functional; this is evocative, imaginative, at a level of abstraction some distance above the parade ground itself.

Abstraction has little place in a waltz for dancing, although the best of Johann Strauss's dance melodies are, surely, not merely for dancing, but also about dancing. The waltz evolved from a domestication of the Ländler, the hopping and jumping movements suitable for heavy shoes on rough country floors or bare ground transformed into the gliding of elegant slippers on polished floors (faster tempos also became possible). The gliding is implicit in those long Strauss melodies, almost always conceived for the violin with its portamento possibilities. Even thus domesticated and sophisticated, the requirements of dance music were strict: the inviolable 3/4 time, the almost equally sacrosanct regularity of phrase-length that kept the patterns of the dancers in order and symmetry.

So the originality of the composer needed other outlets to conjure up moods that would not easily fit within the dance itself, and these found their place in the introduction and the coda that framed the waltz itself. From a short fanfare or a few bare chords to set the tempo for the dancers, the introduction had by the time of the Emperor (1888) become a kind of miniature symphonic poem, the task of defining the eventual dance rhythm postponed to the last possible moment.

Before the march has completely disappeared, the oboe leaps to a held note and string arpeggios begin to leap up, growing to a climax—a glorified form of fanfare, fixing our attention for the gentle solo cello melody that descends and slides into the new tempo.

The first waltz sounds familiar, and it should. The introduction's first tune, you will recall, was transformed on the way to the climax, stretching its original melodic shape into a more drawn-out gesture. (The notes are E-G-D-F: a third up, a fourth down, a third up—if this terminology means nothing to you, just whistle or sing the two forms and you will sense the identity of the distances between the notes.) That second form is now put into waltz meter (3/4, or three sub-beats to each main one) instead of march meter (4/4, four sub-beats to each main one), with the third note lowered to the throaty open G of the violin's lowest string. From this newest form of that *Ur*-motive unfolds a luscious waltz

melody, the frequent dips to the open G giving it a very special color. (For future reference, we'll call this tune IA.)



The enduring fate of so-called "light music" is to be taken—well, too lightly. Strauss waltzes? Oh, yes: fetching tunes, lilting oom-pah-pah accompaniments, played with a special Viennese rubato. True, but only part of the story. After all, light music is not merely less well-made "heavy" music, but music with an entirely different purpose, crafted (at its best) with equal finesse. It's worth keeping this in mind—not so that we will treat light music more solemnly, but so that we should widen our perceptions, not miss any of its special distinctions.

The first waltz number of the *Emperor* is certainly more than just that languorous tune and its gentle accompanying rhythm. Note that the first bar of the tune is, in fact, not accompanied—a signal, I take it, that this bar may be played somewhat freely, still part of the "getting-into-the-dance-tempo" motion of the preceding cello solo. Then the oom-pah-pah sets in, and also a regular, clocklike ticking in the oboe. Hear, too, the flutes and harps on the second, third, and fourth bars of each phrase, singling out notes that make up the basic descending shape of the tune. Although the oom-pah-pah is suspended for the first bar in every group of four, the ticking hangs in once it has started—another signal for the conductor, this time suggesting that tempo should not give way from then on, until perhaps the final phrase, which is entirely without (so to speak) a rhythm section.

The next melody (IB) is of a different character, but not such a different shape, for this too begins up a third, down a fourth, up a third. From that same little "cell" Strauss now conjures up a more vigorous, even driving tune. But again, more should meet the ear: in oboes, cellos, and bassoons is a countermelody that fills in the longer notes of the upper line with enlivening surges of motion. And the snare drum, our military friend from the introduction, joins in to clinch the dotted rhythm of the main melody. Just before achieving symmetry (that is, a second eight bars to match its first eight and, equally, a total of sixteen to match the previous melody), the tune breaks off and the oboe ticking resumes, bringing a reprise of everything that has gone before. But with a difference, for the first tune is now more richly scored, the second one begins quietly instead of loudly—and this time rounds out its sixteen bars.

Between the introduction and the coda, the standard Viennese waltz offers, in effect, a suite of individual waltz movements (usually four or five), each of which has its own individual structure of melodies

contrasted and repeated. The basic contrast is between sentiment and energy, the two principal expressive characters that the Viennese waltz embraces, offering the dancers a satisfying alternation between tension and relaxation. The most common formula for the internal structure of an individual waltz movement is AABBA (each letter representing a sixteen-bar melodic unit), and the repetitions are often quite literal, indicated in the written music merely by repeat marks. At the height of his mastery, however, Strauss used a variety of patterns—no two movements in the Emperor cycle have the same layout—and the repetitions are, as we have already seen, often significantly modified.

For variety, each movement is usually in a new key, with the return of the first waltz melody in the coda bringing us back to home base. To effect the modulations, and to indicate the new tempo, a brief introduction (usually four bars) precedes each waltz.

Waltz IIA



The second of the *Emperor* waltzes lacks an introduction, and we are plunged without warning—and presumably without change of tempo—into a relatively distant key (A flat, for those who are keeping track). The new melody (IIA) resembles in contour the last phrase we heard (the A-G-C descent of its cadence now altered to A flat-G-C) and, although it bears no such explicit resemblance to the original march motive as we observed in IA and IB, its pattern of three phrases, each a step lower than the last, embodies the descending line that was implicit in those tunes.

After turning upward at its close (the snare drum sparking a crescendo), IIA is repeated with a new continuation, a sort of rotating figure that becomes, without obvious transition, the start of a new tune (IIB) made up mainly of repeated notes; here the snare drum becomes almost a melody instrument. Strauss indicates that the entire movement should be repeated, yielding an AABAAB pattern, but among the recordings I have heard only Bernstein (Columbia MS 7288) does so—to genuine advantage, for this waltz, the shortest of all, does not recur in the coda, while the contrast its new key provides counts for relatively less without the repetition.

Waltz IIIA



Waltz III does have an introduction, returning us quickly to the home key of C major. The new melody (IIIA), soaring up at the same altitude as IB, also embodies that characteristic descending line (its long notes are E-E-D-C-B), and—also like IB—it has a “fill-in” counterpoint, little rocking figures in the oboe and horn, to sustain the swinging urgency during the longer notes of the tune. Upon repetition, the pendant phrase—a swaying figure offered antiphonally by violins and cellos—is varied to set up the second tune (IIIB), a majestic descending stride led by trumpets and trombones. This is so rousing that it is played again, still more grandly scored and turning upward to a new and bigger climax. (Perhaps because of its sheer weight of volume, there is no additional repetition indicated for this waltz.)

Waltz IVA



The lead-in to Waltz IV takes us to F major and a catchy tune (IV A) with, in effect, a long upbeat of three measures. Again, the snare drum is imaginatively used: All the other instruments play forte throughout the tune, while the drum starts piano and beats out a crescendo leading to the tympani note on the first real downbeat (amazing how many conductors treat casually this telling detail!). This is the only section of the *Emperor* to follow the traditional AABBA layout, and even here there are important variations in some of the repetitions. (Strauss marks the entire waltz to be repeated, a request universally ignored in modern concert performances.)

Now a new ascending phrase takes over—clearly not another waltz movement, for the oom-pah-pah has dropped out. And although tune IA appears, its new chromatic bass line and fanciful climax further indicate that we are in a transitional phase.

Like the introduction, the coda of the Viennese waltz has its historical origin in a piano piece, Weber's Invitation to the Dance, which sandwiched a suite of waltzes between two pieces of programmatic tone painting. Whereas Weber brought his initial waltz back to round off his central section, the Viennese tradition saves this reprise until the coda, which has now become a kind of potpourri: selected waltz tunes strung together with modulatory passages that keep the listener in suspense about which tune will come next. The basic mood is one of reminiscence, reviewing the images of this particular dance and sometimes introducing poetic touches almost as distant from the dance floor as those of the introduction (although always in waltz meter).

The *Emperor* coda first brings back Waltz I as it originally appeared, the B melody taking a surprising turn into a quiet pizzicato vamping figure over a held bassoon note. (The key is unexpected too—E minor.) But the bassoon note slyly moves to prepare a new key (G major), and Waltz IIIA

floats in quietly. Instead of leading directly to IIIB, however, it is interrupted by trumpet fanfares that set off a string cadenza and a rocking preparatory climax, yielding IIIB from a new direction (but back in the home key of C major).

This could—and in many waltzes would—be the end, clinched by a brief codetta. After all, what can now follow the splendor of this tune? Only, surely, something very different, and that is what happens. The cadence breaks off, the horns echo it gently and more slowly, the oboe ticking from Waltz I returns, and then the solo cello utters a phrase reminiscent of many familiar melodic shapes. The harps take up the ticking, very slowly, and, over soft tremolos in the violins, solo cello and horn muse on Waltz IA. The full strings gently move to round it off, and on high the flute fixes a note that, cadenzalike, flows into the start of IB and comes to rest on a trill. Only now does the main tempo return and wrap up everything with fanfares, a crescendo, and descending phrases in the trombones that, once again, recall the shape of most of the waltz melodies (and, because of the orchestration, particularly Waltz IIIB).

What is involved in a good performance of the *Emperor*? Certainly, those things involved in the stylish performance of any Viennese waltz, such as a modicum of string portamento and that characteristic rubato whereby the first “pah” of the oom-pah-pah comes a shade earlier than a metronome would require. Even these should not be obtrusive (as Karajan’s insistent portamento seems to me to be, for instance), and they are far from sufficient. Like every piece of good music, each Strauss waltz makes its own demands, requires an understanding of its particular course of events. What goes on at the points of transition, for instance? I have drawn attention to a few such matters in the preceding account, and there are others. The “vamping” episode that precedes the return of Waltz IIIA in the coda is a moment of suspense, and the purposefully unobtrusive last-possible-moment harmonic turn that sets up the new key should not be telegraphed with a conspicuous ritard (as Böhm [DG 2530 316] and Ormandy [RCA Red Seal LSC 3250] do). On the other hand, a tiny caesura *after* the key change, delaying the waltz proper ever so slightly (Klemperer [Angel S 35927], Furtwängler [EMI/Odeon SMVP 8016]), stretches the suspense just a bit further, generating more tension for the soaring tune to unravel.

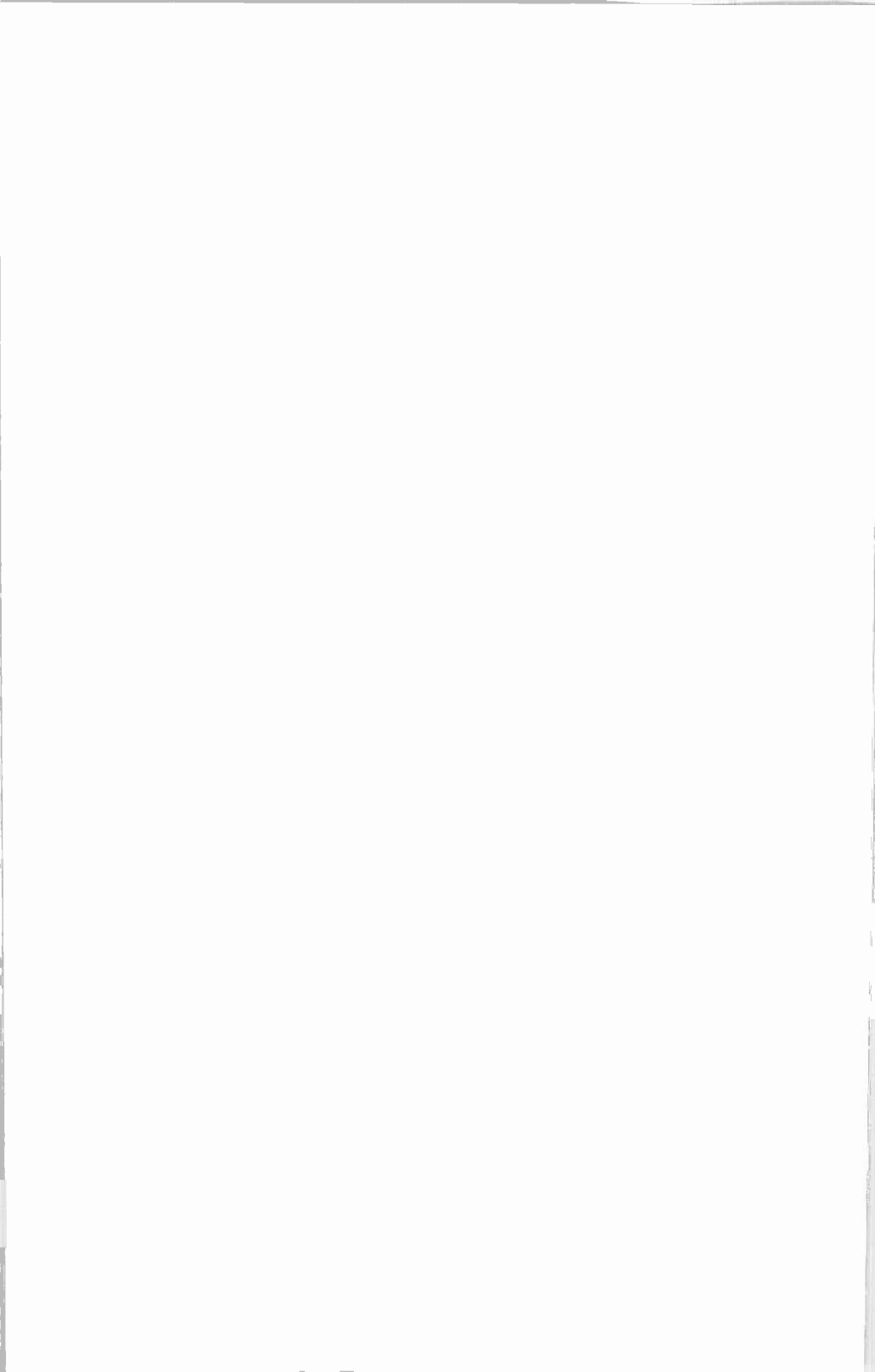
Waltz II is an interesting case, too, for the overlap between the two melodic strains is unusual and subtle: A double-bar is written in the score, but you can’t hear it in the music, for the last motive of IIA turns into the first one of IIB. Given that Strauss has worked so hard to elide this shift in character, attempts (such as Bernstein’s) to articulate it with a sizable slowdown seem to me mistaken.

An understanding of Strauss’s orchestra is surely indispensable, and a passion to make clear all lines in the texture—not least that snare drum part that I’ve mentioned so often. Klemperer is particularly good on that, although somewhat deficient in lilt during the earlier parts of the piece. Bernstein isn’t, but he achieves a remarkable transparency in other respects. Reiner’s superb orchestra (the Chicago Symphony—RCA Red Seal LSC 5005) achieves perhaps the greatest clarity of all: Everything

sounds, from top to bottom, and all to no avail, dissipated by two excruciating, brutal cuts in the coda. Remarkably fine, especially considering the 1950 vintage of the recording, is Furtwängler's performance—the best playing of all the Vienna Philharmonic's many recordings of this piece—even though the introduction is somewhat hasty, doubtless owing to the limitations of 78-rpm sides rather than the conductor's natural inclinations. And the duo for cello and horn in the coda is most beautifully matched by Karajan's Berlin men (DG 139 014).

So one could go on, picking details from many performances, for there is no "best" recording of this, or of any other work that has been often recorded. The point, really, is that every piece of music—even ostensibly "light" music—has to be thought through on its own terms, understood for its unique characteristics. For the listener, this kind of understanding will come, not from the memorization of a single performance, however good, but from sensitive attention to many performances live and recorded. (The bad ones, too, can teach something—e.g., the cut ones forcibly call our attention to the function of the passages they omit.) Even a "simple" Viennese waltz is in fact a complex organism, to be brought to fullest life only through a very specific performance.

II. The Performer's Art



Memories of Fritz Kreisler

by Joseph Szigeti

IT SO HAPPENS that the first work I heard Fritz Kreisler play—at a Nikisch concert in Berlin in 1905—was Viotti's A minor Concerto, a work seldom heard nowadays, even on records. The fact that I had made my "coming-out" debut at one of the concerts of the Budapest Academy of Music with this same work a few months or perhaps a year before the Kreisler "revelation" made this occasion a still more revealing one for the thirteen-year-old that I then was. It showed me the magic that the unanalyzable Kreisler alchemy could work on what was (and, alas, still is!) regarded as "student material." It gave me right at the beginning a working model of how Kreisler could transmute baser materials into gold. (I should, however, add that this Viotti concerto had been a favorite with no less a musician than Brahms. Joachim, in one of his letters to Brahms, refers to the A minor as "*Dein Viotti Konzert.*")

Had I heard Kreisler in the Beethoven or the Brahms or the Mendelssohn Concerto, I would, no doubt, have attributed the effect he made on me mainly to the greatness of the music, to the ambience of the occasion, to the maturity of this "old master" who was all of thirty years old. . . . As it was, however, his playing of the Viotti gave me an almost palpable demonstration of the essentially Kreislerian attributes of elegance, rhythmic thrust, lyric and *parlando* sweetness on material that had become "classroom-worn" for me.

I stress the details of this first contact because it explains to some extent, at least, the newness of the phenomenon called Kreisler half a century ago. When Carl Flesch wrote his *Art of Violin Playing* (published in 1924), he tried to analyze the ingredients of this new dimension brought into our art by Kreisler. Flesch wrote: "He was the first who most nearly *divined in advance* and satisfied the specific type of

emotional expression demanded by our age. This is the reason why, in spite of his astonishing violinistic precociousness, the newness of what he brought us was recognized and appreciated at a period comparatively so late. Thirty years ago [i.e., in the 1890s] his manner of performance, borne on the wings of tempestuous sensuality, supported by an exacerbant, intensive vibrato, and communicating an excitement which whipped up its auditors, was not yet in conformity with the then ruling taste of the time. Gradually the distance between the two was bridged. Kreisler grew more serene the more turbulent our epoch became. In his style, in his tone, with its seductive yet ennobled sensuality, in the compelling rhythmic nature of his specific bowing technique, in that impulsive 'itinerant musician' quality which, for all its directness, never oversteps the limits of good taste, our time appears mirrored in a transcended, ennobled conception of art."

At this Berlin concert of 1905 I not only heard Kreisler but through a Joachim-pupil relative of mine, Jacques W., who had known Kreisler intimately during his student days (he was *Hofkonzertmeister* to the little court of Gera-Reuss), I eagerly absorbed some Kreisler lore by listening in on the tales he told my father—stories about young Kreisler's gambling periods, about the pawning of his violin, his father's frantic telegrams to his son's comrades enquiring about his unpredictable son's whereabouts. But he also told of Fritz's fabulous fiddle-istic doings (this must have been the period of his *Devil's Trill* cadenza and of his Paganini arrangements), so that I had plenty of background information when, in 1907 or 1908, I had my first experience of a full-length Kreisler recital. This took place—unbelievable as this may seem in our day when a Van Cliburn plays to audiences of six thousand or more—before an invited gathering of not more than three hundred people at Leighton House in London. The intimacy of the surroundings, the proximity of the great man (I remember his young wife Harriet pushing him out of the reach of admiring women behind a screen which served as his "artist's room")—all this left me spellbound and slightly dizzy.

Many years later, after a particularly memorable Kreisler recital at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the late Twenties or early Thirties, I returned to my hotel and made some notations in my score regarding what I had just heard—in an endeavor to pin down those elements in his playing that had most impressed and influenced me. Unfortunately, that score is not accessible to me as I write these few lines, but I seem to remember making particular note of Kreisler's incomparable faculty of understatement—for instance, his habit of employing a slight *accelerando* at the end of a cadence and a slight *diminuendo* at the same time (something akin to an actor "throwing away" a line). Kreisler had also a wonderfully satisfying tendency to play fast things somewhat slower and to play slow melodies or themes somewhat faster (more *gehend*) than one would expect. The plasticity and incisiveness of his passage work was something that one marveled at with each new hearing. Probably the bittersweet quality of his playing stemmed from this tendency to understatement and from the ever-present rhythmic and *parlando* articulation of his bowing. Other aspects of Kreisler's playing that seemed to me unique and that I jotted down on this occasion were his

"bow-hair-bite" at the moment of attack and his instantaneous release when leaving the string. This seemed to me to account to a great extent for the marvelous articulation, the rhythmic swing and exhilaration of his playing. The way he stopped his bow on the string was part and parcel of his bowing-phrasing individuality. Trying to find an over-all formulation, I told myself that if one translated Kreisler's playing style into the terms of prose style one could say: Kreisler's is the antithesis of "purple prose." But how hopeless are all these attempts at translating into words something that is essentially ineffable!

It was perhaps Kreisler's capacity to transmute baser materials into gold that was responsible for a certain distortion in the public mind as to what he really stood for. *Londonderry Air*, *Hymn to the Sun*, *Humorousque*, not to speak of his own inimitable compositions, prevented the ordinary listener (in America, particularly) from realizing on what a broad base of musicianship—or better *Musikantentum* (in the sense that the Bachs were *Musikanten*)—all this alchemy rested. This was better understood in England, where the furor created in 1910 by Kreisler's world premiere of the Elgar Violin Concerto put his art in clearer perspective. It was in London too that he could indulge his love of Mozart by playing both K. 218 and K. 219 on one program under Sir Henry Wood (one of my unforgettable Kreisler memories). What loss for us that he did not record the K. 219—and also K. 216, for which he had an especial affection! Sins of omission on the part of the recording industry are indeed partly responsible for the somewhat distorted Kreisler image in America. There was no valid reason for failing to record such inimitable Kreisler performances as the Handel D major or A major sonatas, the Tartini-Kreisler *Devil's Trill* Sonata, the Elgar Violin Concerto, and the K. 216 and K. 219 concertos of Mozart.

It may come as a surprise to some that as early as 1901 Kreisler "indulged" in the musicianly luxury of trio appearances with Jean Gérardy and his pianist, and later with Gérardy and Josef Hofmann, "giving concerts to a handful" as he later reminisced. Kreisler's substituting for Franz Kneisel as primarius of the Kneisel Quartet in 1917 is also indicative of the point I am trying to make as to the incomplete view we have of Kreisler. And who but a dedicated lover of Schubert would have chosen the intimately lovely Duo in A major for one of his three recordings with Rachmaninoff? The *Kreutzer*, the César Franck, the Brahms D minor would have been a more obvious (and to the recording company more profitable) choice.

When I played the then new Dohnányi Concerto under Fritz Reiner in Berlin (I believe in 1921), Kreisler honored me by attending. His appreciation (with some reservations!) of Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto, about which we talked at length during an ocean crossing, also speaks for an awareness of contemporary music of which his "tour" programs give little indication. It was after this Dohnányi performance in Berlin, by the way, that Kreisler had the generosity to bring news of my emergence in Europe to the notice of the American press. (This was some three or four years before Stokowski invited me to make my debut under his direction in December 1925.) It is evident that this accolade had important bearings on my subsequent career, and I was and am

particularly grateful for the unobtrusive way in which Kreisler managed this gracious act.

These random jottings are not my leave-taking of the incomparable Fritz Kreisler. I silently did this when I listened to him for the last time, at a rehearsal with Donald Voorhis for a "Telephone Hour" broadcast in the late 1940s. And I once again said goodbye to him in the mid-1950s when I looked through stacks of old scratched 78s in most unlikely-looking junk shops, always with the thought in the back of my mind of finding some Kreisler treasures. On one particular foray in Boston I carried back to my hotel a whole boxful of ten-inch records, among them the first Kreisler recording ever issued by Victor—"Old Folks at Home," No. 64130. True, they were in a pitiful condition, most of them, but the old Kreisler magic shone right through all these maltreated grooves and they will help me relive moments that only his genius could give.

The Festival in the Folly

by J. B. Priestley

WHEN I AM NOT IN LONDON, I live—and do most of my work—in a house on top of a hill, overlooking the sea, in the Isle of Wight. This house is what used to be called “a folly,” which implies that it was built by a rich man, ignoring all sensible advice, and so cost a great deal more than it is worth. All the woodwork is solid teak.

This means, among other things, that the hall is wonderful for sound. This hall has a wide and rather shallow staircase, which leads to a gallery giving access to most of the bedrooms. If some people sit on the stairs and most of the rest are packed fairly close on small collapsible chairs, I can seat nearly two hundred persons in my hall, still leaving sufficient room for the Steinway grand and several string players. It would be a sinful waste of fine acoustics not to use such a place. So I run an annual Chamber Music Festival, right under my own roof.

It goes on for three nights, always in the middle of September, partly because this is a good time to book successful ensembles, also because my birthday arrives then too. So the people in the audience we like best are invited to remain after the concert, on my birthday night, to eat and drink and sometimes have more music. For at least two years I had a fountain of wine, which is something I have always wanted to have. All you need is a little ingenuity, a small electric fountain, and four or five bottles of inexpensive but drinkable claret—and off it goes, sparkling away, and people can fill their glasses at it—a genuine fountain of wine. Try it yourself, next time one of you wants to have a birthday party.

The audiences pay, of course. Tickets for all three nights cost a pound, for single concerts seven shillings and sixpence. The musicians are not paid their top fees—the Festival won't run to that—but they *are* paid—and so far we have never had any complaints or arguments about fees.

But then the players also stay in the house as our guests, and we do them very well indeed, so that they are always anxious to come back. But of course there is more in this than merely enjoying our food (we have a very good cook), Chateaufort du Pape and Meursault and fine whisky.

The musicians (without a single exception so far) love it because it makes a wonderful change from the usual routine of staying in mournful railway hotels and turning out to play in draughty and gloomy concert halls. Here everything is under one hospitable roof. They can rehearse when they please. (The best quartets do a prodigious amount of rehearsing.) They know the sound is magnificent. And once they have recovered from the first shock of finding an audience packed so close to them, on the same level, they begin to play like angels. This—as so many of them have told me—is how chamber music should be made.

And of course it is. The music is back where it belongs, in a chamber, a warm personal place, and not a cold impersonal hall. When I was young the best string quartets still played regularly in country houses, and it was only our ruthless taxation that put an end to these private concerts. Devoted as I am to chamber music, I detest hearing it in large concert halls, where I want nothing less than a symphony orchestra. (Preferably our Philharmonia—what an orchestra that is! Under Klemperer they make your hair stand on end.) All the chamber music I have enjoyed best has been played well away from such concert halls, often strictly in private, for between the wars I was lucky enough to know people who regularly entertained some great performers.

Herbert Hughes, best remembered for his delightful settings of Irish folk songs, used to give some enchanting musical parties, thirty years ago, in his studio in Chelsea. In the impromptu programs there, of course there were serious contributions by distinguished guests, such as the *Paganini* Variations played by Backhaus, but some of the lighter things stay longest in my recollection. For example, there was a performance, or attempted performance, of Haydn's *Toy* Symphony by London music critics, helped out by a composer or two—and their sense of time could be described only as murderous!

But we don't do badly here, in this house miles from anywhere in the Isle of Wight. Take, for example, an old favorite of mine—the Brahms clarinet quintet, which I have been listening to fairly regularly ever since I first heard it, played by the old London String Quartet and Charlie Draper, when I was up at Cambridge. But the best performance ever—and I hope for nothing better this side of Paradise—was under my own roof, at our very first Festival. The Griller Quartet and Frederick Thurston had just played it at the Edinburgh Festival but said themselves they preferred the performance they gave for us. Thurston was a sick man even then—I remember we had to summon the local doctor for him—and died not very long afterwards. He was a great master of the clarinet, and the perfect instrumentalist for our conditions, for he had miraculous control and exceptional smoothness, heard to even greater advantage in the Mozart quintet, which he also did with the Griller for us. It is a tragedy that Thurston recorded so little.

Am I a fool not to have recorded a single note of these Festivals, when I actually have a tape recorder in the house? What a wonderful collection

of tapes I could have achieved! That exquisite lost tone of Thurston's! Leon Goossens, who has been with us several times, playing the oboe quintets and some of his entrancing little solos! Various splendid quartets, both string and piano (when I told one lady we were having a piano quartet, she said, "What—four pianos!"), such as the Griller, the New London, the Robert Masters, who are particularly good with the Fauré piano quartets and have recorded the G minor. And of course pianists of equal quality, playing in quintets, quartets and trios, and contributing a few solos. And I could have had the lot on tapes, hours and hours and hours of glorious music—and I haven't a single note!

Why? Mere laziness? No, sir! Actually I am anything but lazy during these Festivals. There is much to do—making sure the people are properly seated, the musicians are happy, the programs are nicely timed, and so on and so forth. No, it isn't laziness. But even if the players had made no objection to being privately recorded—and of course they would have been well within their rights to object most strongly—it wouldn't, I felt, have been the right thing to do. Even the most modest private recordings would have changed the atmosphere, threatened the fine spontaneity of these occasions. And after all the concerts themselves came first. Nothing must spoil them.

For this same reason I have always discouraged any attempts to turn one of our concerts into a BBC radio program. It is true the Festival has made two appearances on television: once on direct transmission for a half-hour BBC Sunday night program, the second time on film (for only a few minutes) for one of our independent networks. I have allowed these transmissions for the sake of publicity—not publicity for our particular Festival but for the idea of holding similar festivals in other country houses. For if I can do it, here in the Isle of Wight, which is not thickly populated and hasn't much money, then people elsewhere, nearer the cities and the money, can do it even better. And this of course applies to Americans too.

But to turn one or more of these concerts into radio programs would, in my view, change the whole atmosphere of the Festival. Time would then be our master, not our servant. We announce that the concerts begin at 8:30—and so they do, *more or less*. Five minutes doesn't matter, one way or the other, so long as people have stopped coming in. But if we were geared up to radio, not only would minutes matter but we should be compelled to think in terms of seconds. "We'll begin in ten seconds from now." All that sort of thing. And one secret of a good concert, and indeed of a happy life, is to be well away from the world that has to count its seconds. As men begin to split time into smaller divisions, they seem to split themselves too, losing a cheerful and satisfying wholeness.

The only thing I did record, after a fashion, was my own attempt to play a brief concerto for tinhorn. (This tinhorn is made in France and plays four notes.) But this was not of course during a concert but afterwards, when, the customers having departed, we could begin clowning, not without some encouragement from the grape and the barley. The tinhorn concerto was sent to me from Toronto, where it is occasionally played, as a lark at a charity concert, with the symphony orchestra. I was sent a piano version of the orchestral score, and we

expanded this into piano, string quartet, and flute, played by one of my daughters who happened to be here that year. I had diligently rehearsed my three movements—short and daft—for tinhorn, but no sooner had we started the tape recorder and had successfully negotiated the solemn slow opening, than the miserable little instrument, which had shown no signs of temperament during rehearsal, began to behave damnably, playing all manner of tricks with its all four valves (or whatever they are called) until at last, during the final movement (*allegro-presto*), the little brute came entirely to pieces.

Afterwards I had it repaired, so that it looked and felt all right, a solid job than it had been when I first acquired it; but now it had taken on a tone even more dubious, disheartened, and less likely to blend with that of any respectable instrument, than it had had originally. For a year or two I left it alone, but then, running into a clever young composer, Tristram Cary (son of Joyce Cary, the novelist), I found myself suggesting he should write a small nonsense work for tinhorn, piano, string quartet, and oboe. (I knew Leon Goossens would be with us at the next Festival.) And again, after the audience had gone home and we had suitably refreshed ourselves, we attempted the work, which was very lively—but would have sounded much livelier if my time hadn't been lagging and the tinhorn flat on all four notes. Would any reader, preferably in control of a recording company, like to immortalize a work for tinhorn? Fine then—go ahead! Only don't ask me to be soloist.

But the clowning—which included, late one night, a strange performance by six of us of Smetana's Piano Trio, aided dubiously by a very distinguished composer who was crawling among us wearing a bearskin—cannot be adequately described in cold blood and cold print. Better drop the subject before it gets out of proportion, for, after all, these were only the high jinks after the work was done, and our object in these Festivals is to give people some serious music.

On particularly crowded nights our audiences have it fairly rugged. They are packed in everywhere, with every inch of the stairs filled. Try as we may to ventilate the place, it does get very hot. You would think that people listening under such conditions would become restless. The odd thing is that they don't; they keep astonishingly still and quiet, never making a sound until they burst into applause after the final chord. All our players, and any visiting musicians, notice this stillness and intent silence.

Remember that our audiences are not the audiences that chamber music selects for itself in any large city. Their ages range from an occasional eight to a fairly frequent eighty. A few, a very few, may be themselves musicians, and our turner-over-for-the-pianist is Professor Gerald Abraham, who has a summer residence not far away. But most of our regular attenders are members of island families who play no instrument themselves, have little knowledge of music, and if they were in London would probably never think of going to a chamber-music concert. But here they have been converted into exceptionally good listeners, fit to receive the fine music they are offered every year.

One final point about these Festivals. We have in this country an Arts Council, whose task it is to stimulate, help to organize, often partly

finance concerts of this quality in rather remote areas. I have no quarrel with the Arts Council as such. But I would much rather Her Majesty's Government left me some money of my own to spend on helping cultural enterprises, instead of taking it all away in taxation and then handing a little of it to a public department to spend. Indeed, I have long advocated in Britain what now is coming to pass in Australia—namely, that money spent on certain cultural objects be exempt from taxation. For this device finds the money for the arts but leaves them under private enterprise, where they belong.

Now it is my pride, my joy, my boast that I have already successfully run six of these Chamber Music Festivals, offering people in this island some of the best ensembles and instrumentalists in Britain, without any help whatever from the Arts Council, without using or even asking for a penny of public money. I have never even asked for any subscriptions or guarantees from the island itself. All I do demand—and am rewarded with—is a group of enthusiastic ticket sellers. But then I have another extraordinary and very powerful group of allies. Their names are Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Dvořák, Fauré—and several others of our acquaintance. Try asking these gentlemen in regularly every year—and see, and hear, what happens!

Steinways and Steinwayism

by Joseph Roddy

THE MODERN GRAND PIANO—twelve thousand pieces of wire, wood, cotton, felt, and tusk wrapped around a cast-iron plate and fitted into a mahogany case—may be said to yield music only by flagrantly remote control. To wrest a Chopin phrase from its mechanism a pianist's fingers strike keys which swing hammers to strike strings which emit sound. Although a lot of earnest piano players take their pleasure at it, a good many contemplative musicians feel that ideas and emotions are antisepticized by its machinery. It has even been maintained that as a device for communication between a composer and his listeners, the piano is about as efficacious as a telephone switchboard for conveying the delight of a kiss. Nevertheless, the piano thrives, pianists multiply, and Steinway continues to be the instrument preferred by most of the best of them.

But which particular Steinway? That is indeed a question. The combination of inadequacies and uniformities built into the grand piano might be thought enough to persuade any reasonable man who has played one of them that he has played them all. The concert circuits, however, are cluttered with pianists convinced that they can play some one piano—even from out of a group of the best—measurably better than they can play any other. And most top professionals consider high among the best the fifteen Steinway concert grands stabled in the basement of the building at 109 West 57th Street in New York City, where the Steinway company has its offices. Jammed in there like a herd of great three-legged black beasts with flat backs and too many teeth, they amount to the world's most valued concentration of concert grands. They are the pianos most pianists play in their New York appearances, and the artists who can afford the cartage fees even take them on tour. If the

basement premises these pianos inhabit were struck by fire or flood, many of the most renowned pianists would cancel their New York performances and some of them would retire altogether for the season. Until Steinway could produce a set of matching substitutes, dozens of other performers would consider themselves professionally devitalized.

At the source of all this silence would be the artist's real or imagined need to pair off that leaves almost every pianist in the monogamous clutch of one concert grand whenever he performs within trucking range of the Steinway basement. (By a convenient extension of the war between the sexes, lady pianists regard the instrument as male and men think of it as female. "He's in need of a tuning," Myra Hess says, but "She won't play Bach" is the sort of complaint Eugene Istomin would make.) While they last, these attachments are intense. But pianists are an inconstant bunch, given to loving and leaving; divorces do occur; and a little promiscuity happens too, of course, when a pianist, sensing that he is not altogether pleased with the way things are going, often spends a trial night or two with a prospective favorite before breaking up the old alliance. But bigamous attachments to two or more pianos at the same time are, for the most part, deplored, and only a few very affluent performers believe that a multiplicity of instruments is the answer to a pianist's problems.

To most pianists the factory of Steinway and Sons in Long Island City has the status that the workshops of Stradivari e Filii in Cremona had three hundred years ago. Stradivari made instruments for Vivaldi, Corelli, and Locatelli, and since their day Strads have been the preponderant choice of the highest-priced violinists from Paganini and Ysaÿe to Kreisler and Heifetz. Steinway has provided concert grands for the Rubinsteins (Anton and Artur), for Josef Hofmann, Paderewski, and Horowitz, for Van Cliburn and Emil Gilels. But once past that point of identity, the fiddle-making and the piano-manufacturing dynasties diverge.

One conspicuous difference is that the Stradivari family sold their wares on a cash-and-carry basis, while the Steinways are passing out their seven-thousand-dollar grand pianos free to performers who would otherwise have to buy them or to play Baldwins. This give-away is, of course, a canny stratagem well tuned to the economics of the piano business and resounding with perfectly voiced public relations. Most pianists avail themselves of the Steinway handout if it is offered, and the company regards all of those who accept as "Steinway Artists." In providing pianos for piano players, the announced policy of the company is to regard all artists on its roster as equals. Students of Steinwayism have observed, however, that in practice some artists are more equal than others. All of them—from Rubinstein to the humblest—pay a \$75 fee for trucking and final tuning, but here equality ends. Some Steinway artists are given medium or small grand pianos on permanent loan to practice on at home. Others have to get along with what they can afford to buy or rent from dealers. What a personnel director would unhesitatingly call an artist's potential separates the elect with their permanent loans from the suppliants with hope in their hearts.

Although the number of the company's endorsers having instruments

on loan at home remains a carefully kept corporate secret, the Steinways hold that they pass out more pianos on this basis than they can afford to, but not nearly as many as they would like to. Van Cliburn had a permanent loan long before he was lionized in Russia, Gary Graffman landed one in the fall of 1949 when he entered the Rachmaninoff Contest finals, and Malcolm Frager was fitted with his a few weeks after he won the 1959 Leventritt Award. Claude Frank, who had played with some of the world's most honored orchestras, still did not have a Steinway loan until a few months before he married Lillian Kallir, another excellent young pianist on the Steinway list who was also without permanent loan. To the company, the plight of two Steinway artists married to one another but with only one piano to come home to was too much to bear, and Miss Kallir was recently put on the loan list too. This bit of corporate largesse left the newlyweds with little room for much else in what is certainly the only five-room apartment in New York with borrowed "His" and "Hers" Steinways.

The rival Baldwin Piano Company—which tops Steinway's offer by providing free, to artists who play them in public, not only concert grand pianos but even trucking and tuning services—has almost as many endorsers for its instruments as Steinway has, but the endorsers have far less calculable prestige among pianists. It has the Iturbis, Claudio Arrau, Jorge Bolet, Benno Moisewitsch, part-time pianist Leonard Bernstein—and a lot of performers a lot of piano fanciers never heard of. It has, its stockholders know, a far larger volume of sales than Steinway, but this is a modest consolation to the firm's public relations directors, who cannot help suffering over the fact that Baldwin relates to Steinway about the way General Motors does to Rolls-Royce.

Ticket buyers who attend a piano recital approach it either as a musical rite because of the substance of the program or as an athletic spectacle because of the virtuosity of the performer. To piano manufacturers a piano recital is something else again. To the Steinways, provided the recitalist is a Steinway artist, the event is regarded primarily as a public demonstration of their product's quality—the time and place for a kind of subliminal sales pitch which captive prospects pay to hear made by a captive salesman who gets no commission. Some 175 recognized pianists, assorted conductors, and singers and instrumentalists who need accompanists have publicly testified in this way that the Steinway plays good like a concert grand should.

In return, the company has dispersed about six hundred pianos around the country in such a way that wherever a Steinway artist finds an audience to play for he will not have to look for a Steinway to play on. Stenciled in black on the plate of each of these pianos are the letters CD (for Concert Department) followed by a number. There are four CD Steinways in Los Angeles, five in Chicago, two in Washington, D. C. (not counting the one waiting in the White House for any Steinway artist who may be invited to drop in and dazzle the Chief Executive). In the New York area there are twenty-five instruments, ranging from one in the Metropolitan Museum to four on constant duty at Carnegie Hall. The company's case histories for each piano show that the CDs assigned to Tulsa are as healthy specimens as those settled in Seattle, and New York-

based Steinways are no better for being near the Long Island City factory where they were made. Some well-traveled pianists, however, believe this is true only in the sense that restaurants in eastern Arkansas are as good as those on mid-Manhattan's East Side because both serve food fit to eat. The twenty-five instruments scattered about New York City are generally regarded as being a cut above the national average, though not nearly the match of the particular marvels in the Steinway basement.

The idea of picking a piano and more or less sticking with it infects every pianist at the time of his New York debut. Without even bothering to take a few exploratory whacks, a pianist preparing his first Carnegie Hall performance assumes that none of the four Steinways housed there is right for the occasion. With that settled, he walks a few hundred yards east on 57th Street to select one of the concert grands from the fifteen in the basement, principally because it is the thing to do. When he has made his choice—and if the instrument chosen has not already been preempted by another Steinway artist playing in the area—he arranges to have it shipped across the street on the day of his recital. If, by chance, the chosen instrument has been previously reserved, a somewhat chafing conflict rises. Its resolution depends on which pianist the company values less—or honors more. The vice-president ordinarily in charge of such protocol is Frederick (Fritz) Steinway, a thirty-eight-year-old Harvard grad who can sit down and knock out the *Beer Barrel Polka* any time the spirit moves him. Handing out his fifteen basement pianos at the peak of the music season is a running exercise in tact and temerity about comparable to that of the headwaiter at El Morocco in handing out tables when the Duchess of Windsor, the monarch of Monaco, and unreconcilable oil interests are all doing the town on the same night.

Regardless of when he reserves it, any piano Horowitz wants Horowitz gets—a *droit de seigneur* he shares with Rubinstein alone. And if both Rubinstein and Horowitz should ever want the same piano at the same time, the living Steinways will invoke the shades of their ancestors for help. Even without such eventualities, the two titans can cause a lot of unintentional trouble around the basement. Any piano either of them has favored, Fritz Steinway has noticed, is immediately coveted by pianists who cannot shake the suspicion that some of the old spellbinders' virtuosity has rubbed off on the instrument itself. It becomes the new girl in town, and a lot of young men call at once to make dates.

In Horowitz's case, cast-off pianos have been few. The 55-year-old wizard almost always used the same two concert grands for seventeen years—one for recitals, another for concerts with orchestras. During that time few other pianists played them in public. Because the Horowitz specialties were often triple-forte fireworks displays given a punishing trip-hammer touch swung from the wrists, this prolonged liaison between a pianist and his two pianos is one of Steinway's best proofs of the staying power of its product. No two technicians on the premises can nail down in language the characteristics of the Horowitz pianos, but the belief is that they are qualities Horowitz battered into them rather than ones the Steinway factory put there. As CD 347 (for recitals) and CD 18 (for concerto playing) they traveled with him everywhere until he gave

up touring and then concertizing altogether seven years ago. When he emerged recently to make recordings, he decided to change pianos, and selected not one but three Steinway grands from the basement pool on 57th Street for shipment across the way for use in Carnegie Hall.

Rubinstein also knows precisely what he wants in pianos, but he seldom wants the same thing for many years in succession. A few seasons ago he kept two of them leap-frogging across the country as he alternated instruments, playing one concert grand one night and another the next. "Pianos are like women," he told Fritz Steinway back in New York. "You like women and I like women, but we do not like all women the same." In Switzerland, Rubinstein found one small grand built in the Steinway branch factory in Hamburg so congenial that he asked to take her home. He paid the full price to the company cashier, the same as any other customer would, and became thereby one of the relatively few Steinway artists to own a Steinway.

The fickleness pianists sometimes show represents, in many cases, a refinement in taste moving from rich- to lean-sounding Steinways. And for recording sessions, some pianists have used two different instruments in playing the same concerto—a big-sounding Steinway for the first and third movements, and a piano with a more reined-in tone for the soulful melodies of the slow movement. Such distinctions among pianos are sometimes so subtle that they elude even the pianists. To satisfy himself that some of this picking and choosing is partly posturing, Fritz Steinway has found that quite a few pianists coming in to New York happily reserve there a piano which had previously earned their ire when it had been encountered out of town. Van Cliburn's favorite CD 6, on which he performed and recorded the Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff concertos in Carnegie Hall last spring, languished unloved in the Midwest for ten years and picked up the usual quota of complaints from touring Steinway artists who could find nothing better in the area. Recalled to New York about the time Cliburn returned from Russia, CD 6 has since then been in as heavy demand as the Texan who played it.

Ever since the Steinways constructed a custom-tailored instrument to fit the undersized hands of Josef Hofmann, the pianists who play Steinways have been quick to suggest a lot of improvements. The manufacturers would be more responsive to these recommendations if the characteristic one pianist wanted intensified was not so regularly the feature another pianist wanted removed altogether. Hofmann, who understood the mechanical intricacies of the piano better than any pianist the Steinways served, wanted an instrument more sensitive and responsive to his touch than the 1932 model Steinway. The company's engineers went to work and in a few years came up with Patent No. 1826848, under which the keys were balanced on small, curved fulcrums and neither collapsed in descent nor bounced on the way back up, thus giving the pianist a new measure of control. (The Steinways have since called this "Accelerated Action.") About this time, one of the newest Steinway artists was Artur Schnabel, previously a proponent of German-made Bechsteins, who complained that the New York instrument was already too fast for his taste. "These steeds are of the Paderewski breed," he said, "and not made to canter in my paddock." As a result,

while some technicians were speeding up Steinways for Hofmann and others were putting governors on them for Schnabel, a lot of lesser pianists learned that the company could adjust its instruments to individual preferences. Ever since then Steinway has been steadily tightening and loosening piano actions in its basement, where—according to one pianist who is so unfashionably well adjusted that he finds any Steinway perfectly satisfactory—it has some instruments whose keys go down if he gives them a hard look and others that he has to jump on to produce any sound at all.

Where all this catering to taste will stop bothers some of the Steinways. "We don't tell pianists how to play pianos," Fritz Steinway says with a combative smile, "so we don't want them to tell us how to build them." In fact, what pianists want to tell the Steinways is not how to build pianos but how to listen to them. For all their interest in ravishing the ears of audiences (and that urge is far less intense now than it was with grand-mannered virtuosos fifty years ago), professionals regard the piano stool as the best listening post from which to assess the instrument. The Steinways are more concerned about how their pianos sound sixty feet back, or at about twelfth row center in Carnegie Hall. If the piano acts and sounds good to the pianist playing it, he assumes (sometimes wrongly) that the audience hears it his way. But if it sounds poor to the Steinway men out front, they assume (perhaps rightly) that it sounds that way to the rest of the audience and conclude in a trice that this is no way to stir up sales. To protect its interest the company has retired CD instruments even while some artists claimed that they could not live without them. The ailing instrument is sold, sent away, or rebuilt beyond recognition, but its CD number is removed and sometimes assigned to the replacement concert grand added to the basement pool. The day will surely come, Fritz Steinway is convinced, when some artist with an impassioned preference for, say, CD 234 will fail to notice that the number is now stenciled on a newly minted instrument—same number, different piano.

The Steinways have been coping with the idiosyncrasies of pianists, however, almost since the day in 1836 when Henry Engelhard Steinweg started making pianos in the kitchen of his house in Seesen, a tiny mountain town in central Germany. Twenty years later his sons were putting together pianos in a loft at 85 Varick Street, in New York City, and a Steinway daughter was selling them as fast as they were finished by offering to give free piano lessons to prospects who needed that extra little push before they would make the purchase.

The Steinways got into the habit of supplying pianos to the best pianists in exchange for glowing testimonials back in 1872 when they engaged Anton Rubinstein to make his first American tour under their management and at their piano. At the time, the piano business was as competitive as the detergent trade is now, and to make the Russian virtuoso's performance on their product as broadly appealing as possible to American audiences, the Steinways induced him to play a set of variations on *Yankee Doodle Dandy* at the end of each concert. Result: an incalculable number of orders placed for pianos just like Rubinstein's. The Boston manufacturers of Chickering pianos induced Hans von Bülow

to do the same honors for their instrument, but with less salutary results. In Baltimore he took one look at the gold-lettered brand name hung on the side of the piano, dumped it on the floor, and announced to the assembled audience that he was not a traveling advertisement. A few years later he became a traveling advertisement for Knabe. Over the years well-known performers have switched allegiance—notably from Steinway to Baldwin, and vice versa—but no one gets unduly alarmed. On a “names-not-for-publication” basis, some Steinway artists have high praise for Baldwins they have been invited to try at that company’s Manhattan showroom on 54th Street. But stories persist that some Baldwin artists have surreptitiously made their recordings on Steinway pianos.

This would seem to suggest that there is something essentially different about the sound of a Steinway. There may be, but the manufacturers cannot name what it is, and if the Baldwins could isolate it they would probably incorporate it. Both companies have experimented with the shape of the black keys, and many a pianist led blindfolded to one or the other instrument could tell which company made it by rubbing his finger along an E flat without even sounding it. One pianist in New York maintains he can tell the difference between the two makes of instruments by smelling them, and another says he can look at a recital audience and know whether the pianist on the bill is a Steinway or Baldwin man as easily as a baseball buff could tell Dodger rooters from Yankee fans. Winston Fitzgerald, Fritz Steinway’s soft-spoken assistant, claims he can hear the difference every time, on records or in recital halls. The man he works for feels less sure of himself, but allows that he could probably separate his instrument from the competition’s if the same pianist played the same piece in the same way in quick succession on a Steinway and Baldwin standing side by side.

Whatever value lies in the opinions of experts (self-appointed or otherwise), public testimonials seem to signify little. Though he is the most publicized figure on the Baldwin list, the New York Philharmonic’s Leonard Bernstein is music director of an orchestra whose official piano is the Steinway, and on the orchestra’s European tour Bernstein played Steinways most of the time because there were few Baldwins around. Even when there are lots of Steinways around, the company’s artists are still caught in compromising situations with other pianos. Steinway’s Van Cliburn was elaborately photographed at the recent Russian fair in New York, proudly seated at a Soviet Estonia baby grand; Steinway’s three Casadesuses were honored guests at the Pleyel Bicentennial at the Lamoureux Concerts—where Robert, Gaby, and Jean played the Bach Triple Concerto on three Pleyels; and when comedian Jimmy Durante tears apart a piano in his nightclub appearances, the instrument is a Steinway—and it is hard to see what good that does for sales.

If selling Steinways ever gets difficult (it has been before, but is not now), one sure way to sell a lot of them would be to reclaim those on loan, close up the basement, and make pianists buy their own instruments. A benefit concert on a grandiose scale could help out those young professionals otherwise unable to afford the essential tool of their trade. It could even be a nonpartisan benefit, with something in it for everyone.

Charles Munch, a Baldwin man, could guest-conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra (which has an exclusive contract with the Lester Piano Company) in a concert on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House (where the official instrument is the Knabe piano). The soloist in a Chopin concerto (the composer was a Pleyel man) could be Artur Rubinstein, who plays only a Steinway and even bought one. With just about every maker's product endorsed at the same time, the endorsement business might come to an end. There would remain only the matter of passing out the benefit money to the deserving pianists. The Steinways think they know just what would happen. There would be a great tumult in the basement on 57th Street, where the artists would be found bidding against one another for last year's Horowitz or this spring's Rubinstein.

Conversation with Beecham

by Lord Robert Boothby

Lord Robert Boothby: You have met in the course of your life, Sir Thomas, a number of celebrated composers, and I should like to begin by asking you about one whose paternal ancestors came from my constituency in Aberdeenshire, namely Edvard Grieg. You knew him, did you not?

Sir Thomas Beecham: Yes, I met him when I was a very young man on a trip to Norway. I visited him at his house near Bergen and his wife was there also. They were perfectly delightful. Grieg sat down and played me a little piece which he had just written, and his wife sang two of his songs. I can say that no one has ever sung his songs half so well. She had a small but beautiful voice and a complete understanding of mood and nuance—quite unlike certain sopranos who bawl, scream, and shout this enchantingly delicate music. This, of course, should be stopped, if necessary by Act of Parliament.

Boothby: Grieg reminds me of another Northern composer, Jan Sibelius. Were you disappointed or surprised that Sibelius did not produce more music before his death?

Sir Thomas: I was not surprised that he wrote no more symphonies. I was a little disappointed that he did not continue his other vein, the symphonic poem, in which he had written such splendid examples as *En Saga* and the last one of all, *Tapiola*. I thought he would have gone further along that line, but he did not; he called a full stop to his work, and it shortly became evident that he was not going to publish any more of consequence. I became resigned to the fact; but, of course, there was

the usual quota of gossips, who are the major pest of our age, holding out hopes that hidden away in Sibelius' house there must be manuscripts and sketches. All bunkum, nonsense, and sheer invention.

Boothby: Let's move on now to Delius. You, I suppose, are responsible to a considerable extent for having made Delius the figure that he is in music today. Can you tell us something about him?

Sir Thomas: Delius was a very unusual person, a very uncommon type of man. He was a rebel, an independent, who described himself as a conservative anarchist. This applied to his life as well as to his art. His music, once he had found himself, was largely underivative. He owed very little to predecessors. His ancestry was lost somewhere in the mist of the past. Delius' period of inspiration lasted for about ten to twelve years, say from 1901 to 1914, just as it did with Debussy.

He was, by the way, a first-rate controversialist and very easily wiped the floor with almost everyone of his time. I have heard him converse with Shaw and Belloc and others and he always held his own. Unlike nearly all English controversialists, he had a deep sense of logic. Having created the central point in any argument he hung on to it like grim death and never let go. Other people could scratch around it, but he would always return to the central point.

Boothby: What about Saint-Saëns? You were acquainted with him, I know. How do you rate him as a musician?

Sir Thomas: Saint-Saëns was the most accomplished, all-round second-rate composer in the world. Although he never did anything that was supremely outstanding, he wrote a large quantity of excellent music and it is, all of it, a model of technical proficiency and style, occasionally achieving charm as in the symphonic poem *Le Rouet d'Omphale*. His highest accomplishment was his opera *Samson and Delilah*, which contains three of the best-known songs in the French language. He was a man of great ability, undoubtedly an ornament to his country. But he had a very curious misanthropic disposition. I don't know what the cause was; I think it was inherent. It was not envy or a jealous nature, because he thought of everybody in the same way, with the possible exception of his master, Franz Liszt, who was his idol and in some respects his god.

Boothby: Was he a good executant himself at the piano?

Sir Thomas: He was a very good executant, indeed, very correct and cultured.

Boothby: Did he admire the piano playing of others?

Sir Thomas: I never heard him express any opinion of others. I don't think he ever went to hear them. Some he personally disliked very much. A case in point was Rubinstein; for some reason or other he could not stand the great Anton. Rubinstein once went to Paris to give about

twenty-five concerts at the Trocadéro. He played half the music in the piano repertoire and had an enormous success. Saint-Saëns went nowhere near the place. After it was all over, he happened to meet Rubinstein in the street and said, "Anton, my dear Anton, what are you doing in Paris, when did you arrive?" Could one be more ruthless than that?

Boothby: I was struck in reading Puccini's life by its sadness, something which we would never suspect from his sunny music. Have you any comment to make? Did you come across him at all?

Sir Thomas: I knew Puccini very well indeed. He discussed a great many of his operas with me. He talked about their interpretation at great length and was consumed with profound dissatisfaction at the way his works were sometimes given in Italy—notably by the younger conductors, whom he didn't like at all. You have referred to the fact that his works are sunny. I am not sure I would use that description. I think they are generally rather tragic, and always reach their best moments when they are tragic. Those are the moments which appeal to everybody—to people of all classes and tastes. Puccini's music is quite different from that of anybody else. He is the most effective of all opera composers. If you were to ask nine operagoers out of ten in any country in the world whose operas they like best, as I have done, the answer would be Puccini—not Wagner or Mozart or Verdi, but Puccini. I think it is because he speaks to us personally in a way we understand. This is the opinion of waiters, hotel managers, taxi drivers, bus conductors, anybody you like.

Boothby: And now to finish these reminiscences of composers with whom you were associated, what about Richard Strauss?

Sir Thomas: Oh, Strauss. He was a very curious man. Like Delius, he had nothing to say about his own music. Delius used to say, "You play any way you like." Strauss didn't even say that; he said, "You play it." When conducting his own music, he seemed to be quite indifferent to the different points of the playing. He was conducting my orchestra before the war in some piece or other and he went right through it without a stop. The leader [i.e., concertmaster], I think it was Albert Sammons at the time, said, "Is there anything you would like to suggest to us?" He thought for a moment and said, "Yes, bar number 336, up bow!"

Boothby: You mentioned Liszt just now, Sir Thomas, as the master and teacher and god of Saint-Saëns. Have you any story to tell about him?

Sir Thomas: I know a great many stories about Liszt, of course. The most interesting of all, I think, is illustrative of Liszt's enormous capacity to read music at first sight. It was told by Hans Richter, who as a young man had acted as secretary to Richard Wagner, when Wagner was living just outside Lucerne. For some time there had been a breach between Wagner and the gentleman who was now his father-in-law, Franz Liszt, the father of Cosima, whom Wagner ran off with. Liszt did not like it at

all. However, Richter prevailed upon Liszt to call on Wagner, arousing his interest by saying that Wagner had completed a new opera which he (Richter) had just finished copying out. So Liszt went, and for a while the atmosphere was very frigid. Then Richter produced an enormous score, saying, "This is the new opera." Liszt looked at it. "Ah, comic opera," he said. "You have been studying counterpoint, Richard. I'll see how much you know about it." He went to the piano, played through the overture, looked around and then continued to play the entire score of *Die Meistersinger* right through from sight. Extraordinary! Grieg told me that he took his piano concerto to Liszt. Liszt had never seen it before, but he played it through just like that, talking all the time. He played it very quick, but he played it—anxious to get it over, I suppose.

Probably nobody ever played the piano like Liszt. Somebody asked him how he learned to play so wonderfully. "I did it," he said, "by listening night after night to the greatest singers of the day." Now the singers have to listen to instrumentalists to learn legato. Times have changed.

Boothby: As you refer to singers, would you say that while the standard is very high now, we have not any tenor, for example, to equal Caruso, or anyone to equal De Reszke, or De Lucia? They are only legends to me.

Sir Thomas: No, there is not a voice to approach Caruso's. It was unique. The singers of today have a certain standard accomplishment. I say standard because it is just that. For instance, in the United States there are quite a number of accomplished sopranos. They all sing well, but you can't tell one from the other. The main feature about the great singers of my youth was the remarkably individual character of them all; each one was like no one else. Nobody had a baritone voice like Maurel's, nobody had a bass voice like Plançon's, nor was there a mezzo-soprano like Calvé. Caruso was the same and so was Chaliapin. The average bass of today is as different from Chaliapin as is Euston Station from Westminster Abbey.

Boothby: You mentioned in connection with Saint-Saëns that he wrote a lot of extremely good second-rate music which has much charm. But the great music of the world, I suppose, would be the music which has magic. How much of that would you say there has been?

Sir Thomas: Very little. I was once asked for a definition of great music and I had to give it on the spot. I said, "Great music is that which penetrates the ear with facility and quits the memory with difficulty." Magical music never leaves the memory. That is why certain works appeal to me, and I never alter my view about them. I have in mind certain things of Handel and Mozart, the Schubert *Unfinished* and his great quintet.

Boothby: Anything of Wagner?

Sir Thomas: I think so, yes, I think so. I believe that the end of the *Walküre* is a great stroke.

Boothby: *Tristan*?

Sir Thomas: Oh yes, definitely, magic itself—particularly the middle of the last act when Tristan sees the ship approaching. Not the second act or the first act. The second act, especially, contains a lot of ordinary nineteenth-century romantic music, some of which is pure Liszt.

Boothby: Have you come to appreciate certain composers or works you once disliked, or come to be bored with music you once liked?

Sir Thomas: No, no change.

Boothby: In other words, the Beecham of 1958 is much the same as the Beecham of 1908.

Sir Thomas: Just the same.

Boothby: When you are conducting, you always look as though you are enjoying yourself. Are you?

Sir Thomas: I am. Of course it depends if I am alone or not. When I have an assisting artist—a violinist or pianist—I may have to qualify that generous statement.

Boothby: Since you started your musical career, first gramophone records, then radio, then talking films, and now television have all arisen to play an important part in all our lives. In your opinion, have these developments been, on the whole, a good or bad thing so far as music is concerned?

Sir Thomas: It's a very large question. Do you mean to say, have they arisen to play a vital part in *my* life or everybody's life?

Boothby: Everybody's life. Has it made people, peoples in the plural, more musical on the whole, more appreciative?

Sir Thomas: Well, certainly records have. And I think radio has helped. Now, about films, I don't see the association with music at all. I mean, when I go to see a film and they start playing the music, my ears are deafened and my head goes round and I have to run out of the building.

Boothby: Does that apply to the *Tales of Hoffmann* which you made?

Sir Thomas: There are honorable exceptions to the rule! As for television, the only thing I can say is that all the music I have ever seen on television looks grotesque, quite grotesque. You have pictures, you know, of a gentleman playing the horn and then emptying the liquid out of it onto the floor, which of course may be instructive to some people. And then you have somebody sawing away on a bass. Can you think of

anything less picturesque than a huge stringed instrument, called bull fiddle in this country for some strange reason or other, being sawed away on like this? Or a singer coming right forward, opening a very large mouth? You see right down the larynx, almost into the tummy, the eyes go this way, the nose goes that way, and the mouth is twisted round; wretched singer, you know, attempting high notes generally outside his or her compass. The whole thing is revolting. That's television so far as music's concerned.

Boothby: If you had to master the craft of making music again, would you set about it differently, or do just about what you have done?

Sir Thomas: I wouldn't do it very differently, but I would arrive at a measure of competence more speedily. I have been slow to realize the potentialities of sound. In fact, I have been very much helped in that by the invention of the gramophone, through listening to records, frequently records of other musicians. It's been of great use to me, knowing what to avoid.

Boothby: Are there any particular musical compositions which you are sometimes obliged to play and positively loathe, and can you give a good performance of them if you have to do it?

Sir Thomas: I've played very little music that I've positively loathed, perhaps none at all. I have played a vast quantity of music in which I could discern very little sign of originality or enduring quality, but I have played it because of some interest it has had for me as a student of music generally, as a conductor of an orchestra. I should say half the music I have ever played has not impressed me much, and I've been profoundly conscious at the time that it was doubtful if the music would live ten years. Those fears—or, let us say, in many cases hopes—have been fully realized.

Boothby: Of all the great composers, which one would you have most liked to have met and talked to?

Sir Thomas: Oh, oh, it's very difficult to think of *anyone*, because I think that as a class the great composers have been of unattractive demeanor, they've had repellent manners, their information on matters other than music has been exceedingly limited, almost childish, and some have been almost dumb. I have never had an urge to meet composers, you know, though I have been brought into touch with a great many. The most charming of them all was Massenet undoubtedly. He was a man of excellent manners, very pleasing and sometimes delightfully amusing, and he was without envy, or spite, or malice. Debussy rarely spoke. Ravel was very lively, with curious musical predilections, but still very pleasant. Delius eventually could listen to no music at all except his own.

Boothby: But was good company. . . .

Sir Thomas: He was, until he became tiresome on the subject of religion and Christianity. He considered it a part of his duty on earth to convert everyone to a deeply anti-Christian point of view, especially young people, acting on the Jesuitical principle that if you catch them young you can do what you like with them.

Boothby: Talking of which, do you prefer, when you are conducting an opera or accompanying a soloist, to work with somebody who has a pretty strong character of his own, or with somebody on whom you can impose your will?

Sir Thomas: Ah, that depends, entirely. Generally I'd rather have somebody with a very strong character. I remember something that Maurel once said to me about knaves and fools. He said, "I'd prefer a clever knave to a silly fool, because a clever knave you *can* do something with, but you can't do anything with a damn fool."

Boothby: Do you find any significant differences in musical taste between audiences in England and the United States?

Sir Thomas: No, no differences at all. I won't say anything as to the nature of the taste. Of course, there is more music given in England than in the United States. For instance, there are six or seven orchestras in London alone and really only one in New York. Therefore, the orchestral repertoire there is more limited; and I have found that when you go very far outside the standard repertoire, the American public is inclined to resent it, which was the case in England thirty and forty years ago. But fundamentally there's not much difference. In America at the moment there's a very healthy renaissance of interest in choral singing. When I first went there, I couldn't get a choir anywhere, for love or money. Now every university has a very fine choir. There are choirs all over the place. That's something, because it means that the amateur is taking part.

Boothby: Would you say that as far as symphony orchestras are concerned, England probably leads the world today in having three or four of the best in the world?

Sir Thomas: Well, I may have my own views about the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, but I don't propose to inflict them on the American public, before whom I am going to conduct next year. At the same time, I want to emphasize this, that everybody should stop talking nonsense about the best orchestra, or the best orchestras, in the world. You see, there are asses in England who say, "*We* have the best orchestras." The Germans claim the same. There is no such thing as the best orchestra in the world today.

Boothby: They are just good, bad, or indifferent?

Sir Thomas: There are a very considerable number, more than formerly, of first-rate orchestras, and each one of those has its especial quality. For

instance, the French Orchestre National has special qualities; there is certain music that it plays better than any other in the world, and you can't take that away from it. The strings of the Philadelphia Orchestra have a certain quality, a vigor, which is very remarkable. Every good orchestra has its points, its unique qualities, its style, its character. You cannot say, "This is the best orchestra in the world." Any man who does so is ill informed.

Boothby: But carrying the argument just one point further, would you say that certain orchestras play certain composers, national composers, better? For example, would you say that an English orchestra can play Elgar and Delius better than a French or German orchestra?

Sir Thomas: Oh, certainly, there's no question about it.

Boothby: Well, how do you explain the affinity of national orchestras to their composers? Is it a matter of their make-up, or is it a matter of training?

Sir Thomas: It's a matter of tradition. Now we've just had the Leipzig Orchestra here, and an orchestra like this, which has played under Mendelssohn, Schumann, Nikisch, Bruno Walter, and so on, performs almost exclusively the music of Germany and Austria. It should play it well and have an insight into it. Whether it plays it any better than the orchestras of England or the United States, I won't say. French orchestras have distinctly a style of their own, far more individual than any others in the world; when they play certain music—in a few pieces by Debussy and Ravel, some things of Bizet—they cannot be surpassed. The merit of English orchestras is that they have not so much a definite character as a wide capacity; they are *more* interested in *more* kinds of music, they've greater curiosity. A German orchestra has very little interest in any music but that of Germany or Austria. A French orchestra, very little interest in music other than that of France. We English are more eclectic, for good or ill, than any other nation.

Boothby: How do you account for the fact that the symphonies of Sibelius are appreciated here and in America so much more than they are on the continent of Europe?

Sir Thomas: The feeling in France and the Latin countries is anti-Northern. They want excitement, they want merriment, they want warmth, they want sunshine, they want quick response, you know, to quick emotion. You don't get that in Sibelius. What you get in Sibelius for the greater part of the time is an extreme reticence and a slow delivery, and that of course is very popular in England, it is our tradition. We get it, Lord Boothby, possibly from the Government.

Aksel Schiøtz (1906-1975)

by Paul Moor

OCCASIONALLY—VERY INFREQUENTLY—a musical performer appears who for one reason or another establishes himself in a category apart from almost all his colleagues. Thanks to his voice, his musicality, his intelligence, and to the medium of phonographic recording, the great Danish tenor Aksel Schiøtz, whom leukemia and an intestinal cancer vanquished in Copenhagen at the age of 68, belonged in such a category. Admirers who knew his recorded repertoire regarded him, to put it simply, as unique. Relatively few, though, knew the details of the tragic episodes that restricted that great singing largely to recordings.

And what records! When they were imported to New York in 1946 or 1947, they caused—especially two breathtaking *Messiah* arias—a true sensation among collectors, repeating an earlier sensation in England. Fortunately, before illness abruptly canceled his public career soon after the war, HMV in Denmark and England had recorded a lengthy repertoire, including two complete major Lieder cycles, Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, with Gerald Moore at the piano.

Outrageous fortune surely has plagued few artists—few human beings—as it repeatedly did Aksel Schiøtz. Starting adulthood as a provincial schoolteacher, he had a rich tenor voice full of vibrato but free of tremolo, with an uncanny baritone timbre throughout its range. Many admirers thought that voice justified a full-time professional career, but the three children Schiøtz and his admirable, stalwart wife, Gerd, had to feed and clothe made him hesitate. (And later, twins made their responsibilities even more sobering.) Finally, however, he took the plunge.

The morning after his professional debut in Copenhagen, Danes woke up to find their little country occupied by Hitler's Wehrmacht. With foreign appearances now impossible, Schiøtz set about using his art for the comfort and reassurance of his countrymen. As a patriot, he dropped his entire German repertoire for the duration—a crippling sacrifice for a Lieder specialist. To fill that void he revived much very worthwhile but neglected, or even forgotten, Danish music. He sang everywhere—in schools, in churches—sometimes defiantly, such as at the funeral of the patriotic writer Kai Munk, whom the Germans had killed. After the war the King of Denmark awarded Schiøtz the country's equivalent of a knighthood. Literally everyone in Denmark knew him, admired him, and loved him.

Wartime broadcasts of Schiøtz's early recordings had caused important ears to prick up in England. As soon as possible, HMV brought him to London for extensive recording, and at Glyndebourne's world premiere of *The Rape of Lucretia*, which had dual casting in all roles, he alternated with Peter Pears as the Male Chorus. That summer began lifelong friendships with Benjamin Britten, Kathleen Ferrier, and Pears. It also brought the first symptom—double vision—of a *tumor acusticus*, the same type of growth behind the ear that had killed George Gershwin.

Schiøtz survived the operation he had in Stockholm, but the surgeon's unavoidable severing of a nerve cable affected his body as if a guillotine had sliced it in half frontally from head to toe, leaving the right half blind, deaf, and lame. The surgeon said that Schiøtz would never sing again but that, with luck, he might walk again.

In 1948, after months of recuperation during a tramp-steamer voyage, indomitable Aksel Schiøtz gave a comeback recital in Copenhagen. He was brought to New York soon thereafter for three Town Hall recitals. The first sold out immediately, the second attracted about half capacity, the third drew virtually no one who had paid for his ticket. Some years later, Schiøtz attempted another comeback as a baritone. Tapes he made then in America (where he taught) of Schubert's *Winterreise* cycle—never, unfortunately, released on discs—proved that nothing had affected that great artistry. He called the book he wrote simply *The Singer and His Art*, and he could lay more legitimate claim to that title than could, or can, the vast majority of his colleagues.

And now at least we have those unique recordings made almost thirty years ago. As long as people set stylus to disc, they will remain treasures beyond price, inimitable examples of what the human voice, in very rare instances, can communicate.

Toscanini and Furtwängler: An Empire Divided

by Peter J. Pirie

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO imagine a sharper polarity in the art of interpretation than that afforded by the differing views of Toscanini and Furtwängler on the reading of Beethoven's orchestral music. There is no doubt that today the *Zeitgeist* favors Toscanini; everyone criticizes Furtwängler, but any criticism of Toscanini savors of blasphemy. Yet it will be my thesis that the latter's view of Beethoven is not the only possible one, and may even be considered incomplete; and that incompleteness of comprehension, even if covered by the sheer dynamic of genius, leaves a dangerous legacy for those of lesser talent, remains a fault in spite of genius, and may perpetuate a false impression of the composer. And although I believe that Furtwängler (because he is an antithesis and not a balanced corrective to the conducting style of Toscanini) cannot be unconditionally endorsed, I maintain that he is nearer to the true tradition of Beethoven conducting, and possibly to Beethoven's original conception, than is the Italian maestro.

I have suggested that Toscanini's view of Beethoven is incomplete. We are reminded of Tovey's dictum: "Beethoven is a complete artist. If the term is rightly understood, he is one of the completest that ever lived." Living over the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Beethoven stands poised at the juncture of the classical and Romantic styles, and forms a bridge between them. He is the supreme sonata-form composer, and his work the climax of the sonata style; yet in that very climax are elements foreign to the music of the no less perfect Mozart. Those elements have much in common with the Romantic style, without

ever belonging wholly to it: the expressive elements (Beethoven's own term) are invariably turned to account as points of form; or points of form are marvelously turned to expressive purposes; it is impossible to say which. Form never exists for its own sake, as in classical music, and expression never overruns form, as in much Romantic music; the equipoise is perfect. Similarly, we here meet the classical key structure, which is the very soul of the sonata style, at its highest point. Beethoven used it to serve structures that were larger than any that had been conceived up to his day, and impart to them an extra dimension of time. His is the greatest and almost the last confirmation of the old principles of tonality.

Thus technique; we should now consider the "expressive elements." The heavy-browed Beethoven of legend, hurling his thunderbolts, is but half the truth. There is a story that relates how, when one of the innumerable good women who clustered round Beethoven was half-demented with grief at the loss of her child, the master came discreetly and in silence to play for her until her health and reason were restored. (He has done the same, since then, for innumerable men and women he could never know.) This is the Beethoven of the Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Sonata in F sharp, Op. 78. This is the delicate and sensitive tone poet, tender and gentle. It is when we see how gentle and tender his music can be that we realize how strong is its strength. Only the very strong can be truly gentle, and strength without its foil of gentleness is mere violence, and has no place in art. For this reason any interpretation of Beethoven's music that strives to raise its dramatic strength to the highest power, while pushing the tenderness and delicate imagination into the background, is incomplete.

We must also consider the great scherzos and the Eighth Symphony. In these we have every aspect of humor—that divine attribute, the most human of the emotions; if a mental patient can be made to laugh, laugh with the comic and heartfelt inconsequence of the humanly ridiculous, then the battle for his sanity is won. A great gale of laughter bursts from the music of Beethoven like the wind of April, bringing with it health. It makes the task of those who would prove him fundamentally unbalanced extremely difficult. He was a whole man, as well as a complete artist; no normal human emotion is missing from his music, and it is there in just the balance and measure that informs every aspect of his art.

It is said that if Beethoven missed a performance of one of his works, the one question he always asked about it was "What were the tempos like?" For information on what he expected from a good performance it may well be safer to refer to his remarks as they have come down to us, and his practice, than to his metronome marks. The latter are notoriously controversial; they indicate a very fast speed indeed, in the majority of cases, and it is well known that Beethoven altered those of the Ninth Symphony towards the end of his life, halving the speeds. Schnabel's attempt to play the first movement of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata at Beethoven's metronome mark merely indicates that it is impossible to do so; the result is sufficient proof of the inaccuracy of this marking. And of all conductors, it is Toscanini who most nearly accords with Beethoven's metronome marks.

Beethoven's ideas on the subject are best given in his own words: "Though the poet carries on his monologue or dialogue in a progressively marked rhythm, yet the declaimer, for the most accurate elucidation of the sense, must make caesuras and pauses in places where the poet could not venture on any interpunctuation. To this extent, then, is the style of declaiming applicable to music. . . ." Further, Anton Schindler, Beethoven's friend and biographer, tells us of his practice that he "played without constraint as to the rate of the time. He adopted a tempo rubato in the proper sense of the term, according as the subject and situation might demand, without the slightest approach to caricature. Beethoven's playing was the most distinct and intelligible declamation. . . ." This is clear enough, even if we cannot be quite sure what Beethoven meant by "progressively marked rhythm," and it confirms the practice, within their individual styles, of Furtwängler, Klemperer, Jochum, and Karajan. But it does not confirm that of Toscanini; Beethoven's observations and practice seem to indicate not only a more flexible tempo, but a slower one, than that of the metronome marks.

Furtwängler stands squarely in the Wagner tradition. His incomparable readings of *The Ring* are a clinching proof of how near he is to this, the main stream of German conducting. How near that tradition may be to a true Beethoven style may be gauged by Wagner's remarks in his book *On Conducting* where in terms that suggest familiarity with Beethoven's words quoted above he lays down the principle "for Beethoven and all Romantic music" of "perpetual modification of tempo." One may say, then, that the tradition of Beethoven conducting in Germany and Austria favors the "rhetorical" style: not the fast, steady tempo one would naturally adopt in a Mozart or Haydn allegro, but one that adapts itself to the inherent drama of the music; not a sentimental tempo rubato, but a dramatic emphasis declamatory in style. Since Beethoven was not, as we have seen, wholly a Romantic composer, the result is that conductors in the Wagner tradition tend to render his scores too massive and sluggish of tempo. Nevertheless, I feel the root of the matter can be found in this tradition, whatever its occasional excesses.

We might inquire if Toscanini also belongs to a tradition. There are few Italian symphonic conductors, and the two we might name, De Sabata and the late Guido Cantelli, belong to a later generation and owe not a little to Toscanini's pioneering. The overwhelming Italian tradition is operatic, and it is from this tradition that Toscanini's methods spring. He had, of course, his own individuality, but it was mainly Verdi (all Verdi, except perhaps *Otello* and *Falstaff*) that went to the molding of his musical thought. His Beethoven readings are never less than beautifully organized, and from within; somewhere inside those clear, tawny textures that he always obtained in Beethoven the unifying principle works outward to all the surface detail. With Furtwängler the reading is imposed from outside. This accounts, in part, for the atmosphere of furious excitement Toscanini engendered; he takes the smallest rhythmic unit as his basis and relates the whole to it. Furtwängler, and the German school with him, take the intellectual conception of the whole as a starting point, and relate every detail to it. With Furtwängler a

symphony unfolds; with Toscanini it generates, even at times explodes. Furtwängler's was an intellectual concept, Toscanini's, basically, a physical one.

Toscanini was never at his best in Beethoven's slow movements. His reading of that of the Ninth Symphony is superficial compared with his performance of the first movement. The reason is that the Beethoven-type adagio does not occur in Verdi. The Beethoven slow movement is a perfect union of intellectual and emotional factors; we call the result spiritual, and some sort of metaphysical concept is inevitable in considering the Beethoven adagio. It is a strictly German concept, at any rate in its translation into this type of very slow "generating" slow movement. The Italian slow tempo is nearer to andante than adagio, it is broadly lyrical, not *tief*; it is fatal to let an Italian melody drag. The typical Beethoven slow movement generates an exceedingly slow pulse, hardly a body rhythm, but noticeable as an unfolding. The nearest thing in Verdi to this kind of thing is the tenor aria "*Dio mi potevi scagliar*" from *Otello* (was this piece the reason for the accusations of German influence?). It is for this reason that I excluded *Otello* and *Falstaff* from my account of Verdi's influence on Toscanini; he gave incomparable performances of these two exquisite scores, but they have stylistic differences from the rest of Verdi. In the same way, there is a very German use of modulation to heighten drama, or give an impression of "things moving in the deeps" that is seldom found in Italian music; a very cogent instance occurs halfway through the second movement of Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony.

These things can be seen in the second half of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Here are three factors: the physical impact of the fortissimo return of the hollow fifth opening at the onset of the reprise; the psychological drama of the subsequent key waverings of the second subject, a dramatic stroke of great subtlety which heightens the sense of tragedy and renders the great coda necessary; and the drama of that coda itself. Let us see how Toscanini and Furtwängler play these crucial passages. Toscanini takes the storm of the reprise for all it is worth, and more, and his coda is so tremendous that it leaves you flattened. They are both emotional points. But his basic tempo, which is very fast, and which he maintains unaltered, precludes playing the second subject material in the exposition at the speed it cries out for; and when he comes to the reprise the effect of the key wavering is lost. He does not adopt a slower speed for the whole, or relax for the second subject. Furtwängler makes every point, with power, throughout the movement, and above all from the opening of the reprise to the end. He has been criticized both for his deliberate basic tempo and his elastic departures from it for rhetorical purposes. I submit that he was amply justified. Indeed, his reading of the Ninth Symphony is perhaps his best Beethoven performance; he reveals *in combination* the dramatic sense, emotional power, and intellectual grasp necessary in order to perform this symphony above all others.

Toscanini's training was in the Italian operatic repertoire, and it remained his especial affection all his life. Now the basis of this style, *Otello* and *Falstaff* again excepted, is swift dramatic movement of a

specifically theatrical kind; lyrical passages are an outpouring of extrovert melody, the basic tempo of which is often a moderate *andante*, occasionally a slow *allegro*, rarely a true *adagio*. The tunes sing, but they move at a certain pace, and must be made to do so. The dramatic climax is swift and brassy; the clanging of high-pitched brass is its most typical sound. Choral writing tends to be square, and to move to a swinging rhythm. In fact, Toscanini's *Missa Solemnis*—one of the best, if not the best, of his Beethoven recordings—must be seen in relation to his performance of Verdi's *Requiem*. The tremendous dramatic force, rhythmic vitality, and ferocious aspiration of the former performance are derived from a temperament attuned to the latter. And dozens of instances crowd into the mind: the great brassy climaxes in the first movement of the Ninth, taken with pace and power, overwhelming in their menacing intensity; the entry of the last movement of the Fifth; the tremendous rhythmic drive of the Seventh. Above all can be noted his overwhelming success in the *Gloria*, *Et Resurrexit*, and *Agnus Dei* of the Mass, and his reading of the last movement of the Ninth—an all-out thrust depending for its success, one might say, on sheer physical impact covering up the rather heartless way it charges through the slow passages. To this tradition we may add Toscanini's unique contributions, in many ways a heightening of this same thing: knife-edge *sforzandi*; an intensity of over-all construction based on a relating of the basic rhythmic unit to the metrical construction of the whole rather than on an ability to see a design from outside.

This is almost un-Beethovenian Beethoven. One aspect of him is here, almost to excess: the deadly serious hurler of thunderbolts. But the lyric artist, the tender singer, the boisterous humorist, and above all, the mystical weaver of evanescent dreams, is in abeyance. There is, in Toscanini's complete recording of the nine symphonies, only one true *adagio*—and that in a section where it is actually out of place, the introduction to the first movement of the Fourth. This is marked *adagio* certainly, but is here taken at something like *largo*; it should move towards the *allegro*, and be a part of it. Toscanini's account is altogether too melodramatic for this lightweight symphony, and when he comes to the *allegro*, he distorts it by his military rhythm, his deadly serious, almost tragic performance. The whole reading of this symphony, a gay and romantic comedy touched with the wistfulness of love, is forced by procrustean methods into Toscanini's somewhat extrovert conception of the heroic. How wrong this great genius of the baton could sometimes be. He could not, or would not, give a Beethoven slow movement its full weight; he was almost incapable of humor. He was capable of apocalyptic vision, but if his subject was not apocalyptic, he tried to make it so. The vision of the inner eye, the solitary communing of the creature with its creator that is Beethoven's crown of glory, was beyond him.

Furtwängler's outlook on Beethoven, as I have said, was modified by a very different operatic tradition, that of Wagner. (Incidentally the greatest all-round Beethovenian of our time—Felix Weingartner—was censured for his curiously light and undramatic Wagner.) But if Wagner lay in the direct Beethoven tradition, he also modified it with his slow and heavy tempos; and a conductor used to playing Wagner has to mind

he does not use the same methods in the much more athletic Beethoven. Here is where Furtwängler is at fault, and where Toscanini scored, for whatever else is wrong with Toscanini's Beethoven, his textures are beautifully light and athletic. Yet, after all, Wagner's operatic tradition derived from Beethoven himself. Although the drama of opera and the drama of symphony are ordinarily poles apart (in opera the music illustrates drama, in symphony the music *is* drama), in Wagner the drama is in the symphonic web itself.

Beethoven is, of course, bigger than all his conductors. In the slow movement of the Fourth, the most elusive in all his symphonies, both Toscanini and Furtwängler show their characteristic failings. Furtwängler just pulls it to pieces, and the result is most odd; Toscanini gives, to my mind, the most unnerving piece of cold-blooded playing on record. Superlative readings of this movement have been given by three conductors: Beecham, Weingartner, and, oddly, Mengelberg. Beecham and Weingartner always play gently romantic music well, but the performance of the somewhat coarse and blatant Mengelberg is a surprise. Beecham excels in even number Beethoven, but his Third, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth are quite unidiomatic. He is not really a Beethoven conductor at all, but I personally prefer his Second, Fourth, and Eighth to those of all other conductors. If there is a better Sixth than Beecham's, it is that of Bruno Walter, the embodiment of the Viennese tradition (and specifically Viennese, not even Austrian, let alone German).

Toscanini's peculiar genius is in accord with the times; we have much admiration for speed, drama, and impersonal aspiration. Yet it is the spiritual quality of Beethoven's works that gives them that extra dimension of greatness, and this metaphysical tradition is part of the equipment of the great German and Austrian conductors: Furtwängler, Klemperer, Knappertsbusch, Weingartner, Walter. Furtwängler, it seems to me, had qualities of brain, heart, and spirit that, in spite of his faults, brought his readings very near to the heart of the great Beethoven of the third period. The gramophone enables us to make comparisons. We can hear Nikisch's Fifth, and regret that Mahler, who could have recorded, did not; we can hear the readings of conductors young, old, and dead, of every nation, side by side, and use their readings as we might any other musicological tool. We can greet newcomers and see if they have learned Toscanini's lesson of clarity while retaining the spiritual quality of the German tradition.

What were the tempos like? They varied; varied with the most protean of all composers' protean progeny, each demanding a world of unique concentration, each uniquely different. An army of musicians, belonging to every nation and tradition (and, for the record collector, an ever widening span of time), unite in bringing us this man—who contained multitudes, whose time was eternity, whose nation was mankind.

Noel

by R. A. Israel

AT SIXTY-ONE, England's pioneer *enfant terrible* of the 1920s is lithe, bursting with energy and plans. His first novel, *Pomp and Circumstance*, reached the best-seller lists; his recent play *Waiting in the Wings* has had a long successful run in London; and his first new musical comedy in over a decade, *Sail Away*, is about to open in New York.

Noel Coward is a man whose total devotion is to his craft. His prolific wit and satiric mind, his sure insight into human behavior, are cherished by a large group of theatre- and music-loving people, for the most part over thirty, who can recall his long and versatile career as playwright, director, actor, film maker, composer, and lyricist. There are others, however, who mistakenly regard his work as a glib reflection of a superficial age that made a specialty of facetiousness.

Since he is fundamentally a playwright, the vast bulk of Coward's music was conceived for the theatre and is directly related to that medium. His songs and routines can be considered apart from their original show settings, however; and as a separate literature they provide, through the eyes of a perceptive satirist, a marvelous and intriguing look into our world of upheaval and change.

Noel Coward first "appeared" at Teddington, on the morning of December 16, 1899. The beginning of the Edwardian era, this was for middle-class families a time of gathering around the piano for after-dinner concerts, of recitals by cousins or the "talented auntie," of evangelical hymn singing. At seaside resorts, variety acts thrived under colorful open tents, and popular songs were heard everywhere by pleasure-seeking groups promenading in their holiday finery at Brighton or Bognor. In the large cities vaudeville flourished with abundance (and abandon) to the delight of devoted audiences.

"I had a happy childhood," Coward told me, in response to a query about his early years. "I had a wonderful mother who adored me and a father who was amiable. We had no money and this was very difficult. Accordingly, I started professionally when I was a little boy. I adored the theatre, and musical theatre especially." Coward's mother came of good family, and she remained a gentlewoman in spite of financial difficulties. She also had a passion for theatre, and from his fifth year on, her companion in the audience was her son.

The whole of the period was saturated with operetta and musical comedy, and its impact on Coward's creative impulse is consistently apparent in some of his larger works for the musical stage as well as in individual songs. This is especially true of the resplendent *Bitter Sweet* (1929), certainly one of his most popular successes. In creating this work, Coward deliberately set out to fashion a romantic, sentimental musical based on the old operetta form. But he has never allowed sentiment to predominate for long. A striking duality, an affinity for the satiric along with an understanding of the romantic, is always evident: while he can fondly muse over the snug patchwork comfort of those early days, an intruding spirit of impish rebellion has always been present. Surprisingly enough, it was Mrs. Coward who encouraged this free spirit in her son.

"Being born in middle-class England and poor, I was not actually in the streets, but I was very much a part of everyday suburban life. All of my formative years were spent there, and it follows quite naturally that my first effort reflected this situation. The earliest lyric I ever wrote, which incidentally is not published, is in Cockney. *It Is Only Me* is its title," Coward said, "and believe me, it is only a 'little' Cockney song. In addition to the theatre music that I heard and adored, certain very great performers also had a profound effect on me in those years."

The famous high-styled craftsmanship of facile, dapper Charles Hawtrey particularly influenced Coward's acting technique and enhanced his general knowledge of the theatre. "He was one of *the* marvelous comedians, a beautiful actor and wonderful director. I went to him when I was ten years old. He gave me my first big chance. He taught me so much without my knowing it. And, even today, if I play a comedy part, I think what 'the Governor' would have done. He was technically superb. It was a matter of timing and understatement, use of voice, projection—giving the audience the impression you are absolutely natural and yet getting to the back of the gallery. All this I actually learned from Hawtrey."

The young performer also eagerly watched countless variety bills with George Robey, Beattie and Babs, Mme. Alicia Adelaide Needham and her choir, the Grotesques, Wild West Shows, and the celebrated Gertie Miller. ("Love of my life when I was a child. I went to her theatre every Sunday and waited outside the stage door to see her. She was, to me, the epitome of exquisite, musical comedy charm, slight, pretty, soft . . . and wicked as hell!")

Recently, I talked with a veteran character actress, one of Coward's closest companions during this period (1907-1920) and a featured player in many of his plays and musicals. She spoke revealingly of the

unpredictable adolescent performer: "Even at sixteen, he was fired with the desire to be successful. 'I'm frightened,' he said, 'because I want to act, I want to write plays, and I want to write music—and I'm terrified that I'm going to fall between the stools!'"

By 1919, having returned from a "brief and inglorious" service in the British Army, Coward turned with unabashed single-mindedness towards his goal—success. Significantly, he wistfully admired the popular appeal and professional artistry of a multi-talented new friend—the composer, film star, and matinee idol Ivor Novello. A man of great charm, Novello helped Coward tremendously, both artistically and personally, by introducing him to the elite of London's theatrical and social world.

Between job hunting and creative work, he managed invitations to the country set, where he briefly tasted some of the pleasurable (and vacuous) aspects of society. He noticed the velvet smoking jackets, the casual manner of the tennis-playing young set, their shirts and flannels showing just the proper amount of use in contrast to his newly acquired sportswear. He also recognized the completely conventional pattern of their conversation—as if he could predict what they were about to say. These people were his contemporaries, and yet Coward felt isolated and old in their company. Slowly he began to apply this experience in his writing; what was opulent and grand before the war appeared to him remote and meaningless.

Occasionally, he published a few songs or sold a play for \$500, but for the most part he was completely flat. The frustrating experience of poverty and rejection of his work, of ever increasing financial obligations, of only half-acceptance in the world of society (which both fascinated him and provoked his censure)—these factors gave Coward a new impetus.

"However," Coward assured me, "I am really devoid of blatant envy. That is a great comfort to me. I love to be successful, and I saw to it that I was!"

His satiric writing began to acquire a sharper, stinging tone; his lyrics etched the spirit of the time: "Life won't fool us," a trio chants in *Let's Live Dangerously*, "because we're out to lick it, we've got its ticket and we'll kick it in the pants." And with this new-found forcefulness came a remarkable control, the famed Coward imprint; control as a playwright, a lyricist, a performer; a control that was to become a trademark of Coward during his career. The key to Coward's wit is this control: understatement and the appearance of ease.

"Suggest, because it is much more effective. Suggestion is much more effective than editorializing. This applies to lyrics as well as theatre generally. The key to my brand of satire lies in insinuation. I don't say exactly what I think. The dialogue and lyrics have to sound absolutely natural and ordinary, but almost each line should have behind it the meaning of the situation. I believe in all the undercurrents which emerge. Because I insinuate, I am accused of being aloof and withdrawn. On the contrary. That is what makes it good."

Success cascaded upon him during the years from 1923 on. His plays and song lyrics examined issues that only Wilde and Shaw among

modern British dramatists had dared to touch: no foibles or vices were immune, no human pretensions or delusions. Commenting on this new arrival, Somerset Maugham exclaimed: "For us English dramatists the younger generation has assumed the brisk but determined form of Mr. Noel Coward. He knocked at the door with impatient knuckles, and then he rattled the handle, and then he burst in!" At first he was heralded by the press as the new white hope of England. His every move was devoutly reported. He was photographed to the point of absurdity in every conceivable costume and pose. He wore a turtle-neck sweater everywhere, and soon turtle-neck sweaters became the vogue throughout the land. Then, as suddenly, a violent reversal in public attitude set in.

He was labeled degenerate, superficial, a flash in the pan, a playboy whose meteoric rise could only lead to an equally meteoric fall into oblivion. Not long ago Lorn Loraine, Coward's staunchly devoted secretary and literary guardian since 1921, recalled the reasons for this reaction: "He was overwriting, producing too much; and in the eyes of the press his continued success had come to be almost infuriating."

But this time of mixed public reception had positive results for Coward as a creative artist. Opposition abetted Coward, nurtured his inventiveness, his ability to satirize. The bulk of his finest satires (then and now) owes much of its strength to this early period of struggle, for it served to clarify his intentions and to crystallize his techniques.

"On the words, generally, I spend more time perfecting a lyric than writing anything else. Sometimes they come easily. I generally write out the melody line first. I compose a line and then fill it with words. This method helps me to give the words their emphasis and contrast. If I sit down to write a verse, my ear will keep it in strict meter. No lyrics are good with strict meter. The twists and turns demanded by a melody help to make a lyric imaginative and interesting."

Coward reflected further: "It's the human situation that interests me, the people. For example, so many recent works that have talent are spoiled by bias: moral bias, political bias and, nowadays, a bias of defeat. I don't believe the world is done for. By overeditorializing, by emphasizing one's own bias, one can spoil dramatic impact. I have never, never been remotely interested in the abstract 'political idea.' If you analyze my work, the plays themselves and the lyrics, they are about people, unless I am talking of a revealing condition that amuses me. I am not what they call a conventionally 'profound' thinker." Coward paused in search of words that would clarify. "Maybe I am," he said, a smile flickering across his face, "but I am not going to bore an audience with it. I'd rather they come again and again."

Coward's satiric gifts are particularly memorable when applied to political absurdities: "It seems such a shame when the English claim the earth, that they give rise to such hilarity and mirth," he exclaims, while prodding the decaying ribs of colonialism. And in matters of sex, love, and lust, the author, again, has not spared the rod: ". . . because I am a realist," Coward interjected during our interview, "I know romance is an enchanting and charming thing, but very effervescent. To love is touching and filled with lovely plans for the future, and I also know it does not last or very, very rarely does."

The Coward pen has often etched a hard and absolute spectacle of vulgar self-indulgence, recalling the uncompromising accuracy of Daumier and George Grosz. "You may think food and drink constitute the core of us," Coward writes in the song *Regency Rakes* (1933). "That may be, for we represent the ineffable scent of our age; we are ruthless and crude." Marginal sex is also blatantly revealed: "Blasé boys are we, exquisitely free from the dreary and quite absurd moral views of the common herd . . . pretty boys, witty boys, too, too, too lazy to fight stagnation. Haughty boys, naughty boys, all we do is to pursue sensation!"

Today, Noel Coward's aura of disenchantment has become almost a personal trademark. His view of the forces that move modern society inevitably is tinged with regret and a backward glance. He feels that the world of his youth has virtually been obliterated by the machine and that personal life is being forced into rigid conformism by impersonal external forces.

"I think modern life, on account of advertising, radio, and television, has changed. The little romance that still exists takes place in front of or comes out of a television screen. The accouterments have changed. Now it is all so quick. Romance has to get in under the wire." Once again the sentiments that Coward expressed to me in conversation are reflected in the lyrics of a song: ". . . everything's altered and changed about. Progress goes on, glamour has gone . . . speed and power, hour by hour . . . coal-dust and grime, no one has time, for any simple romance at all. . . ." Thus *Lorelei*, Coward's brilliant satire on contemporary life. "George Gershwin adored that song," he remarked as an aside. "He was a wonderful, vital composer, and a dear man."

Never one to overlook the humorous side of a quandary, Coward observes that we have pills galore designed to shield us from the "ultimate abyss" and that our modern "chic ambition" is to remain uncompromisingly young at all costs. With this magic strength we will survive the age of the atom and eventually the search for eternal youth will be successful. Everyone will be absolutely young, permanently!—posing this unique sociological question: "What's going to happen to the children, when there aren't any more grownups?"

To Coward, the frantic groping of modern man for diversion is a symptom of our uprooted century: "Play, orchestra, play . . . for we must have music to drive our fears away. While our illusions swiftly fade for us, let's have an orchestral score; in the confusions the years have made for us, serenade for us just once more."

But the famous Coward disenchantment is more philosophical than defeatist. "Everything alters and combines differently," he said to me at the close of our last meeting. He stood in the doorway, the collar of his brown checkered overcoat turned up for fall. "There is only the appearance of change. The world goes around, full circle." He made a circular motion with his right arm. The inevitable cigarette was there, its smoke curling up towards the ceiling.

Should Music Be Played "Wrong"?

by Charles Rosen

THERE ARE TWO opposed views of performance, both equally mistaken in my opinion. One is the belief that a composition should be played as it was during the composer's lifetime, and the other is that the performer should use the work as a vehicle for expressing his own personality. The second view is intellectually disreputable, and I do not propose to beat a dead horse, even one whose ghost still walks. But the first has pretensions to respectability, and it needs the stuffing knocked out of it. This is what I now propose to do.

Schoenberg once remarked, "My music is not modern, it is only badly played." It seems to me that this remark is as disingenuous as it is provocative. Like most things, music is generally badly played, and there is nothing particularly reprehensible, shocking, or even surprising about this. It is the way things have always been and the way they always will be. I have heard a tape of a new composition in which most of the rhythms were at least slightly wrong, the players were rarely quite together, and often they forgot to come in at all. The composer lamented that if this tape were exhumed in the twenty-second century, students would conclude that it represented the performance practice of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, they would be quite right.

But Schoenberg's remark is disingenuous because it involves more than technical deficiencies. We have all heard note-perfect performances of Schoenberg's works (and of Beethoven as well) that made them seem completely dead and without any interest, while other performances were full of mistakes, but also were full of a genuine poetic life. There are an infinite number of ways of playing a piece of music badly, but also a great variety of ways of playing it well.

and everyone has his own tale to tell. Mine is the one of Berlioz and the clarinet players, which Berlioz relates in *Les Grottesques de la musique*. Berlioz once had to conduct an amateur orchestra in a performance of a symphony by Gyrowetz, a composer in whom Berlioz was as uninterested as we are today. The first sounds from the clarinets produced a horrible discord. Berlioz stopped and said to the clarinets, "You must have mistaken one piece of music for another. We are playing in D and you have just played in F."

"No, Monsieur, we have the right symphony." They begin again. New discord, another stop.

"Let me see your parts. Ah, I see the mistake; your part is written in F, but for clarinets in A, and you have clarinets in C."

"They are the only ones we have."

"Transpose a third down."

"We don't know how."

"Then stop playing."

"Ah, no, we are members of the society, and we have the right to play just like everybody else."

Then there is the soprano who so heavily ornamented an aria of Rossini when she sang it for the composer that his comment was, "Beautiful. Who wrote it?"

These are the amateur and minor performers. But what about the great performers? There is the famous occasion when Liszt played one of Chopin's mazurkas in public in such a manner that Chopin, outraged, went out and replayed the piece himself to show how it should have been done. Liszt had the grace to apologize and to acknowledge the justice of Chopin's criticisms, but how many other musicians would have had his generosity? And here is a letter of Beethoven's to his most faithful and distinguished interpreter, Carl Czerny: "Today I cannot see you, but tomorrow I will call on you myself to have a talk with you—I exploded so yesterday but I was sorry after it had happened; but you must pardon that in a composer who would have preferred to hear his work exactly as he wrote it, no matter how beautifully you played in general." Yet all that Czerny had done was to permit himself the normal liberties of the time which, we are told, most musicians took. This should make us suspicious not of the existence of these traditions, but of their relevance and of their application.

Indeed, so far we have been dealing with the whims and caprices of individuals, small and great; but the inequities of performance have a larger range and embrace the most general practices. The custom of interrupting a symphony or concerto with solos between the movements was widespread in the nineteenth century: the premiere of Beethoven's violin concerto was made more interesting by the interpolation between the first and second movements of a sonata for upside-down violin with one string, written by the violinist. But this is only the most scandalous and bizarre example of a general tradition.

To move back into the eighteenth century, in 1767 Rousseau complained that the conductors at the Paris Opera made so much noise beating a rolled-up sheet of music paper on the desk to keep the orchestra in time that one's pleasure in the music was spoiled. But this practice was

traditional and part of the immediately audible experience of eighteenth-century opera.

We can go back further still, at least to the sixteenth century. The uncertainty of the *musica ficta* (the sharps and flats not written down by the composer but necessary to performance) is not a modern uncertainty but one shared by contemporary performers and singers. (It seems that they were often as much in doubt as we are.) Lewis Lockwood has commented on a contemporary description of an entertaining dispute around 1540 by two singers in Rome over the use of accidentals in the performance of a work.

You will see what I am getting at: there is no reason to assume that performers understand the nature or even the implications of the music written during their lifetime. I have in mind not only the particular performers but the traditions of the age in general. Even the composers themselves—not only insofar as they themselves perform, but as composers—must be included with performers in this respect. That is, even the performance imagined by the composer as he writes may deform, or leave unrealized and unheard, something essential in the music as written. This may seem paradoxical if one believes that the music is only the notation of an imagined and possible realization, but I do not think that conception is tenable. In short, what I am challenging is the authority—or, better, the nature of the authority—of the study of performance practice. But I am not, I emphasize, challenging its relevance or its significance.

We can examine this best by taking an extreme case, where the features will be magnified, so to speak. The traditions of performance during any period will be most at variance with music that is in some way radically new, that quite evidently calls for a new approach in performance. (For the moment we may dismiss the possibility of genuine innovation by the performer: in such a case the performer must be regarded as a composer. This will seem less illogical if we reflect that Liszt's arrangements of Paganini, Bellini, and even of Bach must be classified as original works of art.) The nature of that collision between stylistic innovation and performance is not susceptible of straightforward or simple definition, and to see how it takes place I should like to consider the disappearance between 1770 and 1810 of the continuo in the piano concerto, particularly its significance for Mozart.

A sense of drama was an important part of late eighteenth-century music. We can see this from the development of the keyboard concerto during the period that preceded Mozart's maturity. From 1750 to 1770 a figured-bass or continuo accompaniment on the keyboard was sometimes still harmonically necessary in all the purely orchestral sections. This accompaniment by the soloist, however, was felt to be injurious to the dramatic effect of his entrances as a soloist; to reinforce the contrast between the orchestral and solo passages, the soloist stopped accompanying the orchestra for a few measures before each of his solo entrances.

Mozart, on the other hand, never bothered to set off his solo entrances in this way. If we were to believe, as some would now have us do, that Mozart continued to use the solo instrument as an accompanying

instrument in the tutti, it would imply that the minor composers who preceded him were more interested in the dramatic effect of the solo entrances than was Mozart. This conclusion is plainly not easy to accept. In every way, Mozart made the soloist of his concertos more like a character in an opera, to emphasize the dramatic qualities of the concerto.

The evidence of Mozart's use of the piano as continuo instrument in the concertos after 1775 consists of the following: 1) the manuscripts clearly show that Mozart almost always wrote *col basso* in the piano part whenever the piano is not playing solo; 2) every one of the editions of the concertos published in the eighteenth century gives a figured bass for the piano during the tuttis; 3) there is a realization in Mozart's handwriting of a continuo part for the early D major Concerto, K. 238.

We must, however, remember the conditions of public performance during the late eighteenth century. No one played from memory, and a full score at the keyboard would have been too cumbersome. Nor did conductors always use a full score; it was, as a matter of fact, common practice to use only a first violin part. The pianist used the violoncello part for cues, a tradition that dates back to a time when a pianist actually had to play continuo. (Even Chopin's concertos were published with a continuo part!) In Mozart's concertos no extra note is needed to fill in the harmony; and nowhere does the texture of the music require the kind of continuity that the steady use of figured bass can give. Continuo playing in secular music died out in the second half of the eighteenth century, although gradually, and everything about the music of Haydn and Mozart tells us that it was *musically* dead by 1775.

Eighteenth-century performance was, in general, a less formal affair than it is today (Haydn's letter about his Paris symphonies, in which he suggested that at least one rehearsal would be advisable before a performance, gives an idea of what was happening). Did a pianist ever play some part of the continuo, if not all of it? When the pianist conducted from the keyboard, he did play chords to help keep the orchestra together, and perhaps even added a little extra sonority to the louder sections. Eighteenth-century piano sound is so weak that even if the pianist played some of the continuo, he would have been inaudible most of the time except to members of the orchestra, unless of course he played loudly. But there is no musical or musicological reason to suppose that anyone in the late eighteenth century ever played a continuo part other than discreetly. As the size of the orchestra increased, the continuo became not only unnecessary but absurd as well. From the point of view of modern performance, it would be acceptable if the pianist played the figured bass, provided no one could hear him.

There was, however, a way of playing the more lightly scored concertos—and that was at home with a string quintet. Mozart once wrote to his father apologizing for not sending him the manuscript of some new concertos because, he said, "the music would not be of much use to you . . . [they] all have wind-instrument accompaniment and you very rarely have wind-instrument players at home." The realization of the continuo for the K. 238 concerto was intended for such an occasion: the piano accompanies the orchestra only during the passages marked *forte*, and at only one point does it double the melody—significantly at the only place

in the entire concerto where the winds play alone without being doubled by the strings. This realization, then, is clearly for a performance without winds—a private performance with string quintet—with the piano adding a little extra sonority to the loud parts.

The indication of continuo in the Mozart concertos should be considered together with the evidence for piano parts in the later Haydn symphonies. Haydn himself conducted the first performances of the London symphonies from the keyboard; there is even a little eleven-measure piano solo at the end of his Symphony No. 98 that has come down to us. Yet in all of the half-dozen editions of this symphony published during Haydn's lifetime, the solo is omitted: it is found only in an edition published after his death, and in arrangements for piano quintet and piano trio—in one of these arrangements it is assigned to the violin. Against the background of the immense output of solo writing for all other instruments in the Haydn symphonies, only eleven optional measures for piano exist as an example of Haydn's wit. The responsibility for keeping the orchestra together at the first performance was divided between the concertmaster, Salomon, and the composer at the keyboard; it must have been delightful at the end of a symphony to hear an instrument—whose prior musical significance had been that of a prompter at an opera—suddenly begin to play a solo. The charm of this passage is not that the piano was used for symphonic works, but that, with the exception of these eleven measures, it was seen but not heard. (It would be impossible to appreciate this joke in a modern performance, although the sonority of the little piano solo is so enchanting that it is a pity to leave it out.) The keyboard had, by that time, long since lost its function of filling in the harmonies, and it was no longer useful in keeping an ensemble together.

In all of this discussion, there has been one important absence—an empty chair for the guest of honor who never turned up. It involves a question missing from all the literature on the subject, as far as I know. We have asked whether the continuo was used and whether it was necessary, but we have never asked what the musical significance of the continuo is. There should, after all, be a difference between a performance of any work with keyboard instrument adding harmonies and a performance without one—a specifically musical difference. Why did composers cease to use the keyboard instrument to fill in the harmonies? It would have been easier than distributing the notes over other instruments, and also a decided advantage in keeping an orchestra together. Furthermore, why would the addition of even a discreet continuo to a Brahms or Tchaikovsky symphony seem so ludicrous?

A continuo (or any form of figured bass) can outline and isolate the harmonic rhythm of a composition. That is why it is indicated generally by "shorthand" figures under the bass rather than by writing out the exact notes. Only the harmonic changes are important—the doubling and spacing of the harmony are only secondary considerations. This isolation, this emphasis upon the rate of change in the harmony, is essential to the baroque style, particularly the late, or high, baroque of the first half of the eighteenth century. This is a style whose motor impulse and energy come from the harmonic sequence, and it is this that gives life and vitality to a relatively undifferentiated texture.

The energy of late eighteenth-century music is not based on the sequence, but on the articulation of periodic phrasing and modulation (or what we may call large-scale dissonance). Emphasizing the harmonic rhythm is therefore not only unnecessary but positively distracting. The tinkle of a harpsichord or a late eighteenth-century piano is a very pretty sound when it is heard in a Haydn symphony, but its prettiness has no relevance to the music and no significance beyond its agreeable noise value. That Haydn himself was unable to conceive of a more efficient way of conducting an orchestra puts him on a par with all the other performers of his day, performers who had not caught up with the radical change of style that had taken place in 1770, and for which Haydn himself was so largely responsible. This raises the question: does the composer know how his composition should sound?

Let us put this in its simplest possible terms. Contemporary testimony tells us that in 1790 when a conductor led from the keyboard he often stopped playing to wave his hands. When Haydn imagined the sound of one of his symphonies, he must indeed have expected a certain amount of piano or harpsichord sonority here or there, but nowhere in his music did he imply this as necessary or even desirable, except for that little joke in the Ninety-eighth Symphony.

This means that a composer's idea of his work can be both precise and slightly fuzzy: this of course is perfectly legitimate. There is nothing more exactly defined than a Haydn symphony, its contours well outlined, its details clear, and everything audible. Yet when Haydn wrote a note for the clarinet, it did not indicate a specific sound—there are lots of clarinets and clarinetists, and they all sound very different—but a large range of sound within well-defined limits. The act of composing is the act of fixing those limits within which the performer may move freely. But the performer's freedom is—or should be—bound in another way. The limits the composer sets belong to a system which in many respects is like a language: it has an order, a syntax, and a meaning. The performer brings out that meaning, makes its significance not only clear but almost palpable. And there is no reason to assume that the composer or his contemporaries always knew with certainty how best to make the listener aware of that significance.

With music that forces an important change on the musical language, there is generally a gap of at least twenty or thirty years before performers completely learn how to deal with it. When performers have finally grasped something new and different about the music written twenty years ago, a swing in fashion will cause them to lose contact and sympathy with that music. Performances of Bartók are a good example. Bartók was a splendid pianist of a school that seems somewhat old-fashioned today. *Espressivo* to him still meant playing with the hands not quite together, and he played his own music that way, as well as that of Liszt and Beethoven. However, in many of his works there is a very exciting kind of cross-accentuation which can only make its effect by an incisive and percussive performance. While we have learned this new rhythmical style—to some extent learned it from Bartók's own music—we have lost much of the relaxed grace and charm of his performances.

For much the same reason, it was a number of years before the music

of Beethoven was accepted with understanding: his symphonies could not have been really satisfactorily played so long as most musicians believed that they were filled with capricious and unjustified dissonance and that the form was arbitrary and unintelligible. As late as 1832 Berlioz and Fétis could still argue about an E flat in the clarinet part of the slow movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Fétis claiming that a typical Beethovenian dissonance must be a misprint. It was Berlioz who showed comprehension and understanding. And yet it was Berlioz who performed this same symphony with an orchestra of 400, including 36 double basses. A man who could do that must be said to have lost contact at some point with the music of Beethoven. While Berlioz could appreciate Beethoven's harmonic logic, the contemporary taste for the gigantic blinded him to Beethoven's proportions.

In short, there is no such thing as an authentic performance of a work, at least an interesting and original work, and what is more, there never was one. We are either too early or too late. And yet—it must be emphasized—the work of music remains unchanged behind this relativity, fixed, unswerving, and above all, in principle, accessible. This is the justification for the study of performance practice. It is not to unearth the authentic traditions of performance and to lay down rules, but to strip away the accretions and the traditions of the past (including those accepted by the composer himself) and the fashion and taste of the present—all of which get in the way of music more often than not.

All this may seem a little simple-minded, and it is certainly not original to remark that a radical innovation in music requires a number of years to be absorbed. I do not want to belabor the obvious, nor do I want to be paradoxical. But I recently read an article in the Times Literary Supplement written by H. C. Robbins Landon, a musicologist to whom we are all indebted and for whose work we are deeply grateful, in which he expressed the hope of hearing at last an "authentic performance of the Beethoven Second Concerto with a continuo." Leaving aside the question of authenticity, I should like to ask, why? Does Landon think the work would be improved thereby, and if so, in what way? I can more easily imagine and sympathize with the musician of 1799, who wanted to hear a performance *without* any continuo, properly and efficiently conducted. My musician is not imaginary. He must have existed, for pianists very soon stopped playing any continuo at all—audible or inaudible—and they can only have stopped because it seemed a good idea.

If Landon's wish is inspired only by curiosity—to hear what this odd and useless appendage from the past is like—then I am at one with him. But my real dream is more ambitious: it is to hear a Rameau opera with the conductor loudly beating on the music stand with a rolled-up sheet of paper. For those who are interested in history, rather than the music, the ability of music to call up the past and to re-create it for us is a legitimate and important function; but this interest should not disguise itself as the search for *musical* authenticity.

"The Letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life" is a piece of wisdom that T. S. Eliot once reversed, and implied that an absence of ritual can destroy a tradition. It seems to me that both the Letter and the Spirit,

when separated, can kill. The performer who plays pedantically and only what is on paper and the performer who uses a piece of music as a springboard for his own private dreams or as a release for his personal inhibitions are not just equally unsatisfactory extremists. They often sound more alike than is realized. So too are opposing ideas of performance: that the way it was done during the composer's lifetime has immediate and absolute authority; that it doesn't matter how you play a piece provided it sounds well. These are mechanical principles that are applied without discrimination, and both, paradoxically alike, touch only the outer shell of music. Both treat music as if it had no significance and no reference beyond itself, forgetting that a performance is more than a voluptuous noise or a historical echo from the past.

Leadbelly's Last Sessions

by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

IN THE UNITED STATES, not so long ago, we had a giant of a man with us, a singer and adventurer whose exploits, if we did not know the actual facts of his existence, might one day have been amplified into a sort of Paul Bunyan legend that could hardly have been more colorful than the truth.

Leadbelly, or Huddie Ledbetter, was born in Mooringsport, Louisiana, son of a Negro farmer who worked 68 acres of land in the Caddo Lake district. From the beginning, young Huddie was bewitched by music. One uncle had a guitar; his friends played small accordions, or "windjammers," as they called them in that part-Cajun, part-Negro country. At twelve or thirteen, Huddie started riding off in the canebrakes and bottomlands to play for sukey jumps and breakdowns—Saturday night get-togethers in cabins and little, low dance halls. He was soon "good as they had on a windjammer," according to his own testimony.

It was a rough crowd. In the North, social workers would probably have intervened. But late nineteenth-century Negro youngsters in the South were allowed to go their way and settle their problems (no one considered them "problems," anyway) amongst themselves. They drank, they made love, and they got into fights.

It was one of these fights, a few years later, that started Huddie on the hardest part of his life, and shaped his career for years to come. In a bottomland fracas involving Huddie, a man was killed.

They hung a sentence on Huddie, and sent him to a prison camp, or county farm. He broke out of that, but soon got into other troubles. He was too young, too handsome, too powerful. Women couldn't let him alone, and he couldn't let them alone. But through it all—from 1918, when he was sentenced in the Bowie County Courthouse, Texas, to 1935, when

he was released from the Angola State Prison Farm, in Louisiana—Huddie kept close to his music. He broke jail, he rambled, he married and remarried, he picked cotton, he worked in a car agency; all this was part of, but strangely incidental to, the main drive of his life—the need to learn more songs, the need to perform them, anywhere.

He was released from Angola on "good time." There, he had known work hard enough to kill other men, and the sting of the lash, administered because of his "impudence." By that time, John A. Lomax, expert folklorist and curator of the Archives of American Folk Music of the Library of Congress, had found him. Setting off in the Lomax car the folklorist and his discovery began an informal "lecture" and "recital" tour, stopping at several universities.

At Harvard, Professor Kittredge, longtime student of music and folklore, was impressed. It must have been a strange moment. All their lives, folklorists in musty retreats examine, weigh and compare ballads and songs that have to do with robber bridegrooms, pale horses, pale riders, brigands, cutthroats, and deeds of lust and violence. But here was pale Professor Kittredge, and here was Leadbelly. Looking up from his books, Kittredge must have swallowed hard. Turning to Leadbelly's impresario, he whispered, "He is a demon, Lomax."

During the latter years of his life, Leadbelly shed the demon. More and more, he placed music ahead of everything, and with his wife, Martha Promise, settled down to a relatively calm life. It was Martha who made this possible. She loved him; she took care of him; she was there when he needed help. And it is because of Martha that Huddie settled down, too, to the long task of recording the great body of folklore and song he had collected all along the way of his rambling, rough career. For the Library of Congress, Leadbelly recorded close to 135 songs. Later, for commercial record companies, he cut a disappointingly small total of his repertoire.

I cannot recall the exact date of my first meeting Leadbelly, but I shall never forget hearing him sing for the first time. Charles Edward Smith and I had just completed work on the book *Jazzmen*. It was Smith who heard Leadbelly first, and suggested that we should both know more of the music that, he was convinced, had done much to feed jazz some of its most vigorous material. So he dragged me to a Greenwich Village bistro where Leadbelly was singing for coffee and cake. We sat at a table and talked with Huddie.

My immediate impression was of the man's strength. Years later, when Martha once remarked, "He's built like King Kong," I knew what she meant. Here was the individual who had been lead man on the hardest chain gangs of Texas and Louisiana, working under broiling July and August sun in the canebrakes, and who had survived. There were tales told of him that were almost superhuman: that he could pick 1,000 pounds of cotton a day (this wasn't true, but like some of Bunyan's feats, it was close to true; he had outpicked every other man on the gangs); that he had cut away from one gang with the ball and chain still in his hands, and the guard's bullets ripping the dirt out from under his feet; that a man had once got a knife in his neck and pulled it halfway 'round before Huddie's girl friend beat off the assailant; that he could dance and play

all night long in the compound, and then go out and do a full day's work.

The scar was still there, on his neck. Only this was a man who dressed quietly, in a dark gray or brown suit, and who sat and talked quietly, in heavy southern speech that rolled and murmured with retards and elisions; at first, it was hard to understand what he was saying.

We talked a bit, and I noticed that Leadbelly didn't go in for "conversational" speech. Always, it was about something he had just sung, or was about to sing. Of the past, he was blank. He was content to forget.

We sat and drank beer, and then someone up on the little platform announced that "Leadbelly, King of the Twelve String Guitar," was about to sing some more. Leadbelly got up, walked slowly over to the platform, guitar in hand (it never left him), and, with a few slow words of introduction to the audience, thrashed into his song.

His was not a subtle voice; it lacked agility and it had grainy, hard overtones. But there was rhythm in every syllable and conviction in every word—and incredible volume: he never needed a microphone to sing in a crowded hall, and everything he sang rang out loud and clear; clear, that is, if you understood Louisiana.

Underneath his suit, the muscles rippled visibly as he strummed his guitar. Before that evening was over, we had heard "Gray Goose," "Rock Island Line," "Ha Ha This-A Way," "Ol' Riley," "Salty Dog," and a big fistful of Leadbelly's other classics. Furthermore, I had become convinced that if you cared about music at all, you couldn't ignore Leadbelly.

This was the beginning of a long friendship. And all along the way, I learned from Huddie—what his songs meant, why he sang them, and how he loved them.

Two or three years later, I found myself preparing, for an English publication, a discography of all the songs Leadbelly had recorded. At that time, I got hold of as many of the recordings as I could, and listened to them. And although I was overwhelmed by the number of titles in his repertoire, I was at the same time disappointed. The earlier, Library of Congress recordings, by far the most complete collection of his songs, had been taken for the most part on a portable machine, and the best that could be said of them was that they were highly unfaithful to the original. (In 1935, the phrase "high fidelity" was only a password to dingy backrooms frequented by renegade engineers and other dangerous persons.)

The commerical recordings, too, lacked a great deal in quality, and gave no idea of the vitality of Leadbelly's gargantuan voice. Then, too, something else was lacking—a characteristic immediately perceptible in his "live" performances, but dead as a padded anteroom on the records. It was the warm, intimate quality that came over when Leadbelly sat and performed for a small group, talking as he sang, singing as he talked. It may be that then, sometime back in 1942 or 1943, I first thought of recording Leadbelly as I felt he should be recorded.

However, I still hoped that one of the big studios would come through with some crisp, clean recordings of Leadbelly, something that would give an idea of his personality as well as his music. But Leadbelly's

brushes with commercial companies were annoyingly unproductive. They simply didn't have the time or the interest to deal with artists whose music-making had to be spontaneous. Leadbelly experienced the frustration of sessions cut short just as he was warming up; of recordings made, then withheld because they weren't "commercial" enough.

By the fall of 1948, Leadbelly was also smarting from the Grade B reception Hollywood had accorded him. He had set off for that city during the feverish war years, sure he would conquer it and, after it, the world. Instead, he had ended up as entertainer at parties given by celebrities—but no one ever took him seriously as a star or an artist. His song "4, 5, and 9" reflects some of his disillusionment. An executive at one of the parties had said, laughingly, "Sure, call me up tomorrow at 45 to 9," when Leadbelly had asked for a test. Leadbelly didn't realize that this was a Sunset Boulevard brush-off, and had had to go through the additional pain of being laughed off the switchboard when he took the remark literally and put through a call at a quarter past eight.

His last "commercial" records, a mere handful of five or six sides, were made for Capitol around 1946, and although "Irene," the title he knew would someday be a hit (it was—a year after his death), was one of them, no one did anything to promote them. Yet Leadbelly wanted to perform, and to record. When he returned to New York, the director of WNYC, the municipal station, arranged a series of half-hour programs, and he began to feel a little better. But he had an increasing awareness that he probably never would be a "commercial" success.

Leadbelly's final acceptance of this fact, and my growing conviction that more could be done with an artist of his stature than was ever likely to be done commercially, finally brought us both to undertake private recordings. Then, too, time was running out; Leadbelly was no longer young, and too often I had seen projects postponed until it was too late. Years before, when I had first thought of recording Leadbelly, he probably would have refused, politely but firmly, to contribute so much time to a venture which he had been told would bring no financial return.

We had one thing in our favor. The long era of the big, clumsy acetate disc had just come to an abrupt close with the introduction, for the first time in the United States, of tape recording. In June of 1948, Columbia Records, Inc., had launched the long playing record. The combination of tape and microgrooves pointed to a different recording procedure. No longer would each separate selection have to be cut on a disc that, at its very longest, could play only five minutes in final form. No longer would artist and recorder have to labor over exact timing for each selection. And if Leadbelly wanted to talk between his selections, we could leave the microphone open and pick that up, too.

For Leadbelly, when he got going, had a routine that was like that of the record collector who, with a large library to choose from, spends an evening pulling out his favorite discs in a sequence both varied and suggestive. With tape, it was possible to record in sequence, and to preserve that sequence. From the first through the ninety-fourth, then, all the selections in the four-disc Folkways album we made are presented in exactly the same order as played by Leadbelly. The final editing was

simply a matter of removing a few extraneous bits of conversation that had kept creeping into the proceedings.

The recording sessions got under way exactly as I had hoped. One evening late in September, 1948, Leadbelly and Martha came to dinner. Afterward, we sat and talked. I had broached the subject of recording to Leadbelly, and showed him the tape machine. He began talking about the WNYC broadcasts, rehearsing them aloud as he went along. His guitar was at home, as I had said we'd merely discuss the project on that first evening. But when he began to sing, I got the machine going, and set the microphone down beside him. We were on our way.

Selections 1 through 34 were recorded on that first evening with Martha joining in on several of the choruses. Because he hadn't brought the guitar along, Huddie sang many of the songs which he normally did without accompaniment—shouts and hollers, field calls, and blues. Among them was a long version, longer than any previous recording, of the splendid "Ol' Hannah," the song workers in the gangs address to the sun—"Go down, Ol' Hannah, and don't you rise no more." Others were "Yes, I'm Standing in the Bottom," a long chant not recorded before, and the "Dick Ligger's Holler." "I Ain't Goin' Down to the Well No More," a sort of lonely, penitent holler, "Black Betty," and "I'm Goin' Back Down in Louisiana" were others of the same kind. There was a rollicking version of "Blue Tail Fly," with new verses improvised as Leadbelly went along, and a spirited "Rock Island Line." There were spirituals like "Never Said a Mumbling Word," and "Old Ship of Zion."

When he heard a playback of the first "takes," Leadbelly was enthusiastic. "Man, you got something there," he said. "You can just let that thing run. Now let's try some more."

It was that way all through the first evening, the second, and the third. At first, Leadbelly wanted to hear all the playbacks. Then, when he was satisfied that these were "the best ever," he just kept on going. There was hardly time, between breaths, to get new tapes on the reels. Once in a while he stopped and asked to hear a favorite he had just put on the tape. Then he forgot all about playbacks, because he had to stop and listen, and that made him stop singing. Leadbelly was competing with Leadbelly, and that would never do. I don't think he ever heard any of the songs he recorded after that first evening.

There is hardly any need to put down in writing what happened after Leadbelly set forth on his songs, reminiscences, and talk. For everything that took place has been kept and is to be heard on the records. That the material has been preserved in this way is no accident. It also serves to explain why it has had to wait so long, since 1948, to be released. For when "Irene" became a hit, there was a flurry of interest among all the companies who had neglected Leadbelly. Several wanted to bring out part of the material that Leadbelly had recorded on tape, but not one of the major companies cared to preserve the sequence which is so vital a part of the feeling of these recordings. The only person in the entire record industry who would go along with this idea was Mr. Moe Asch, of Folkways Records. But in 1948, when the tapes were made, Folkways Records had a very small list, and had to proceed with caution.

There was a second evening in October, and for that occasion,

Leadbelly's old friend, Charles Edward Smith, came to hear and to help. Selections 35 through 75 were recorded on that night. Leadbelly was in particularly fine form this evening, and gave us one stunning example after another of his favorite blues and ballads, throwing in a popular tune here and there for variety.

It began to be evident, as the evening progressed, that Leadbelly was doing his very best to get down selections which he had never before recorded, and to bring forth from memory much of his past life. The thing that seemed to be running through his mind was a re-creation of his early, wandering years—of the days when he “banished away” from his childhood home and took to the road as a wandering ballad singer.

Particularly revealing is his song about Blind Lemon Jefferson, who was among the first major influences on Leadbelly's long musical life. Blind Lemon was to Leadbelly what Ma Rainey was to Bessie Smith—he took the young boy, and taught him his repertoire and his way of living. A fresh glimpse of that way of life is provided by Leadbelly's remarks about their train and bus rides together, and their boisterous trips to Silver City, a wide-open frontier district outside of Dallas, Texas. There is probably no clearer account on record of the way American folk musicians have traveled and learned together and of the way their song, passing freely from each man to his companion, grew and was enriched.

Notable, too, is the story Leadbelly tells about the ballad of “The Titanic.” According to Leadbelly, the captain of that boat had refused passage to Jack Johnson, the celebrated Negro pugilist. When the boat went down, Negroes who had been shocked by the captain's callous statement (quoted as “I ain't haulin' no coal”) tended to feel that a higher hand had passed judgment on the captain's man-made laws of segregation. And Leadbelly, fresh from the same sort of rejection in Hollywood, puts more than a little bite into his account of the disaster.

As we had planned it, the third evening (selections 75 through 94) might have taken us a little less than halfway through the project of recording all of Leadbelly's repertoire. But we never saw Leadbelly after that night, when he had sung as his last number the “Leaving Blues”—“I'm leaving you, and I won't come back no more.”

Not long after this, a trip to Europe was arranged for Leadbelly and he set out with high hopes. But in Europe, he was almost unable to play. After giving one concert at the *Fondation des États-Unis*, which was well received by the small group of Parisians who attended, Leadbelly was afflicted by the latter stages of chronic poliomyelitis. With atrophied muscles, it became impossible for him to go on. Sadly he returned to the United States. Not long after, on December 6, 1949, he died at Bellevue Hospital in New York City.

"A Mixture of Instinct and Intellect"—

George Szell on Conducting

by Paul Henry Lang

Lang: MR. SZELL, I shall not ask you about your favorite dishes, nor about whom you consider your ten favorite composers. Since this is an opportunity for readers to be admitted to the workshop of a conductor, let us engage in shop talk. Conducting, like other forms of executing music, relies, of course, both on instinctive musical feeling and on technical mastery of a craft. But, unlike a solo performer, a conductor is engaged in making others carry out his wishes. Therefore, another dimension is involved. Would you care to comment on this?

Szell: To make an orchestra—to make players—realize the diverse characteristics of various styles and to transfer this realization to their music-making is one of the most important tasks of a conductor. The means to this end are, of course, partly of a technical nature. I personally like complete homogeneity of sound, phrasing, and articulation within each section, and then—when the ensemble is perfect—the proper balance between sections plus complete flexibility—so that in each moment one or more principal voices can be accompanied by the others. To put it simply: the most sensitive ensemble playing. Perhaps I can best characterize my idea when I say it should be a chamber music approach, not a hundred men playing while looking, like slaves, at the stick, but a hundred men playing, each of them listening, so far as possible, to the ninety-nine others, and trying to make music together the way a string quartet does. Because of the size of an orchestra it has to be done under the *guidance* of a conductor, but not under his *knout*—if I may put it that way. Does this give you an answer?

Lang: It certainly does—and it's an interesting counterbalance to the

widespread belief that the conductor elicits sounds from the players solely by his choreography.

Szell: Now here I must go one step further. While the choreography is really not essential—and sometimes it's even harmful because aimed primarily at the audience, not at the player—the posture, the gestures, and the facial expressions of a conductor are of tremendous importance—as you yourself recognize, because as I happen to know as a very young man you played in an orchestra.

Lang: And on one occasion under you—when you were also a very young man.

Szell: And under me! Even that! After more than fifty years' experience as "conducting" conductor and as "observing" conductor, it still seems to me miraculous how the sound of an orchestra can change from one minute to another according to what type of person stands in front, and according to what type of hand the players watch, and what type of eye looks at them. I found in our tests for the Ford Foundation's project for young conductors a very vivid demonstration of this miracle, when one contestant stepped up and conducted for ten minutes and then another took over and the orchestra sounded completely different. Now, I wish I could explain this to you, but I think that it is really inexplicable—we just have to put it down to the miraculous little residue that remains probably in each artistic discipline and which can fortunately never be explained.

Lang: While you are catholic in your tastes, you have acquired a reputation as a specialist in the works of the so-called classical composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Would you comment on the widely shared bit of nonsense that this music must be doctored for modern audiences? What are your beliefs in this regard, and how did you bring your men to so felicitous an understanding of this music?

Szell: Well, I'm certainly of the opinion that this music does not have to be, and should not be, doctored. I think it is perfectly possible and even necessary to play it without any doctoring. What is essential is a feeling for the style of the music. The approach, particularly on the part of the strings, will have to be a little bit different from the approach that some take to Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff and which they then like to apply to older literature. The works of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries demand a distinct curbing of exhibitionist tendencies, at the same time that the delivery must not be allowed to become cold or dry or doctrinaire. It should be very warm, yet chaste, graceful, and elegant—yet not affected. It's the man of a different period who expresses himself. And then, there are technical questions that come into play, as to how many strings. . . . You have another question?

Lang: Yes. It is understood that in our large concert halls the typical eighteenth-century orchestra would be somewhat lost. Some conductors

just go ahead and play Mozart with the standard modern complement, which of course does not do, while others reduce the strings, which in itself is not an ideal solution. You seem to employ a much more subtle procedure. Would you describe it?

Szell: Yes, I think I can give you a very exact answer. In some works, in some of the more majestic or festive works, where we know that even Mozart himself was enchanted by performances with a big string choir and with doubled woodwinds, I proceed in the same manner. With other works, I reduce the number of strings, but then I have a variable reduction scheme. Supposing I take a standard complement of strings in a given composition: twelve first, ten second violins, eight violas, five or six cellos, three or four basses—I like, incidentally, to lighten up the basses for obvious reasons. This probably will give me the proper balance for most of the piece. But if I find that in some spots it does not, I reduce all sections or some sections even further, albeit often only for certain passages.

Lang: I have noticed that, and I have wondered how you arrived at these differences. Here you reduce, there you add, and the statements are always clear.

Szell: It's a question of balance. You see, it is the balance I pre-hear that I go after—and if you ask me how I do that, what I do, then perhaps the best answer is, I have a conception; I have an aural image of what I want, and I go after it *coûte que coûte*, with all the means at my disposal.

Lang: Well, it's very interesting because clarity, of course, is the first thing in this music and you get it by balance.

Szell: Absolutely. But let me add one thing. Though I don't want to reflect on my colleagues, I feel that not very many present-day conductors are basically and constitutionally attuned to polyphonic hearing, if you know what I mean. For my part, I have been trained to hear in my mind the whole texture and I hear the various parts and voices in their relationship and proportion before I hear the actual sound. Then I try to match the actual sound with this preconception.

Lang: I have a concrete example in this regard. In one of your recent recordings, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19 with Serkin, the complicated polyphonic passages came out with exceptional clarity. How do you approach this situation, the most difficult task in orchestral playing?

Szell: I think I have given you the main answer but I have to add something. If an orchestra is trained to honest chamber-music-like playing, with the result that every player in every section plays every note with the proper articulation and emphasis in dynamics . . . if that is the case, the task of the conductor is made very much easier. Then he can put together a few strands which already are clean and balance them

properly. Now, how does one train an orchestra to do this? By simply not putting up with anything less.

Lang: And if the players are constantly reminded to listen to each other . . .

Szell: It becomes second nature for them.

Lang: But you see, in our youth, you and I were brought up on chamber music. That's missing today.

Szell: Unfortunately, yes. There has been a greater and greater separation between chamber music and orchestral music. Today you have elite chamber music players who never play in an orchestra, and you have orchestral players who never play chamber music except sometimes for their own entertainment—and then most of the time it's pretty awful. I would remind you that the Rosé Quartet—which was for a generation probably the best string quartet in Central Europe and which studied the repertoire with a certain Gustav Mahler who happened to be the brother-in-law of the first fiddler, Rosé—this Rosé Quartet was nothing but the section leaders of the Vienna Philharmonic and the Opera.

Lang: Our musicians have become specialists.

Szell: Yes, but this is a very dangerous type of specialization. The divorce between chamber music and orchestral playing is ruinous. I stoutly maintain that whatever is possible to attain in the way of performance clarity and purity and cleanliness in chamber music is possible with an orchestra if you know how and if you devote enough time and attention to this end.

Lang: Attention to detail is always the mark of a good conductor. But fullness of detail is not always a merit. In your own work it seems to me that you never miss the thematically relevant passages but are averse to the kind of clinical examinations some conductors are fond of. Is this instinctive or planned?

Szell: I suppose it is both. Altogether, if I may digress for one moment, I think that what we should aim at is the perfect mixture of instinct and intellect in the application of what we are able to do, and sometimes I am tempted to tell my students that the ideal thing would be if we could arrive at the point where we think with our hearts and feel with our brains. But to answer this question a little more specifically, I believe that awareness of the relationship of details to the whole is what is most important. If details are lifted out of proportion simply because the conductor is proud to have discovered something which seems to have been hidden, then the performance can very easily become a travesty or a caricature. But every detail in its proper place and with its proper emphasis will enhance the effect—and by effect I mean not an outward effect but the result desired by the composer. I start out with the

assumption that everything a good composer writes down is supposed to be heard except in obvious cases where a coloristic impression is intended, as for instance the violin figurations in Wagner's "Magic Fire Music."

Lang: I asked this because the other day I heard a recording by a very distinguished conductor of advanced years who brought out every little detail with the utmost clarity—to the point where eventually it seemed merely meaningless precision.

Szell: Because probably the big general line was lost. Well, there are also aesthetic questions involved. You see, one term which was used one hundred and fifty years ago so very, very frequently and which is not used any more except very rarely is the term "taste."

Lang: Yes, it's curious—everything is technique and precision and volume, and other things are forgotten.

Szell: But this term "taste" was used in the most serious evaluations of musicians.

Lang: What is historically wrong is nine times out of ten aesthetically wrong. Do you find it imperative to keep abreast of the serious literature on music and new critical editions of the great masters?

Szell: Yes, indeed, I find it extremely important to keep abreast of all these things, but—and here I may step into a hornet's nest—I have my reservations about some of the musicologists. Many of them are not musicians. The trouble is that many performing musicians have absolutely no musicological background and many musicologists are dry-as-dust scholars without any live contact with real music and music making.

Lang: And then the trouble is that they edit.

Szell: Exactly. They edit; and even if they edit Urtexts, they are apt to go much too far in dogmatic adherence to a manuscript, without taking into account that in many cases the first printing supervised by the composer may be more authentic than the manuscript—he might, for example, have made changes which he did not bother to incorporate in the manuscript. Also, I have found that some problems of authenticity simply cannot be considered as finally solved; later versions, later authenticated copies may very well be found and our understanding of the work changed. So, while I'm certainly in favor of knowing as much as can be known about these things and following every bit of musical research, there comes a moment when I feel—and I may be a heretic here—that my instinct and judgment as an experienced performer must be the guiding and, at last, the determining factor.

Lang: You are right.

Szell: Simply because if I cannot perform something with complete conviction, I cannot make it sound convincing to the listener.

Lang: What do you do with scores, such as Chopin's concertos, where even a conductor with abiding respect for the composer's intentions must take a hand in rectifying miscalculations?

Szell: Well, I would like to answer this question in two parts. If we take Chopin's concertos in particular, I am afraid that there is no remedy except complete reorchestration. Now, if we talk about certain other scores, I must confess to some retouchings, but I try to make them so discreetly that they are not really noticeable—at least I hope they're not. In Schumann's symphonies, for instance, in order to clarify the real intent of the composer it is absolutely necessary to retouch. One must exercise a careful hand, of course—that is, acting as if Schumann had had as much skill as an orchestrator as Weber but not making his work sound as if it had been orchestrated by Richard Strauss. I think you'll agree with that.

Lang: Yes, I do. As long as the retouching is imperceptible and sounds natural, it is fine. But how do you feel about these cadenzas foisted on great concertos?

Szell: I'm afraid that we could get into a real argument here. If you mean only the bad cadenzas that violin and piano pedagogues made for these concertos, I'm all with you. But if you say that cadenzas should be abolished altogether, I'm afraid I would not go along.

Lang: I wouldn't say that . . . but some of these cadenzas are a third as long as the movement itself.

Szell: That of course is very bad, but let's not forget one thing. The cadenza was thought of by the composer as something that *should* be happening. Just what, and to what length, was left originally to the taste of the performer. There is a *juste milieu* for this as well. If the cadenza has too little specific weight, it is not good. If it is exaggeratedly long and verbose, it is also bad. So how do we decide this question?

Lang: It would be ideal if the performer still could improvise.

Szell: Exactly.

Lang: Some can.

Szell: I have always been a bit skeptical about this sort of improvisation because I have often found, particularly after repeated listening to the same organist improvising, that there are a few stock formulas on which he falls back, no matter what the thematic material imposed upon him is. Now, since we have spoken about the separation between chamber music and orchestral music, why don't we speak about the regrettable separa-

tion between the composer and the performer? And why don't we say that actually every performer should be trained as a composer even if he has no talent for composing, so that he at least knows what the music universe looks like from the composer's vantage point?

Lang: In the old days they didn't teach conducting; they taught music, and then you started to conduct. Now, if I may, I'd like to ask you a few concrete technical questions. The phrasing and bowing of your strings is such as cannot be ascribed solely to a knowledgeable concertmaster. To what extent do you control your strings in this regard?

Szell: A hundred per cent, my dear Paul. You know that I own the complete orchestral materials of the whole standard repertoire. I take these orchestral parts everywhere, and they contain all the bowings and phrasings marked by me. I sometimes consult with my concertmaster, not to learn what is feasible but to find out what his personal preference may be in cases where there is more than one solution to a given problem. Basically, my bowings and phrasings are completely my own—and have been for the past thirty-five or forty years. I have made this a study as long as I have been connected with orchestras and strings; and I have found that not being a string player myself but having intimate knowledge of bow technique makes me less hidebound in habits and conventions. As a result, I sometimes can invent highly serviceable if unorthodox bowings for certain passages, which then enhance the effect, the plasticity, and the clear articulation.

Lang: I asked the question because I noticed it.

Szell: Well, I'm glad you did.

Lang: And the woodwinds. Yours sing. They are in perfect tuning, and the chord-defining tones are always on top. How is this done?

Szell: Here I must give very great credit to my woodwinds. I can think of no orchestra having a finer set of first wind players than the Cleveland Orchestra—and I don't want to overemphasize the word "first" because the sections as such are really distinguished. Of course, these players are not only highly competent; they are real artists. They have been working together and with me over a period of fifteen, eighteen years. And we have grown together, we have adjusted to each other.

Lang: Their intonation is marvelous.

Szell: Also as far as phrasing is concerned, they aim at the homogeneity which I love and demand, but you don't have to force it upon them. They work for it themselves and they listen to each other and really play with each other.

Lang: I notice also that the horns, the brass in general, by nature laggards, come in with as much precision as your woodwinds.

Szell: That is a matter of training—simply relentless admonition and intolerance of any imprecision. My horn section, in particular, is not as homogeneous as one could wish for. But they all have the same schooling, they play the same type instrument, they use the same type mouth-piece.

Lang: In your recent recording of a Mozart divertimento, there is some absolutely prodigious horn playing.

Szell: I agree with you. I must say that when I heard the record, I said to myself: I knew it was pretty good, but I had no idea it was that good.

Lang: In our modern orchestra, nine bass fiddles seem to be the rule—which to my own mind is too many—but yours never grumble and. . .

Szell: I would disagree with you slightly in saying that nine are too many. There are times when you really need that number, in the works having full orchestra and much brass, when you want the string bass to help carry the weight of the total structure. The important thing is that they play in the appropriate style and with the appropriate dynamic range.

Lang: Now a bit about your general musical attitudes. We are still under the influence of so-called "content aesthetics," as you can see from our program notes—everything always has a story or some particular feeling attached to it. But a Mozart symphony or a work like Beethoven's Fourth doesn't have any other purpose but music. How do you keep your mind free from conceptual diversions?

Szell: I wouldn't know how to permit entry of those conceptual diversions into my mind. It wouldn't occur to me to invent a program or to try to inspire an orchestra by extramusical hints and suggestions. Very, very rarely does it happen that I go very far out in making metaphoric suggestions. I might, for instance, ask for a velvety or silky sheen in the sound, or a breathless silence, but I would be much more likely to tell my players something along these lines: "Now, look, if we are to come in together with the piano at the beginning of the second movement of the Beethoven C major Concerto, there is only one way to do it. We must do it without the conductor. The problem is that you must come in together with the piano, the piano speaks in a completely different way from the way the strings speak, so we have to use a trick. Have your bow soundlessly, silently on the string and the moment you hear the piano sound, start pulling very slowly and you'll be there without the conductor." Thus you achieve the desired result by knowing what trick will result in what effect—by purely musical means.

Lang: The difficulties that arise when one courageously refuses to be a conformist must have caused misunderstanding on the part of some of your critics. Yet you refuse to slow down for subsidiary themes, to indulge in noticeable tempo variations, to use *Luftpausen* before last chords, and

to play an allegro as a presto. All this is now being recognized as virtue in a conductor, but you must have had some discouraging experiences in the past.

Szell: The most discouraging experience is not if one gets a poor review, but if one is dissatisfied with oneself—and that does happen pretty often. But at the same time one learns from those experiences.

Lang: Occasionally, I play an old recording—for instance, something by Mengelberg.

Szell: Well, he was the great distorter.

Lang: And yet for a long time that kind of conducting was considered an ideal, and anyone who didn't follow suit was called "cold."

Szell: Of course, Mengelberg aimed at a plasticity and a clarity of a very special sort, which is obtainable only by wild exaggeration and by destroying the natural pulse of a piece of music. The difficult thing is to obtain plasticity *without* destroying the natural pulse of the music.

Lang: Like practically all great conductors, you grew up in the opera pit. I know that you have trained some talented young men, but will many of them be able to acquire the ultimate in technical finish without that hard but priceless schooling of the opera house?

Szell: I really don't think that the same technical finish and the same readiness for any emergency in fractions of seconds is possible without operatic training. I really don't think so.

Lang: That is the one shortcoming we have in this country—we have talented young people but there is no place for them to operate.

Szell: Exactly, except that in certain conducting courses—as, for instance, in the Ford Foundation program at Baltimore—training is offered in some operatic scenes and excerpts. This is, however, very different from an actual opera house situation, where you may have to save the performance by jumping wildly over the bars in order to catch up.

Lang: Nowadays we have even that once unimaginable specimen—and right in the Metropolitan Opera House—the conductor who cannot accompany his singers.

Szell: In the old days all the opera houses had some conductors who were not really high-class musicians and who perhaps couldn't even read a score awfully well. Yet they had the skill to go with an unmusical and unrhythmical singer through thick and thin and keep fairly well together with him. And of course, the orchestra also profited. While it was not the cleanest type of orchestral performance, it was very flexible, it was very competent, and singers and musicians were almost always abreast.

Lang: I've noticed time and again, for instance, how that excellent little orchestra in New York's City Center can get out of difficult spots where even a first-class symphony orchestra would drown.

Szell: This is par for the course, because every concert orchestra, every symphony orchestra, is by definition less yielding. Why? Because they are the protagonists, whereas every pit orchestra knows that they are basically subordinate. They have to go with what is happening on stage.

Lang: We shall leave out the living conductors, but I should like to ask you your opinion of some of the great of the past whom you have observed.

Szell: Well, there was one who was my god at the time, and I am not sure what kind of a figure he would cut in our day. That was Artur Nikisch. He was the great wizard of the orchestra, but those were times when cleanliness and precision did not count for as much as they do now. Whether we would tolerate the wild, gypsylike improvisational way of treating music that was characteristic of Nikisch, whether we would tolerate it now after having gone through the Toscanini epoch is a little doubtful in my mind. Still, I think we would be enchanted with the spontaneity and with the wonderful sound and freedom of the orchestra. What Nikisch did was very, very rhapsodic and unpremeditated, and in the best sense hypnotic and magnetic. You could not extricate yourself from his spell. I once sat on the platform behind the orchestra facing him in the old Berlin Philharmonic Hall and when I saw his eyes—his heavy eyelids and then the lightning of his eyes—I was fascinated. I felt: I don't know what he wants, but I am sure that as a player I would do exactly as he wants.

Lang: Can you think of some others?

Szell: In his own way Richard Strauss was a very great conductor when he really felt like exerting himself. He could be extremely dull if he wasn't interested. And he had the great advantage of being the great Richard Strauss, which made the attitude of the orchestra different right from the start.

Lang: But he was interested in precision.

Szell: Yes, very much, and he had a very small clickety, precise beat with always another little upbeat inside his wrist. My conducting technique was originally fashioned after his, because he was the nearest to a commanding influence in my formative years. I worked for two years under him as his assistant at the Berlin State Opera, then the Royal Opera. There are many others whom I could mention, of course. No one could leave a man like Toscanini unmentioned. Whatever you may think about his interpretation of a specific work, that he changed the whole concept of conducting and that he rectified many, many arbitrary procedures of a generation of conductors before him is now already

authentic history. That at the same time he has served as a not too useful model for a generation of conductors who were so fascinated that they were unable to follow him with some sense of discrimination is equally true, I believe.

Lang: Now, to conclude, how do you feel when, after so many years of conducting that Mozart, or Schumann, or Brahms symphony, you have to dust it off once again?

Szell: Unless one has the hope of making progress until one's last day, one has the wrong attitude. Never work from routine, never repeat a performance you have given. One must retain the feeling—the wonderful feeling—that every time you pick up that Mozart or Schumann or Brahms symphony it is a brand-new adventure.

Gould Interviews Gould

Glenn gould: Mr. Gould, I gather that you have a reputation as a—well, forgive me for being blunt, sir—but as a tough nut to crack, interview-wise?

Glenn Gould: Really. I've never heard that.

gg: Well, it's the sort of scuttlebutt that we media-types pick up from source to source, but I just want to assure you that I'm quite prepared to strike from the record any question you may feel is out of line.

GG: Oh, I can't conceive of any problems of that sort intruding upon our deliberations.

gg: Well then, just to clear the air, sir, let me ask straight-out. Are there any off-limit areas?

GG: I certainly can't think of any—apart from music, of course.

gg: Well, Mr. Gould, I don't want to go back on my word. I realize that your participation in this interview was never contractually confirmed, but it was sealed with a handshake.

GG: Figuratively speaking, of course.

gg: Of course, and I had rather assumed that we'd spend the bulk of this interview on musically related matters.

GG: Well, do you think it's essential? I mean, my personal philosophy of

interviewing—and I've done quite a bit of it on the air as you perhaps know—is that the most illuminating disclosures derive from areas only indirectly related to the interviewee's line of work.

gg: For example?

GG: Well, for example, in the course of preparing radio documentaries, I've interviewed a theologian about technology, a surveyor about William James, an economist about pacifism, and a housewife about acquisitiveness in the art market.

gg: But surely you've also interviewed musicians about music?

GG: Well, yes, I have, on occasion, in order to help put them at ease in front of the mike. But it's been far more instructive to talk with Pablo Casals, for example, about the concept of the *Zeitgeist* which, of course, is not unrelated to music—

gg: Yes, I was just going to venture that comment.

GG: —or to Leopold Stokowski about the prospect for interplanetary travel which is, I think you'll agree and Stanley Kubrick notwithstanding, a bit of a digression.

gg: Well, this does pose a problem, Mr. Gould, but let me try to frame the question more affirmatively. Is there a subject you'd particularly like to discuss?

GG: Well, I hadn't given it much thought really, but, just off the top, what about the political situation in Labrador?

gg: Well, I'm sure that could produce a stimulating dialogue, Mr. Gould, but I do feel that we have to keep in mind that HIGH FIDELITY is edited primarily for a U.S. constituency.

GG: Oh, quite. Well, in that case perhaps aboriginal rights in western Alaska would make good copy.

gg: Yes. Well, I certainly don't want to bypass any headline-grabbing areas of that sort, Mr. Gould, but since HIGH FIDELITY is oriented toward a musically literate readership, we should, I think, at least begin our discussion in the area of the arts.

GG: Oh, certainly. Perhaps we could examine the question of aboriginal rights as reflected in ethnomusicological field studies at Point Barrow.

gg: Well, I must confess I had a rather more conventional line of attack, so to speak, in mind, Mr. Gould. As I'm sure you're aware, the virtually obligatory question in regard to your career is the concert-vs.-media controversy, and I do feel we must at least touch upon it.

GG: Oh, well, I have no objections to fielding a few questions in that area. As far as I'm concerned, it primarily involves moral rather than musical considerations in any case, so be my guest.

gg: Well, that's very good of you. I'll try to make it brief and then, perhaps, we can move farther afield.

GG: Fair enough!

gg: Well now, you've been quoted as saying that your involvement with recording—with media in general, indeed—represents an involvement with the future.

GG: That's correct. I've even said so in the pages of your illustrious journal, as a matter of fact.

gg: Quite so, and you've also said that, conversely, the concert hall, the recital stage, the opera house, or whatever, represent the past—an aspect of your own past in particular perhaps as well as, in more general terms, music's past.

GG: That's true, although I must admit that my only past professional contact with opera was a touch of tracheitis I picked up while playing the old Festpielhaus in Salzburg. As you know, it was an exceedingly drafty edifice, and I—

gg: Perhaps we could discuss your state of health at a more opportune moment, Mr. Gould, but it does occur to me—and I hope you'll forgive me for saying so—that there is something inherently self-serving about pronouncements of this kind. After all, you elected to abandon all public platforms some—what was it?—ten years ago?

GG: Nine years and eleven months, actually.

gg: And you will admit that most people who opt for radical career departures of any sort sustain themselves with the notion that, however reluctantly, the future is on their side?

GG: It's encouraging to think so, of course, but I must take exception to your use of the term "radical." It's certainly true that I did take the plunge out of a conviction that, given the state of the art, a total immersion in media represented a logical development—and I remain so convinced—but quite frankly, however much one likes to formulate past-future equations, the prime sponsors of such convictions, the strongest motivations behind such "departures," to borrow your term, are usually related to no more radical notion than an attempt to resolve the discomfort and inconvenience of the present.

gg: I'm not sure I've caught the drift of that, Mr. Gould.

GG: Well, for instance, let me suggest to you that the strongest motivation for the invention of a lozenge would be a sore throat. Of course, having patented the lozenge, one would then be free to speculate that the invention represented the future and the sore throat the past, but I doubt that one would be inclined to think in those terms while the irritation was present. Needless to say, in the case of my tracheitis at Salzburg, medication of that sort was—

gg: Excuse me, Mr. Gould, I'm sure we will be apprised of your Salzburg misadventures in due course, but I must pursue this point a bit further. Am I to understand that your withdrawal from the concert stage, your subsequent involvement with media, was motivated by the musical equivalent of a—sore throat?

GG: Do you find that objectionable?

gg: Well, to be candid, I find it utterly narcissistic. And to my mind, it's also entirely at odds with your statement that moral objections played a major role in your decision.

GG: I don't see the contradiction there unless, of course, in your view discomfort, *per se*, ranks as a positive virtue.

gg: My views are not the subject of this interview, Mr. Gould, but I'll answer your question, regardless. Discomfort, *per se*, is not the issue; I simply believe that any artist worthy of the name must be prepared to sacrifice personal comfort.

GG: To what end?

gg: In the interests of preserving the great traditions of the musical/theatrical experience, of maintaining the noble tutorial and curatorial responsibilities of the artist in relation to his audience.

GG: You don't feel that a sense of discomfort, of unease, could be the sagest of counselors for both artist and audience?

gg: No, I simply feel that you, Mr. Gould, have never permitted yourself to savor the—

GG: —ego-gratification?

gg: The privilege, as I was about to say, of communicating with an audience—

GG: —from a power-base?

gg: —from a proscenium setting in which the naked fact of your humanity is on display, unedited and unadorned.

GG: Couldn't I at least be allowed to display the tuxedoed fallacy, perhaps?

gg: Mr. Gould, I don't feel we should allow this dialogue to degenerate into idle banter. It's obvious that you've never savored the joys of a one-to-one relationship with a listener.

GG: I always thought that, managerially speaking, a 2800-to-1 relationship was the concert-hall ideal.

gg: I don't want to split statistics with you. I've tried to pose the question with all candor and—

GG: Well then, I'll try to answer likewise. It seems to me that, if we're going to get waylaid by the numbers game, I'll have to plump for a zero-to-one relationship as between audience and artist, and that's where the moral objection comes in.

gg: I'm afraid I don't quite grasp that point, Mr. Gould. Do you want to run it through again?

GG: I simply feel that the artist should be granted, both for his sake and for that of his public—and let me get on record right now the fact that I'm not at all happy with words like "public" and "artist"; I'm not happy with the hierarchical implications of that kind of terminology—that he should be granted anonymity. He should be permitted to operate in secret, as it were, unconcerned with—or better still, unaware of—the presumed demands of the marketplace—which demands, given sufficient indifference on the part of a sufficient number of artists, will simply disappear. And given their disappearance, the artist will then abandon his false sense of "public" responsibility, and his "public" will relinquish its role of servile dependency.

gg: And never the twain shall meet, I dare say!

GG: No, they'll make contact, but on an altogether more meaningful level than that which relates any stage to its apron.

gg: Mr. Gould, I'm well aware that this sort of idealistic role-swapping offers a satisfying rhetorical flourish, and it may even be that the "creative audience" concept to which you've devoted a lot of interview space elsewhere offers a kind of McLuhanesque fascination. But you conveniently forget that the artist, however hermetic his life style, is still in effect an autocratic figure. He's still, however benevolently, a social dictator. And his public, however generously enfranchised by gadgetry, however richly endowed with electronic options, is still on the receiving end of the experience, as of this late date at least, and all of your neomedieval anonymity quest on behalf of the artist-as-zero and all of your vertical panculturalism on behalf of his "public" isn't going to change that, or at least it hasn't done so thus far.

GG: May I speak now?

gg: Of course. I didn't mean to get carried away, but I do feel strongly about the—

GG: —about the artist as superman?

gg: That's not quite fair, Mr. Gould.

GG: —or about the interlocutor as comptroller of conversations, perhaps?

gg: There's certainly no need to be rude. I didn't really expect a conciliatory response from you—I realize that you've staked out certain philosophical claims in regard to these issues—but I did at least hope that just once you'd confess to a personal experience of the one-to-one, artist-to-listener relationship. I had hoped that you might confess to having personally been witness to the magnetic attraction of a great artist visibly at work before his public.

GG: Oh, I have had that experience.

gg: Really?

GG: Certainly, and I don't mind confessing to it. Many years ago, I happened to be in Berlin while Herbert von Karajan led the Philharmonic in their first-ever performance of Sibelius' Fifth. As you know, Karajan tends—in late-Romantic repertoire particularly—to conduct with eyes closed and to endow his stick-wielding with enormously persuasive choreographic contours, and the effect, quite frankly, contributed to one of the truly indelible musical/dramatic experiences of my life.

gg: You're supporting my contention very effectively indeed, Mr. Gould. I know that that performance, or at any rate one of its subsequent recorded incarnations, played a rather important role in your life.

GG: You mean because of its utilization in the epilogue of my radio documentary *The Idea of North*?

gg: Exactly, and you've just admitted that this "indelible" experience derived from a face-to-face confrontation, shared with an audience, and not simply from the disembodied predictability purveyed by even the best of phonograph records.

GG: Well, I suppose you could say that, but I wasn't actually a member of the audience. As a matter of fact, I took refuge in a glassed-in broadcast booth over the stage and, although I was in a position to see Karajan's face and to relate every ecstatic grimace to the emerging musical experience, the audience—except for the occasional profile shot as he might cue left or right—was not.

gg: I'm afraid you're splitting subdivided beats there, Mr. Gould.

GG: I'm not so sure. You see, the broadcast booth, in effect, represented a state of isolation, not only for me vis-à-vis my fellow auditors, but vis-à-vis the Berlin Philharmonic and its conductor as well.

gg: And now you're simply clutching at symbolic straws.

GG: Maybe so, but I must point out—*entre nous*, of course—that when it came time to incorporate Karajan's Sibelius Fifth into *The Idea of North*, I revised the dynamics of the recording to suit the mood of the text it accompanied, and that liberty, surely, is the product of—what shall I call it?—the enthusiastic irreverence of a zero-to-one relationship, wouldn't you say?

gg: I should rather think it's the product of unmitigated gall. I realize, of course, that *The Idea of North* was an experimental radio venture—as I recall, you treated the human voice in that work almost as one might a musical instrument—

GG: That's right.

gg: —and permitted two, three, or four individuals to speak at once upon occasion.

GG: True.

gg: But whereas those experiments with your own raw material, so to speak, seem perfectly legitimate to me, your use—or misuse—of Herr von Karajan's material is another matter altogether. After all, you've confessed that your original experience of that performance was "indelible." And yet you blithely confess as well to tampering with what were, presumably, carefully controlled dynamic relationships—

GG: We did some equalizing, too.

gg: —and all in the interest of—

GG: —of my needs of the moment.

gg: —which, however, were at least unique to the project at hand.

GG: All right, I'll give you that, but every listener has a "project at hand," simply in terms of making his experience of music relate to his life style.

gg: And you're prepared to have similar unauthorized permutations practiced on your own recorded output by listener or listeners unknown?

GG: I should have failed in my purpose otherwise.

gg: Then you're obviously reconciled to the fact that no real aesthetic yardstick relates your performances as originally conceived to the manner in which they will be subsequently audited?

GG: Come to that, I have absolutely no idea as to the "aesthetic" merits of Karajan's Sibelius Fifth when I encountered it on that memorable occasion. In fact the beauty of the occasion was that, although I was aware of being witness to an intensely moving experience, I had no idea as to whether it was or was not a "good" performance. My aesthetic judgments were simply placed in cold storage—which is where I should like them to remain, at least when assessing the work of others. Perhaps, necessarily, and for entirely practical reasons, I apply a different set of criteria on my own behalf, but—

gg: Mr. Gould, are you saying that you do not make aesthetic judgments?

GG: No, I'm not saying that—though I wish I were able to make that statement—because it would attest to a degree of spiritual perfection that I have not attained. However, to rephrase the fashionable cliché, I do try as best I can to make only moral judgments and not aesthetic ones—except, as I said in the case of my own work.

gg: I suppose, Mr. Gould, I'm compelled to give you the benefit of the doubt.

GG: That's very good of you.

gg: —and to assume that you are assessing your own motivations responsibly and accurately—

GG: One can only try.

gg: —and given that, what you have just confessed adds so many forks to the route of this interview, I simply don't know which trail to pursue.

GG: Why not pick the most likely signpost, and I'll just tag along.

gg: Well, I suppose the obvious question is: if you don't make aesthetic judgments on behalf of others, what about those who make aesthetic judgments in regard to your own work?

GG: Oh, some of my best friends are critics, although I'm not sure I'd want my piano to be played by one.

gg: But some minutes ago, you related the term "spiritual perfection" to a state in which aesthetic judgment is suspended.

GG: I didn't mean to give the impression that such a suspension would constitute the only criterion for such a state.

gg: I understand that. But would it be fair to say that in your view the critical mentality would necessarily lead to an imperiled state of grace?

GG: Well now, I think that would call for a very presumptuous judgment on my part. As I said, some of my best friends are—

gg: —are critics, I know, but you're evading the question.

GG: Not intentionally. I just don't feel that one should generalize in matters where such distinguished reputations are at stake and—

gg: Mr. Gould, I think you owe us both, as well as our readers, an answer to that question.

GG: I do?

gg: That's my conviction; perhaps I should repeat the question.

GG: No, it's not necessary.

gg: So you do feel, in effect, that the critic represents a morally endangered species?

GG: Well now, the word "endangered" implies that—

gg: —please, Mr. Gould, answer the question; you do feel that, don't you?

GG: Well, as I've said, I—

gg: You do, don't you?

GG: (pause) Yes.

gg: Of course you do, and now I'm sure you also feel the better for confession.

GG: Hmm, not at the moment.

gg: But you will in due course.

GG: You really think so?

gg: No question of it. But now that you've stated your position so frankly, I do have to make mention of the fact that you yourself have by-lined critical dispatches from time to time. I even recall a piece on Petula

Clark which you contributed some years back to these columns and which—

GG: —and which contained more aesthetic judgment per square page than I would presume to render nowadays. But it was essentially a moral critique, you know. It was a piece in which I used Miss Clark, so to speak, in order to comment on a social milieu.

gg: So you feel that you can successfully distinguish between an aesthetic critique of the individual—which you reject out of hand—and a setting down of moral imperatives for society as a whole.

GG: I think I can. Mind you, there are obviously areas in which overlaps are inevitable. Let's say, for example, that I had been privileged to reside in a town in which all the houses were painted battleship gray.

gg: Why battleship gray?

GG: It's my favorite color.

gg: It's a rather negative color, isn't it?

GG: That's why it's my favorite. Now then, let's suppose for the sake of argument that without warning one individual elected to paint his house fire-engine red—

gg: —thereby challenging the symmetry of the town-planning.

GG: Yes, it would probably do that too, but you're approaching the question from an aesthetic point of view. The real consequence of his action would be to foreshadow an outbreak of manic activity in the town and almost inevitably—since other houses would be painted in similarly garish hues—to encourage a climate of competition and, as a corollary, of violence.

gg: I gather, then, that red in your color lexicon represents aggressive behavior.

GG: I should have thought there'd be general agreement on that. But as I said, there would be an aesthetic/moral overlap at this point. The man who painted the first house may have done so purely from an aesthetic preference and it would, to use an old-fashioned word, be "sinful" if I were to take him to account in respect of his taste. Such an accounting would conceivably inhibit all subsequent judgments on his part. But if I were able to persuade him that his particular aesthetic indulgence represented a moral danger to the community as a whole, and providing I could muster a vocabulary appropriate to the task—which would not be, obviously, a vocabulary of aesthetic standards—then that would, I think, be my responsibility.

gg: You do realize, of course, that you're beginning to talk like a character out of Orwell?

GG: Oh, the Orwellian world holds no particular terrors for me.

gg: And you also realize that you're defining and defending a type of censorship that contradicts the whole post-Renaissance tradition of Western thought?

GG: Certainly. It's the post-Renaissance tradition that has brought the Western world to the brink of destruction. You know, this odd attachment to freedom of movement, freedom of speech, and so on is a peculiarly occidental phenomenon. It's all part of the occidental notion that one can successfully separate word and deed.

gg: The sticks-and-stones syndrome, you mean?

GG: Precisely. There's some evidence for the fact that—well, as a matter of fact, McLuhan talks about just that in the *Gutenberg Galaxy*—that preliterate peoples or minimally literate peoples are much less willing to permit that distinction.

gg: I suppose there's also the biblical injunction that to will evil is to accomplish evil.

GG: Exactly. It's only cultures that, by accident or good management, bypassed the Renaissance which see art for the menace it really is.

gg: May I assume the U.S.S.R. would qualify?

GG: Absolutely. The Soviets are a bit roughhewn as to method, I'll admit, but their concerns are absolutely justified.

gg: What about your own concerns? Have any of your activities violated these personal strictures and, in your terms, "menaced" society?

GG: Yes.

gg: Want to talk about it?

GG: Not particularly.

gg: Not even a quick for-instance? What about the fact that you supplied music for *Slaughterhouse Five*?

GG: What about it?

gg: Well, at least by Soviet standards, the film of Mr. Vonnegut's opus would probably qualify as a socially destructive piece of work, wouldn't you say?

GG: I'm afraid you're right. I even remember a young lady in Leningrad telling me once that Dostoyevsky, "though a very great writer, was unfortunately pessimistic."

gg: And pessimism, combined with a hedonistic cop-out, was the hallmark of *Slaughterhouse*, was it not?

GG: Yes, but it was the hedonistic properties rather than the pessimistic ones that gave me a lot of sleepless nights.

gg: So you didn't approve of the film?

GG: I admired its craftsmanship extravagantly.

gg: That's not the same as liking it.

GG: No, it isn't.

gg: Can we assume then that even an idealist has his price?

GG: I'd much prefer it said that even an idealist can misread the intentions of a shooting script.

gg: You would have preferred an uncompromised Billy Pilgrim, I assume?

GG: I would have preferred some redemptive element added to his persona, yes.

gg: So you wouldn't vouch for the art-as-technique-pure-and-simple theories of Stravinsky, for instance?

GG: Certainly not. That's quite literally the last thing art is.

gg: Then what about the art-as-violence-surrogate theory?

GG: I don't believe in surrogates; they're simply the playthings of minds resistant to the perfectability of man; besides, if you're looking for violence surrogates, genetic engineering is a better bet.

gg: How about the art-as-transcendental-experience theory?

GG: Of the three you've cited, that's the only one that attracts.

gg: Do you have a theory of your own then?

GG: Yes, but you're not going to like it.

gg: I'm braced.

GG: Well, I feel that art should be given the chance to phase itself out. I think that we must accept the fact that art is not inevitably benign, that it is potentially destructive. We should analyze the areas where it tends to do least harm, use them as a guideline, and build into art a component that will enable it to preside over its own obsolescence—

gg: Hm.

GG: —because, you know, the present position, or positions, of art—some of which you've enumerated—are not without analogy to the ban-the-bomb movement of hallowed memory.

gg: You surely don't reject protest of that kind?

GG: No, but since I haven't noticed a single ban-the-child-who-pulls-wings-from-dragonflies movement, I can't join it either. You see, the Western world is consumed with notions of qualification; the threat of nuclear extinction fulfills those notions and the loss of a dragonfly's wing does not. And until the two phenomena are recognized as one, indivisible, until physical and verbal aggression are seen as simply a flip of the competitive coin, until every aesthetic decision can be equated with a moral correlative, I'll continue to listen to the Berlin Philharmonic from behind a glass partition.

gg: So you don't expect to see your death wish for art fulfilled in your lifetime.

GG: No, I couldn't live without the Sibelius Fifth.

gg: But you are nevertheless talking much like a sixteenth-century reformer.

GG: Actually, I feel very close to that tradition. In fact, in one of my better lines I remarked that—

gg: —that's an aesthetic judgment if ever I heard one!

GG: A thousand pardons—let me try a second take on that. On a previous occasion, I remarked that I, rather than Mr. Santayana's hero, am "the last puritan."

gg: And you don't find any problem in reconciling the individual-conscience aspect of the Reformation and the collective censorship of the puritan tradition? Both motifs, it would seem to me, are curiously intermingled in your thesis and, from what I know of it, in your documentary work as well.

GG: Well, no, I don't think there's an inevitable inconsistency there because, at its best—which is to say at its purest—that tradition involved perpetual schismatic division. The best and purest—or at any rate the

most ostracized—of individuals ended up in Alpine valleys as symbols of their rejection of the world of the plains. As a matter of fact, there is to this day a Mennonite sect in Switzerland that equates separation from the world with altitude.

gg: Would it be fair to suggest that you, on the other hand, equate it with latitude? After all, you did create *The Idea of North* as a metaphoric comment and not as a factual documentary.

GG: That's quite true. Of course, most of the documentaries have dealt with isolated situations—Arctic outposts, Newfoundland outposts, Mennonite enclaves, and so on.

gg: Yes, but they've dealt with a community in isolation.

GG: That's because my magnum opus is still several drawing boards away.

gg: So they are autobiographical drafts?

GG: That, sir, is not for me to say.

gg: Mr. Gould, there's a sort of grim, I might even say gray, consistency to what you've said, but it does seem to me that we have come a rather long way from the concert-versus-record theme with which we began.

GG: On the contrary, I think we've performed a set of variations on that theme and that, indeed, we've virtually come full circle.

gg: In any event, I have only a few more questions to put to you of which, I guess, the most pertinent would now be: apart from being a frustrated member of the board of censors, is any other career of interest to you?

GG: I've often thought that I'd like to try my hand at being a prisoner.

gg: You regard *that* as a career?

GG: Oh certainly, on the understanding, of course, that I would be entirely innocent of all charges brought against me.

gg: Mr. Gould, has anyone suggested that you could be suffering from a Myshkin complex?

GG: No, and I can't accept the compliment. It's simply that, as I indicated, I've never understood the preoccupation with freedom as it's reckoned in the Western world. So far as I can see, freedom of movement usually has to do only with mobility, and freedom of speech most frequently with socially sanctioned verbal aggression, and to be incarcerated would be the perfect test of one's inner mobility and of the strength

which would enable one to opt creatively out of the human situation.

gg: Mr. Gould, weary as I am, that feels like a contradiction in terms.

GG: I don't really think it is. I also think that there's a younger generation than ours—you are about my age, are you not?

gg: I should assume so.

GG: —a younger generation that doesn't have to struggle with that concept, to whom the competitive act is not an inevitable component of life, and who do program their lives without making allowances for it.

gg: Are you trying to sell me on the neotribalism kick?

GG: Not really, no. I suspect that competitive tribes got us into this mess in the first place, but, as I said, I don't deserve the Myshkin-complex title.

gg: Well, your modesty is legendary, of course, Mr. Gould, but what brings you to that conclusion?

GG: The fact that I would inevitably impose demands upon my keepers—demands that a genuinely free spirit could afford to overlook.

gg: Such as?

GG: The cell would have to be prepared in a battleship gray decor—

gg: I shouldn't think that would pose a problem.

GG: Well, I've heard that the new look in penal reform involves primary colors.

gg: Oh, I see.

GG: And of course there would have to be some sort of understanding about the air-conditioning control. Overhead vents would be out—as I may have mentioned, I'm subject to tracheitis—and, assuming that a forced-air system was employed, the humidity regulator would have to be—

gg: Mr. Gould, excuse the interruption but it just occurs to me that, since you have attempted to point out on several occasions that you did suffer a traumatic experience in the Salzburg Festspielhaus—

GG: Oh, I didn't meant to leave the impression of a traumatic experience. On the contrary, my tracheitis was of such severity that I was able to cancel a month of concerts, withdraw into the Alps, and lead the most idyllic and isolated existence.

gg: I see. Well now, may I make a suggestion?

GG: Of course.

gg: As you know, the old Festspielhaus was originally a riding academy.

GG: Oh quite; I'd forgotten.

gg: And the rear of the building is set against a mountainside.

GG: Yes, that's quite true.

gg: And since you're obviously a man addicted to symbols—I'm sure this prisoner fantasy of yours is precisely that—it would seem to me that the Festspielhaus—the Felsenreitschule—with its Kafka-like setting at the base of a cliff, with the memory of equestrian mobility haunting its past, and located moreover in the birthplace of a composer whose works you have frequently criticized, thereby compromising your own judgmental criteria—

GG: Ah, but I've criticized them primarily as evidence of a hedonistic life.

gg: Be that as it may. The Festspielhaus, Mr. Gould, is a place to which a man like yourself, a man in search of martyrdom, should return.

GG: Martyrdom? What ever gave you that impression? I couldn't possibly go back!

gg: Please, Mr. Gould, try to understand. There could be no more meaningful manner in which to scourge the flesh, in which to proclaim the ascendance of the spirit, and certainly no more meaningful metaphoric *mise en scène* against which to offset your own hermetic life style, through which to autobiographically define your quest for martyrdom, as I'm sure you will try to do, eventually.

GG: But you must believe me; I have no such quest in mind!

gg: Yes, I think you must go back, Mr. Gould. You must once again tread the boards of the Festspielhaus; you must willingly, even gleefully, subject yourself to the gales which rage upon that stage. For then and only then will you achieve the martyr's end you so obviously desire.

GG: Please don't misunderstand; I'm touched by your concern. It's just that, in the immortal words of Mr. Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, "I'm not ready yet."

gg: In that case, Mr. Gould, in the immortal words of Mr. Vonnegut himself, "so it goes."



III. The Musical Stage



The Splendid Infamies of Le Docteur Véron

by S. J. London

AMONG THE GROTESQUE PERSONAGES who populated nineteenth-century Paris and the novels of Balzac, none was more bizarre than Dr. Louis-Desiré Véron, a hugely accomplished gourmand, lecher, and entrepreneur who occupies also a small but picturesque niche in the history of music. Dr. Véron's exploits were many and dubious, but at least one achievement speaks to his credit: at one point, he managed to save French grand opera from feckless ruin.

This fantastic figure is perhaps most graphically described in the words of the contemporary *littérateur*, Philarète Chasles: ". . . a man with a high color, a chubby face, the mere hint of a nose, scrofulous, his neck always buried in the folds of some stuff that both alleviated his malady and concealed it, his belly rotund, his eye round, bright, scintillating, greedy, the mouth laughing, the lips thick, the hair scanty, the manner that of a little lackey mincingly aping his master and putting on drawing-room affectations; the voice high, sharp, aggressive, hissing, overbearing; supple here, impertinent there . . . ; the head thrown back, the cheeks swollen, the glance arrogant when he had nothing to gain or to fear. . . . He was not wicked, or perverse, or lacking in intelligence. He was without principle. . . . No one in our epoch has had such a nose as Véron for the scent of profit, or such a greyhound speed for running it down. . . . Véron was the first to become . . . the jobber in coarse pleasures that had a dash of the mind in them, the Mercury of an intellectual materialism . . . unclean in habits, playing now the vicomte, now the bourgeois; employing artifices that were on the fringe of fraud but never slipped over into it, this gross Véron, crooked as an attorney, as three attorneys, fond of women, pictures, and men of letters, played the role of a farmer-general. . . ."

Actually, Dr. Véron was a very typical product of his era, that incredible period known as the July Monarchy, and did no more than function in accord with his psychosociological milieu. The fine promises of the French Revolution had been frustrated by the bloodiness of the Napoleonic Wars and the autocratic rule of the restored Bourbons. When, in early July 1830, Charles X dissolved the Corps Legislatif and passed a series of oppressive tax laws, an army of middle-class rebels barricaded every strategic point in Paris and began shooting indiscriminately. On July 30 the aging Marquis de Lafayette rode his horse to the Hôtel de Ville and proclaimed fat little Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orléans and the Royal Cousin, Citizen King in the name of French liberty. There immediately descended upon the capital a host of estimable citizens seemingly bent on one aim, to hew their fortunes from the new freedom. They infiltrated the government, seized as many sinecures as possible, made contracts between themselves as civil servants, with themselves as entrepreneurs, and flooded the boulevards and cafés of Paris in search of hard-earned pleasures. At this time Véron was thirty-two and more than ready to share in the spoils.

One of the tangled affairs the Citizen King inherited was the perilous state of French opera. In 1811 Napoleon I had drastically changed the financial structure of the Royal Academy of Music by allotting as its only source of income a percentage from the receipts of Parisian theatres. Under Charles X theatre receipts in general dropped off so sharply that in 1829 the Opéra Comique declared itself bankrupt and the Royal Academy, known as the Paris Opéra, was fast approaching the same denouement. Anxious to rid his government of a white elephant, Louis Philippe had his Minister of the Interior issue the following proclamation in August 1830: "The administration of the Royal Academy of Music, also known as the Opéra, will henceforward be delegated to a director-entrepreneur who will exploit it for six years at his own risks, perils, and fortune." Thus did free enterprise come to the Paris Opéra, and with it Dr. Véron.

There is no doubt that he was well fitted for the new role. While still in his teens, Louis-Desiré had had considerable success as a full-fledged boulevardier, a career brought to a halt by an outraged father's threats of disinheritance. Forced to choose a profession, Véron entered medical school, where, strangely enough, his career was not without distinction (far better than that of his fellow-student Hector Berlioz, for instance). A rather indelicate affair with a young nursing-order novice, however, made it advisable that he grasp his degree and move elsewhere as soon as possible; and in 1823 he set out to make his fortune in Paris. There his medical practice turned out to be of short duration. Most of his patients simply refused to tolerate his inept bleedings and catheterizations. The *coup de grâce* was finally delivered by a formidable Parisian beauty; when his needle missed the vein of her satin-sheathed arm, she shrieked "*Maladroit!*" and had him thrown bodily from her house.

Before forsaking medicine altogether, he made one last attempt at success. Having heard of a poor pharmacist named Regnauld who made an ointment which allegedly cured all respiratory diseases, Dr. Véron paid him a business call—only to find Mme. Regnauld in widow's weeds.

He hurriedly paid the widow 17,000 francs for sole rights to this nostrum and proceeded to run up a profit of 100,000 for the first year. This was done, first, by converting the *Pâte Pectorale de Regnauld* into lozenges, tablets, juleps, and syrups, and then by inundating the market not only with this unusual *pâte* but with the first gigantic promotional campaign in modern commercial history.

Retired from medicine and fortified by the profits from his *pâte*, Dr. Véron was now, in 1828, ready to assert his claim to higher things. Reinventing the boulevards, he sought out the palpitating literati and soon had a corps of illustrious names with which to grace a proposed newspaper, *La Revue de Paris*: as co-owner an unsavory *émigré* Spanish banker named Alexandre Aguado; as members of his Board, Scribe and Rossini; as contributors, Balzac, Hugo, George Sand, and Dumas. Carefully planned and executed, the first issue was six months late but struck at a time when the middle-class liberals were gathering for their attack on Charles X.

Up to this time Véron's musical experience consisted in having studied violin, at the age of fifteen, with Georges Ney, first chair at the Opéra (in fact, he had spent more time in ogling the undressed beauties of the chorus than on his fingering and bowing), but apparently it was enough to induce him to act on Louis Philippe's Opéra decree. According to this pronouncement, the director was to receive a fixed annual budget from the Ministry of the Interior and would pocket all receipts in excess of this amount; the risk would be in his agreement to repair all deficits out of his own funds. Véron, characteristically, had no qualms about deficits and set about capturing the plum by machinations at which he had by now become an old hand. With the shadowy Aguado in the background he quickly sowed 340,000 francs in the most fertile Ministry pastures, contrived to have the incumbent director, one Lubbert, accused of grand larceny, and settled himself triumphantly in the director's seat in March 1831.

The good doctor was faced by a situation of enormous artistic portent. Besides the threat of financial disaster, French opera was also confronted with the overwhelming influence of Italian opera. The breath of new life had begun to stir in an effort to dislodge the Rossinian *tira-lira* then gripping Paris. But the new director, with ears apparently deaf to both the *tira-lira* and the nascent school of French dramatic music, seemed attuned only to the seductive clink of profits. The house on the rue Le Pelletier, badly in need of new decor, was shortly put in order. He had a new restaurant constructed and laid plans for a new ballroom which was to be the arena for a sumptuous *bal masqué* every New Year's Eve. He reduced all admission prices and converted most of the loges-for-four into loges-for-six to accommodate larger parties in the more expensive seats. Ingenious arrangements were made to increase the sale of programs, librettos, lorgnettes, and liquid refreshments, and for the increased utilization of the parterre as a fashionable promenade. Opening curtain time was pushed back by one hour in order to allow *aficionados* to sup leisurely and use the promenade to its fullest advantage.

Véron's most detailed attentions were lavished on the *corps de claque*,

and for its chief he hired a crafty hook-nosed genius known only as Auguste. Auguste had fought with Napoleon and preened himself on his military acumen; he divided his corps into ten divisions, each under the command of a lieutenant and deployed for action as vanguard, rear guard, flanks, and reserves—his objective being to envelop the hapless audience by a pincers movement. "The general order of battle," he decreed, "will consist of desultory fire during the early acts, followed by increasing enfilade and defilade during the subsequent acts, with a climax of at least three full salvos for each last-act aria and ensemble, and a massive cannonade for the finale."

Auguste reported to Véron on the morning of each performance for a strategy briefing and on each morning-after for an intelligence session. During the latter, tactical errors and successes were analyzed and future plans hatched; then, too, specific targets were chosen for special attention. Auguste was permitted to accept commissions for these special attentions from singers, dancers, conductors, composers, and even librettists, turning a few extra sous from the delivery of flowers and jewelry to artists on stage. Véron, however, reserved to himself the privilege of deciding which of the secondary artists were to receive the corps' special attention and thus managed to pry loose a variety of favors. As a result of these tactics, Véron was securely entrenched as arbiter of his artists' destinies.

Another of his great successes was the forging of an able body of performers. At the high-water mark of his administration he had under his wing the then unusual number of forty dancers, seventy musicians, sixty choristers, and the undivided services of some of the greatest living solo artists, including the tenor Adolphe Nourrit, the basso Nicolas Levasseur, the sopranos Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Marie-Cornélie Falcon, and the ballerinas Maria Taglioni and Fanny Elssler. This was managed by the simple expedient of paying them opulent salaries and cascading the distaff side with magnificent gifts. Every diva and ballerina was invariably sent a box of sugared almonds wrapped in a thousand-franc note after each performance. When he set out to woo the ballerina Elssler sisters, Fanny and Thérèse, he captured them in London by using Clarendon's for his setting and personally serving them a dessert which consisted of a huge dish of luscious fruit upon which was heaped money and 200,000 francs worth of jewelry. With modest alacrity, the sisters chose two bagatelles worth six thousand francs each, but followed with their signatures on the waiting contracts.

In actuality, this dessert had been only the postlude to a supper whose magnificence even Clarendon's had hitherto failed to equal. Dr. Véron had the physician's traditional weakness for gastronomy and anatomy and used his directorship of the Opéra as a vehicle to indulge both. As a gastronomist he had no peer; even the fabulous Dumas, after a short rivalry, was forced to admit total defeat. Each afternoon his short fat figure held sway over a fawning entourage at the Café de Paris which listened to his tirades on politics, women, and art, and managed to crow his praises breathlessly between each gigantic mouthful. His postperformance supper parties, however, disappeared beyond the horizon of orgies, and the creaking boards were stressed to the limit by his notorious

desserts, the most celebrated of which was a huge silver casserole which, upon removal of the cover, revealed a naked ballerina garnished with precious stones.

His interest in anatomy was perhaps even greater than that in gastronomy. He had a limitless storehouse of delights in his *corps de ballet*, and these he lent freely to his personal and political friends; some of the weightiest decisions of the July Monarchy were rumored to have been influenced by the off-stage functions of his dancers. "What is the Opéra," observed a bitter Berlioz, as one after another of his operatic proposals was rejected by Véron, "but a house of assignation and self-indulgence?" Jacques Barzun, in *Berlioz and His Century*, writes that the composer might have received a different welcome from Véron had he been willing to accept a ballerina as an offering. Yet the fat little doctor had a certain justice on his side. In 1832 Berlioz had proposed an opus based on the Day of Judgment, at a time when Paris was beginning to recover from a disastrous cholera epidemic and was in the midst of a bloody political revolt; with his sensitive nose for public opinion, Véron could hardly be blamed for disdaining a piece of this macabre nature.

Despite these magnificent excesses, Dr. Véron did expend some serious effort on the music of the Opéra. The Government had set him a yearly production quota of new works, which was to include one grand and two lesser operas, and one grand and two lesser ballets. Running a contemplative eye over the previous decade's repertoire, Véron found that such spectacles as *William Tell* and *La Muette de Portici* had drawn the greatest audiences and decided that, art and the evolution of opera notwithstanding, the biggest sellouts would come from grandiose historical plots capped by a crashing finale. The finale would be the thing—a glorious *mise en scène* with masses of people on stage, magnificent sets, lavish costumes, arias, ensembles, and deaths galore, all to full orchestral accompaniment. Paradoxically, it was this concatenation of noise and color, conceived by a mercenary dilettante, that set a rejuvenated French grand opera bounding across the world.

Giacomo Meyerbeer, of course, enjoys some responsibility for this Gallic resurgence. The French had taken to his works and, sensing that his good fairy was a Parisienne, Meyerbeer began the assiduous study of French literature and language. When Scribe offered him the libretto for the medieval tale of chivalry, sin, and repentance called *Robert le Diable*, Meyerbeer accepted it immediately. The result was a three-act opera, originally intended for the Opéra Comique but later revised into five acts for presentation by the Opéra. Véron's first assignment—handed down from his predecessor, Lubbert—was to mount *Robert le Diable* as soon as possible. He at once threw the entire Government into crisis by refusing, publicly stating that the production required too much time for its actual worth. What he neglected to add was that it would likewise require great expenditures. Finally, however, the Ministry granted him a supplementary budget, Meyerbeer agreed to purchase the organ required in the finale—and *Robert* went into rehearsal.

Dr. Véron also managed to squeeze from the composer some artistic concessions which must be held at least in part responsible for the opera's phenomenal success. Meyerbeer agreed to rewrite the role of Bertram for

basso in order to permit the great Levasseur to create the part, and to assign the role of Alice to the nimble Gallic soprano Dorus instead of the broad-beamed Teuton Schröder-Devrient. The change of greatest consequence was that of the finale's *mise en scène*; on tenor Nourrit's suggestion, this was recast from a conventional Gluckian Mount Olympus to a cloister cemetery with a host of ghostly nuns rising from their tombs to bring the action to its appropriate climax. The opera went on to its premiere, launched Meyerbeer on his spectacular French career, restored operatic hegemony to Paris, and earned Véron 780,000 francs in two years.

Véron actually more than fulfilled his contractual obligations by mounting six new grand operas in the four and a half years of his tenure. Among these was Halévy's *La Juive*, in which the potboiling Inquisition *mise en scène* produced a most brilliant effect. Nourrit again contributed a telling assist by writing the lyrics for the great tenor aria. Levasseur created the role of Eleazar, and Falcon was responsible for Rachel.

With *La Juive* safely on its way and several millions of francs stuffed in his coffers, Dr. Véron was suddenly confronted by the official disquietude of the Ministry, ostensibly because certain vestigial Jacobin purists were outraged by the licentiousness then rollicking at the Opéra. When the loyal Nourrit reported overhearing a Ministerial plan to investigate Véron's financial structure, the eminent Doctor hurried to the Minister (the erstwhile radical journalist Adolphe Thiers), screeched his outrage at officialdom, and presented his already prepared resignation. Thiers promptly accepted it and then presented the directorship to the architect Duponchel with orders to proceed at once with Meyerbeer's new *Les Huguenots*. Dr. Véron, however, had left an acquisitive finger behind in the operatic pie; unbeknownst to either Thiers or the composer, he had bought a comfortable interest in Meyerbeer's new work through the murky offices of banker Aguado and planned to await his profits in the wings.

Dr. Véron went on to play even more crucial roles in what had by now become the dismal fiasco of the Citizen King's regime, becoming by his control of legislative seats and newspapers the country's foremost entrepreneur of power and influence. He became involved, too, in a long and incredible liaison with France's greatest tragedienne, Rachel. As he himself remarked to Arsène Houssaye: "I am a happy man, and you must admit that I have a right to call myself so. Every day of my life for thirty years I have drunk champagne, and still I find it good. I have denied myself no woman, and the Government does nothing without consulting me." But as the political complexion of France changed, Véron's influence gradually diminished. When he died quietly at the age of sixty-nine on September 27, 1867, he had been discreetly retired from public life for several years and had long since been consigned to the limbo of the damned and disinherited by physicians and musicians alike.

Scala's New Queen

by Martin Mayer

THIS WAS IN APRIL, the next to last month of the opera season at La Scala. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V had just put his crown back on, over his monk's cowl, and dragged his dying grandson off to the catacombs at stage left, and the curtain was dropping on the year's final performance of Verdi's *Don Carlo*. A full house of 3,200 Milanese was making its presence felt, and shortly the cast was taking bows before the curtain, dominated now as during the performance by the tall, red-headed, slender figure of the Queen of Spain, Maria Meneghini Callas.

It was her last performance of the season at Scala, and this 1953-54 season had seen the greatest triumphs of her career—Donizetti's *Lucia*, Gluck's *Alceste*, Cherubini's *Medea*. In the row behind me a man broke off his applauding to say to his companion, "*La Regina della Scala*"—the Queen of Scala. And at the end of the last curtain call, a straggler turned to the stage and called, *con amore*, "*Arrivederci, Maria!*"

Few opera singers ever win such displays of love from the audience in the expensive seats, and I told Miss Callas about it when we met the next day at the spanking-new, abandoned movie theatre (its owners had been unable to get a license) where EMI was recording Bellini's *Norma*. Miss Callas was delighted. "You know, we can hear them shouting," she said, "but we can't hear *what* they shout. I'm so happy to know it's so nice."

One of her entourage picked up the conversation, "They loved you in *Don Carlo*," he said. "But I don't think I'll ever hear anything like the reception they gave you after *Lucia*."

Miss Callas turned on this unfortunate with her full stage presence. "What!" she said. "Have you forgotten? I haven't done *Traviata* yet!"

This was three-quarters a joke. Almost exactly three-quarters.

Maria Callas (Meneghini is her husband's name) was born thirty-two years ago to a Greek immigrant family in New York City's Washington Heights. She sang from infancy, mostly in church choirs and over the radio on Saturday morning children's programs. She received her early education in the New York public schools, from which comes the idiom of her English. When she was thirteen her parents separated, and mother took Maria back to Greece, where, at the age of fourteen, she made her debut in *Cavalleria* at the Athens Opera.

Miss Callas was successful in Greece, but very much a local star, and in 1945 she returned to the United States, looking for new lands to shine upon. The parts and places she was offered seemed to her unworthy of her abilities, and her quest was fruitless for a year. Then, quite suddenly, there appeared in New York the director of Verona's outdoor opera season, looking for someone who could handle *Norma*. He auditioned Miss Callas in New York and gave her a contract.

Within three years she had sung major parts in every important Italian opera house, and her talents had been gathered together and given a new direction by Tullio Serafin, the Grand Old Imp of Italian opera. "You could say he made me," Miss Callas commented. "Of course, I made myself. But he was very important." She sang in London and in South America, and the records began to appear: the first was Cetra's *Gioconda*. Then EMI (Angel in the United States) featured her last year in its three official Scala recordings—*Tosca*, *Lucia*, *Puritani*—and her name began to be heard back home. The Metropolitan Opera tendered an invitation which was rapidly refused, both money and other conditions being unsatisfactory; but the resuscitated Chicago Opera rescued the situation. Miss Callas will make her professional debut in her native land at Chicago early this November. She will sing in *Lucia*, *Norma*, and *Traviata*—six performances in all. Then she returns to Italy, to reign at Scala, and elsewhere.

What the Chicagoans will see this fall bears small resemblance to the pictures which have accompanied Miss Callas's record albums. These photographs showed a hefty, goggle-eyed woman, no style to her at all; while the Callas of today could be a symbol of theatrical chic, a young girl with an excellent figure, wearing dark-rimmed, extreme harlequin glasses, her flaming red hair pulled tightly back into a burning bun, her tailored clothes and dramatic hats in colors that set off the very white skin, the black eyebrows, the red hair. She is not photogenic, in the same illogical way that some singers record badly, but even the camera does not lie so completely. During the summer of 1953 Miss Callas lost no less than 70 pounds, with the inevitable, cheerful result. She said that she did not work to lose her weight: "I am not naturally fat. I had a tapeworm, and when I lost the tapeworm I lost the fat." And then, later, she added, "The operatic public does not like fat women, and they are right. To be on the stage a woman should be attractive."

It was a conversation studded with such comments, like nail heads. "Records are wonderful for little voices," she said. "They are hard for me because, you know, I have the big voice." In talking about composers she took pains to praise Bellini, for whose music her brilliant, flexible voice is

perfectly suited, at the expense of Verdi, who sometimes demands a richer sound. She lamented that certain singers whose presence would enrich the casts of her favorite operas tend to waste and ruin their talents on works in which she has no part. She does not sing German: "Opera is always so beautiful in Italian."

It is fun to watch this sort of thing being done again, after so many years. Most modern opera singers are hard-working musical professionals whose performances are judged, like pianists' performances, according to more or less objective standards. In the Golden Age, or so the memoirs have it, the *cantatrice* was a woman apart, walking in an aura of impeccable greatness towards which gravitated a large, traveling entourage. Every piece of clothing was part of a costume, every word expressive of a complicated inner state called temperament. The world was an oyster, and the prima donna was its pearl. What saved this attitude from pomposity was the boisterous Italian sense of humor; Miss Callas, returning to the grand manner, relies with great success on an equally direct, equally attractive American irreverence.

Behind the sound, the fury and the bounce, after all, is a superb voice and a great talent. Music aside, Miss Callas is an excellent actress, specializing in the most difficult of the acting arts: classical tragedy. Her glance dominates the stage. Her posture proves the pride that is about to fall. In emotional moments she uses her hands and arms—very slow, smooth gestures—to beautiful effect. She moves regally, slowly, gracefully. ("But, of course," she says, "what counts is that I can stand still. Very few singers can stand still. It takes nerve.") The voice itself is an extremely expressive one, especially in a dark, tolling lower register which is Miss Callas's patented own.

With these tools, her strong intelligence, and her Greek-American-Italian exoticism, Miss Callas has established with her audience a rapport that makes her the unquestioned prima donna of the Italian operatic stage. This was difficult to do: how difficult can be appreciated only by those who have experienced the incomparable voice and perfect musicianship of Miss Renata Tebaldi. To have the second best voice in Italy, and become the first lady of opera, is an accomplishment beyond any man's poor power to add to or detract from. Like all such accomplishments, it takes constant work.

The movie theatre in which EMI recorded *Norma* is a one-level affair with a loge but no balcony. The orchestra section runs back to a wall about a quarter the height of the theatre, and the loge starts at the top of that wall. The local deckhands cleared out the back fifteen rows of the orchestra, sat the musicians in front of the wall, facing toward the stage, and used the wall as a sounding board. The chorus sat in the loge, right above the orchestra; the singers stood on a raised, railed walk to the conductor's left. This is a very awkward way to run a railroad, and as many as eight microphones were used to pull everything together on the tape.

The engineering and musical staff, one Englishman and one Italian at each position, sat in a small, smoky room behind the stage, and communicated by telephone with conductor Tullio Serafin. To a visiting American the strangest part of the procedure was the casual way the

musical staff turned the dials on the recording equipment: any such behavior in the United States and the engineers' union would go into a state of shock, and probably pull all the wires out of the joint, smash the equipment and yank up the floorboards. In Italy, it seems, the rules are less rigid. Walter Legge, grand sarchem of EMI, was boss on the job; since he was boss, he could twist knobs to his heart's content, until he got the balance he liked.

EMI's Scala recordings are locally considered historic documents, on which no expense is to be spared. Thirty-six hours of recording time went into the two records of Puccini's *Tosca*, and though *Norma* was a less complicated job it was damn the torpedoes from beginning to end. The worst trouble, oddly enough, came in the moments that sounded most beautiful in the hall: the second act duet between Miss Callas and Miss Stignani.

They are as unlike each other as any two women could be. Stignani is as short and dumpy as Callas is tall and trim, and some years older. (Ebe Stignani is a name not for an age but for all time, with which your great-grandfather was probably acquainted. She has been singing for at least thirty years, but her voice remains pure, huge and incredibly flexible, without any edge to it, or an ounce of strain.) Stignani croons through a rehearsal, and turns on the juice for the recording; her mouth forms a different shape for every vowel and every tone; she works. Callas loves to sing, and gives at all times; she produces her voice effortlessly, and her mouth scarcely opens; she seems to be talking; her mind is constantly on the dramatic significance of the music. Stignani stands four-square, stiff and stern, the disciplined House Mother; Callas leans forward into the music, her elbows propped against the railing. When the passage is over Stignani simply closes her mouth; Callas shakes her head, frowns and looks ashamedly into the floor, protecting herself against any possible disappointment when she hears the tape. It is a very appealing—and oddly American—gesture.

When the duet started, Callas reached over and took Stignani's hand, to achieve a closer communion. Serafin turned to them with his seraphic smile, and they sang it gorgeously. Then the two engineers came out muttering, and began moving microphones, platforms, scores, people. The girls had sung their perfect thirds, but the resultant tones in that oddly-shaped house, with its acoustically treated ceiling and bare walls, had created serious harmonic distortions. Again they sang it, again, and again, perfectly every time, until Legge had the sounds he wanted. It was an exhausting day—for Serafin, who is now seventy-six and feels it; for Stignani, who had postponed an engagement in Rome to finish her part of the recording; for Callas, who was fresh out of a sick-bed; for Meneghini, her husband, who is always with her when she sings; and for their chauffeur, a swarthy gentleman in puttees, who kept wandering in and out of the hall, bored.

Miss Callas lives in Verona, in the penthouse of a new, six-story apartment house two blocks from the Roman amphitheater where, seven years ago, she made her first Italian appearance. (This is one home; she and Meneghini also maintain a permanent suite in Milan's Grand Hotel, where Verdi worked and died.) Her husband probably owns the whole

house; when they were married he sold his large building materials factory, put all his money into real estate, and turned his commercial attention to managing his wife's career.

The apartment, like the household, is a handsome blend of Italian and American (Miss Callas, though permanently residing in Italy, retains her U.S. passport and citizenship). The living room is enormous, full of comfortable furniture and *objets d'art*: Miss Callas's grand piano at one end, the 21-inch screen television set at the other. The kitchen is full of chrome gadgets, and Miss Callas trots around in skirt, sweater, and flat shoes. There is an exuberant, two-year-old poodle, obviously one of the happiest dogs in dog-rich Italy. (Miss Callas added to this happiness, and took years from the lives of EMI's Milan staff, by bringing the poodle with her to the last recording session of *Norma*.) Around two sides of the living room runs a wide terrace, on which Miss Callas is presently establishing a garden; next year she hopes to have rambler roses.

She loves it all: home and husband, garden and dog. She loves her car, a remarkable light-green Alfa-Romeo specially made for the Paris Auto Salon by Pinin Farina. "You know," she says, "it's very difficult for me. If an ordinary artist has a Cadillac, how can I have a Cadillac, too?" She loves her costumes, many of which are her property, made by her own couturier; she loves her large personal wardrobe. In short, she loves all the appurtenances of her great success; she worries about them; she works terribly hard.

"Every year," she said, "I must be better than the year before. Every year I must have an even greater career. Otherwise, I'd retire. I don't need the money. I work for Art. But also I work for a great success."

When Duse Tapped at Boito's Window

by Vincent Sheean

ARRIGO BOITO, composer of *Mefistofele* and librettist for Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff*, had a remarkably varied career: musician-poet, pianist, journalist, politician, he had been a volunteer for Garibaldi in his youth and the main instigator of Verdi's last works. But one chapter of his experience has remained virtually unknown until the past few years. It is the chapter of his relationship with the memorable actress Eleonora Duse, coinciding with the *Otello-Falstaff* period.

The love of Duse and Boito was hardly even suspected in the Eighties and Nineties of the past century. Duse cared nothing about public opinion, but Boito was a secretive man. We see in him another exemplar of the strange phenomenon encountered chiefly amongst men of letters: a great determination to deceive their contemporaries, but along with it an utter inability to throw away any scrap of paper, precious or insignificant. Thus there was left, at Boito's death in 1918, such a mystifying clutter of scribbles, notes, letters, maps, lists, and diagrams, such a welter of faded words, that it took many years for the most devoted of scholars to sort the whole thing out and to perceive its meaning.

What came to light out of this vast rubbish heap was not only a good deal of valuable material about Verdi's work and Boito's, but—unsuspected for a half century—the entire love correspondence of Boito and Duse for ten years, 1887-1897: that is, from the first night of *Otello* to the time when they said farewell in Rome. Not all of this has yet been published. The first and most astonishing part came out in 1954, the year of the Boito centenary, under the care of Pietro Nardi, who has spent decades in the Boito archives. In 1956 it was used again by Olga Signorelli in the best biography of La Duse. Up to now the secret has still

been pretty well kept because the scholarly works in which these letters were printed have not reached the general public even in Italy. We still have no means of knowing—and indeed we may never know—if Verdi was aware of the flame which consumed these two extraordinary beings between *Otello* and *Falstaff*. And he would have been downright horrified, in those pre-Freudian days, if anybody had suggested to him that perhaps the loves of Duse and Boito had been caused by *Otello* and had resulted in *Falstaff*.

Yet something of the kind is what our post-Freudian world must inevitably think. We know that these two were brought together on the first night of *Otello*; we know that much of *Falstaff* was written during the period when they were really together. For both of them this was the one true love of a lifetime; and it would be impossible for us to believe that some element of the Duse—"Lenor," as Boito called her—had not animated the libretto of *Falstaff* and entered into it.

Eleonora Duse was just twenty-four, and was on the brink of her great renown, when she first met the forty-one-year-old poet at a supper party given in her honor by the intellectuals of Milan. In 1884 Milan was, as it is now, the arbiter of taste for all Italy in literary and theatrical matters. Duse had been playing at the Carcano Theatre for a short season, alternating two plays which, however famous she afterwards became in them, were new for her at the time. One was *La Dame aux Camélias* and the other was *Cavalleria Rusticana*. (This latter play, from a story by Giovanni Verga, did not become an operatic barnstormer until six years later.) The impression Duse made in her Milan season was so profound that some hardy spirits were already saying she was a greater actress than Sarah Bernhardt.

She was an extraordinary creature and had had an extraordinary life. Her parents were strolling players, Venetians who usually played in tents and seldom had enough to eat. She had been led on to the stage at the age of four by her father, as Cosette in *Les Misérables*, and had never stopped performing from that time. She had almost no schooling. When it was possible for her mother to get her, briefly, into a village school, she was made to sit in a corner by herself because she was the child of the "comedians." Brought up on a diet of greens gathered from the fields (as she herself related), it was perhaps inevitable that she should be an undernourished, scrawny child. Without culture or any knowledge of the world, she nevertheless longed for it: poetry had been pouring through her since her earliest childhood, because of the plays she played, but for years she never had any clear idea of what the words meant.

When she was fourteen years old, Juliet's age, she played Juliet in the Roman Arena at Verona and (we take her word for it) had a mystical experience. It was of a kind which is far more often talked about by actors of all countries than really known. On this occasion Duse "became" Juliet. In the Roman amphitheater, under the moon, smelling the roses she had instinctively plucked and carried with her on to the stage, she suffered the metamorphosis pretended by all actors and felt by few: she utterly ceased to be Eleonora Duse. It was like a hypnotic trance and went on for a long time, not only during that evening but when she went

to bed and when she woke up the next day. It took her hours to get out of it even then, and when she did she was exhausted.

It was a kind of foreshadowing of her whole life. To the very end—she died in Pittsburgh on Easter Sunday, 1924—Duse seems to have been in an abnormal psychotic condition which produced the highest and truest reality for herself and others when she was on the stage, but not invariably even then. If she was indeed the greatest actress the world had known, as seems likely on the evidence, it was due principally to this psychosis in which she “became” various characters and briefly lived their lives. Her power has been described by Anton Chekhov, Bernard Shaw, and dozens of other unimpeachable authorities as being unlike anything else known to the theatre. She did not paint her face at all (she hated what she called “false teeth”), and her concessions to ordinary theatre conventions were very limited. She dressed as she believed the character she had “become” would dress, and she gave free rein to designers, lighting engineers, and others concerned in a production. That was about all. Otherwise she went on to the stage and lived for awhile in another life (Juliet, *La Dame aux Camélias*, Cleopatra) and never fully knew whether there was an audience or not. Unlike most actors, and especially unlike her antithesis Sarah Bernhardt, she could not tell whether the house was full or empty and did not care.

Hermann Bahr, who happened to be in St. Petersburg when she first played Juliet there, has left a memorable description of how this woman (then in her thirties) without a scrap of make-up on her face suddenly became fourteen years old under his eyes when she began to speak.

Chekhov's awe and wonder are recorded in his diary and letters, as well as in some of *The Sea-Gull*. His entire style of dramatic composition was deeply influenced by having seen Duse in his youth in Moscow; by nature he also loathed “false teeth,” but until he saw Duse he had never believed it possible to write for the theatre in such a spirit. Bernard Shaw, a combative and jocose spirit, was more solemn about Duse than he ever was on any other subject except God and Joan of Arc. Between about 1884 and 1924 a favorite diversion of intellectuals, G.B.S. included, was contrasting the uniqueness of Duse with the familiar glitter of Sarah Bernhardt. That the world could have contained both these artists at the same time is almost as mysterious as the coincidence of Wagner and Verdi. What we must remember best about their parallel careers is that each knew the other to be a woman of genius, no matter what the world might try to throw between them; and Duse always said, after she had triumphed in every other country in Europe and both the Americas, that she would never play in Paris until Bernhardt invited her to do so. Sarah, who was a great woman, too, invited Duse to play *La Dame aux Camélias* (her own most famous part) in her own theatre.

Some of the things we read about Duse as an actress would appear downright impossible if they were not so well attested. One of the oddest is that her audiences, or anyhow the persons in them who left evidence, were under the illusion that she was speaking their language, not her own. That is, Russians heard her in Russian, Frenchmen in French, Englishmen in English, although she never spoke anything but Italian on the stage. This conviction was crystallized by the President of the French

Republic (Félix Faure) when she apologized to him for performing *La Dame aux Camélias* in Paris in Italian rather than French. "Ah, Madame," said the President, "were you not speaking French?" She had the Pentecostal gift because of the penetrating beauty of her voice, one must assume, along with an extraordinary clarity of enunciation. Her appeal to people who did not know a word of Italian, the Russians and the Americans being most conspicuous, was based upon this strange gift as much as her others. And since it was so strange, it could not happen every single evening: it was a miracle or mystery beyond her own control, and as a result many an audience all over the world was sent home again because Duse could not perform that night. Managers had to accustom themselves to the fact, which also had a physical basis in the artist's fragile health. Duse, in fact, coughed blood sometimes in *La Dame aux Camélias* because the illness of the heroine was her own. (She did not cough blood when she was playing other parts, be it noted: no better proof of her psychosis could be found.)

All this was still to come, but when she and Boito met for supper at the Cova in May 1884, it was already clearly in prospect to those who could recognize genius. The Cova Restaurant in Milan no longer exists, but in the nineteenth century and for part of this one it had a place unique in the life of the city. The ladies of society—all those Milanese countesses who were Verdi's and Boito's friends—had not yet taken to public dining, and their absence was notable: but their husbands, brothers, and other male friends were pillars of the institution. Women of the theatre dined and supped in public, of course, and most often with men of the aristocracy; but Duse was a special case. It shows the awe in which she was held, even then, that her hosts did not dare invite other women to meet her: they could not ask their own wives and sisters and they dared not ask anybody else. She was, as a result, the only woman guest we find mentioned in accounts of the evening.

It was a brilliant evening with the luxury and pomp, combined with decorum, which characterized such gatherings in the 1880s. Every man of interest amongst the Milanese intellectuals and aristocrats was there. The Mayor of Milan (Count Gaetano Negri) was the host, with Eleonora Duse at his right; on her left was Arrigo Boito. There was a private dining room, of course, with plenty of champagne and an endless supper, and there were the private drawing rooms to go with it. We are told that Madame Duse did not go home until three in the morning.

She had played Marguerite Gautier that night and came to the party in a dress of soft green velvet, with a train. Perhaps it was a stage dress, for she seldom troubled to dress well off the stage. She moved from group to group in the salons with the simplicity of a great lady, Nardi tells us in his centenary book about Boito: she had a word for everybody; she was lively, intelligent, full of tact and sympathy; and she evidently knew (for she read everything she could) who all the poets and playwrights were. There were many lights and flowers; a small orchestra played good music; after supper the company adjourned to the drawing rooms and there was more talk. Madame Duse's husband, the actor Tebaldo Checchi (whose real name was Marchetti, of a noble family), was not present, although he was playing in her company at the time.

Boito was always successful with ladies. He was a tall, handsome man of wit and manner; his poetry and his literary and musical journalism had been widely appreciated for twenty years; his opera *Mefistofele*, in its revised version, had been going the rounds of all the capitals with great success for almost a decade. In addition to these advantages he was in some mysterious extra way personally celebrated, even for no reason at all, as he had been since adolescence—that is, he was constantly mentioned, much discussed, and all his doings aroused wide interest. The attraction he and Madame Duse felt for each other, although it was not (evidently) the lightning stroke of instantaneous love, contained possibilities. The actress left Milan a few days later for Turin, after having sent the poet a photograph of herself at his request. He wrote to her on May 21, the day of her last performance in Milan, so the letter must have reached Turin as soon as she did. His letter reads:

"You have gone away and the thread is broken and we have all fallen down to earth, Verga, Gualdo and I, with our noses to the pavement. Now, after thirty-six hours of catalepsy, my arm has regained its movements and my hand turns this bit of paper which is dedicated to you." He tells her not to bother with an answer, but she replied on the last day of May: "May is going. . . . Sad thing." Her letters, generally brief and rather wild, are written like Emily Dickinson's verses, without any punctuation except an occasional dash, and in such a way that a few words cover a whole page.

On June 7 Boito writes again and encloses the sheet belonging to the month of May from his desk calendar. On this he wrote a quatrain containing a play on the word *mai*—since the calendar was in French. This pun, or *calembour*, or whatever he called it, is not precisely a declaration of love, but for such a brief acquaintance it might be called warm. Here it is: "*In questo mese il raggio/ Dei vostri occhi mirai, / Letto in francese, e il maggio, / Ma in italiano e un mai.*" In French it's May but in Italian it's *never*, says he, and in some uncanny way his melancholy prescience was perfectly right: there was a never-never quality about their love from the very start.

Duse had then to go to South America: she was beginning her long life of incessant wandering. (Once when she was asked, by a reporter, which country pleased her best in all the world, she answered sadly: "The journey there.") In South America she had her final break with her husband, painful but explicit, and he left her acting company as well as their union. He was an honorable man who never troubled her again; he settled in Argentina and became a respected citizen, ending his career with a long term as Argentine consul-general in Bristol. Duse had loved him; he was the father of her only surviving child, Enrichetta; but he used to go and watch her performances when she played in London and never gave her a sign of his presence. He had defied his noble parents in order to go on the stage, and even more so when he married a theatre woman; but when he left all that (with perhaps a sigh of relief?), it was for good.

Duse had shown with him what was a primary characteristic of her youth: attraction to an older man who had much to teach her. Her husband was a great deal older than herself; but he was a man of culture,

he knew the world, he came of a social order quite unknown to the starveling child of the tramp comedians. Her first lover had also been an older man from whom she could learn: the Roman journalist Cafiero, to whom, at the age of nineteen, she bore a child (soon to die). The second was her husband. In her whole life, although she loved deeply and stormily, her loves were extremely few. Towards the end she came to say that the only true one was Boito.

This rare, haunted, exquisite woman, a poet in her heart even though she could hardly spell her own name, was in love with beauty—with the good, and the true, and the beautiful, with all the best that has been thought and felt and said in the world. Sometimes the moon or a bird or the light of the sun on the water moved her so unutterably that she was ill. Ill means ill—she had to go to bed and call the doctor. Her abnormal sensitivity began in childhood, but instead of wearing off it grew more powerful, right to the end (and she died at sixty-five). Once in later years when she was walking on the Lido with Rainer Maria Rilke a peacock came along and cried out and she fainted dead away. She could not endure that horrid screech, and in addition she had some strange superstition from her savage childhood to the effect that peacocks brought bad luck. She was untutored genius, if there ever has been any such thing, but the point is that she wanted to be *tutored*, she was avid for culture and poetry and music. Older men—fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years older—had more to give her, for many years, than any of their juniors. One older woman, the eminent novelist Matilde Serao, had acknowledged her genius during her first season in Naples, and they became friends. From such as these, and they were good teachers, La Duse derived whatever education she ever had.

This was Duse—wild but longing to be tamed, famished for some not-impossible combination of art and love—when *Otello* was performed for the first time (Saturday, February 5, 1887) at the Scala Theatre in Milan.

How she got there we do not know at all. It was almost impossible to get near the theatre, and the seats had been sold for many weeks in advance. Many foreigners (Americans, English, and the like) were paying fortunes for admission. Perhaps the Mayor of Milan remembered Duse. We feel sure Boito did not. On that night he could not have remembered his own name: he was all Shakespeare, Verdi, *Otello*. But in the course of the evening, somehow or somewhere in that magical theatre, he came face to face with La Duse once again.

"Lenor!" he said.

This was the only true love of Boito's life or of Duse's. Her seven years with D'Annunzio afterwards were infatuation, as overcolored and overheated as the plays, poems, and novels D'Annunzio wrote about it: it was a form of hysteria. Her friendship with Rainer Maria Rilke still later on was poetry. But for at least a while (give it two years!) she and Boito were wonderfully united in a relationship which seemed to both of them the utmost life had to offer. They were unspeakably difficult characters, both: intense and supersensitive to the point of absurdity. Duse, who fainted at the peacock's cry and wept for the sunset, was matched with a man who could hardly endure existence in its ordinary aspects at all, who

lived in dreams and kept his door locked and bolted against all comers. It was an impossible conjunction, but it occurred, and its results may be traced out through a number of works of art. Duse's share in *Falstaff* cannot be calculated at all, for instance, but it was written under her eyes or at her elbow. Boito's *Cleopatra*, which is somewhat more than a mere translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, was written for Duse, and it was in this play that the young Chekhov saw her for the first time. The results of that were momentous enough: Chekhov and after him Stanislavsky created the style of the Moscow Art Theatre, which, directly inspired by Duse (as they often said and as she was proud to admit), was the first great continental school to oppose the Comédie Française, Sarah Bernhardt and all.

Most of all, Duse's own art matured rapidly after her union with Boito: she was soon to reach a height which, if we accept the testimony of the time, had never been reached in a theatre before.

Otello must be reckoned at least partly the cause of the sudden flare-up between Duse and Boito: to meet again on such a night was to multiply and intensify every feeling there could have been between them. It was an evening of such excitement that those present never forgot it: Toscanini, who played cello as a volunteer in the second row, cherished it as one of the greatest evenings of his life. I know an old lady, still living, whose father (a professor at the Conservatory) took her to that performance when she was seventeen years old. Now, seventy full years later, she regards it as the most electric experience she ever had in an opera house.

Under such conditions, on the night of Boito's triumph—for Verdi insisted that Boito share the triumph: the old man dragged the poet out on the stage to take bows with him—Duse clearly fell in love as never before. The same is true of the poet, in his way; but if we read his character correctly, he might never have done anything about it: he had too much dread of life.

The exact night cannot be determined, but it was almost certainly between February 5 and February 11 that Duse "tapped on Boito's window." That is the way both expressed it in letters long afterwards when their love had fallen into reminiscence. February 5 was the first night of *Otello*, and February 11 was the night on which Boito took Verdi and his wife Peppina to see Duse in Goldoni's *Pamela Nubile*, taking the august old couple to her dressing-room afterwards. Between those dates the union had occurred, we are well entitled to think.

Boito lived "alone," as they said, behind locked doors, playing Bach to himself and looking at the Velasquez drawings he had brought from Madrid. "Alone" is a relative word: he had his mistress-housekeeper, Fanny, and such other servants as were necessary, but few friends were ever admitted to the house. He went into society a good deal, especially to the house of Donna Vittoria Cima, but did not "receive." When Duse "tapped on his window" it was three o'clock in the morning. He had not expected her but she could not wait any longer.

Both of them refer repeatedly to what Duse always called "the year of the dream," the year in which they were together more than they ever were again. On that first night there was snow; she crept down the

narrow "white street"—she makes it sound like a Utrillo picture—and out-tapped Bach with her long fingers on the windowpane beside the door. At dawn they sat on the edge of the bed and Boito said to her: "What is there in those eyes?" She answered, as she recalled in a letter ten years later, "Little hope." Hope flowered again the next day, she says, "and from then on our life was marked by a common destiny."

Boito knew all too well that this common destiny could not long survive the conditions of life. No actor in Italy, even today, is permitted by the theatre system to remain long in any one city. Boito detested travel, the "circus tent," and the exile from his own pianoforte, his Bach and Velasquez. He went on tour with Duse and hated it; the tour of Sicily in the spring after *Otello* was, for him, extremely uncongenial. They had some months in the mountains above Bergamo, both in this year and the next. He never told Verdi what he was doing up there and we cannot prove what, if anything, Verdi knew about the Duse-Boito union.

Now that the letters have been published, at least in part, we know that *Falstaff* took form during "the year of the dream," and we can easily conjecture that all Duse's lightness and grace, those qualities which made her supreme in Venetian comedy, were called out by happiness. It is something of this essence which infuses *Falstaff* and gives it the wondrous gaiety that, like Duse's own, ends with a catch in the throat.

Years later she went alone to see *Falstaff* and wrote to Boito: "How sad is your comedy!" We are reminded of what so many writers said of her own comedy: all laughter and delight, with an aftertaste of tears.

For it was not in the nature of these two to be happy for long, and life was against them anyhow. They could have married, as Boito originally wished, but only if she had left the stage. Both could see how tragic this might be, and, too, how impermanent. She was constantly on tour; soon those vast journeys, Russia, the Americas, Egypt, London, were upon her; their love declined into a correspondence; they met at constantly widening intervals. When Duse wanted him to come to Turin or Rome for a week or for only a few days, he was unable to do so; he had his work; he must finish his *Nerone*. When Verdi wanted him for a day or so he flew. She observed this difference, sadly but not bitterly. "The year of the dream" was over.

In 1898, when she had met "the young Mago" D'Annunzio, she said farewell to Boito. "The young Mago" was her only reproach to Verdi, the "old Mago" (wizard) who had taken so much from her.

Long afterwards, when Boito died, Duse told her intimates that she owed everything good in her life to him. He had said that their last meeting was "a form of death," but he survived it for twenty years. His own wizard, Verdi, died not long after that last meeting with Lenor. Boito went on in his own way, playing Bach to himself and covering bales upon bales of paper with the ever-expanding details of his interminable opera, text and music. As he had said decades before, if he could not finish the work, that would also be all right. He was a man destined to do his best for others, not for himself; he dreamed his dreams in solitude. He never did finish *Nerone*.

The Phantom of the Festspielhaus

by Wieland Wagner and Roy McMullen*

THE TIME MIGHT BE *the late afternoon of any day of rehearsals during the Bayreuth Festival. The place is the Festspielhaus. Its neo-Greek amphitheater rises steeply around us in the empty darkness. The singers and the orchestra have left, but from the invisible pit—the famous mystical chasm—there emerges an acoustical perfume, a sort of air-conditioning in E flat. Wieland Wagner, in gray slacks and blue sweater, is alone on the stage, studying his basic Ring setting: a giant drum, flanked with steps and backed by an enormous cyclorama. As he moves about, the changing light on his face picks out resemblances to his grandfather Richard, his grandmother Cosima, his great-grandfather Liszt. Suddenly the acoustical perfume thickens into a billowing chord, and the figure of Richard Wagner materializes in the center of the giant drum. In one of his favorite costumes, half Romantic dandy and half Renaissance prince, he makes a theatrical figure.*

Richard Wagner: Sorry. I know you're busy, my grandson. But after fifteen years (*he glances around at the nearly bare stage*) of this—this sort of thing, I must have a talk. (*He looks around again.*) I see you like one of my jokes.

Wieland Wagner: (*Recovering politely.*) Er, what joke do you mean? (*He finds a chair for his grandfather.*)

R.W.: (*Settling in.*) My *Parsifal* joke. One of those Cosima wrote down.

*When it originally appeared, the article, subtitled "An Only Partly Imaginary Conversation between Richard and Wieland Wagner," bore the following editor's note: "The description of this conversation as being 'only partly imaginary' is correct. We wish to thank Wieland Wagner for generously taking the time to play his own role in this dialogue. The part of Richard Wagner was assembled by Roy McMullen from his published opinions and accounts of his productions."

"Ach," I said, "I'm sick of all these painted and costumed creatures. Now that I've invented the invisible orchestra pit, I'd like to find the invisible theatre." (*He looks around again at the bare stage, meaningfully.*) The invisible theatre! *Das unsichtbare Theater!* You seem to have found it for me.

W.W.: I've never taken that as a joke . . .

R.W.: Evidently not.

W.W.: . . . but rather as the deep perception of a man who had optical and acoustical visions.

R.W.: Yes. And then?

W.W.: And who saw these visions distorted in the theatre by untalented painters, to the point of being really unrecognizable.

R.W.: You're right. I did have a good deal of trouble getting my visions realized. (*Pause. Aggressively.*) But untalented painters are one thing, and a bare stage is another. What have you done with my *Fafner*, my swimming machines for the *Rhine Maidens*, my *Valhalla*? What's wrong with naturalistic illusions? What's wrong with a little stage magic?

W.W.: Nothing's wrong with stage magic. A production of *The Ring* needs it just as much as it needs a brilliant tenor. But now we can create magic with lighting techniques which weren't available to you back in 1876.

R.W.: Lighting techniques are one thing, and a bare stage is another.

W.W.: (*Explaining patiently.*) But, grandfather, a naturalistic set today would simply destroy an illusion, not create one—it would simply be a giant-sized trashy colored postcard.

R.W.: (*Warmly.*) Are you suggesting that *my* ideas about how to stage an opera might spoil public taste? I once said about this *Festspielhaus*: quote, the mysterious entry of the music will prepare you for the unveiling and distinct portrayal of scenic pictures that seem to rise out of an ideal world of dreams, and which are meant to set before you the whole reality of a noble art's most skilled illusion. Unquote. That seems to me clear enough. Scenic pictures. The whole reality.

W.W.: (*Still patient.*) We have other and better ways of making illusion today. Lighting techniques now make it possible to *dematerialize* the setting, to give it an ideal quality, so that the artwork—your artwork—rises above ordinary reality. With lights we can create a fluid musical sphere instead of a rigid stage picture. Isn't that what you wanted?

R.W.: That's only part of what I wanted. I see you are working over that

joke of mine about *das unsichtbare Theater*. You seem to think that my stage instructions, which were very specific and which your grandmother respected when she was in charge here, are no longer to be considered in the same class as my music and poetry. You apparently forget that I was the creator of a total—a unified—theatrical experience.

W.W.: (*Gently.*) Times have changed. Things are different now. "Naturalistic settings" stick out awkwardly in an era that looks for a symbolic interpretation of your scores.

R.W.: Symbolic interpretations indeed! (*Peers into the wings.*) *Mein unsichtbarer Fafner!* All right, I was a symbolist. But you know perfectly well that I was never a symbolist in the namby-pamby French way. My symbols were substantial mountains, caves, castles, cups, swords, birds, beasts. In fact, one of my clearly stated reasons for leaving the historical subject matter of Meyerbeer and those people and turning towards myth was that in myth the folk gives naturalistic—I repeat, naturalistic—form to our deepest intimations about life and the universe. Isn't it still true?

W.W.: Not quite. We have learned a lot about the more or less abstract symbols in myth. And I'm sure you would agree that, while the work of a genius is created for the centuries, its realization on the stage is tied not only to current progress in theatre techniques, but also to the enlargement of human consciousness. Modern depth-psychology, my dear grandfather, has given us undreamed-of possibilities to interpret operas—and not only yours—more meaningfully, to reveal their true content, to free them from superficial theatrical attributes.

R.W.: My dear Wieland, you don't need to give me, of all people, any lessons in what you call depth-psychology. Look around you at this theatre—my theatre. It's a palace of illusionism, of narcosis, of hypnosis. Old Klingsor couldn't have done better.

W.W.: Well, you must admit that my brother and I have left undisturbed the unique features of the house—the sunken orchestra, the so-called mystical abyss, the amphitheaterlike auditorium . . .

R.W.: Good, but I haven't got to my point. I'm wondering if you actually believe, as all my immediate disciples did, in theatrical empathy, in-feeling, *Einfühlung*. Some of your highly intellectual methods, your ways of keeping an audience alert and wide-awake, seem to run counter to the basic aims of my poetry, my dramas, my theatre, my music, and even my life philosophy. Remember, now, I have been watching your productions here since 1951, and . . .

W.W.: (*Interested.*) Empathy? *Einfühlung*?

R.W.: Precisely. I wanted my audiences to react to my operas as people with poetic German sensibilities ought to react. I wanted them to be

drugged, to lose themselves, to go under. Like Isolde. (*In an old man's Sprechgesang.*)

*In dem wogenden Schwall,
in dem tönenden Schall,
in des Welt-Atems
wehendem All-
ertrinken,
versinken—
unbewusst—
höchste Lust!*

How can you get this essential, truly German effect with your almost abstract and vaguely cosmopolitan symbols? Without my appeal to our national sensibility? Without my kind of disbelief-suspending stage naturalism?

W.W.: (*Briskly.*) I find it hard to believe that you were ever seriously of the opinion that late-Romantic decor and appeals to nationalistic sentimentality were the only ways to get this effect. In fact, I feel that you seemed, or pretended, to want this effect more than you actually did.

R.W.: As for nationalism . . .

W.W.: (*Firmly.*) I think that an abstract space which gains color and character through the modern use of light goes much better with your music than naturalism does. And I'm convinced that what you really had in mind when you created your works was not just to narcotize the audience. You do appeal, of course, to the subconscious through your music. But you also appeal to the conscious mind with your poetry, your psychology, and your choice of themes. I think it is right to lead the public not just into dreams, but also into meditation about your works. That's one reason why I've been interested in the ideas of twentieth-century scholars of Greek tragedy.

R.W.: I'm still thinking about *Einführung*. It is all very well to say that an audience ought to be persuaded to think about what it sees and hears at the opera house, but first of all it must be persuaded to feel—to believe. That, after all, is what the theatre is all about. And the audience cannot be persuaded to feel and believe if it is not provided with an illusion of reality in the decor—and also, by the way, in the acting.

W.W.: It goes without saying that the actors should identify with their parts in your works. One should not think that a singer is merely playing a role, but that he really is Tannhäuser, for example, or Siegfried. The structure of a music drama is fundamentally a structure of actors. But don't—when you think about the problem of theatrical belief—underestimate the effect of your music.

R.W.: Grandson, you don't need to give me any lessons in that subject either. I must say, however, that often I suspect that you want the sound of my invisible orchestra to compensate too much for what is missing in

your partly invisible theatre. Your actors have so little to do. And so few things to do anything with.

W.W.: I repeat. Don't underestimate your music. Its capacity for expression is so great that often the part added by theatrical business seems ridiculous. Take the Valkyries. The force of your purely musical storm is much greater than anything that could be shown on the stage. Much greater, for instance, than the theatrical effect of a woman riding a wooden horse across the horizon from right to left—as you directed. Instead of trying to follow your instructions for realistic details, one ought to try, in my opinion, to translate the cosmic storm of your music into general visual terms.

R.W.: But it isn't just a question of theatrical effect. Take my *Parsifal* production of 1882. (*In a musing tone.*) How it rained! All during our weeks of preparation! And how cheerful we all were! (*Back to his argument.*) Now I grant that my moving scenery, my ingenious *Wandeldekoration* in the first and third acts, was a fiasco. Because of a miscalculation I never understood, the machinery went twice as fast as the dramatic action required. It was painful. However, my point, for you, is that I did not intend this change of scenery as a merely decorative or theatrical business. The idea was to lead the audience, to the accompaniment of the music, imperceptibly into the sanctuary of the Grail—as if in a dream.

W.W.: Don't forget that your works were composed before the invention of motion pictures. Today many things can be realized much better on film than in the theatre, and I am against mixing the effects of the two genres. In the theatre we should stress above all the effect of human beings.

R.W.: I see I'm a prophet without honor in my own family.

W.W.: Well, I must say, respectfully but firmly, my dear grandfather, that I think many of your stage instructions are better left disobeyed.

R.W.: Fortunately, some of my admirers think my writings are the last word on producing my operas.

W.W.: The so-called word can only be the work in question—not a statement about it, even if it comes from the originator of the work. In a stage production the problem is to make the work one's own, and the solution is an extremely personal act. Directors and producers who argue over the letter of stage directions have clearly not made the work their own. The impersonal—that's the museum of directing styles.

R.W.: That, Wieland, is an interesting confession. How do you know where to stop when you start making my work your own? Let me tell you that there is nothing at all impersonal or extraneous in my stage directions. They are mine, mine personally. They are part of my

integration of all the arts, and are no more to be ignored than my music or my poetry. They help to bring out the deep symbolic content of my work.

W.W.: Actually, since 1951, we've realized on the Bayreuth stage what you yourself wanted, but which couldn't be achieved with the tools of your time. The theatre of naturalistic illusion covered up the heart of your work more than it revealed it. As Appia, Meyerhold, and other directors realized a long while ago, your deep symbolic content can be interpreted neither by naturalistic scenery nor by its equivalent in the imitative gestures of actor-singers.

R.W.: Gestures! No, there you certainly can't say that you have realized what I wanted. Do I have to remind you of the close accord between what happens in my orchestra and what happens on the stage—or ought to happen? You, with your modern penchant for abstraction and your apparent dislike of synchronizing things, seem to be ashamed of the obvious fact that your grandfather's music is richly figurative—and frequently even imitative of visible movements of the body.

W.W.: Come now, your music isn't ballet music.

R.W.: Of course not—and don't bring up that trouble I had in Paris about the ballet for *Tannhäuser*. But a lot of my music is of the descriptive or representative sort, plainly intended for miming. And that's exactly how I interpreted it when I was my own producer. Take my Dutchman as an example. His first entrance is very solemn. During the deep trumpet notes—B minor—at the close of the introductory scene he has come ashore, along a plank lowered by one of the crew. (*Rises and begins to play the Dutchman.*) Now then . . .

W.W.: (*Drops from habit into the tone of a director coaching an actor.*) Really, music can't be transformed into movement in such a primitive way. We must present, instead of this, and as I do, an impression of a man with a curse on him, bound to the mast of his ship.

R.W.: (*Still in the role.*) . . . now then, his rolling gait, proper to seafolk, is accompanied by a wavelike figure for the violins. With the first quarter-note of the third bar he takes his second step—always with folded arms and sunken head. His third and fourth steps coincide with the notes of the eighth and tenth bars. Then . . .

W.W.: The relationship between the music and the scene is extremely complex in your work.

R.W.: Complex, but very carefully calculated. (*Sits down again.*) By me, that is.

W.W.: It's true that the music and what the actors do go together, but they don't stick together as if one were cause and the other effect.

R.W.: They certainly don't in some of your recent productions. For instance, I've noticed that as soon as Tristan and Isolde have drunk the potion you have her throw herself into his arms. Now here my stage directions are detailed. The lovers are supposed to exchange a long, long look while the potion takes effect—it's a rather slow potion. And even if you are determined to ignore my written instructions, you can scarcely ignore my music at this supreme moment in the drama. That long, slow look of love and death is in the music, as you know. It has been there in the music since the prelude.

W.W.: You've picked a good example. I regard your music here as having primarily a psychological significance—not as being the automatic signal for some synchronized acting. The slow resignation to love and death does occur in my version. It simply does so after, not before, Tristan and Isolde are in each other's arms. And you yourself provide justification for my version. You make it clear that they have been in love for a long time. The potion is not the cause of the passion—it's not the cause at all. It is just the agent revealing their passion, and also their desire to be united in death. For of course they think they have committed suicide.

R.W.: My instructions were followed by Cosima. They're a tradition.

W.W.: I must insist a bit here. It seems to me wrong to transform your psychological—and philosophical—music into movement in a theatrically primitive fashion. As for tradition, that is pure laziness, and present-day Bayreuth productions are free of it. They are also, I might add, free of false piety.

R.W.: They are indeed!

W.W.: At Bayreuth we are trying to make your work more immediately meaningful for modern people. And I must say that we seem to be succeeding.

R.W.: That at least I'll grant, my dear Wieland. (*Pause.*) But your success in reviving the Bayreuth Festival since 1951 has for me a peculiar flavor—quite apart from what I've been saying about decor and acting. You seem bent on taking the German Soul—the German nation—out of my work.

W.W.: (*Showing some impatience.*) During most of your career the German nation did not really exist. It was a beautiful dream. You longed for it in the way Verdi longed for a united Italy. When the Reich was finally created, a few years before your death, you were bitterly disappointed in it—as you yourself wrote to Ludwig II.

R.W.: Perhaps. But I believe in the German Soul and—as I was saying a few minutes ago—in a German artistic sensibility. I know how bitterly against my nationalism and my anti-Semitism you are. But isn't it obvious that I became Richard Wagner only after I gave up my foreign

styles and subject matter? It seems to me that all this political and aesthetic internationalism at Bayreuth is cutting my work off from its German roots.

W.W.: A Romantic dream. After two wars—and after Auschwitz—things look quite different.

R.W.: Are you going to argue that three generations of producers, critics, and ordinary Wagnerites were mistaken about the national character of my music dramas?

W.W.: My generation has the luck of being farther away in time from these creations. Each age sees a work differently. Your work is human and above all Christian. Actually, there isn't a single nationalistic phrase in it—not even in *Die Meistersinger*. Hans Sachs says at the end of this supposedly nationalistic opera that a Holy Roman Empire for the German nation is not important—but that German art is. Thomas Mann has pointed out the importance of an exact understanding of this passage.

R.W.: I'm learning things about myself every minute!

W.W.: As for the argument of older Wagnerian commentators that Alberich, Mime, and Beckmesser are caricatures of the Jewish personality, I'm pretty sure you'll agree that it's ridiculous. These figures simply represent the negative side of human nature. Alberich is a personification of the same greed for power that is embodied in Wotan. Mime is a personification of the false father-figure, of the unproductive teacher who misuses the son in his plans for world domination.

R.W.: (*Interested.*) And what do you think of Sixtus Beckmesser?

W.W.: Beckmesser is a symbol of musical impotence. This is shown by your not giving him any proper musical theme of his own—just a distortion of the theme of Walther von Stolzing.

R.W.: This isn't exactly answering my complaint about the German character of my work, unless you mean that I wasn't as German as I thought I was. But go on.

W.W.: As for your infamous anti-Semitism, we know it was conditioned by history. Besides, you attacked not only Jewish composers, but Catholics, Protestants, the French, the Bavarians, the citizens of Munich and Berlin. You attacked on principle everyone who was not enthusiastic about your work.

R.W.: Grandson, I won't tolerate this kind of disrespect from a member of my own family in my own Festspielhaus! Furthermore . . .

W.W.: (*Interrupting smoothly.*) Your genius is allowed its human

weaknesses, since they are compensated for by your masterpieces.

R.W.: (*Long pause. Decides to be placated.*) Speaking of my masterpieces—haven't you called my *Gesamtkunstwerk* idea, my notion of an integrated artwork, a mistake?

W.W.: I think your *Gesamtkunstwerk* idea has produced a lot of nonsense in theatrical literature and theatrical practice. Of course, all skills and materials are integrated in each production. But to want to attain unity through equally strong poetry, music, scenery, and acting seems to me futile. I stay with the real and never-failing source of unity in an opera—which is the score.

R.W.: You may be right, although that wasn't the sort of priority I had when I created *The Ring*. (*Pause.*) I hear, by the way, that you have been invited to stage *Lohengrin* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. You know, I often felt that Americans appreciated my work more than my own countrymen did. When I was afraid the festival would never become a reality here in Bayreuth, I considered emigrating to America and establishing it there.

W.W.: If the Festspielhaus stood today in the Rocky Mountains or any other scenically stimulating region of the United States, the radiations to the world of culture would be just what they are now. I do not believe that the idea and the work which we understand by the word Bayreuth are tied to any geographical or political location.

R.W.: (*Musing.*) Fafner in the Wild West! *Ein unsichtbarer Fafner*, of course. (*Peers wistfully into the wings. The E flat perfume fades. Wieland Wagner is alone again on the Festspielhaus stage, studying his Ring setting.*)

A Plain Case for the Golden Age

by Conrad L. Osborne

WHEN I WAS A STRIPLING in the lower right-field stands of Yankee Stadium, my compatriots always advised me to stay away from the garrulous old dribbler who sat up near the back, burbling about how Billy Johnson wasn't fit to soap up Tony Lazzeri's glove, or about how Bill Bevens' sore arm wasn't no excuse—in the old days, a man'd pitch a doubleheader with a sore arm, no whines or alibis.

And I always planted myself alongside the old bore, because he didn't bore me. I liked hearing tales of baseball when it was baseball, and I more or less believed them, too.

In those days a stripling could lead a sensible stripling existence. The baseball season was 154 games, not 162, and didn't keep you up nights, and the opera season was twenty weeks, not thirty; the two dovetailed, and didn't stumble and sprawl all over each other as they do now. So when the World Series had ended and there had been a short period for the application of one's thoughts to things like first-year algebra, I moved from the lower right-field stand to the left-field upper deck (alias Family Circle standing room) of the Metropolitan Opera House—the one, you remember, down near the Crossroads of duh Woild, where for so many years it impeded the Progress & Development of the Borough of Manhattan, Inc. And there would be another garrulous old dribbler (or mayhap the same one, I couldn't be sure), burbling about how Stella Roman didn't deserve to powder Elisabeth Rethberg's wig, and about how things were in the days when opera was opera. And there was everyone else, moving on down the rail to get away, and me, sitting there listening and believing.

When it comes to opera, you can be reasonably sure that it wasn't all fantasy. It is just possible that Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb weren't a whit

better than Willie Mays or Mickey Mantle, but Pinza and Chaliapin were sure as hell better than (enter name of your favorite bass), and all that is required to prove it is the lowering of a stylus into a groove. That proposition is, approximately, the subject of the present article.

It is tiresome, of course, to listen to someone who merely prefers the way it used to be. I crave your indulgence, and confess my bias: I was dragged up on the records of Caruso, Chaliapin, Galli-Curci, Gigli, Ruffo, Battistini, Pinza, Ponselle, and a few others, and it always hit me as sacrilegious that when music could be sung that way, it could also come out sounding as it did on the radio at two o'clock on Saturday afternoons. You might with some justice say that I was a garrulous old dribbler at the age of twelve.

But a lot of hot air has blown through the tunnel since then, and here I am, a little punchy but possessed of a certain queasy equilibrium, and still getting a stronger signal from (see above) than from (enter names of your favorite singers). There have been times, especially since I began my career as Keeper of the Flame and Upholder of the True and Living Art, when the goggles have fogged over a bit. A few months of new record releases in tandem with live performances can truly make it seem as if it has always been this way, is now, and ever shall be. Then I will dig through the pile to an LP of re-pressings from the Messrs. Rococo, or Olympia, or Eterna, or Odeon, or RCA Victor, and plunk it on. A couple of seconds of scratch, and then—*Qual lampo!*—it comes to me again: the incredible expressive capabilities of the human voice, as developed in Western Europe in the last couple of centuries—its capacity for a true legato that cannot be obtained by any instrument, its wealth of emotional color, its extraordinary power and flexibility.

I should make it clear here that I am not talking essentially about matters of style or changing tastes in what constitutes "musicianship." On the whole, I prefer the older singers on musical and stylistic grounds too, at least in nineteenth-century repertoire. But the point I am making is related to the question of how voices sound and how well they work; and even with all the difficulties imposed by older recording processes, the evidence is irrefutable that they sounded and worked a lot better fifty years ago than they do now. I would submit that this holds true for all voice ranges and types, and I have chosen to discuss baritones partly because it was a recording of Amato's that set me thinking about the subject again; partly because I am a baritone myself and so have a certain empathetic understanding of the technical problems of that range; and partly just because the discussion has to have some boundary.

Let me narrow the classification still further to the so-called "singing" baritone—the sort cut out for the great vocal roles of the Italian and French repertoire which demand a full sound and cantabile "line" singing. We will thus lay aside the entire Wagnerian army (the old-timers win hands down there, anyway) as well as the sort of singer who specializes in something else but makes an effect in a few carefully selected roles, or the sort who triumphs over vocal limitations through interpretative or musical expertise. We are not, in other words, discussing the Fischer-Dieskaus, Preys, and Souzays of our time, or the

Giliberts and Gillys of another time—fine artists all but not of the sort we are concerned with.

Now if one musters a list of the prominent "singing" baritones of the past twenty years, one can come up with Warren, Taddei, Gobbi, Bastianini, Merrill, Guelfi, and MacNeil. (There are three younger ones I know of—Peter Glossop, Sherrill Milnes, and Kostas Paskalis—who seem to me to give every sign of turning into major singers, but it is early yet to set them up with the Establishment.) If, however, one looks at the two decades bridging the turn of the century, one can, without combing through any rare catalogues, draw up a list including Kaschmann, Magini-Coletti, Battistini, Scotti, Amato, Ruffo, Campanari, Sammarco, Ancona, Renaud, Giraldoni, Stracciari, Maurel, Del Puente, Viglione-Borghese, De Luca, Baklanoff. On the horizon were the likes of Danise, Galeffi, Granforte, Formichi, Zanelli, and Montesanto. An embarrassing comparison from the quantitative standpoint, it's also discomfiting from the qualitative one: not only are the very best of the contemporary entries far inferior to the best of their forebears; from the standpoint of vocal function, they can hardly be regarded as any better than middle-of-the-field. Domenico Viglione-Borghese, for example, who cannot be compared with Amato, Ruffo, or Battistini, is nonetheless quite noticeably superior in most respects to, say, Merrill or Bastianini, while Scotti, who had the reputation of being rather short on range and tonal splendor, still discloses a vocal substance and technical command well beyond all but two or three latter-day baritones.

Speaking broadly, vocal training has two goals. The first is to cultivate a desirable combination of tonal beauty, range, flexibility, and size. The second is to create a functional situation that will serve the singer well over a period of many years. Although the two things are of course interrelated, this does not mean that a singer who succeeds in one area will necessarily succeed to the same degree in the other; we can all think of singers who produced attractive, large, and exciting tone, whose voices were wide-ranged and capable of certain technical feats, but whose singing prime was of short duration. And none of us is at a loss to call to mind singers whose voices seem to endure forever without marked deterioration, but who have never produced truly beautiful sound or astonished anyone with bursts of technical brilliance. The very greatest singers, of course, combine exceptional achievements in both areas—these are the artists who sing unusually well for an unusually long time.

Still, keeping in mind that, like all generalizations, this one has its exceptions, the voices that sound best are the ones that tend to endure the longest. Our reasoning becomes a bit curved here, for the more one learns about singing, the more one tends to listen to the way a voice works; consequently, sounds that one might have accepted and even cherished lose much of their appeal if they are functionally precarious. That is true in any discipline: one's taste is strongly influenced by the state of one's knowledge. And that is why *mere* taste, however refined, is a poor guide in such matters. One can say (on grounds of taste) that a wobble is not really so offensive; some people can't stand it, others are willing to put up with it in the presence of other virtues. But the matter does not end there, for a wobble represents a malfunction as well as an

unfulfilled musical possibility. The casual listener may ignore it if he chooses; he will not be hearing it for long.

There are, of course, many factors influencing vocal longevity, among which the most important is health, mental and physical. That is why it is a bit dangerous to inflate the importance of longevity as a standard of technical perfection. What can be said is that any audible imperfection stands for some technical malfunction, and that whenever a voice does begin to deteriorate, early or later, the deterioration will almost invariably take the form of an intensification of that imperfection.

And how do we decide what constitutes an imperfection? I suppose we must answer, by a combination of imagination and cumulative hindsight, plus the context of European musical culture. (I append this last simply to acknowledge that we are not dealing with an absolute. The artists of the classical Chinese opera, for instance, cultivated a kind of sound and technical capability markedly different from that demanded by Western operatic music, and worked out functional systems that supported those requirements.) That is, the technical method which enables a singer to operate to the greatest effect for the longest time within the framework established by our active literature is the one we would call closest to perfection.

These requirements have not led to a universally agreed-upon method, but they have led to a set of descriptive rules which more or less summarize the goals of such a method. This working description has not altered much since the eighteenth century, and it might be written down this way: if a voice can negotiate a firm, smooth, even-tempered scale over every note of its required range, on each of the pure vowel sounds, and if it possesses the capacity to swell and diminish between a legitimate *pp* and a legitimate *ff* without waver or break on each of those pitches and vowels, then the technique is perfect. This may not sound like such a large order but I can assure you that it is. I can assure you that there are many admired singers at the top of their profession who could not execute such a scale really well on even two or three of the five pure vowels, and who could not execute a proper swell and diminish (the *messa di voce*) on more than a few semitones in a restricted area of the range. In fact, there has probably never been a singer who could meet all the conditions stated. Such a singer would be capable of rendering in a technically efficient manner any piece of music written for his general voice range.

Anyone who has done any reading in the literature of vocal pedagogy (a literature in which the diversity of unsupported assertions, unfounded assumptions, nonconsecutive arguments, and illogical conclusions is matched only by the near-illiteracy of their authors) is well aware that every generation of singers and teachers since the time of Tosi has complained of the faltering standards and abominable taste of the oncoming bunch—*"tutto declina . . . non c'è più virtù,"* as Boito's Falstaff remarks. This fact is frequently cited as evidence that there has been no progressive deterioration, only changes of taste or fashion. Personally, I am perfectly prepared to believe that things have been getting steadily worse for two or three hundred years now, but the actual evidence dates back only to the beginning of this century.

It is there for anyone who cares to investigate it. In the instance of the baritone voice, we are fortunate in that the limitations of early recording methods do not hopelessly distort our picture of the voice, as so often happened to sopranos. While it takes a measure of imagination and good will to arrive at a close idea of Sembrich's greatness, the records left by these baritones, if found in good condition and played on good equipment, give us a reasonably faithful portrait of their sound and their accomplishments. (We have not only the word of qualified observers who heard them, but the proof of recordings made well into the electrical era by several of the most important of these artists, notably Ruffo, Stracciari, and De Luca.)

Since it is impossible to describe singing, interested parties are going to have to look up the old records themselves. But an example or two may pin down what I am getting at—the discs are there for verification. Let me use Amato's immensely rich, soulful, and poetic "*Eri tu*," as transferred onto Cantilena 6201. What impresses most on Amato's records is the extraordinarily full, even scaling, just as meaty at the extremes of the range as in the middle, and the joyous clarity of tone that comes of a truly pure, clean articulation of the vowels. He could turn the tone color to an extreme brightness and brilliance without a trace of thinness, and to a richness and darkness without any sense of weight. The legato never ends—the line extends from the beginning of an aria to its end. Max de Schauensee, a knowledgeable observer and a veteran of live Amato performances, describes the voice as "very large, round, and sonorous with a soaring bell-like quality in its top register," and this jibes well with what we hear on his records.

The first section of "*Eri tu*" is rendered in a splendidly firm, strong-lined legato, the words crystal-clear; it comes to an end with a decrescendo and portamento down from the top F on "*guisa*," a most expressive turn and acciaccatura on "*primo*," and a fermata at the end of the phrase. The cantabile portion is quite straightforward (topped by a thrilling G) until the "*e finita*," from which point Amato treats the phrases as sections of a cadenza, rushing headlong down from the F sharp on "*non siede che l'odio*"; executing a gorgeous *mezza-voce* fermata and portamento on "*vedovo cor*," full of mournfulness; then swelling the top F ("*O speranze*") from *mezzo-forte* to *ff* and breaking it off with a sob; lingering in a beautiful *mezza-voce* on the turn; then returning to tempo for the final "*d'amor's*." The thing is, it works. It does not sound phony, but genuine; not softly indulgent, but manly; not unmusical, but eminently tasteful.

One begins to realize that the failings of more recent singers have been enshrined as virtues. Naturally, if a singer cannot do more than get out the notes in one color and at one level, then we prefer to hear them in strict time rather than have the artist demonstrate what he can't do. This does not mean that the possibilities of the piece are thereby explored, or that the composer intended the singer to consider an accurate reading as a finished interpretation. It cannot possibly mean that Verdi would have enjoyed hearing our leading four or five baritones sing through this aria and, despite their differing timbres, their slightly differing tempos, come up with almost identically bland, anonymous interpretations,

totally uninformed with the spark of individuality, the truth of creative perception.

There are, to be sure, many reasons apart from those of vocal technique to account for some of the changes of the past fifty years. Tastes *do* change, and we would not today put up with an elaborate series of little flowered turns at Macbeth's "*Eppur la vita sento nelle mie fibre inaridita*," even if we had a baritone who could toss them off in Battistini's way, which we certainly don't. There is the fact that an increasing proportion of our major singers are Americans, whose highest accomplishments still often seem lacking in spontaneity and commitment alongside the urgency of their native Italian forebears. There are other factors. But what interests me is not only that Amato *chose* to sing "*Eri tu*" as he did, but that he was able to, whereas we do not actually know what the range of expressive possibility within a more modern style might be, since even our best baritones are relatively hemmed in by technical limitations. You do not play with dynamics and colors when your choice of volume level or balance is limited to one or two options; you do not maintain a firm line and even scale if one area of your voice works noticeably less well than another; you do not communicate with words if your vowel formation is indistinct to begin with.

All of the turn-of-century baritones I have mentioned had in common one characteristic that seems to be lacking among even the best of the current lot: they were all able to combine a basically manly, steady, sonorous tone with easy, effective top notes, and with the ability to shape and mold phrases—I mean really control them—around the transition area in the upper-middle part of the baritone voice (roughly, D sharp to F sharp). This *combination* is not found to a persuasive degree in any of our contemporary entries. If your instinct is to protest this, ask yourself if, for all of Leonard Warren's sailing freedom on top and truly unique ability to float out a pillowy, long-lined *mezza-voce*, you ever heard him render a declamatory recitative with true steadiness and solidity, or bring real bite and thrust to dramatic passages except in the upper register; ask yourself if you can recall an occasion on which MacNeil, similar in many respects to Warren (a bit more openness and size, a bit less refinement in his capacity for shading), has truly altered the color of his voice in any startling way (the color, not the volume), or has poured on weight in the middle of his voice without disclosing at least the suggestion of a slow quaver.

Recall, if you can, a top note of Taddei's that really sailed forth with brightness, openness, true ring. Tell me about the occasion on which either Merrill or Bastianini turned into the top notes without a sudden, graceless vowel alteration and radical change of tonal quality, or when either executed a genuine *mezza-voce* or a true cantabile line above the staff. Remind me of the time when Gobbi's top was not overcovered and hooted, when his *mezza-voce* did not consist of a gummy croon, the vowels unrecognizable. Enlighten me as to the unrevealed ability of Guelfi (the only one of these, I must own, that I have not heard in person) to sing at anything less than *forte* or to negotiate the top without sounding as if he is lifting weights.

Now, these have been our best for twenty and more years past. They

have all given us splendid things to remember—and quite apart from their interpretative and stylistic achievements, which in some cases are considerable—they would all be regarded as major league vocalists at any time within the past seventy-five years. But not one of them can aspire to the top echelon among the older singers—an Amato, a Battistini, a Ruffo, a Magini-Coletti, a Stracciari is on another level of accomplishment entirely. And the less adept of our prominent modern baritones—Gobbi, for example—are really disqualified from inclusion in the group at all (again, let me emphasize that I am speaking of vocal technique, not dramatic or stylistic sensitivity); Giraltoni or Viglione-Borghese are giants by comparison.

While much has been lost in terms of elegance and smoothness of execution (there is no one today who can sustain line and grade dynamics in the manner of a Battistini or even a De Luca), this loss does not seem to have been a price paid for greater volume. Indeed, there seems to be little correlation between volume per se and ease and grace of execution; Ruffo was considered the prototype of the big-voiced baritone, while Amato, Magini-Coletti, Stracciari, Giraltoni, Viglione-Borghese, and Montesanto, at least, were also of large vocal frame. Battistini's voice was evidently somewhat smaller in format, as was De Luca's and apparently Ancona's and Sammarco's, but in none of these cases do we read of any lack of impact or audibility, and it is obvious from the full, clear sound of their recordings that these voices carried well. All these artists were also capable of a variety of roles ranging from Malatesta to Amonasro and Scarpia. (I mean capable—we have a scattering of baritones today who sing both types of role, but badly, which does not count for much with the Great Prompter Up Yonder.)

Naturally, one speculates on the reasons for such a discouraging state of affairs. There are just as many young artists entering the profession now as then (probably more, taken on a world-wide basis), and while many of them undoubtedly do not train as long or as thoroughly as they ought, we must, if we are honest, concede that most of their artistic ancestors didn't either. A few of them went through what we might call full courses of study, but a very large proportion of them studied briefly and haphazardly, often with teachers of no great repute, and more than one seems to have simply worked things out as he went along from one provincial theatre to another, sometimes losing his voice, sometimes trying to sing as a tenor, sometimes as a bass, etc. Many (though by no means all) of these singers rose from conditions of poverty and ignorance far more squalid than that of the contemporary neophyte; a Juilliard graduate with some scholarship help and a Rockefeller grant (and you can count them by the dozen) has received more education (musical and otherwise) and more concrete assistance than several of the finest singers of the older group.

Still, while we cannot ascribe the latter's superiority to length of training or to the influence of any particular teacher or method, it does seem that they knew something we don't know. I realize that some people ascribe the situation to a mysterious weakening of the biological strain (UFO visitors? The Red Chinese? We are not told), but this Progressive Deterioration of Protoplasm Theory makes no sense to me. The race is

reportedly bigger and healthier than ever, and I doubt that it is suddenly bringing forth children with vocal cords, pharynxes, arytenoids, and whatnot of markedly inferior construction or composition. Are not the faults of a Di Stefano, a Callas, a Del Monaco obvious enough, and is it not within the imagination's grasp to project what they might have been like with the amount of control and command that was once considered normal for singers of their importance?

Every singer or teacher will have his own theories as to what is responsible for such a decline in standards. I have my own, but I do not think this is the place to push them, under the guise of analytical criticism. What is perhaps more profitable is to consider a few of the over-all differences between the singing methods of the two generations. The vocal methods of, say, De Luca and Stracciari are as dissimilar, in certain respects, as are those of, for instance, Warren and Bastianini; nonetheless, there may be factors common to the first two that are not found in the latter pair. My own consideration leads me to the following observations.

1) The basic structural pattern of these baritone voices reveals a dark-textured, full-throated quality, capped by a brilliant top. In other words, they did not sing "light and bright" to secure the top notes; yet the darkness and fullness of their middle ranges did not stand in the way of a soaring tenory top—did not constitute a "weight" on the voice.

2) The prevailing pattern among today's singers of voices that are noticeably "fatter" in the middle or upper-middle portion than anywhere else is not in evidence among the older singers. Several of these voices are noticeably weak at the bottom, and grow steadily towards a full, open top; several others are very evenly proportioned over the whole range. But almost none disclose today's common design of a fat middle and a narrow top, and of all these baritones, only Scotti sounds in any way limited in coping with the top.

3) Corollary to 2): Today's generation is, interestingly, one of "middle-voiced" singers. True basses are virtually nonexistent, likewise contraltos. The number of sopranos really adept above high C can be counted on one hand, and of them, all but one are quite lacking in any kind of thrust or fullness. Dramatic voices of all sorts seem increasingly rare. The tenor voice is for some reason assumed to be exotic, though all the evidence indicates that, by nature, this type of voice occurs not appreciably less often than other male categories. There is a suspiciously high incidence of "high baritones," mezzo-sopranos, and bass-baritones. It is as if the human voice were getting bunched up in the middle; fifty years ago, we not only had more voices at the extremes, but more successful use of the extremes in individual instances.

4) The transition from the dark-textured middle range to the brilliant upper range was accomplished without a sudden, extreme vowel alteration. For all the contrast, one part grew directly out of the other and could be joined to it in a smooth fashion; these singers did not "cover" in any mechanical sense (nor flatten out the vowel, either—the condition "cover" is supposed to correct), did not "flip," "hook," or "lock." Merrill and Bastianini, for instance, both have secured a certain brilliance on top, but it sounds closed and artificial by comparison with the old-timers; it

does not retain the same fullness, and it involves a sudden vowel change with concomitant stiffness and lack of dynamic control in that area of the voice.

5) Our "scientific" knowledge of the voice, which has increased manyfold since the days when these singers formed their techniques, has evidently added nothing at all to our ability to control and develop voices. The many theories of breathing and of resonance which have grown up in the last half-century (and nearly all the current ones are that recent in origin) were not a part of these singers' methods, and are apparently lacking in some way. Either our "scientific" observation of vocal function is inaccurate, or else our conclusions based on such observation are faulty, or both.

But do not take my word for it. You can obtain complete LPs of all the following: Battistini (Angel COLH 116; Eterna 0-462, 709; Olympus ORL 221, this last including all his *Ernani* excerpts); Amato (Cantilena 6201, Eterna 482, duplicating some of the same material); Ruffo (Rococo 5253; Scala 812, 855); Sammarco (Rococo 5226); Magini-Coletti (Rococo 5221); Ancona (Rococo 5213); Scotti (Rococo 35, and Rococo 5240, a Caruso record which embraces several of the wonderful Caruso/Scotti duets); Stracciari (Scala 802); De Luca (Rococo 24, and the deleted but worth-searching-for RCA Camden CAL 320). In addition, both Scotti and the excellent Giuseppe Campanari are generously represented in Columbia's 1903 Grand Opera Series reissue M21 283, also deleted and also well worth a search for everyone interested in great singing; and there is a good cross-section on Eterna 717 ("Famous Italian Baritones"), which is especially worth investigating for Giraltoni, Viglione-Borghese, and Montesanto, who are otherwise scantily represented on LP. Play Giraltoni's *Hamlet* Brindisi or Borghese's magnificent voicing of the *Wally* aria, and ask yourself if there is a baritone anywhere today capable of approximating such performances.

Otherwise, one must dig a bit. Stracciari is the Figaro of the old Columbia *Barbiere* and the Rigoletto of the same company's old version of that opera, both available as Italian imports. In each case he outclasses the competition with room to spare—and in each case he was pressing sixty at the time of the recording. Eterna 747 combines excerpts from *Ernani* and *Otello*, and in addition to other extracts includes such baritone niceties as Amato's version of Iago's drinking song (the top A truly sung) and his "Si, pel ciel" with Zenatello, or Stracciari's spectacular "Lo vedremo, veglio audace" and "O, de' verd'anni miei" (second only to Battistini's). Eterna 738 (devoted to highlights from Giordano operas, believe it or not) has a truncated version of "Nemico della patria" by Giraltoni which makes the best contemporary performance (i.e., Bastianini's) sound both graceless and namby-pamby by comparison; and Eterna 739 (Donizetti highlights) includes two splendid Stracciari's ("Cruda funesta smania" and "A tanto amor") and two Battistini excerpts from *Linda di Chamounix*. Magini-Coletti also has an extended excerpt from this last work, a duet with the bass Oreste Luppi, on his Rococo disc, and it was in this sort of music that such singers really gloried—the Battistini *Favorita* and *Don Sebastiano* arias on Eterna, for instance, represent something that has gone out of the art of singing.

(Rococo and Cantilena records are not listed by Schwann and are not distributed to any great number of retail outlets. They may be obtained from Box 3275, Station D, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2R 3G6. Several of the items in this firm's lists, notably its Magini-Coletti, Amato, and Ruffo issues, are among the most desirable of all available LP pressings.)

These records speak to us, if we will listen at one remove from our immediate loyalties, of a time when the art of operatic singing maintained a standard higher than the one we accept today. And they tell us that something has gone awry in the years that separate us from the sounds they bring us, sounds sometimes veiled and scratched but still pulsating with a unique vibrancy and freedom that we should not otherwise have ever known.

The Trojans

by Colin Davis

EVERY NOW AND THEN people who have become aware of my admiration for Berlioz ask me, rather challengingly, to explain why he did not succeed as a composer of musical drama. My first impulse is always to assert that he *did* succeed. Nearly everything he wrote is essentially dramatic—and dramatic in a way that gets through to audiences. Last year [1968], for example, a concert version of the complete *Trojans* was presented at the Promenade Concerts in London, and every ticket was sold. I am counting on the same public reaction when the opera is staged at Covent Garden this fall.

Much depends, of course, on what you want from music. If you want to be Puccinized, if you are looking for an intellectual argument, if you want a feeling of redemption, if you favor a musical world in which lovers go to bed, then Berlioz is not for you. On the other hand, if you want a spell spun out of a summer evening by the sea, if you want intimacy, restraint, and complete purity contrasted with destructiveness, if you favor a world in which love-making takes place in a cave or some place equally wild and romantic, then Berlioz is your composer. He is one of our greatest poets of music, and I would suggest that if you are not moved by his big dramatic moments—the farewell at Carthage, for instance—you ought not to be reading this article.

I am willing to grant, however, that his operas are not uniformly successful and that they make unusual demands on the imaginations of performers, audiences, and critics. (Perhaps I ought also to grant that my views reflect my education and my personal taste. Like Berlioz, I am not an academic musician. Again like him, I do not play the piano. I was already twenty-one when I first heard his music, and it appealed to me immediately because I loved melody and I loved singing.)

Benvenuto Cellini, Berlioz's first opera and the only one for which he himself did not write the libretto, has wonderful things in it, but it is a bit confused and on the whole it lacks his characteristic span and conviction. Though his own experiences as an artist may have aroused in him a sympathy for a fellow-artist, Cellini's autobiography did not engage his deepest feelings—certainly not in the way the story of *The Trojans*, from his earliest days, engaged them.

The music of *Beatrice and Benedick* is close to pure heaven for my ears. Berlioz distills from every situation in the opera a mood that reflects his obsession with a kind of love which he longs for and which he cannot find for himself in real life. He avoids the extremes of destructive frenzy to which he occasionally swings in his other pieces when he is aware that he cannot have the sort of love he longs for. But the work is very loosely constructed, and the characters do not emerge very clearly. Benedick is a particularly scratchy creation, Hero and Beatrice are developed along lines that merely reveal the composer trying to express himself in them, and the comic figure Somarone is simply a mystery stuck on to the story by a genius—the supposedly grotesque madrigal is actually quite pretty. There is also, I think, at least for English and American audiences, a peculiar difficulty about this work for which Berlioz is not really to blame: we tend to think back to Shakespeare's play, and the comparison fails to work out either with the opera's text or its music. *Much Ado About Nothing* is a sophisticated comedy with a great deal of intellectual acrobatics, whereas *Beatrice and Benedick* is gentle and delicate.

The fact is, it seems to me, that in both *Benvenuto Cellini* and *Beatrice and Benedick*, for all their marvelous, witty, and melodic music, Berlioz is not really on his own ground. His imagination was too distant from real life to be able to create real-life characters with credibility (he could never, for instance, have composed *The Marriage of Figaro*, although Mozart might easily have written *Beatrice and Benedick*, and brought it off successfully). He despised ordinary human beings, I think, and was constantly irritated by the pettiness of reality. He liked big, general images. He never lost his vision of what men might be in a world constructed by the imagination on a vast scale—in a great empire partly inhabited by gods and swept by forces unlike anything we experience in everyday existence.

In short, Berlioz is in his element in *The Trojans*, and the result is one of the most magnificent works ever composed. I must say that I am impatient with some of the objections that have been raised against this extraordinary opera.

It has been called too long. But it is not long. It is about the length of *Die Meistersinger*, and not as long as *Die Götterdämmerung*. I think that people who find it too long are simply suffering from a common illusion—the illusion that persuades us that a lot of time has passed when a lot of things have happened, and that practically no time has passed when practically nothing has happened. The first act of *Tristan*, for example, may seem relatively short in imaginative retrospect because so little takes place; and the first act of *The Trojans* may seem relatively long because of what the listener and viewer must absorb: the apparent

departure of the Greeks, the forebodings of Cassandra, the disbelief of Choroebus, the singing and dancing of the celebrating Trojans, the ominous news of Laocöon's death, the dragging of the horse into the city. Also, unlike Wagner (and like Mozart), Berlioz hardly ever lets you relax and listen comfortably to a repeated theme; he keeps forcing you to adjust to something new in the music, and thus adds to your impression that a lot of things are happening and a lot of time is passing.

The opera has been called static and untheatrical, and I admit that I can see what is meant by this criticism. Within each tableau there is not much development of the situation, at least not much in the usual sense in which a plot develops. Often the important action does not take place before our eyes; often Berlioz is intent on creating a mood that is the result of what has occurred. But cannot much the same thing be said about the dramas of Sophocles and Racine? Although Berlioz does provide musical and psychological development from one tableau to another (for instance, Dido's progression from confident widowhood through weakening, falling, submission, and rage to resignation and death), he clearly feels that we know the story and do not need the usual sort of on-stage action and evolution of the plot. He does, however, provide plenty of theatrical excitement—processions, wild crowds, off-stage trumpets, the ghost of Hector, the Andromache scene, the collective suicide of the Trojan women, the prophetic and epic cry "Italy," the fury of Dido and her noble death. Even in its calm moments *The Trojans* is by no means a closet drama. It calls for a stage. When you can combine, for instance, the poetically ravishing music of the tableau in Dido's gardens with equally poetic settings, you can produce a wonderful experience for an audience. In fact, the work is so theatrical that one of the problems we—myself and the producers and technicians at Philips—will have to face in recording it is precisely that. We must find ways to project from records an astonishing visual and spatial imagination.

What the objections I have just mentioned come down to, I feel, is a failure to recognize an essential fact about Berlioz: namely, his strange combination of a poetic content that is nonintellectual and nonclassical with a general outlook, a technique, and an approach to form that are thoroughly classical. In this, the only major composer whom he really resembles is Gluck (although occasionally, in his love of extremes, he may remind one of Weber). Hence any attempt to perform or appreciate *The Trojans* in terms of Italian operatic conventions or of Wagnerian music drama is a mistake.

Whereas Wagner tends to swim in powerful emotions, Berlioz seeks to distill them. The great waves of universal love that wash through the closing scene of *The Ring* do not appear in *The Trojans*. The personal love of Dido and Aeneas is untouched by Wagnerian overtones of self-pity and self-indulgence; it has nothing to do with a secret desire to be mothered and it has no Freudian connection with death—if Berlioz decides to destroy you, he does so, and that is that. He does not suggest that somehow you may be saved—you go down proudly, expecting nothing. Indeed, much of *The Trojans* is primarily about the energy of a people; the Trojans who provoke the destruction of their city and who then, as a surviving remnant, go on to found Rome (destroying Dido

along the way) constitute the real protagonist of the opera. You get this feeling for the energy of the people very strongly in the first part: in the noise and power of the crowd at Troy and in the tremendous force that drives them to take their fatal chance with the horse. You get it again in the closing scene at Carthage, when Dido, her love frustrated by the force that drives the Trojans on to Italy, dies prophesying the glory of Rome. (This balance between the crowd hysteria of the first part and the tragic climax of the second part is one of several reasons why the work should be performed, and recorded, in its entirety.)

Some of the music in which this great drama is embedded is linked to the personages; Cassandra and Dido in particular are clearly characterized by the orchestral and vocal writing. Some of the music—for instance, the interlude of the royal hunt and the storm—is poetic description and an evocation of the forces of nature. Some of it gives you the impression of being battered by the violence of events. Much of it, as I have said, spins out a mood that is a consequence of the action. But all of it is essentially classical, so much so that occasionally, when listened to with the mid-nineteenth century in mind, it sounds positively archaic.

At least the melodies, which may have several parts and may go on for fifty or more bars, often sound archaic to me. Unlike those of Beethoven, for example, they are not made up of pregnant little fragments. Sometimes they have the shape of a simple, long-lined Oriental creation; sometimes they make use of a sixteenth-century type of phrasing. Firmly anchored at each end by a tonic and a dominant, and moved around by diminished chords, they have a definitely monkish flavor, which I suppose may be the influence of the church music Berlioz listened to as a boy in La Côte-Saint-André. They are also a reminder that he played the flute.

Much of what has been written about his harmony by academic critics, and which applies to many pages of *The Trojans*, seems to me both correct and beside the point. He undoubtedly learned to form chords from playing the guitar. His harmony is very simple and extremely unsurprising (at least his cadences are); it is often theoretically incorrect; it does not work properly when tried on the piano; it was utterly out of date when composed; it is really just melodic expression harmonized. But it works for Berlioz—and you cannot “correct” it. It works partly because he was a genius at using the instruments of the orchestra to stimulate the imagination, and also because he used its simplicity to keep his ideas unsullied. He was not a man to spoil a large, dramatic effect by interfering with the insides of a chord.

I hope what I have just said does not suggest that I find the music of *The Trojans* lacking in complexity, for in fact I find it full of unexpected beauties at each hearing, and never boring. I am merely pointing out that when you get down through its irregular phrasing (the predictable phrasing of Tchaikovsky would have driven Berlioz mad), its unusual rhythms, and its effects of tumult and disorder, what you find is the order of an old-fashioned classical composer.

What you also find, if you are a performer, is that the music of Berlioz can be properly performed only as Berlioz conceived it. Everyone knows how to interpret the role of Floria Tosca, partly because it has been done

so often and partly because the conception is at the level of the fiction in women's magazines. But for Dido, Cassandra, and the music of Berlioz in general you need to have a great deal of imagination, and to have read some Shakespeare and some Vergil. You need to know how to declaim—and if you do that in the wrong places or in the wrong way, you are a ham (especially in England and the United States). You have to be noble, aristocratic, and godlike, and gifted with the greatest possible talent for classical legato singing. If you are a conductor or an orchestra man, you have to know how to lead through the harmony to the pure cadences that support the great themes. You have to perform with tremendous rhythmic precision, and a combination of burning intensity and tenderness that makes the pace killing. And all the while you have to be a demigod yourself, full of self-denial and a kind of savage glee.

A Reprieve for Massenet

by Robert Lawrence

FOR A GOOD MANY YEARS now, spitting at the work of Jules Massenet has been correct critical procedure. After reaching heights of popularity during his lifetime (1842-1912), topped by a postmortuary glow of about a decade, this composer has gone into such a decline that any present-day admirer (and there *are* some) is put in the unfortunate position of having to assume the defensive. Furthermore, he faces that most difficult adversary in the arts—not the fierce but the patronizing one. “Massenet is sugary,” some bright spirit once declared; and this judgment, grown into a slogan, has been parroted over the past three decades or more by those who, suffering an allergy to the sugar and spice of this master’s *Manon*, seem undismayed by the tomato sauce and garlic of The Other One’s *Manon Lescaut*. But wheels are now in motion; the cycle of musical preference, never absolute, is turning on its axis; and those of us who value Massenet are taking a stand.

Not unnaturally, this distinguished musician wrote some pages decidedly banal, and certain of his scores (there are twenty-two for the theatre) are below *par in toto*. Yet of how many composers is this not true, and wherein lies the justice of belittling a man’s entire output on the basis of his lapses? Massenet’s work exhibits wide inequalities, but along with his indigestible scores there are masterpieces. That these are neglected today can be charged largely to practical causes.

The high point for Massenet’s operas in this country was reached between the years 1906-10, when a public thronged the Manhattan Opera House nightly to hear French lyric drama. For those interested in New York’s theatres of the past, it is still possible to estimate the size and atmosphere of that famous auditorium by a visit to the present Manhattan Center on West Thirty-fourth Street. There, within, stands

the shell of Oscar Hammerstein's opera house, its balconies intact but its orchestra floor raised to the level of the stage to provide for a convention hall and dance floor. Anyone with imagination should be able to reconstruct the house. It was relatively *small*. So is the Opéra-Comique, where many Massenet works had their premieres. These intimate scores need appropriate theatres—a Sadler's Wells, New York City Center, Brooklyn or Philadelphia Academy of Music; transfer them to the larger spaces of the Metropolitan, La Scala, or Covent Garden and their effectiveness is much diminished. The second reason for the current neglect of these operas has been our apparent lack of suitable singers. Massenet wrote star vehicles. But today we have no Mary Garden to beguile us as Thaïs, to move us as the Jongleur; and there is no Emma Calvé to make Fanny Legrand in *Sapho* believable. But if the right auditorium is found for Massenet, and artists of the proper temperament, he will impress.

Given the conditions indicated above, which are the works of Massenet that might not only survive but conquer? *Manon*, of course, holds the stage everywhere. Too often its tender intimacies are blown to grand opera proportions and the wonderful alternation of spoken and sung lines largely lost. What we hear when this work is given in big theatres has not much resemblance to the narrow-gauge French lyric style. The manner of performance has become wide open, faceless. Yet such is the charm of the music, the attractiveness of the libretto, that *Manon*—in any event—has kept its grip upon an international audience.

Thaïs has been less fortunate. Indeed, it is the whipping-girl for all the Massenet operas still on display. In no theatre in the United States, to my knowledge, has new scenery been constructed for this work. On the rare occasions when *Thaïs* is taken off the shelves for performance, the seedy settings of 1910 come with it. The overly long ballet of Act II—which can be dispensed with, according to a note in the printed score—is always given and holds up the action; the voluptuous moments for Thaïs herself are usually acted out in silent-movie style with laughable crudity; and, to complete the list of drawbacks, highbrows simply loathe the melody of the *Méditation*. These people—who when confronted with a questionable theme by Beethoven reply, "Ah, but what he does with it"—forget (or have never learned) what Massenet too does with the germinal element of the *Méditation*, how in the final scene—the death of Thaïs—he causes it to flower until the theme acquires a vaulting musical line worthy of a great master.

Very many criticisms, some of them justified, most of them not, have been laid for years at the doorstep of *Thaïs*. Without an electric personality in the title role this vibrant, viable work cannot and should not be given. (Doesn't the same precaution apply to *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Turandot*?) Not dating back to the era of Mary Garden, I must admit to never having heard a good Thaïs, just as I have never encountered a completely satisfactory Carmen. The passing of John Charles Thomas (an American artist in the authentic French tradition) and the retirement from active operatic singing of Martial Singher have left us without a definitive Athanaël. One does not, however, abandon

hope. What the team of George London and Leonie Rysanek has done in our time to raise *The Flying Dutchman* to new standards of audience popularity, another gifted pair might accomplish for *Thaïs*.

Consider the possibilities of this opera with great singing personalities, fine staging, sensitive orchestral support. The role of Athanaël, when taken by a first-rank baritone, can flame. As for *Thaïs* herself, the flamboyant splendor of her first-act entrance, the climax of the Mirror Scene, the final transfiguration in the desert offer values not to be brushed aside. Granted that the libretto of Massenet's opera skates on the surface of Anatole France's ironic novel, the ultimate basis for judging an opera extends to more than its literary worth. Does it establish a dramatic mood, a special ambience? I believe that *Thaïs* does these things—on a relative scale perhaps, but vitally. It is no *Don Giovanni*, nor yet a *Tristan*; but when given an authoritative production in good French style, it need not hang its head.

So much for the most frequently belittled member of the Massenet family. No apologies or special pleas need be made for *Werther*, the most romantic of operas, and Massenet's greatest achievement. *Thaïs* may be suspect for the gaudy ingredients which have gone into its making: the "personality" soprano, the grand seduction scene, the ballet introduced according to the requirements of a bygone Parisian taste. None of these elements mars *Werther*. There is no chorus (only a small, well-characterized group of children), no ballet, no interpolated glamour—for which even the Cours-la-Reine scene from *Manon* may be justly criticized. If one does not believe today in certain aspects of *Werther*, the fault is neither that of Massenet nor of Goethe but of our own changed social mores. If one meets the argument of this opera on its own grounds and surrenders to the sentiment of the story, Massenet's music enters irresistibly into the blood stream. What listener of sensibility, on first hearing the moonlight scene as Charlotte and Werther make their nocturnal return from the ball, can fail to be deeply stirred? And what lover of opera, no matter which of the repertoires be his preference, can withstand the emotional surge of the tenor aria "*Pourquoi me réveiller?*"—for my taste, the most beautiful *romanza* of them all? The character development of all the leading roles (for instance, the wheedling child Sophie, grown before our eyes into a disillusioned girl) is wed to a searching, perceptive musical treatment; and the sound of the orchestra, somber and richly expressive, completely lacking in the froufrou of which Massenet has often been accused, conveys as eloquently as the singers themselves the burden of this lyric drama. *Werther* is not an opera for a large auditorium. Its intimacy would be lost, its subtlety dissipated. For ultimate success in this country, it must avoid the chasms associated with traditional Grand Opera.

Another work of Massenet in the same class of fragile masterpiece—only doubly so from the standpoint of intimacy—is *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*. Originally written for an all-male cast (with the exception of two lady Angels who appear in the final vision, and the mixed chorus of townspeople in the opening act), the opera has sometimes been presented with a soprano—notably Mary Garden—in the name part instead of a tenor. Though the change, on examination of the sparsely written score,

would seem to threaten the delicate balance of the opera, I have been assured by those who heard her that Miss Garden brought her own world of imagery to text and music. For a revival in our day, it would seem that a tenor in the role of Jean—Massenet's first intention—might mesh more convincingly with the voices about him. A study of the score will reveal Massenet's grasp of medieval plainchant, an element essential to the opera's time and place; and it will disclose, more importantly, the composer's simplicity, even reticence, in the face of a subdued dramatic subject.

When, in the spring of 1963, the Friends of French Opera presented at Carnegie Hall a concert version of *La Navarraise*, Massenet's one-act "épisode lyrique," the audience was shaken from the first powerful chord and remained in a state of perturbation throughout the work. During its span of forty-five minutes, *La Navarraise* touches the nerve endings as do few other works in or out of the repertoire. Influenced by the *verismo* style of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which preceded it by three years (there are resemblances between the heroines of the two works, both of whom may be interpreted by either dramatic soprano or high mezzo, and similarities in musical construction, including the use of a symphonic intermezzo), *La Navarraise* goes beyond its Mascagni-motivated origin to point the way towards the one-act music-dramas of Richard Strauss. It is, in truth, the French *Elektra*; and the opening battle canvas, with its depiction of a military retreat to the pounding of cannon and the crackling of small arms, could not be bettered.

Once again, as in *Werther*, there is no interpolated glamour, hardly any chorus (if one excepts a brief ensemble of soldiers), and no ballet. The characters are rugged, flesh-and-blood figures, all of them; and with the heroine, Anita—created at the opera's Covent Garden premiere in 1894 by Emma Calvé and sung at last year's New York performance by Rita Gorr—Massenet has fashioned one of the most exciting roles in modern opera. Her mad scene which closes the work—voice alone, softly, to the chiming of distant church bells—is completely original in its conception, an inspired dramatic stroke. As in *Werther*, the sound of the orchestra is symphonic; and this time there are no arias of any sort if one excepts a brief *serenata* by the hero, Araquil. To judge by the response of the Carnegie Hall audience, the opera would succeed handsomely in a fully staged performance. Its vigor and violence are irresistible. And detractors of Massenet take note: there is no sugar in *La Navarraise*. The stark depiction of a peasant girl driven to murder and insanity comes off as a shocking bit of theatre. Into its brief playing time is packed a tragedy of human beings as we know them.

Another Massenet opera, written three years after *La Navarraise*, that would seem due for re-examination and perhaps revival is *Sapho*. The one stumbling block here lies in the implausible moralizing of the plot, based on a novel by Alphonse Daudet. A young man, Jean Gaussin, up to Paris from Provence, attends a party at the studio of a famous sculptor, Caoudal, meets a woman named Fanny Legrand, and goes to live with her in a country retreat. He subsequently learns that she is the model who posed for Caoudal's notorious nude of Sapho, and he abandons her. That a young man who has run off with a woman of loose habits

should be so shocked by a minor revelation about her past rather strains credibility, yet fortunately the opera does not founder on this point. Later, the lovers are briefly reunited, but for Fanny the end has come. This worldly woman realizes that there will always be a barrier between herself and the ingenuous boy from the provinces.

The plot, as will have been noted by now, is a combination of *Traviata* with the as yet unwritten *Rondine* of Puccini. Much of it, by today's standards, seems contrived; but there are certain scenes absolutely stunning in their impact. The episode in which Fanny tells off Caoual and his artist friends after they have revealed her past to the young man is of a frankness and ferocity seldom found in opera. Indeed, at the hands of a great singing-actress such as Calvé indubitably was in the work's premiere and as Maria Callas might be today, the entire role of Fanny could offer a more solid incentive for a "star" revival than that debatable pair *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *La Sonnambula*.

Massenet's wonderfully detailed dynamic markings for *Sapho* bring one to a general consideration of his care for every vocal nuance that might affect his singers in performance. No other writer for the musical theatre has, to my knowledge, guided the sound of the voice with such care, prepared the great effects with such mastery. The artist has only to follow precisely the printed score, with its myriad vocal accents and indications, to arrive at a true rendering of the character in question. As to Massenet's handling of the voice itself, he has achieved an ideal type of sonority, idiomatic and unforced, utilizing the coloristic effects of every possible timbre, making sure that the required notes lie comfortably for the type of singer involved, preparing the grand climaxes so that they contain no shouted top tones but, instead, a glistening vocal sound supported by luminous orchestral underpinning. At the culminating point, for example, of Thais' invocation to the mirror—"Dis-moi que je suis belle éternellement!"—the vocal writing is so expertly handled that the upper B flat packs the acoustical wallop of a high D. This is the composer's professional magic.

Massenet, at his finest, has a way of reducing the framework of his final scenes to the barest minimum of characters with a maximum of expressive power. Verdi achieved this special kind of effect twice, in the lonely episode for Gilda and the jester at the close of *Rigoletto* and in the tomb duet which concludes *Aida*; Puccini once, in the Louisiana chapter of *Manon Lescaut*; but Massenet comes near it constantly. The final pages of *Manon*, *Werther*, *Sapho*, and *Don Quichotte* are cases in point. The unearthly moment in *Don Quichotte* when the voice of Dulcinea floats from the horizon to console the dying knight as he lies attended by the faithful Sancho is one of the master strokes in a type of operatic composing that springs directly from the poetry, unhampered by musical formalities.

One does not claim that Massenet is a composer without limitation. I know of only three such figures in operatic literature: Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner—with Strauss as a possible fourth. Massenet was never able to shift his sights successfully from lyric drama to full-scale grand opera, as even Puccini (in my opinion less attractive and touching a composer) managed to do in his late work. *Turandot* has its share of musical

banalities and dramatic incongruities, but it does come off—something that cannot be said for Massenet's large canvases: *Le Roi de Lahore*, *Le Cid*, and *Hérodiade*. All have their moments, of course; but *Le Cid* is a supercolossus, its grandiose nature incompatible with the genre touch in which Massenet excelled; and *Hérodiade*, despite some pages of prime intensity—notably the first-act duet for Jean and Salomé—is undone by a ridiculous rewrite of Biblical history in which Salomé becomes the first Girl Scout, loving Jean like a sister, and by an oppressive use of pseudo-Oriental color that mars (at least for this writer) certain other French operas such as *Lakmé* and *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. Both *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Hérodiade* are early works by this master, essays at ambitious formalism before he found his métier in *Manon*. *Le Cid* followed *Manon* by a year; and then the grand-heroic dropped away permanently, yielding to that tender human insight which was to characterize Massenet at his best.

If a general revival of this composer's operas were indicated, there might be further fields to till: the charming *Cendrillon*, in which Mary Garden and Maggie Teyte once played opposite each other as Prince Charming and Cinderella, and the highly dramatic *Esclarmonde*. The entire Massenet terrain is marked by unpredictability. Let those who accuse him of excessive sweetness make a study of the bitter *Navarraise*; those who find in him a constant vein of refined escapism turn to the unbuttoned frankness of *Sapho*; those who accuse him of being a "tune" composer examine the sparingly devised, almost laconic, last act of *Don Quichotte*. A major figure in musical history? Hardly—but our opera houses are in need of minor composers. The Big Three can provide only so much for the seasons that come and go. As an opera buff who craves a change in menu, I plead the cause of a fragrant saffron dish: the music of Massenet.

Leonard Bernstein Discusses His *Mass*

High Fidelity: What prompted you to write *Mass*, and how did its unusual formal organization develop?

Leonard Bernstein: That's leading with a clout; I hardly know where to begin. I've always wanted to compose a service of one sort or another, and I toyed with ecumenical services that would combine elements from various religions and sects, of ancient or tribal beliefs, but it never all came together in my mind until Jacqueline Onassis asked me to write a piece dedicated to her late husband. I suppose part of the reason that the Catholic Mass became the spinal structure—unconsciously, perhaps—must have had something to do with the Kennedys. But besides that, I've always had a deep interest in Catholicism in all its aspects, its similarities and dissimilarities to Judaism as well as to other religions. The Mass is also an extremely dramatic event in itself—it even suggests a theater work. I became particularly interested in Catholicism during the Papacy of John XXIII, when it really seemed that the Catholic Church was taking the lead in certain movements: towards justice, equality, and all the things we dream about and try to work for but never quite know how to achieve. That was altogether too brief a Papacy, but it left a mark that began to be carried forward in many ways by other Catholic groups—one got the feeling that a new vitality was stirring among Catholic clergy.

H.F.: But *Mass* also has a strong Old Testament flavor to it—the questioning, even nudging, of God that one never finds in Catholic doctrine.

L.B.: Several people have told me that they thought *Mass* was a “Jewish”

work, and I know what they mean. The questioning of God is a time-honored Jewish tradition, based upon the intimacy with God which Jews have always felt, especially in the diaspora, in exile, in ghetto living—because that's all they had, you see. Without a real earthly life their existence centered around religion and religious observances; and of course the center of all this was God. I can imagine people in the Russian or the Polish ghetto, for example, who justifiably did not consider themselves citizens of either Russia or Poland, who felt the only real authority to whom they were beholden was God himself. It must have inspired a special relationship to God; the kind of "*Ich-Du*" relationship that Martin Buber talks about. I guess this is typically Jewish and perhaps goes back, as you say, to the Old Testament in its quality. There's a good deal of personal questioning of God there—even back talk: all those reluctant prophets who said, "Oh! But why me? I stutter" or "I'm shy; I'm not a leader; why pick on me?"

H.F.: Were you consciously working for this flavor? Is that why you didn't write a conventional Mass with a Latin text?

L.B.: I wouldn't say that's the reason. In the first place, I'm not really entitled to write a Latin Mass, nor was I considering a strictly religious work, although in a sense *Mass* turned out to be every bit as religious as my *Kaddish* Symphony, except that *Mass* is a theatre work. You see what I mean by the difference? I consider both *Kaddish* and *Mass* as essentially religious statements, but not as works to be performed in the context of organized religion—that is, within a house of worship or on religious occasions.

H.F.: Would you feel that the music of *Mass* represents a plateau or summation of your compositional work to date?

L.B.: I think so. Yes; I feel it's a work I've been writing all my life. But in a way that's true of anybody's latest work, if it's a major one. I mean, one could easily make out a case that Beethoven's Opus 101 is a summation of everything he had written up to that point, and the same for Opus 102.

H.F.: There are so many different kinds of musical styles in *Mass*. Did their juxtaposition pose problems for you as the work progressed?

L.B.: Occasionally I worried as I was working on *Mass* that the eclecticism of the work might militate against it. As a matter of fact, I remember one day when I played over the first five minutes and thought: "Good Lord! There are so many body blows from so many different directions; have I destroyed the piece before it's barely begun, in the first five minutes?" And yet I knew that that was the essence of the work, the eclecticism of it; it *had* to be. But it had to be very carefully handled, so that the eclecticism worked positively and not negatively, as a pastiche. And because the stylistic variety was applied so consciously, I can't judge the work; I'm much too close to it to know whether *Mass* is a good piece

or a bad piece. All that I can judge are the reactions to it: that is, the reactions of audiences and the cast. And I already knew in rehearsal, even before we had done it in front of an audience, that the eclecticism was working. It's a matter of timing, which is very difficult, and a matter of making certain key moments work. If they don't work, then neither the next five minutes nor the next hour will work. By "key moments" I mean those moments where there is a sense of shock, where the eclecticism is most apparent. Someone told me that, for him, *Mass* was two hours of constant shocks, surprises that were always surprising and never became predictable after a certain point: "Oh, yes; I see what he's going to do now; he's going to switch on me and do the following predictably surprising thing." But, actually, I never used these "surprises" for their sheer shock value; they all came from somewhere very deep. And this, I feel, is the essence of the work's eclecticism.

H.F.: Can you tell us who the Celebrant is?

L.B.: No, I can't. As a matter of fact, I'm so confused at this point from *reading* about him that I don't really know what I originally intended. I've read that he's everything from Everyman to Christ himself; from simply "a priest" to a representative of Youth. I guess I *can* say what I originally thought him to be. I never thought of him as a "character"; the Celebrant, for me, was always that element in every person without which you cannot live, without which you cannot get from day to day, cannot put one foot in front of the other. He represents the quality that makes you go on living. I suppose this can be defined partly by the word "faith," partly by the word "hope," partly by the word "anticipation." And because of the various things that this element, or character, or whatever you want to call him, undergoes, he is rendered useless—he is destroyed. Which simply means that people have destroyed that thing in themselves on which they depend for their sense of life and their ability to live in a positive sense; and that's why the entire cast becomes literally immobilized on stage. There are 160 people sitting there, none of whom can breathe, make a move, or take the next step in life because of the fraction that has occurred. There has been a fraction of many things: of the vessels of the psyche of this quasi-character, and of faith itself. And at that point, everyone has to look very deeply into himself to find that very thing that he has destroyed.

H.F.: What is it that finally heals them?

L.B.: The act of finding it, each one, in himself. In other words, you cannot have a relationship with another person unless you have some kind of relationship with yourself, and with that indefinable "divine" element in yourself that we've been talking about—the quality the Celebrant possessed before he became priestly, gorgeously clad, powerful. In other words, one has to rediscover it on the simplest level. Having rediscovered it, one is then able to move a muscle, the blood begins to flow again, you can draw breath; and once able to do that, you can move that muscle towards someone else, reach out, take someone's hand, and make a relationship. You can then reach out and relate to several people

and, ultimately, to society. But the main thing is that it must begin inside you. It mustn't come from exteriorization. And that's what happens during that paralyzed silence. It's one of the greatest efforts that anybody can make, and I can't think of anything in theatre that's quite like it: that unbearable, seemingly interminable silence, in which no one, either on stage or in the audience, can move or breathe or do anything until that first flute note sounds.

H.F.: The response to *Mass* has ranged from extravagant praise to critical scorn. Did you expect the reaction to be quite so intense?

L.B.: It was a surprise—the intensity, as you say, as well as the range. Actually, the unfavorable reaction was extremely small and came from half a dozen critics in New York. But, to read *Il Messaggero* from Rome, or the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, or the *Mannheimer Whatever-it-is*, or the *London Times*, or papers from Chicago, Houston, or anywhere, the reviews have been more than favorable. And often they do not even read like reviews: they've been like prayers of gratitude, of thanks, of deep appreciation. I've been sent copies of sermons that have been preached about it, which are really remarkable. The most intense reactions have come from Catholics, and I was worried about the possibility of offending Catholics—the last thing in the world I wanted to do, especially since the Kennedy family was highly involved. But far from being offended, they were terribly moved. As a matter of fact, Senator and Mrs. Kennedy kept coming to rehearsals and previews; they must have seen it I don't know how many times, and were more and more moved each time. Priests have come to me after performances and said things that were so moving I'm embarrassed to repeat them. There *have* been some negative responses: "You have desecrated our Holy Mass," and so on. But these have been very, very few, to my amazement, because I did expect, especially from certain kinds of rigidly dogmatic Catholics, that sort of reaction, even picketing and I don't know what. But nothing like that did happen.

If you read *Commonweal* or other major Catholic publications, there were mainly perceptive appreciations of the work. And this is true not only of Church fathers and Jesuits but of nuns and Protestant ministers and Episcopal bishops and rabbis. I'm touched by the reaction of the religious community—the *whole* religious community. And there was an atmosphere about the whole thing that was also surprising to me in the sense that the audiences all seemed to have that kind of reaction too. In other words, when they waited for me outside, it wasn't to say "Congratulations" or "Bravo, maestro" or any of the usual things, but "Thank you"; and it was more often than not an embrace and not a handshake.

H.F.: A great deal has been made of the sheer size of *Mass*, especially in its Kennedy Center production. How do you envision future performances?

L.B.: I'm not entirely convinced that *Mass's* proper dimensions will necessarily dictate the involvement of two hundred-plus people. It did turn out that way in this particular production because the house we were

dedicating happened to be an opera house, but I'm not sure that it's a work that belongs in an opera house. I haven't had time to think really objectively about it, but my instinct tells me that it's a work that can operate in various dimensions. I can see it with four musicians, or with eighty; I can see it being done in a high school auditorium, as well as in a normal theatre. It would, of course, require reorchestration and some reconception.

H.F.: Are there any definite performances scheduled in the near future?

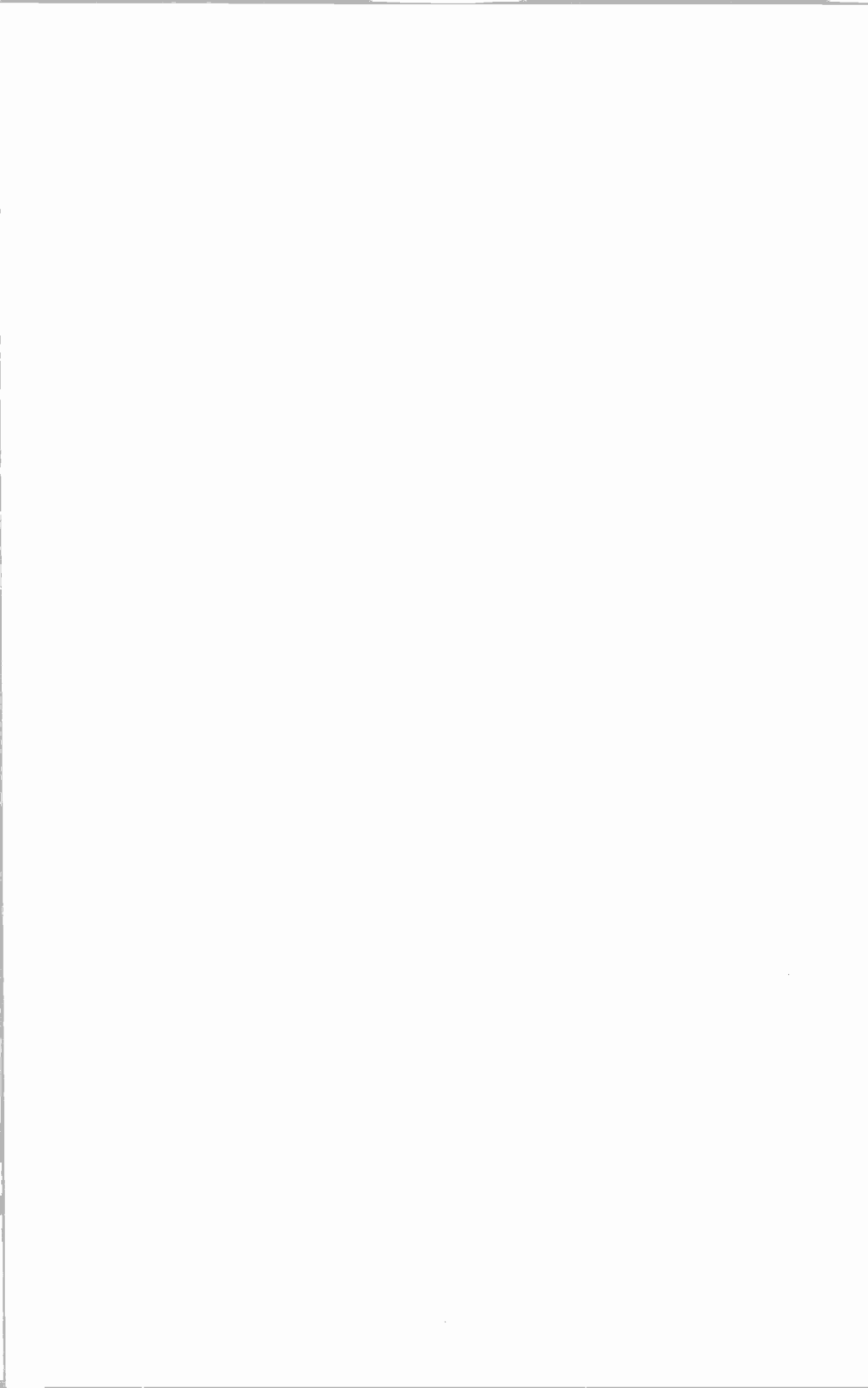
L.B.: I've said "no" to everything for awhile, until some objectivity is reached. There won't be any performance this winter in New York, in spite of the many requests for it from all departments of the Broadway theater, including the Radio City Music Hall. The only "yes" has been given to the Vienna Staatsoper, which will produce it next season. Right now *Mass* is having a cooling-off period. And it's a shame because, naturally, I would love a lot of people to see the work, to hear it, and to experience it. But somehow I know it's right to wait until one can recognize the true dimensions of the piece. And maybe the true dimensions of the piece *are* those of the Kennedy Center. I don't know. Maybe an integral part of the work is its "mass" aspect.

H.F.: How did the performers react to their parts?

L.B.: One of the great experiences of *Mass*, for me, was watching the stage musicians become day by day more and more involved in the work. For example, during the Meditations, when the Celebrant said "Let us pray," and the pit orchestra would play the meditation, I found the stage musicians extremely moving to watch. Some of them would be weeping openly. They were never directed to assume any physical attitudes of prayer or meditation; they were left to their own devices, and it was extraordinary what happened. This was true of the whole cast. I have never seen in the theatre such expressions of love among so many people who were working together, twenty-four hours a day, over a period of weeks—and you know the frictions that always arise in circumstances like that. There was never anything like that. There was just a constant increase in affection and patience and devotion to one another and to the work—a sense of love permeating the whole atmosphere. In a way, they took possession of the thing; they took it away from me and made it *their* piece.

I know it all sounds very sentimental, and the sort of "love-in" atmosphere has been soiled and desecrated again by the cynical press, but they have no understanding of what really went on. It *was* a kind of love-in, and it's very hard for some people to believe that, that's all—especially those people of the press who are more inclined to believe in fakery, show-biz tactics, or whatever. Unfortunately, that's a reflection of their own feelings or lack of feelings. If they talked to anybody who was involved in the performance, any string player or percussion player or choir member or boy-choir member, to say nothing of the principals and the dancers, I think that they would find they were wrong.

IV. Some Musical Pundits



Sour Notes on a Basset Horn

by Jacques de Menasce

IN THE PREFACE to a collection of some of Bernard Shaw's writings on music, W. H. Auden is quoted as having expressed the opinion that Shaw "was probably the best music critic who ever lived." A statement of this kind coming from Mr. Auden should be taken seriously; although it is gracefully couched in terms of surmise, it is strong enough in formulation to assume the character of the pronunciamiento. Mr. Auden is a man whom one admires as a poet and respects as a person, and who in addition has contributed generously to music—notably by providing Igor Stravinsky with an imaginative libretto for *The Rake's Progress*. I felt that his views on music criticism could not be ignored and that I ought to re-examine Shaw's musical writings in the light of this unequivocal enthusiasm. I thought that some important aspect might have eluded me at the time of my first encounter with these brilliant and vastly entertaining essays, that some essentials might have escaped my attention, that euphoria might have blinded me to the presence of unsuspected values that had revealed themselves to Mr. Auden.

Before settling down to reappraisal, I tried to reconstruct my early reactions to Corno di Bassetto. My generation had taken to Shaw instinctively. He had brought happy relief from weary pragmatism, and his readiness to chastise the pundits wherever they stood was encouraging and refreshing. His music criticism had been brought to my attention in Vienna in the Thirties by Siegfried Trebitsch, the German translator of Shaw's dramatic works. It was interesting to find that certain structural aspects of the musical essays were not dissimilar to those one had observed in the plays, where a simple moral would lend itself to unsuspected and elaborate development and where a major issue was often surrounded by an unholy assortment of incidental whim, satire,

and outright buffoonery. Thus, a complaint about a rough attack by the brass in Wagner's *Kaisermarsch* would culminate in a plea to Sir Augustus Houndsditch not to attempt this masterpiece again and to stick to his usual "rum-tum" if he could do no better by the "giant of Bayreuth." In the meantime, Shaw would have threatened the London County Council; insulted Camille Saint-Saëns and the Archbishop of Canterbury; attacked *Carmen*, flouted the *German* (and every other kind of) *Requiem*; withered fox hunting and musicology; exhorted the children of Israel to compose fewer oratorios and to contribute more to the Municipal Band Fund; assured everyone in sight that the only musical merit of the French was their ability to sing in their own language without a cockney accent; and employed whatever space then remained to him to denounce Edvard Grieg as a "musical grasshopper."

This digressive approach could be amusing, but it did not always lead to the best kind of music criticism, although many of Shaw's ideas were sound enough considering the retarded and provincial conditions prevailing in a country that had languished under foreign musical domination since the days of Purcell and that, a couple of centuries later, was still awaiting an Elgar. After all, one had to remember that in 1892 there still lived in London one Samuel Butler, who thought of himself as the spiritual son of Handel and who, in 1883, had sent a minuet he had composed in the Handelian style to a friend with the following comment: "There is no one whom I have surprised more than myself, for I have lived with myself for forty-seven years without suspecting that I had it in me to compose music, and yet it seems I can compose as well as many another."

It was also quite apparent that Shaw's efforts to arouse his countrymen to a higher consciousness of musical values were not entirely selfless. One could not help thinking of Lord Henry Wotton's remark to the man who had painted the picture of Dorian Gray: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." In any case, here is what Shaw admitted himself: "I yield to no man in the ingenuity and persistence with which I seize every opportunity of puffing myself and my affairs," and he did not hesitate to confide that "any sort of notoriety will serve my turn."

The evaluation of Shaw's music criticism in a narrower sense presented no difficulties, once one had decided to attribute certain contradictions and barbarisms to the peculiarities of Shaw's temperament and to the somewhat extravagant and argumentative approach to music of the English generally. It was clear that Shaw had taken a stand for Wagner and that most of his opinions about the music of his time were derived from this viewpoint. This did not mean that he would not unbend and that his imagination would not respond to phenomena that others as dogmatic would have been unable to reconcile with the rigor of their beliefs. His understanding of Mozart was remarkable and of a sort by no means common in his day. (Henry T. Finck, for example, the critic of the New York *Evening Post* from 1888 to 1924, had described the G major Piano Concerto as a "childish and empty thing" and had called the Mozart piano concertos in general "as dull and trivial as music can be.") My over-all impression, however, was that Shaw had excelled mainly in

presenting a pungent panorama of English musical life in the Nineties; as music criticism in a stricter sense, his had struck me as superficial and amateurish by standards accepted among professional musicians, though it was enlivened by the warmth and sensitivity of a great creative artist.

This thought takes me back to Mr. Auden, whom I thank for having revived my curiosity in Shaw's musical essays, which I had not re-examined thoroughly. Having done so, I must confess that I am very much at a loss to understand the exorbitance of Mr. Auden's claim. In the first place I can think of no single person of any description and of any time whom I would care to identify as "probably the best music critic who ever lived," unless I were to apply this designation to Josef Haydn for his majestic judgment on Mozart. If this were not acceptable, and if I were to pursue the hypothesis of the existence, past or present, of any other candidate, I would turn to Schumann and Berlioz, to Liszt, Wagner, and Debussy, to Schoenberg and Stravinsky, all of whom have criticized music admirably and in every conceivable capacity. I would certainly not overlook, among innumerable other writers and musicians, such men as Heine, Stendhal, and Nietzsche, Fauré, Dukas, Milhaud, Sauguet, and Romain Rolland, Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, Eduard Hanslick, Josef Marx, Paul Becker, Alfred Einstein, and Willi Schuh. I can find no good reasons to believe that Shaw was superior as a music critic to any of these eminent and highly proficient men. I cannot even bring myself to state with any degree of conviction that he was their equal. I have no way of telling what standards Mr. Auden applies to music criticism. Still, I cannot quite believe that he could have been unduly impressed by Shaw's assurance that "literature is six times as difficult an art technically as composition" (no reasons given), or that *Carmen* is "abysmally inferior" to *Der Freischütz* (no explanations), or that Beethoven did not know how to orchestrate, or the numerous other ex-cathedra pronouncements that turn up right and left in the four solid volumes of his musical essays.

The subjects of major musical consequence that Bernard Shaw discussed in his time were then more or less *res judicata*. The battle for Wagner had practically been won, even in England, and what Shaw actually was pleading for was more and better Wagner. Brahms was equally famous in his own way and well established everywhere, except in France. Shaw makes it quite clear in the course of his reviews that he was far from being the Brahms-hater he is reputed to have been. This he proves by a display of genuine sympathy for the chamber music and a passable understanding of some of the major large-scale works. Once this has been said, it should be clear that there remained little that could burden Shaw with any undue critical problems and little that could ruffle a man who had assimilated *Tristan* and *Parsifal*. Verdi's *Falstaff* was the one exception and here Shaw rose to the occasion with a good piece.

The only other flash of novelty from a sphere that was other than Teutonic or Italian, Shaw did not recognize at all. This was the First Violin Sonata by Fauré and it gave rise to a most unfortunate review. Here it is, in part: "Ysaÿe . . . also brought forward a sonata by Gabriel

Fauré, the Maître de Chapelle of the Madeleine; but this, however it might have sounded before Mozart, made no effect after." That kind of review always reminds me of Max Graf's malicious recommendation to a young critic: "If you do not know what to say about a new composer, just say that he is no Beethoven; that will always be true." Quite independently of this, the review is also an example of poor reporting; for even if the sonata had made no effect after Mozart, it still was a new piece about which the public at large was entitled to learn a little. It is difficult to suppress the suspicion that Shaw's prejudice against French music, away from the opera, and his undisguised dislike of "Chapelles," their "Maîtres," or any edifice serving the function of the Madeleine, may have interfered with his desire to listen carefully and may have impaired his usual alertness. One would have much preferred an emerald-green howl of rage and some of his lusty rum-tums, titi-pahs, and taran-taras to the kind of genteel and guarded malevolence that lurks in his review and that is usually the appanage of men less exalted by far.

Shaw's suspicion that there was probably more to the artistic life of Paris than he had been able to detect when he had attended some official functions in that city would have been confirmed had he but ventured there more often. A meeting with Debussy or Ravel, or with one of the younger Russians, might have helped steer his imagination away from the belief that musical salvation could come only from Germany. But he did not care much for travel, which is a pity, because in his day not all the mountains came to Mohammed as they do now, when even the untutored can learn all about the earliest in plainchant or the latest in dodecaphony from the jacket of a record. It cannot be deplored enough that Bernard Shaw had given up his assignment a few months before the world premiere in Paris of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Whatever his reactions would have been, they would have added to his music criticism an asset that is sorely missing: a firsthand report about an important new composer and a revolutionary new work.

Alas, the lure of Bayreuth had been too strong to allow for a diversion elsewhere. Curiously enough, his reports from that shrine are disappointing. By and large, one learns from them only that the Germans had rougher voices, cheaper instruments, but much better dragons than the English. It may seem churlish to bring out all this, and Bernard Shaw can surely not be blamed for having chosen to review music during those few years of the nineteenth century when musical creativity had gone underground and was preparing for a counterrevolution. But still, unfair as it may sound, a little luck is an indispensable part of all great achievement; and in order to be "probably the best music critic who ever lived," one has to function at the right time. As a drama critic, Shaw was more fortunate, and one knows how much was added to his prestige by his discovery for England of Ibsen and Strindberg.

It is regrettable that Bernard Shaw did not always keep his promise to the editor who had begged him to avoid all technical minutiae—"Bach in B minor," as he would have it. But Shaw was largely self-taught and, like many of his kind, he combined a grand disdain for erudition with the irrepensible desire to prove that he could be as erudite as "many another." His attempts in this respect were not always successful and

were responsible for the amateurish overtones perceptible in most of the essays. There are subjects that refuse to be treated summarily and that cannot be dismissed with peremptory and superficial explanations. Discussions on the thematic potential of a leitmotiv, or the laws dividing absolute music and program music, or the merits of opera versus music drama, or the advantages of one harmonic system over another, cannot take place successfully within the narrower framework of day-by-day reports. By ignoring the complexity of problems of that kind, and by hustling them around according to his needs, Shaw merely succeeded in obscuring his arguments by frequent confusion of aesthetics with technique. This—very clearly—happened when he judged the merits of modal harmony by the works of some academic English composers and concluded, from what he had heard, that only such “professors” would hold with “all this mixolydian stuff.” He could not see that the merit of “mixolydian stuff,” like any other “stuff,” including chromaticism, depended on the men who used it. Mussorgsky and Debussy could have shown him, and so—for that matter—could “the giant of Bayreuth” himself, who had fused modal and chromatic elements in *Parsifal* with no uncertain success.

As a crusader for Wagner and a pious follower of the Liszt-Wagner line, Shaw often maneuvered himself into untenable positions, as is shown by the following: “Stavenghagen . . . played the C minor Concerto of Beethoven. The first movement, which made hardly any effect, is, when properly handled, grand in the old-fashioned way. . . . He was more at home in the Liszt Concerto in A—its genuine organic homogeneity being particularly welcome after the formal incoherence of the earlier work.” This is a typical example of sectarian criticism, which in itself is not objectionable, if it can make its point. But in this particular instance it certainly failed to do so, and we may rest assured that Liszt himself would have set the fiercest family dragons at anyone who suggested to him that he had improved on Beethoven. Of course, it was easier for Shaw to understand the homogeneity of Liszt’s newer and well-advertised cyclic form than to see any organic coherence in Beethoven’s more subtle constructions. Here was a case when intuition could not substitute for true knowledge and when the assimilation of fashionable lore could not take the place of personal experience.

Among the more extravagant reviews, the following report on an organ recital in a church is a grand evocation of the Victorian age and a fine piece of Wagnerian pamphleteering. As music criticism it is not altogether convincing. Let me quote: “Inside I found some sixty people listening to Mr. John Runciman, who was compelling a loud-mouthed intractable organ to discourse to the following effect: 1. Andante con moto from Beethoven’s G minor Symphony, 2. The *Parsifal* Prelude, 3. Bach’s Organ Fugue in A minor, 4. The Death March from the *Götterdämmerung*, 5. Mr. Marshall-Hall’s Witenagemot Music, 6. Prelude to the third act of *Lohengrin*. This is exactly the right sort of program for an organ recital in a church.” Shaw sums up a longish argument in favor of this peculiar list by saying: “He who sticks to Wagner and Bach will eventually get the choicest spirits in the parish into the way of coming to the church and learning something there.” It is clear that in this case he

was mainly interested in establishing Wagner's respectability in the eyes of churchgoers and at the same time in seizing an opportunity for one of his usual little flings at clerical institutions.

Beside the "mixolydian" and other related subjects, there is one in particular that Bernard Shaw was always a little pedantic about. In his youth he had lived for a while under the same roof with a singer who had taught according to what is known as a "method." Need one say more? This sad experience weighs heavily on some of his criticisms and spreads a good deal of tedium when he discusses the *coup de glotte* or deplures the shortcomings of a voice sadly misplaced "behind the upper teeth." Of course, he may have been doing his duty for a public perhaps thirsting for enlightenment on all such matters.

As a writer of genius and a man born to the theatre, Shaw was at his best when his critical faculties were aroused by both looking and listening. His descriptions of operatic performances, or of artists like Emma Calvé and Yvette Guilbert, or his fantastic ramblings about Paderewski are among his most original efforts. He is at his best also as an observer of the human drama; his pathetic evocation of Siegfried Wagner, for example, belongs to literature altogether. He was admirable too in his untiring persistence in urging a then musically backward people to broaden its outlook and to establish a reasonable hierarchy of musical values within its consciousness. As a man of stature, he showed a remarkable absence of petty chauvinism. When Anton Rubinstein had written about the "children of Albion" that their ignorance of music was only exceeded by their lack of appreciation, Shaw had replied: "Do not dream to apologize, friend Rubinstein, your remarks may do the children of Albion some good."

As a pure music critic Shaw did suffer, however, from the malady that I once described as "knowing a little too much and much too little." There is, of course, no denying his gifts in the domain of musical journalism, and it is only regrettable that these gifts were not given more time to develop. One is in fact tempted to vary his own famous *mot* about the then fifty-year-old Adelina Patti and to say, applying it to him, that one firmly believes Bernard Shaw was capable of becoming a great music critic. Unfortunately, the indiscriminate adulation his writings on music have received, and of which Mr. Auden's statement is symptomatic, has had a deleterious effect on some of Shaw's self-appointed and less talented successors. Shaw's musical essays—good, bad, or indifferent—are still by Bernard Shaw. They are neither an anthology of derogatory epithets for the use of cranks nor are they a recommended kindergarten for hopefuls in search of overnight fame. By now the tricks are all well worn, the similes are all shop-soiled. And the art of being caustic without being vulgar is still confined to a chosen few.

Huneker in Retrospect

by Van Wyck Brooks

DILETTANTISM IS DEAD, never to be summoned from the tombs by the most hedonistic master of the future. Seven devils of war and woe, hatred, murder and rapine have driven forth the gentle arts from the House of Life." So James Huneker wrote in 1918, three years before his death, and no one could have described better the change that came over the aesthetic world at the beginning of the World War epoch. With him died the dilettante, in the best sense of the word, one who, though "only a newspaper man," as he said again and again, "could love, intensely love, an idea or an art." Expansive, impulsive, full-blown, he remarked in another letter, "It is better to be prodigal and abundant and fluid than hard, constipated, and narrow. . . . I am told twenty times a month to stick to my last—music criticism—and, begad, I think people are right"; but, believing that the purpose of the arts is to rejoice the spirit, he saw the arts as all essentially one. He gave himself equally to poetry, painting, and fiction, although music remained his master passion. He was a melomaniac first and last.

A Roman Catholic Irishman who had come from Philadelphia, with one Hungarian forebear to give him the family name, he had, as a boy, played the organ in a church on Sundays, and on Saturdays in a synagogue. He had early studied Hebrew with Latin, for his mother hoped he would be a priest, and his father, who had once belonged to the circle of Edgar Allan Poe, entertained all the visiting musical celebrities. Huneker remembered seeing at home Gottschalk, Thalberg, Vieuxtemps, and Ole Bull, who once went around the dinner table walking on his thumbs. He had heard Von Bülow play, and Anton Rubinstein, the "heaven-storming genius," and he had been present at representations of *Die Meistersinger* and *The Ring* that were better than he experienced

later at Bayreuth. So much for "dear old dusty Philadelphia," that "cold-storage abode of Brotherly Love." He had passed on his way to school the house in which Poe had spent six years—Poe, the literary ancestor, as he said in *Iconoclasts*, of nearly all the Parnassians and Diabolists, and he had just convalesced from a severe attack of Poe when he fell desperately ill with Whitmania. He called upon Whitman in Camden and, meeting him on Market Street, escorted him several times to symphony concerts. Later he turned against the "windy" poet, while the music of Chopin flooded his emotional horizon, Chopin who remained his most enduring artistic passion, "the piano bard, the piano rhapsodist, the Ariel of the piano." There was in him "something imponderable, fluid, vaporous, evanescent" that eluded analysis, he said, in *Chopin: the Man and His Music*; "each of his fingers was a delicately differentiated voice, and these ten voices could sing at times like the morning stars." For the rest, "Music, the conqueror, beckoned to me," he wrote, "and up the stairway of art I have pursued the apparition since—up a steep stairway like one in a Piranesi etching, the last stair always falling into space as you mount, I have toiled, the dream waving me on."

Music mad, Huneker went to Paris in 1878, with a longing to see Liszt, if not to know him, for the cult of the Abbé Liszt had been strong in the household in Philadelphia. He was to write a study of the legendary Liszt, a book, planned as a biography, that turned into a scrapbook of notes and recollections. In Paris he lived in a sunless room at the top of a damp, dark building, and he wore a velveteen coat, a Scotch cap, long locks, and a fluffy little beard. From a genuine pupil of Chopin he learned the art of fingering, but he found that by playing Bach he gained finger independence and touch discrimination and color. "Bach," his Old Foggy said, "could spin music as a spider spins its nest, from earth to the sky and back again," and every morning he played Bach preludes and fugues as he read Browning to prepare himself for the struggle with the world. Browning's *Paracelsus* and *Childe Roland* were his "daily sustenance," and *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* grew younger with time, he found: it remained his book of eternal wisdom. For ten years after he returned to New York, he gave regular piano lessons. In Paris he practiced every day from six hours to ten or more.

Meanwhile, he developed in Paris an interest in the other arts that he had felt as a boy in Philadelphia. He knew by sight the celebrities of the new painting crowd, Degas and especially Manet at the Café Guerbois, and he saw Mallarmé walking with Manet once and Guy de Maupassant sipping a bock at the Café Sylvain. He caught sight of Victor Hugo mounting an omnibus, a cotton umbrella in his hand. He heard Barbey d'Aurévilly talk, and Villiers de L'Isle Adam, and one day, on the Chaussée d'Antin, Gustave Flaubert passed him, evidently on his way to the train for Rouen. The terrific old man with the drooping mustache, big blue eyes, and large red face, gave him a smile "angelic in its indulgence," for Huneker fancied that to be an artist one must dress like a cross between a studio model and a brigand. Flaubert remained his romance: Huneker always came back to him as the greatest of all writers of prose.

A born hero worshiper, hopelessly romantic—"There are only roman-

tics and imbeciles," he quoted a young man saying to him—he found in Paris his *patrie psychique*, the "reservoir of spiritual and artistic certitudes." There he not only discovered painting and acquired a passion for literature but he found his own literary form, the *causerie* or *feuilleton* that French writers practiced but that was virtually unknown in his own country. He was to write in the manner of Anatole France, Jules Lemaitre and, above all, Remy de Gourmont, of whom he became a friend in 1897 and regarding whom he said, in words that applied to himself, "The latch was always lifted on the front door of his ivory tower. He sits . . . on the ground floor, from which he may saunter and rub elbows with life."

Huneker appeared in New York in 1886, and the years at the end of the century, the Eighties and the Nineties, were those in which he felt most at home. "Isn't it lovely," he said in a letter, "to be able to write 1884 again; 1908 is so chilly, so dreary to me"; and he brought the New York of those decades vividly to life in his later novel *Painted Veils*. It was the New York of Edgar Saltus, of the first Ibsen plays—before this "degenerate" became a "tiresome preacher"—of the great days of opera when Melba, Nordica, and the two De Reszkes all sang together, with Plançon, in *Les Huguenots*. Joseffy, Godowsky, De Pachmann were in highest feather; and "the human pulse beat more quickly than anywhere else on the planet" at the point where Broadway debouched into Union Square. So the critic of music, Alfred Stone, felt in Huneker's novel. Lüchow's on East Fourteenth Street faced Steinway and Sons across the way; the Academy of Music stood on the corner; and close by were Martin's and Delmonico's and cafés in University Place that were made for men, like Huneker, with master palates. There were semi-hotels with *tables d'hôte* for singers, actors, painters, musicians, in one of which Huneker fell in with the "Red Countess" over whom Lassalle had fought his fatal duel. Dvořák was living in New York as head of the National Conservatory, and Huneker traversed with him "the great thirst belt of the neighborhood." These were the days of the hansom cab with the slightly shabby driver and the battered silk hat on the side of his disreputable head.

As an all but penniless music reporter, Huneker worked hard, tramping out every night to every tenth-rate performance at Steinway Hall, Chickering Hall, or the Metropolitan Opera House. He even interviewed Madame Blavatsky, who made him feel, as he remembered, "like a rabbit in the jaws of a boa constrictor." The New Cosmopolis, he said, was no place for provinciality, and, as a Manhattan cockney, he aimed at catholicity, at a cosmopolitan breadth, in taste and judgment. He had in mind, as a model, the archetype of cosmopolitan critics, Georg Brandes, whom he first met in New York, and he soon became an art critic, a dramatic critic, a literary critic, or, one might better say, an all-round essayist; for he was an impressionist who set forth his personal preferences and did not always attempt critical evaluations. There was an element of truth in his remark about himself that he "saw music, heard color, tasted architecture, smelt sculpture, and fingered perfume."

It was a pleasant experience, he said, to catch the first glow of a

rising sun. Swinburne was new, Wagner was new, Manet, Monet, Rodin were new. "I was happy in being born at such a crossroads of art. I watched new manifestations over the water." He said again in a letter, "As far back as 1891, I was in the critical trenches as dramatic critic and fighting the poison bombs of the old-time criticism," reviewing all of Ibsen's plays when the American press was against him, opposing "the mean, narrow spirit in our arts and letters."

To "this land of hysteria, humbug, and hayseeds" Huneker introduced the great new European talents, writing about Nietzsche and Bernard Shaw as early as 1888. He was the first to write articles about Cézanne and Gauguin. He had talked with Couture at his country house near Paris in 1878, he visited Nietzsche's sister, Frau Foerster-Nietzsche, and, interviewing Maeterlinck in his little house at Passy, he went to Stockholm to call upon Strindberg. On the esplanade in front of the Wagner theatre at Bayreuth, he first encountered George Moore, and he went to see Joseph Conrad who was writing "the most wonderful things in English." Cézanne, whom Huneker saw at Aix, struck him as a "sardonic old gentleman in ill-fitting clothes, with the shrewd, suspicious gaze of a provincial notary," and he stood on the spot, near the house, where Cézanne's landscapes were usually painted. The pictures, Huneker said, did not bear a close resemblance to the view, "which simply means that Cézanne had vision and I had not."

Of American artists he liked best Arthur B. Davies, "our own mystic primitive painter," about whom he wrote one of his best essays; and George Luks, with his lithe activity, made him think of the one-man orchestra whom he had once seen in France—with fife, cymbals, bells, and concertina, quivering, dancing, wriggling, and shaking his skull. The lyric, vaporous creatures of Whistler seemed to him to be of the same stuff as the Lenores, Ligeias, and Annabels of Poe. Of Albert Ryder he wrote in *The Lost Master*. He had visited on West Fourteenth Street this painter of genius known to few, in the paint cave paved with empty frames, a litter of bottles, old paint tubes, easels, broken chairs, and worn-out carpets. There he saw Ryder's "Phantom Ship" and a landscape with a little stream beneath the rays of a poisonous golden moon.

Huneker crossed the Atlantic at least once a year, living on occasion in London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Milan, Munich, and Rome. In later years Belgium and especially Holland came first with him—above all, Bruges and Haarlem. "Never again Europe for us without Holland. We love Holland," he wrote in 1911. The placid orderly life of the Dutch cities pleased him best. "We were settled for life in Holland," he said in 1918, "but 1914 drove us home"; and at Amsterdam he saw much of Hugo de Vries, in his experimental garden, for botany also appealed to Huneker's critical curiosity. Then, besides Rembrandt, the "cool clear magic" of Jan Vermeer tempted him at The Hague, Delft, and Haarlem—"I've seen every Vermeer in existence," he wrote in one of his letters, "even the one down in Budapest."

He was drawn to Budapest to hear Hungarian gypsy music, which had more fire, swing, dash, and heart than the gypsy bands at home; and there he studied the stage machinery he had come to know in all the other capitals of Europe. He saw a Maeterlinck play in Vienna and new plays

by Hauptmann and Sudermann there, Sudermann, "the conjuror who pours out any flavor, color, or liquid you desire from his bottle." Sudermann's *Magda* he had seen a dozen times in German, French, Italian, English, and Scandinavian; and he refused to shudder at Wedekind's melodramatic atrocities when he witnessed *Spring's Awakening* in Berlin. Prague and Toledo, he said, were the most original cities in Europe. He spent five months in Spain, finding Velasquez "still the most modern of all painters . . . the greatest painter of them all, with the possible exception of Vermeer in Delft." Fancying that he had been unfair to modern German painting, he visited in 1912 the principal German cities, writing essays on the Frankfurt gallery and the gallery at Cassel, where "the public knows how to savor life slowly. . . . At five o'clock every afternoon the knitting brigade is seated drinking coffee." But he could find no new talent, only a sea of muddy paint, harsh flesh tints, and chemical greens.

Huneker agreed with Huysmans that there are no schools in the land of art—no symbolism, realism, idealism—but only good artists and bad; and his own love of the excellent led him to write about virtuosos, actresses, singers, and artists in black and white. In a series of papers he described Mary Garden's many roles, as he had discussed the plays of Ibsen, and he wrote about Eleanora Duse, about Schopenhauer, William James, and Gordon Craig, the designer of costumes and lighting. He said that to Godowsky all other pianists could go to school: "He looks like Buddha under his Bodhi tree conjuring beautiful sounds from sky and air and the murmuring of crystalline waters." The audacious American girl, the heroine of *Painted Veils*, went to Bayreuth, sang and conquered, the greatest Isolde since Lilli Lehmann.

Meanwhile, some of his finest essays dealt with the black and white artists with whom he had been familiar in his childhood, for his father had a famous collection that included John Martin's vast sinister mezzotints and the architectural dreams of Piranesi. Huneker was the first in America to write about Felicien Rops, whose big style was ignored in favor of his pornographic prints; and, defending the stately but obsolete art of line engraving, he wrote well on Daumier, Méryon, and Constantin Guys. Many of these essays appeared in *Promenades of an Impressionist*, a book that dealt almost entirely with painters and etchers. Among these were Degas and Chardin and one of the finest was on Botticelli's "sweet, sick, nervous music."

His best-liked books in Germany and France were, Huneker remarked, his two collections of short stories, *Visionaries* and *Melomaniacs*, which were "not Anglo-Saxon or American fiction. . . . They belonged to what the Germans call *Kultur*novellen." They derived more or less from E. T. A. Hoffmann but leaned a good deal on Poe, and their characters and settings were usually exotic, musicians and poets of mixed blood, sometimes in German or Austrian watering places. Fantastic, erotic, esoteric, as Huneker said, they have names like Baldur, Arved, Quell; and among these "rebels of the moon" is the Russian mystic and millionaire, the scientific pyrotechnist of *The Spiral Road*. Huneker gave the name of Arthur Schopenhauer Wyartz to the son of an old Brook Farmer.

There came a time when he was "dead sick of the decadents," dead sick of "the entire crew of 'modernity' yowlers," sick of "strange faces" and "foreign tongues," sick of "cosmopolitanism," when he became, in fact, a "rabid Yankee." But this was mainly because of the war, when the impressionable Huneker, the "old practitioner in literary and artistic poisons," said that his cosmopolitanism peeled off like dry paint as he read President Wilson's proclamation. He had the usual "bully time" even with Theodore Roosevelt. But he remained the unquiet soul he described in *Steeplejack*, who voyaged from city to city, from country to country, who never lost the Irishman's love of highly colored phrases and for whom life was never a Barmecide feast.

He was always young in temperament—and he was a critic with temperament—"an optimist at bottom with a superficial coating of pessimism which thaws near a piano, a pretty girl, or a glass of Pilsner." But he became, towards sixty, the Old Foggy who figured in one of his last books—however, he observed, "I know it, and that marks the difference between other old fogies and myself." By nature a Yea-sayer, he left his "dear son," Mencken, to do the attacking; but, although he liked to face the rising rather than the setting sun, he was not at home in the arts of the postwar epoch. He welcomed the writing of James Joyce but he could not accept the *vers libre* of the Twenties; and, with his motto "Write only for the young: The old will not heed you, being weary of the pother of life and art," the young artists did not appeal to him. "I have to get off somewhere," Huneker said in one of his letters, "and with the exception of Matisse and Picasso and Epstein and Augustus John I don't dote on the new chaps." The Cubists did not interest him—he could not unravel their meanings. "There are no tonalities, only blocks of raw primary colors juxtaposed with the childlike ingenuousness of Assyrian mural decorations . . . my sympathies have reached their outermost verge," he said in *The Pathos of Distance*; and he could not like the "neo-Scythians who . . . throw across their saddle bows the helpless diatonic and chromatic scales. . . . I fear and dislike the music of Arnold Schoenberg, the hardest musical nut to crack of his generation, and the shell is very bitter to the mouth." He added, "If such music making is ever to become accepted, then I long for Death the Releaser."

It is true that Huneker eagerly studied Schoenberg's compositions, for he was both curious and conscientious; but he could not live up to his own advice, "Enjoy the music of your epoch, for there is no such thing as music of the future." But, after all, his was the great epoch that opened with Bach and led through Brahms, the "bard chanting humanity's woes and full-blooded aspirations"; and who ever enjoyed more the great composers who lived then, as well as the great novelists, poets, and painters? "The twentieth-century man," he said, "brings forth his works of art in sorrow. His music shows it. It is sad, complicated, hysterical, and morbid"; and, with his cult of great artists in every line, Huneker was himself an archromantic.

It is true, he said, that Mozart was the greatest musician the world had known, blither than Beethoven and more serene; and, in his "Dream Barn" on Madison Avenue, before he was exiled to Brooklyn, he continued every morning to play Bach. That room, on the tenth floor, was

as big as a cathedral—where are such old-fashioned apartments today? Bach, for Huneker, was “the Alpha and Omega of music.” But Chopin was his god, and the sentimental hero Liszt appealed to him much more than Richard Wagner. Loving symphonic music, he disliked grand opera as what he called, in *Ivory Apes and Peacocks*, “a mishmash of styles, compromises, and arrant ugliness”; and elsewhere he said that “a Beethoven string quartet holds more genuine music for me than the entire works of Wagner. . . . The twentieth century will find Wagner out. . . . Think of utilizing that magnificent and formidable engine, the Beethoven symphonic method, to accompany a tinsel tale of garbled Norse mythology with all sorts of modern affectations and morbidities introduced.” He had said in his *Franz Liszt*, “Nothing stales like theatre music. The Button-Molder awaits at the crossroads of time all operatic music, even as he waited for Peer Gynt.”

There was little of the humanitarian in this worshiper of great men, and no doubt he was prejudiced against the “thrice brutal” Zola and his “noisy inartistic novels.” He preferred Nietzsche to the nonresistant Tolstoy, and, as an individualist, he was drawn to Stendhal and to Ibsen, “in these times of vapid socialistic theories.” For the rest, saying there were no modest authors, he was himself genuinely humble, disliking “my truly negligible work” and saying of critics in general, “We are only contemporaries of genius.” At his worst, jerky and florid, he could scribble a series of bad epigrams followed by the phrase “I pause for breath”; but, agile and humorous at his best, and sometimes a beautiful writer, he was learned, always alive, and certainly unique.

Tovey

by George Stevens

SURELY OF ALL professional writers the music critic must cherish the smallest hope of immortality. Even before his words are in print, the event to which they refer is past. An orchestral concert may be repeated once or twice, and an opera revived at intervals, but the performance is never exactly duplicated. This is not to say that music critics have no influence: that is another matter. They can make and break reputations of performers, if not—and generally they cannot—of composers. But their words have a better chance to survive if they concern something other than music, if, for instance, they concern musicians: there is always an audience for biography. The exceptions are likely to be special cases. Bernard Shaw's music criticism has been reprinted, partly because it is good criticism and partly because it is Shaw. And the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick, a giant in his day, has recently been revived with a book of essays reprinted under the title *Vienna's Golden Years of Music*; but Hanslick is still, alas, remembered less for what he did to immortalize any musician than for what Wagner did to immortalize him, in a caricature that is outrageously unfair but that remains indelible.

In this light the history of Donald Francis Tovey's reputation is remarkable if not unique. Twenty-one years after his death, a fair number of his books are in print; yet it may be said, with almost literal justification, that he never wrote a book at all. His editor, Hubert J. Foss, tells us that in 1896, when Tovey was twenty-one, he planned a substantial treatise on the means of expression in music; this was a young man's dream. His posthumous, unfinished *Beethoven* was planned as a book, and so was the essay on *The Art of Fugue*, published in book form during his lifetime. Most, if not all, of the others are collections of

pieces written over several decades, and all of them, including *Beethoven*, are books about music per se. The book called *Forms in Music* is a collection of Tovey's contributions, excluding biographical articles, to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The seven volumes of *Essays in Musical Analysis* are made up of analyses of chamber music (some dating from 1900 or thereabouts) and of orchestral works. The latter were written for the Reid Symphony Orchestra of Edinburgh, which he organized in 1916, two years after he became Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh University, and which he conducted until late in the Thirties. These essays are, in fact, program notes, but program notes of a very special kind. Unlike most such essays, which often seem designed simply to induce a passively receptive mood in the audience, Tovey's are written to enhance the listener's enjoyment of what he hears, and his understanding of what he enjoys.

In company with other admirers of Tovey—I wonder how many—I have been associating with *Essays in Musical Analysis* since the first volume was published twenty-seven years ago. My copies are constantly being taken down from the shelf, which is to say whenever there is occasion to read what he said about a particular composition or a musical subject, and in these days of music at the turn of a switch, that is several times a week.

Now with many writers, I suppose with most writers, the reader's conception of the author is incidental. The book's the thing. But there are some with whom you find yourself developing a sort of personal relationship—one-sided, to be sure, since your author never heard of you, but reciprocity is irrelevant. Dr. Johnson is still our companion, and so is Max Beerbohm. Tovey is one of those who cannot be read impersonally. I think his admirers feel about him much as H. W. Fowler's admirers feel about Fowler. Each of these men is unique in his field, each has uniquely expressed himself. The comparison must not be pressed, for the differences between them are as great as the similarities, if not greater. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* is systematic, comprehensive, methodical, and fussy, where Tovey's work is *ad hoc*, fragmentary, intuitive, and spontaneous. But Fowler, writing about words, and Tovey, writing about music, were alike in at least two ways, enough to inspire in their followers the same kind of loyalty: each had a disinterested passion for his subject, and in spite or because of this, the reader is aware in each case of the presence of a personality that is irresistible, because it is altogether without exhibitionism.

There is a paradox in my experience of Tovey's personality, however. For a long time I had thought of him as crotchety, cocksure, rather old-fashioned: a grand old man in the sunset. I had a picture of him derived from I do not know what fortuitous associations, as a short, stocky figure, striding about with a cigar and moustache, giving everybody what-for and making them like it.

He was not at all like that, as it turns out. I discovered this quite unexpectedly when I read Mary Grierson's biography of Tovey. I was astonished to discover how mistaken was the portrait I had imagined. Physically, Tovey was tall, he had thinning hair, he had certainly no moustache and probably no cigar. Otherwise he was different from my

preconception chiefly in being a more vulnerable human being. This discovery increased my admiration of Tovey as it diminished my self-esteem: I might have known he was vulnerable—how else could he have been so sensitive? I think I must have missed this quality because he wrote with the confidence of authority. But he is not really cocksure at all. If he seems to be so, it is because, at his best, he participates so thoroughly in the composer's intention that he can say the last word—but without making any claim to infallibility.

What Tovey possessed above all was an ability so rare as to be, at any given time, almost unique: the ability to write intelligently and significantly about music, in terms not too technical to be understood by an audience of musical amateurs. Music can be written to fit words; this is true not only of songs, oratorios, operas, and other forms in which words are actually sung, but of music illustrative of a text as well. (There is, to be sure, always the possibility that the music *seems* to fit the words because, since they existed first, the listener has a preconceived idea of what to expect; conversely, an unfamiliar song in a foreign language or a symphonic poem on an unannounced text may, even to a musically experienced listener, only vaguely indicate the verbal subject matter.) But can words be written to fit music? Perhaps any respectable poet can produce verses to fit a Mendelssohn *Song Without Words*, but who is to say anything worth listening to about a Mozart piano concerto?

Tovey recognized the difficulty, and commented upon it in a letter quoted by Miss Grierson: "My main trouble . . . arises from the fact that as a musicologist I am nothing but a popularizer—not, I hope, an unscholarly one, but a person whom even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had to select for that reason rather than for special knowledge. Of course, my special knowledge is music. But scholars can be readable about the most difficult questions in literature, because the difficulties are themselves explained in terms of literature, even if the subject be Chinese metaphysics; whereas no prose-writing about music can possibly be music."

This is not mock modesty, but it underestimates Tovey's great gift. Technical discussion apart (and it really has no bearing), he came as close as anyone ever has, so close that it is impossible to see how the gap could be further narrowed, to writing musically about music. To that pseudo-rhetorical question above, I answer that it is Tovey who can say something worth listening to about a Mozart concerto, as all those know who have read his essay on "The Classical Concerto" in Volume III of *Essays in Musical Analysis*. This is impossible to demonstrate briefly, and difficult even at length without musical examples, but two paragraphs from the analyses of two of Tovey's favorites, the Piano Concertos in A major (K. 488) and C minor (K. 491), may give some idea. These passages should be read with the realization that they are accompanied by several other analyses of Mozart concertos and preceded by the long and comprehensive analysis of the classical concerto mentioned above, which occupies twenty-five closely printed pages, and that musical examples quoted in the original are omitted here.

As there is no rule without an exception to prove it, I readily admit that the first eight and a half pages of this A major Concerto [Mozart K.

488] completely tally with that orthodox account of classical concerto form which I have taken such pains to refute every time I have discussed a classical concerto. And if a single concerto, and that a work which the textbooks have not selected as specially typical, can establish a form as "normal" in points wherein all the other classical examples differ from it and from each other so radically that these points can hardly be identified at all; then perhaps Mozart did here produce an orthodox first movement—as far as the middle of the ninth of its twenty-two pages. But at that point things begin to happen which cannot be found in any other concerto. . . .

Neither Haydn nor Mozart produced more than a small proportion of works in minor keys; and while their ways of characterizing the minor mode are by no means conventional, nearly all their works in minor keys have a special character. Tell me that a mature but unknown large work of Mozart is in a minor key, and I will confidently assert that while it may have humorous passages it will certainly have both passion and pathos, and that while the pathos will almost certainly not amount to tragedy, it is very likely that much of the work will border on the sublime. If a large work of Haydn is in the minor mode it is almost sure to conceal pathos beneath a blustering temper in its quick movements. With Beethoven we reach the world of tragedy. Now the recapitulation of a second subject in a minor movement is likely to make these distinctions very clear. For, if the second subject was, as usual, originally in a major key, what is to become of it when it is recapitulated in the tonic? Haydn, in his later works, nearly always indulges in a "happy ending" by turning the whole thing into the tonic major. Mozart (except in the finale of the D minor Concerto, where he achieves both his own and Haydn's method by adding a happy epilogue) always makes a pathetic transformation of his originally happy second subject into the tonic minor. This is pathetic but not tragic. Beethoven seems, at first sight, to return to Haydn's practice, but really he has transcended Mozart's; his major recapitulation has all the power of tragic irony, and the catastrophe follows in the coda.

Tovey's musical thought is too complex and well integrated to be done justice in condensation or excerpt, but the passages give a good idea of his style and texture. Other aspects of his writing can be represented more easily. An anthology of unadulterated musical fun could be drawn from his writings—almost drawn blindfolded. He had an effervescent *joie de vivre* that makes his companionship a constant delight. Here are a few samples. Tovey notes that the libretto of Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* was supposed to have been translated into German "from the English of one Lidley, a name unknown even to the Post Office Directory. But I do not know what difficulty there is in regarding the mysterious Lidley as a misprint for Linley, the name of a family of well-known musicians. . . . I am sure that Lidley is only Linley with a cold in his head." Again: "Nobody can tell me the exact notes of 'Here we go gathering nuts in May'; but everybody agrees that the finale of Haydn's cello concerto is suspiciously like it." Of another concerto:

The Violoncello Concerto of Dvořák is not without its composer's more amiable weaknesses; nor is it possible to say that all the weak points are, as in some other great works by Dvořák and Schubert, suggestive of new types of form. But it is permissible to plead that the

weaknesses do not matter. Both the slow movement and the finale relapse into Charles the Second's apologies for being such an unconscionable time in dying; but it is impossible to grudge them their time, and as a matter of fact none of the three movements of the concerto is of unreasonable length.

The same quality is ubiquitous in his letters. His biography quotes one from 1910, when Tovey was working on his only opera, which was to occupy him for many years: "I don't see how I shall ever face the strain of 1,000 pages of scoring. How the deuce Wagner got through eleven such works, libretti and all, plus two wives and a million vitriolic controversies, the Lord only knows."

Mary Grierson—whose biography is a tribute to the kind of education the English and Scottish still go in for, which assumes that a doctor of music (or of science, for that matter) may be called upon to write something other than academic dissertations addressed solely to other scholars—tells us that Tovey composed delicious light music which he never committed to paper: songs to verses by Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Hilaire Belloc. A fountain of wit was one of the ornaments of his personality, and makes one long to have known him. So even more does his capacity for friendship. These qualities and others are fully portrayed by Miss Grierson, who was his pupil, his assistant, his perfect interpreter. Her point of view is affectionate without a grain of sentimentality; and she understood Tovey from his point of view without loss of discernment from her own. She makes it abundantly clear that Tovey's qualities were recognized beyond the level of mere adequacy during his lifetime as well as at his death. For example, she quotes the *Manchester Guardian* on the first two volumes of *Essays in Musical Analysis*: "Here is the finest writing on music achieved in our time. Sir Donald's culture is as broad as it is humane; he carries it lightly. He writes with a growing excitement—and with delicious humour. . . . All 'musical appreciation' is here—and none of the blarney."

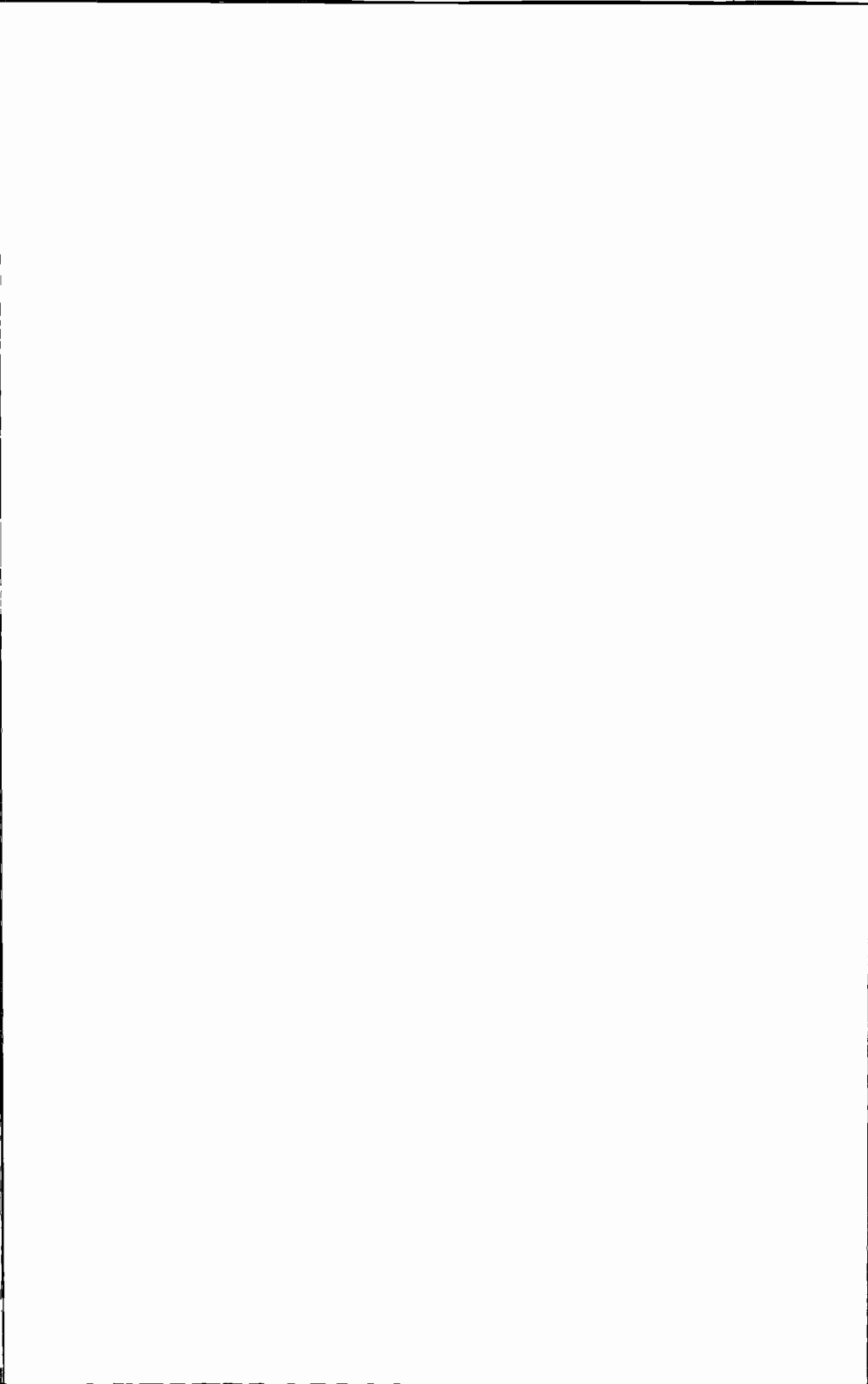
Tovey's musical memory was beyond belief; in reply to a question, he once estimated, without boasting, that if he played all the music he knew by heart, he could go on without repetition eight hours a day for at least four weeks. Such a reservoir of musical experience provided him with an endless flow of perceptions, which he was enabled to communicate by virtue of his humor, friendliness, style, general culture. He was never for a moment guilty of musical snobbery, though his taste was fastidious and his comments could be scathing, as they were regarding the chorus "The Lord is a man of war" from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, which otherwise he admired wholeheartedly: "The seat of the scornful is a bad eminence; and its occupants are liable to blaspheme masterpieces like 'He led them through the deep.' But people who have not outgrown the music of 'The Lord is a man of war' are in as bad a case as Christians who have not outgrown the theology of its text."

Of his qualities he had some of the defects. His close friend and librettist, R. C. Trevelyan, wrote of him: "At his happiest moments, when he had leisure to revise, and when he was not trying to say too much at one time, no one could write more lucid, eloquent, and witty English prose. But often his writing was almost as much an extemporization as

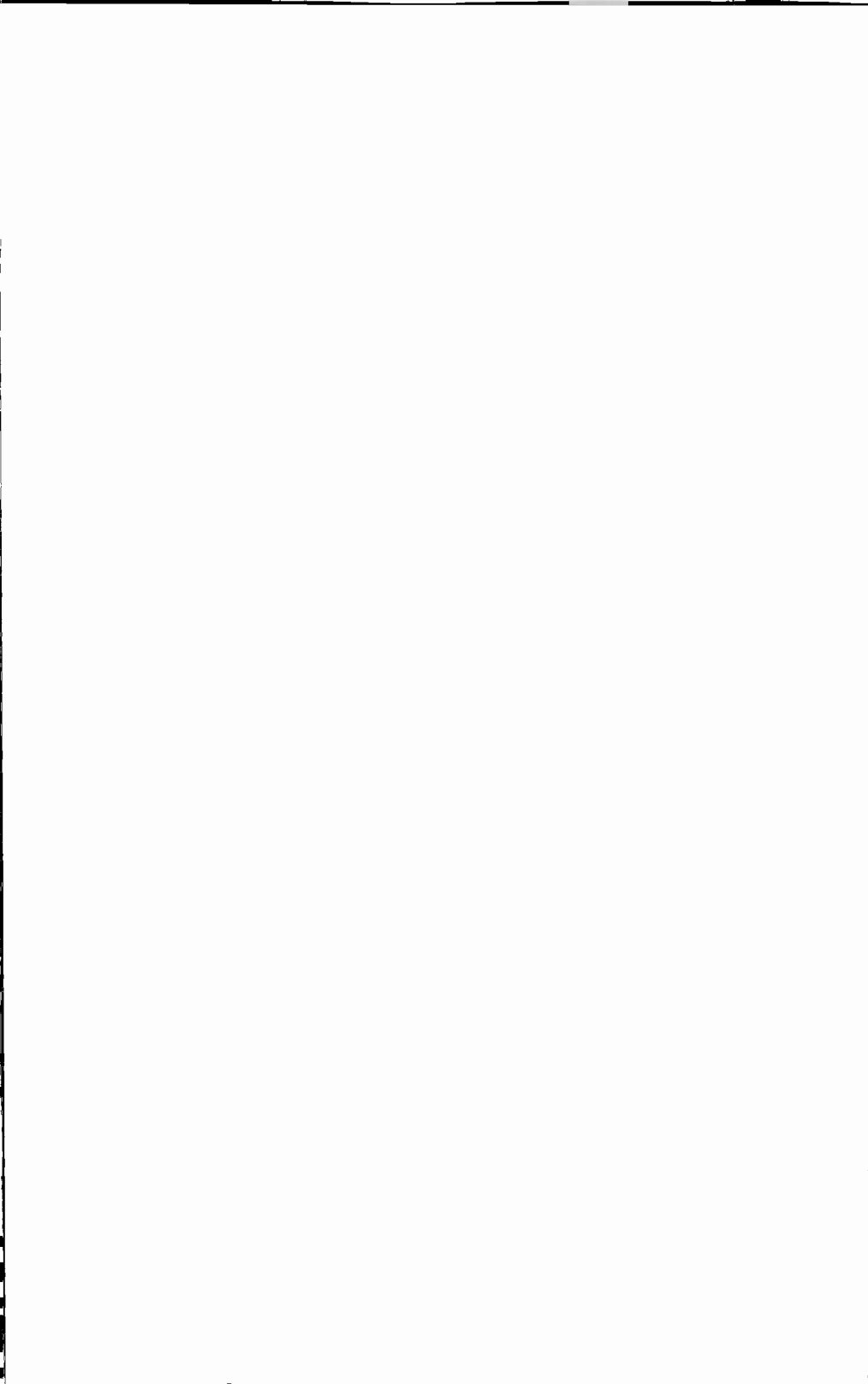
his talk. He was sometimes obscure and overlengthy, and would neglect to make the transitions of his thought sufficiently clear and easy for his readers or his audience. Even so, his wonderful command of language, and his fertile imagination made whatever he had to say remarkable." He made no effort in his analyses to treat a composer's work systematically: he commented on the pieces he and his orchestra played, only as the occasion arose. One regrets particularly that so few of Mozart's piano concertos are covered, for Tovey was able to see into Mozart's inexhaustible depths long before most other musical Anglo-Saxons of his generation did.

Tovey never let the winds of fashion blow him away from any composer who fell into disfavor with musical snobs—such a composer, for example, as Brahms. Not for him the hothouse or any other kind of glass house. He cared passionately for music and for its dissemination; he never compromised his tastes or his standards; but there is no evidence that he considered it compromising to communicate with a large audience. He would, I think, have hooted at the critical pretension that denounces "mass culture."

Today, Tovey's own music is entirely neglected: not a single one of his compositions is available on records, and I have never heard a piece of his performed. (For all I know, his music may not be worth reviving—though I'd give a lot to hear Casals play Tovey's cello concerto, which by all accounts Casals genuinely and deeply admired. And E. M. Forster, among others, admired Tovey's opera, *The Bride of Dionysus*.) Even his critical reputation seems also to be at least in partial eclipse; one seldom sees Tovey quoted (and even finds his opinions held up to obloquy—Barzun's *Berlioz* goes back to 1950). But it is the nature of all eclipses to be temporary, and writings which will reward the closest and most constant attention of every amateur of music are unlikely to remain obscure or unappreciated for any length of time. I wish I had known their author.



V. Sound Reproduction



Hearing Is Believing?

by John W. Campbell, Jr.

YOU CAN LEARN to operate a piece of machinery on the "You push this gimmick, then you pull this thingamabob, then you twist this whatchamacallit" basis. Or, you can learn the basic nature of the equipment, how it operates, and what its limitations are. The latter method usually produces a far better result, more satisfaction and less burned-out equipment and tempers.

What's the difference between a high-fidelity sound system and an old fashioned player piano?

They're basically the same article; each represents a sincere effort of its builder to supply a system that could reproduce high-quality music in the home. Back in the nineteenth century, there was a lot of interest in mechanical reproduction—or, more accurately, technical reproduction. They made player violins, too: motor-driven wheels replaced the bow, and machine-controlled mechanical fingers pressed the strings. There were "juke box" contrivances which incorporated a mechanical violin and a mechanical piano, busily playing a duet. Fascinating things—even more fun to watch than one of the modern hundred-record super-jukeboxes.

The nineteenth century went in also for "artificial silk" and a lot of similar things—imitations of the natural product. There's a different approach today; nylon is a synthetic fiber, designed to meet a specific requirement. It was never thought of as "artificial silk".

The high-fidelity music systems we have today can't be operated on the "push this gimmick" basis. For full enjoyment, we need to go a bit deeper than electronics to get to what the electronics system is there for. The player piano and the player violin weren't electronic—but they, too, were efforts on the road to high-fidelity music.

The thing we're seeking is a method of packaging a human experi-

ence in such fashion that we can unpackage it anywhere, anytime, and enjoy it. Canned peas are not as good as fresh spring peas. Unfortunately, fresh spring peas simply don't exist everywhere, at all times, so it behooves us to find means of packaging them, making the pleasure of eating them universally available. "High-fidelity" packaging is improving; modern frozen peas are getting hard to distinguish from the garden-fresh article.

The player piano tried to package music so that fine playing would be available universally. It's a dead line of development now, because the inventors took the wrong course—but we can learn something from it. Any human experience involves a human being, some medium of communication, and a source of experience. In the case of music, we have a listener, a sound-medium and the sound-source. The player piano tried to reproduce music by regenerating the sound-source—by duplicating the performance. The player violin—and a number of other mechanically played instruments which were developed—tried the same thing.

Edison's first phonograph represented a totally different approach; instead of duplicating the instrument, it attempted to duplicate the sensation of hearing.

The whole line of development since that time has been directed toward better and better methods of duplicating the sensation instead of the instrument. Where once efforts were made at automata that would act like people on a stage, the effort is now toward color television and three-dimensional color-sound movies. Basically, the problem attacked is the same; only the approach is different.

Even the new approach, however, runs into a slight difficulty: human beings spent two billion years evolving the closest possible approach to an absolutely deception-proof sensory system. Animals, since the dawn of life on Earth, have tried to camouflage themselves so that attackers couldn't find them, and so that their prey couldn't see them coming. Efforts to confuse, befuddle, paralyze, or otherwise render inoperative the sensing systems of the other animals has been standard procedure for the last billion years.

Man happens to be the animal on top of the heap now. We can safely assume that one reason he's there is that he's got the most nearly foolable sensing system ever developed.

And this is what the high-fidelity sound experts are trying to fool!

It's fairly evident that they can't do it in reality; only by the willing co-operation of the human mind itself can any deception be achieved. And that isn't going to be true deception, but more on the order of imaginative play.

In the first place, a human experience such as attending a symphony concert at Carnegie Hall consists of a highly complex, highly integrated and cross-correlated system of perceptions. For the moment, we'll leave the main sound business out, and consider the correlated experiences.

There's the visual impression of the stage, and of the instrumentalists in the string section bowing in rhythm, and of the tympanist standing with arms raised, alert, starting the downward movement so that the beat comes at precisely the instant required. There's the feeling of hundreds of other individuals, all joining the enjoyment of the perfor-

mance, the faint odors of perfumes and cigar smoke clinging to clothes, and the odor of wool and human beings. The tactile sensation of the auditorium chairs. And most of all, the *knowing* of how this came about—the trip from home to this precise point in space and time, the sense of orientation with respect to the whole system of the world and life.

When you can contrive an electronic system that can induce a duplication of *that* system of sensations, we can reproduce a human experience. Three-dimensional sound-color movies are the best we've done so far. But the only way you could produce the full experience effect would, necessarily, produce insanity in the audience! You'd have to blank out their memories of where they were, how they got there, what they were doing, and where they were going.

Man himself is the ultimate high-fidelity instrument; it took billions of years of engineering field-trials to develop the magnificent sensory and correlative system we have—and we can stop trying to fool that system right now and save a lot of effort. Instead, let's work with it.

The modern recorded music approach works with it, instead of trying to fool it. The player-piano approach would have called for one hundred and twenty instruments to reproduce a one hundred and twenty-piece symphony orchestra; the ultimate in the modern recording approach necessarily will require only two units for full binaural reproduction of the recording. There are only two ears, no matter how many things they're listening to.

But in working with it, it's necessary to understand what the sensory system is, and how it does work; efforts to skimp on that are going to lead to dissatisfaction.

The ears are incredibly fine acoustic mechanisms; experiments in "dead rooms" indicate that human ears are sensitive to such minute impulses as random movements of molecules of the air. It should, incidentally, dispose of the myth that other animals have keener hearing. Man can hear the air molecules moving. How sensitive can you get?

The dog's wonderful hearing, famous in myth, simply represents the fact that if you haven't anything else to do, you can hear a lot of noises. Incidentally, my neighbor, seeking to demonstrate his new "silent dog whistle" to his small daughter, was somewhat mortified by the fact that his six-year-old police dog couldn't hear the whistle, while the little girl complained that it hurt her ears. It was tuned to about 19,000 cycles. Go ahead! Just try to fool human sensory systems!

But the extreme sensitivity of man's ears wouldn't last long if it weren't protected by an automatic volume-control system. There's a tiny muscle that can tighten or loosen the coupling between the parts of the aural acoustic system. It's extremely efficient, and extremely fast-acting. Hollywood found that out when a movie sound-effects department tried running a pistol shot backwards through the sound machine to see what kind of a sound effect it would produce. The sound resembled that of somebody stopping a leaky gas jet; a more completely uninteresting, unsuccessful sound effect could hardly be arranged. Run backwards, the pistol shot consisted of a rapidly increasing loudness, and the ear desensitized itself so rapidly that, when the shot arrived, there was practically no sensitivity; the whole thing sounded extremely weak.

This protective system causes high-fidelity engineers no end of trouble; not only does it desensitize the ear, it also changes the ear's frequency response.

Now if the human sensory system were satisfied with one method of sound detection, we could overcome this change of frequency response with volume quite simply. The volume compensation systems that increase the bass and treble boost with decreasing volume would then work fine.

And man would long since have become extinct, too, if he had only one sound-detecting system. How do you distinguish between a distant, loud sound and a nearby weaker sound?

Sound, in travelling long distances in air, tends to slide down the scale of pitch. A nearby lightning flash makes a sharp crack; a distant flash produces low-toned thunder. If we measure both frequency and sound-energy, and cross-correlate the readings, we'll get some indication of what caused the sound. It's important to distinguish between a pig in a nearby bush and a rhinoceros pushing trees around a little further off.

The skin "hears" too; the skin extends human hearing right on down from the usual bass range all the way down to zero cycles a second—a steady push. But the skin measures sound *energy* rather than sound *frequency*.

This is easier to understand in another context. If you look at a fluorescent lamp, the tube appears to have exactly the same color and shade as a bar of solid tungsten at a temperature of 2,800 degrees Centigrade. So far as your eyes are concerned, the two appear the same. But your skin also measures radiant energy; the skin reports very little energy, so you're not fooled.

Your skin also reports that a piece of iron is radiating so much heat you'd better stay away from it, even when your eyes say it's black.

If you listen to the Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, your skin not only reports the tactile sensations of your clothes and the chair, it also reports on the powerful sound energy of the orchestra. Skin, muscles and viscera combine to report on crescendo passages. The little muscle in the ears is also reporting that it has slacked off and desensitized the ear, indicating that the sounds are of high energy.

So when you play a Philharmonic recording at a nice, gentle volume, and turn up bass and treble boost to compensate for the change in the ear's sensitivity—skin, muscles, viscera and the little ear-muscles all combine to report, scornfully: "TILT!" The total sensory system recognizes that distortion is present.

So, since we cannot fool the total sensory-integrative system of the human organism, let's see what we can do about working *with* it. Let's enlist imagination.

Man, alone among animals, has a real imagination. He can understand a situation and imagine from it a different situation.

In the case of sound reproduction, we have to recognize what we are actually doing; we are not at the symphony concert, and the limitations imposed are real. We can, on the matter of volume, for instance, recognize that it's impolitic to play the New York Philharmonic at full power level in a New York apartment, and settle willingly for the

intentional distortion of frequencies needed to compensate for the ear's mechanism. Or we can, like a friend of mine, construct a house with eighteen-inch adobe walls, well insulated from the neighbors, build the speakers solidly into the frame of the house, and use a fifty-watt amplifier, all-out.

But even with a home-music system like my fortunate friend's, technical electronics can go only so far. The rest of the job must be done by the imaginative mind of the listener. That's not a platitude; it's a technical specification. The approach of modern music reproduction is psycho-physiological, not mechanical as was the player violin and player piano. For true high-fidelity enjoyment, the total psychological aspect of the listener is an integral part of a psycho-physiological approach to music reproduction.

One simple and common result of this has annoyed many a high-fidelity addict: many and many a time the addict's wife insists that Bill Jones' sound system is better than her husband's. This frustration imposed on hubby does *not* stem from the inherent cussedness of women, but from the fact that the music system embodies a psycho-physiological approach. There is, inherent here, a darned good reason why the Jones' system sounds better to her.

Part of the enjoyment of the Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall is knowing that you're at Carnegie Hall, with hundreds of others who enjoy with you the experience you're enjoying.

The woman of the house, when listening to music at home, knows she is at home; she'd have to have total amnesia to escape that knowledge. But home is, to her, her place of business, her place of responsibility and work. She listens to the music—and notices the dust she missed under the couch—and listens to the music—and remembers the shopping list for tomorrow—and listens. . . .

Try gathering last year's Christmas bills, and this year's income tax forms, and the latest growl from the boss, and hanging them in front of you while you listen to your favorite recording. You'll suddenly discover that the recording isn't as good as you thought. And that needle-hiss is getting bad. And the turntable rumble is a nuisance and you can't afford a new one, and. . . .

At this point, leave the bills and tax forms hanging, and go listen to Jones' sound system. See—it sounds better, doesn't it?

When you use psycho-physiological techniques, your own psychology is directly coupled into the system. You can't uncouple it, either. So—you'll get better results from the system by knowing what you want, and seeing to it that you have it.

Just as the distractions of Christmas bills and income tax forms can decrease your enjoyment, so the reverse is true. A man with Equipment System A, who feels that he has the best practicable system possible to him, will enjoy his music greatly. Given the same equipment exactly, but the conviction that he was a fool not to have bought System B instead—he won't enjoy the music as much. Wherefore, for him, System B is in fact better.

Music has a meaning that's primarily emotional; clearly, then, in enjoying it fully, there must be emotional satisfaction as a background. A

man with a speaker system he knows within himself is *good*, an amplifier he convincedly believes to be top-notch—for him, the music is deeper, richer and more rewarding.

The effort of selecting the components, of judging and weighing their values, of building the system up component by component, personally, thoughtfully selected component—that, sir, will make your music finer, more satisfying, than it could possibly be if provided by some ready-packaged unit someone else gave you, however fine the unit technically!

“Know thyself!” must be the ultimate ideal, and the basic instruction for enjoying life fully. But if that’s too tough a job—“Know thy sound system!” Know why you’ve picked each component, why it is satisfying—and know that you are, yourself, part of the full system of psycho-physiological music reproduction.

And do the selecting *yourself*. No matter what the experts say, you have your own, personal “impedance”; what you want is a system that matches into that “impedance”—that matches *you*.

Necessarily, the full high-fidelity instrument system must include the load into which it works.

That’s where you come in!

Woofers-on-the-Wharfe

by John M. Conly

GA. BRIGGS, whose first two names are Gilbert Arthur, is a fresh-complexioned, blue-eyed, white-haired Yorkshireman of 63, who has begun three careers in his life—one in textiles, at the age of fifteen, one in loudspeaker manufacturing, at 43, and one as a writer (and publisher) of books, at 56. Careers two and three are both doing very well indeed.

The four books he has written in the last five years have sold a total of 81,500 copies, yielding author-publisher Briggs a gratifying profit. And, since three of the books have dealt in whole or in part with loudspeakers, they also have brought manufacturer Briggs some rather productive publicity, not that he really needs it. There is a waiting-line on either side of the Atlantic for all the loudspeakers he can manage to produce.

Indeed, many an anguished dealer, in Britain or America, has written to ask Briggs why, in the name of several netherworld deities, he cannot turn out more loudspeakers. Briggs' invariant reply is that he *could* turn out more loudspeakers if he wanted to, but in that case some of them might have to be shipped without having been mounted in baffles and subjected to individual listening tests by either Briggs himself or his works-foreman, E. R. Broadley. Such conditions never, never, *never* shall prevail, Briggs makes clear, at the Wharfedale Wireless Works, Bradford Road, Idle, Bradford, Yorks., England. Customers who want Wharfedale speakers, built and warranted according to this philosophy, must wait their turn. People who want quickly mass-produced loudspeakers can seek elsewhere. Most customers—including the British Broadcasting Corporation—manage to wait, although none too patiently. Briggs could easily make a fourth career out of answering letters on this single subject.

The rag trade, as Briggs irreverently describes the textile business, was quite naturally the first way-station in his progress. He was born in Bradford, a city whose name is synonymous with British woollens, and brought up there. He was sent to boarding school, but quit when he was fifteen and went to work, though he continued for several years to study foreign languages at night school. He intended to get into textile exports, and he did. At forty he had become a partner and director of a small firm in this line. It was also increasingly evident that he had picked the wrong trade at the wrong time. Textiles were entering a long slump. Briggs began to wonder seriously if there might not be a better livelihood in something he had long engaged in as a hobby. The hobby was sound reproduction.

As a child, he had taken piano lessons. These generated in him a durable interest in piano playing (which he began studying again at the age of fifty) and in music. His favorite composers now are Handel, Mozart, and Berlioz. More immediately, however, he became fascinated with the way in which pianos produced sounds. Later he was to write a book about this (*Pianos, Pianists and Sonics*), but his early experimental opportunities were somewhat limited. Few owners of Steinways and Bechsteins seemed willing to have their instruments dissected by a twelve-year-old boy, no matter how scientifically curious.

The interest stayed with him, though necessarily latent, while he met the exigencies of a textiles career, World War I, and the wooing of the girl who was to become Mrs. G. A. Briggs. By the time he had a home of his own and opportunity to tinker, there was a new phenomenon in the realm of sonics—the phonograph or, as the English prefer to call it, the gramophone. In his garage, Briggs began to amass gramophones and gramophone parts. He was particularly interested in the final stage of their sound production—the horns. Some fairly advanced experiments in acoustic horn-loading took place in Briggs' garage.

In the late 1920s, electric recording began, and work on mechanico-acoustical research stopped, both in the industry and in the Bradford garage. By 1930, electromagnetic loudspeakers were appearing on the consumer market. Briggs, reading of some for sale in *Wireless World*, went down to London and bought three. They were German speakers and, Briggs recalls, cost 7s.6d. each.

"I played about with them," he says. "One day I told my wife I thought I could improve them." He did, too, by dint of replacing practically everything but the magnets and the frames. He wound new voice-coils, by hand, and tried a variety of papers for the cones. Finally he gave up any pretense of "playing about," went to Sheffield and came back with a sizable assortment of magnets, wire and paper, and began to make loudspeakers like fury. Every one he made someone wanted to buy. Apparently here was a product which was, unlike textiles, salable even in depression times. He told Mrs. Briggs and his business partners that he intended to abandon textiles for loudspeakers.

Neither offered any objections. Mrs. Briggs was preoccupied with the approaching arrival of their second daughter, Valerie. The business partners were glumly pleased to see someone else escape, even if they couldn't, from the bogged-down cloth trade. Briggs rented one floor of a

building and, almost exactly twenty-one years ago, started the Wharfedale Wireless Works.

The Works are not in Wharfedale, actually. Two rivers run through the Bradford suburbs, the Wharfe and the Aire, each with its valley, or dale. Briggs lives in Ilkley, which *is* in Wharfedale. The factory is in Idle ("Where we all work very hard," explains Briggs) which is in Airedale, and in which the well-known breed of terriers originated. "To avoid confusion," Briggs says, "I chose the name Wharfedale, though a woman suggested to me once, after a lecture I gave in Canada, that we missed something good in not using the name Airedale for our woofers."

Briggs picked a staff cautiously, a man at a time. Three of his first employees are still with him twenty-one years later, one of these being Broadley, the foreman of the plant and the only man (except himself) whose ear Briggs will trust to distinguish, at one hearing, which is which among three loudspeakers whose fundamental resonances are 50, 60 and 70 cycles per second. Work at Wharfedale in those days was a labor of faith. The first year consumed half Briggs' money, and the next two years also showed losses, though smaller ones. The fourth year they broke a little better than even. "I'm pleased to say," Briggs says, beaming, "that we haven't made a loss since. The early losses were largely due to ignorance of manufacturing methods, costs and so forth." At the Wharfedale Works, they still make the tools for the die-casters who manufacture their parts, and still wind all their own coils, some of them by hand. The factory has spread until it occupies eight small buildings, more or less connected. However, there are only thirty employees, and no effort is made to increase the output of loudspeakers above 300-odd a week. That's as many as Briggs and Broadley can listen to and check out.

"We like to think of ourselves," Briggs tells people, "as the smallest loudspeaker manufacturers in the world."

In a sense, loudspeakers got worse before they got better, Briggs maintains. The early ones had soft leather "surrounds" for rim suspension, and thus low fundamental-resonance points, giving clean bass. The years of the table radio and the undersized console, however, brought a demand for speakers with attributes now abhorred by high-fidelity enthusiasts and always abhorred by Briggs—high fundamental resonances and plenty of frequency-doubling below. Since the tiny open-backed cabinets could not produce real bass, their makers depended on shuddery resonances to simulate it. Wharfedale loftily ignored this demand, and prospered gently just the same. Knowledgeable Britons, in increasing numbers, heard of Briggs' speakers and tracked them down, though they remained almost unknown in America.

One day in 1948, Briggs was in Webb's, a retail radio shop in London, when a man came in and asked the proprietor for a book on loudspeakers. There wasn't any.

"Why don't you write one?" Webb asked Briggs.

"How many would you buy?" Briggs asked him, twinkling. "A half-dozen?"

"Half a gross," said Webb stoutly. So, as Briggs tells it, he went right home and wrote a book. It was to be a paperback, and sell—Webb

insisted—for no more than 3s.6d. This was all right with Briggs, who was primarily intrigued with finding out if he could write, a line of endeavor that hadn't occurred to him before. As he proceeded, he was rather pleased with his prowess, and so was Webb. The latter's pleasure was dampened, however, by the discovery of a more mundane publishing problem, the acute British paper shortage. The only paper Briggs could buy was fine art-grade stock. Determined that his creation should not obsolesce unseen, he bought the expensive paper and himself published the book, the price of which promptly went up to 5s. Webb still took his half-gross, but not without misgivings.

At this juncture, Briggs came to America, largely through the urgings of two Sheffield men who made some of his magnets. They had engaged a three-berth stateroom on the *Queen Elizabeth*, and needed a third man. It suddenly occurred to Briggs that affluent Americans might buy loudspeaker books for five shillings without the slightest hesitation, so he packed a set of galley-proofs and went along to New York.

"I hawked the book all over the city," he says ruefully. "No publisher's outlet would touch it with a barge pole." Finally someone said to him: "The man you want to see is Leonard Carduner."

Leonard Carduner was (and is) top man at British Industries Corporation, a New York firm at that time almost solely engaged in importing British Garrard record changers. He knew how to market "British craftsmanship" in electrical machinery, but he was dubious about promoting a book. Also, he pointed out frankly, he was pretty sure the Americans were far ahead of the British in loudspeaker design. However, he said, if Briggs would leave his proofs, Carduner would have a couple of authorities read the opus and pronounce on it.

Briggs, who had gotten in touch with some distant relatives in Detroit, went to Michigan for four days. When he returned he had dinner with Carduner, who said without delay: "Send me a thousand." Apparently the experts had reported favorably. Briggs didn't faint. Instead he asked Carduner: "How about some loudspeakers, too?" Carduner smiled genially. "Not a chance!" he replied.

Two years later, Briggs had an unsolicited order for speakers from Carduner. The book—*Loudspeakers, the Why and How of Good Reproduction*—had caught on extremely well. Sometimes Carduner's orders had gone as high as a thousand a month. And more and more people wanted to try the speakers made by the man who had written the book. Now British Industries Corporation sells all the Wharfedales it can get.

The first book, *Loudspeakers*, has sold 37,000 copies, nearly half in the United States. Briggs' third book, *Sound Reproduction*, has done nearly as well. Briggs professes to be at a loss as to why sales of his books should be so good.

"I wrote them for technical people," he says, "but the general public seems to be buying them, heaven knows why."

Actually, no celestial information is necessary to explain his sales. For one thing, the high-fidelity boom, so-called, broke just as the books hit the market. For another, Briggs was not educated as an engineer, and thus never had to unlearn the dreadful jargon in which too many engineers, both British and American, actually learn their craft. Even

when discussing technical phenomena unfamiliar to his readers, he discourses in good grammatical English, and somehow conveys the assurance that if the reader will stay with him just a few paragraphs more, all will be come clear. He also dots his technical pages liberally with highly literary quotations, mostly poetical, thus establishing a rapport with the intelligent non-technicians who form so large a part of the high-fidelity home-music army. He humanizes his data, too. It is not uncommon for him to use terms like "innocence and beauty" to describe the oscilloscope image of an undistorted 1,000-cycle note.

Moreover, he is irrepressibly droll and whimsical, in his writing as in his conversation. In *Sound Reproduction*, for instance, he explains how to produce a perfect loudspeaker. A speaker's suspension softens and improves with use, he points out. In Airedale, he has a 10-inch speaker in constant use. To begin with, its resonant frequency was 60 cps. In three years, it has gone down to 45 cps. This is a rate of 5 cps' improvement per year. Extrapolating (completely deadpan), he calculates that in another nine years the fundamental resonance will have reached zero, thus yielding a loudspeaker with absolutely no bass distortion.

Despite his sense of humor, Briggs acts like, and is, a dedicated man. His dedication is to the better transduction of electrical impulses into sound, in which loudspeakers are the central factor. However, he emphasizes, a loudspeaker is not a complete entity. It is part of a *system* which also includes an enclosure and a listening room. In the chain of sound reproduction, it is this terminal system (not the speaker alone) which is the weakest link, being beset with the hazard of resonances. About listeners' rooms, of course, Briggs can do nothing but offer counsel. As to enclosures, he thinks they should be as adaptable as possible, which is why he likes bass-reflex cabinets*—they can be tuned. The best that can be done about speakers themselves is to keep their resonance points down out of the range of room-sound complications, and to make the speakers as easy as possible for amplifiers to hold in absolute control. To this end, Briggs places most of his reliance on flexible "surrounds" and a high density of magnetic force-lines in the gap between the voice-coil and the magnet. He has a few unconventional notions, based on experimental discoveries—for instance, he prefers cone tweeters to diaphragm-and-horn types, and he always recommends that they be used unabaffled, in the open, and facing straight up. This eliminates beaming, among other ills.

In establishing standards of performance for his speakers, he resorts to oscilloscope photos extensively. He and his long-time associate, E. M. Price, a faculty member at Bradford's Technical College, have made more than 1,500 oscilloscope photos. But the final test of a speaker at the Wharfedale plant is by ear. And ear-owners Briggs and Broadley make a point of listening to a good deal of live music, to keep *their* standards high.

As a matter of fact, Briggs makes the transition from the working-day to the evening's leisure by playing the piano for a half-hour, which he

*Preferably of concrete or brick, or at least embodying a sand-filled double-panel baffle. Briggs hates baffles that "flap."

says is even more relaxing than a "gin-and-It" (a British concoction most easily described as a warm sweet martini). When his mind is off audio matters, he does a good deal of reading. He likes certain American mystery-thrillers since, as he says, they contain excellent sardonic humor and terse language. In a more serious vein, he is addicted to autobiographies, particularly musical ones. His current favorite is Sir Thomas Beecham's *A Mingled Chime*, which, it may be pointed out, also contains considerable sardonic humor, although its language could hardly be called terse.

Briggs also spends a good deal of time planning the protection of his garden against the annual assaults of the sheep which roam Ilkley Moor between shearings. They descend whenever the whim takes them, usually in early summer, seeking what they may devour. "My impression," says Briggs, "is that the grown sheep like to take the lambs around and show them where the best meals are to be obtained." Several times this gustatory tour has included the Briggs garden. They (the sheep) couldn't stomach the rose blossoms, Briggs reports bitterly, so they just bit them off and dropped them on the ground. More tragic was what happened in the raids to Mrs. Briggs' garden, three-quarters of an acre of beautifully fostered vegetables, before the woolly marauders were driven off. Mrs. Briggs also raises pigs, in substantial numbers, in a field she rents some distance from the house. So far, the sheep haven't molested *them*. Seemingly, there is an affinity for animals on the distaff side of the Briggs family, for the older daughter, Ninetta, is a veterinarian married to another veterinarian. The only Briggs son was killed in World War II.

Briggs' younger daughter, Valerie, 21, refers to her father as "the famous writer . . . of whom few people have ever heard," which is probably as good a description as any. No writer on sound is likely to attract an enormous public, but the "few people" Briggs does attract comprise an impressive musical and technical elite. When Thurston Dart, of Cambridge University, one of the world's most eminent harpsichordists, and Tom Goff, harpsichord maker, were faced with the problem of making a harpsichord audible throughout London's new, huge Royal Festival Hall for a Coronation-year concert, it occurred to them that music-hall and night-club guitarists constantly employ amplifiers and loudspeakers to make their strumming heard. Could not the same thing be done for Bach's imperial instrument, without sacrificing a jot of its tonal elegance? Dart and Goff obtained some Leak amplifiers, then asked around for a solution to the speaker problem. To whom were they referred? The reader is allowed exactly one guess. The attempt was a success, too, but that is another story.

The Adventure of the Bodiless Virtuoso

by Herbert Kupferberg

THE RECENT APPEARANCE of the first phonograph record devoted to the exploits of Sherlock Holmes raises hopes that the greatest of all detectives is at last about to get his due from the recording industry. The adventures of Sherlock Holmes have flourished, even if in garbled form, in motion pictures, radio, and television. But records have ignored them. Nowhere on discs can you hear the baying of the Hound of the Baskervilles, the thumping of Jonathan Small's wooden leg, the murmurings of drugged wretches in the London opium den to which Holmes journeyed in quest of the Man with the Twisted Lip.

In neglecting Holmes's adventures until now, the record companies have been guilty not only of irresponsibility but of ingratitude. For Sherlock Holmes merits commemoration as a great musician and, even more important, as one of the earliest phonograph enthusiasts known to history. It was he who, more than fifty years ago, first made use of the phonograph record in finding the solution to a criminal case.

This feat is fully recounted in *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* under the title *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*—a highly instructive case worth careful study not only by amateurs of crime, but by audio enthusiasts as well. For unless the present writer is greatly mistaken in his deductions, *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone* clearly points to the conclusion that Sherlock Holmes half a century ago was the possessor of a long-playing record and that, indeed, he himself very likely was the inventor of this scientific marvel.

Holmes himself once laid down the dictum that "it is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence." The evidence for his use of an early model of the LP record is both suggestive and significant, and

rooted firmly in his musical and scientific backgrounds.

Sherlock Holmes was an accomplished violinist. More than that, he was one of the most talented musical amateurs of his generation. His faithful companion and chronicler, Dr. John H. Watson, describes the detective's violinistic talents very early in their association:

"That he could play pieces, and difficult pieces, I knew well, because at my request he has played me some of Mendelssohn's *Lieder*, and other favorites. When left to himself, however, he would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognized air. Leaning back in his armchair of an evening, he would close his eyes and scrape carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy. Occasionally they were fantastic and cheerful. Clearly they revealed the thoughts which possessed him, but whether the music aided those thoughts, or whether the playing was simply the result of a whim or a fancy, was more than I could determine. I might have rebelled against these exasperating solos had it not been that he usually terminated them by playing in quick succession a whole series of my favorite airs as a slight compensation for the trial upon my patience."

We observe from this passage that Holmes, in addition to possessing an almost incredible facility for extracting chords from a violin without even grasping it firmly, was a master at transposing music mentally from one instrument to another. Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* (the *Lieder ohne Worte*), presumably the work Watson is referring to, were written for solo piano, but Holmes plays them upon a solo violin. When we consider that there are forty-nine such Mendelssohn *Lieder* and that Holmes could presumably play them all "in quick succession," his feat becomes all the more impressive. We shall return to it shortly, when we consider the music Holmes selected for his first long-playing record.

Holmes's interest in music was by no means limited to his own performances. He was an active concert and opera goer, almost invariably dragging the patient Watson with him. He hears Mme. Norman-Neruda, the leading female violinist of the day, at the Hallé concert and Sarasate, the great Spanish virtuoso, at St. James's Hall. Observe that, as a true violinist, Holmes never goes to hear a pianist although Paderewski, for one, was a frequent visitor to London at the time.

When no instrumentalist is involved, Holmes is more than likely to head for the opera—a sure sign of the LP mentality. Thus, after running to earth the Hound of the Baskervilles, Holmes celebrates by taking a box for *Les Huguenots*, with the De Reszkes, no less. After his successful solution of the case called *The Adventure of the Red Circle* Holmes goes to Covent Garden, where "a Wagner night" is in progress. For this performance, unlike the *Huguenots*, no box has been reserved; Holmes merely expresses the hope that he will be "in time for the second act."

The most astounding revelation of Holmes's musical aptitude comes in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, wherein Watson discloses that Holmes, after making a hobby of the music of the Middle Ages, has written a definitive monograph upon "the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus." Since Roland de Lassus wrote no fewer than 516 motets which occupy eleven volumes of the Breitkopf & Härtel complete critical

edition, Holmes's monograph, which, alas, was "printed privately" according to Dr. Watson and apparently has disappeared, would surely rank as one of the landmarks of modern musicology.

Even this brief summary of the musical tastes and talents of Sherlock Holmes establishes beyond doubt that he was no mere dilettante and dabbler but a serious and resourceful musician. When the time came for Holmes to apply his musical knowledge to the solution of a mystery, one could logically expect it would be with the same cunning and originality with which he exercised his other intellectual resources.

The opportunity arrived in the twilight of the great detective's career with *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*. Although the year of this case is not indicated in the story, Holmes authorities, on the basis of internal evidence, give it as 1903, or a few years before Holmes's retirement to beekeeping on the Sussex Downs. The date is important, as will become evident shortly.

Let us now summarize briefly the problem presented in *The Mazarin Stone* and Holmes's procedure in resolving it. One of the Crown diamonds, the glittering, yellowish Mazarin stone, has been stolen and the British Government has retained Holmes to get it back. Holmes knows who have it—Count Negretto Sylvius, a famous big-game hunter gone bad, and an accomplice named Sam Merton, a brawny if not brainy prize fighter. Holmes inveigles the two crooks into his rooms at 221-B Baker Street and offers them a deal: give up the diamond to him, and he will let them go free. He gives them five minutes to talk it over in private, informing them that he is retiring to the bedroom to "try over the Hoffmann *Barcarolle* on [his] violin."

Left alone, Count Sylvius and Merton, with nothing to distract them except the sound of the *Barcarolle* coming faintly from the next room, argue at length over what to do. After a time, the Count takes the diamond from his secret pocket to show it to Sam, whereupon Holmes leaps from a place of concealment, seizes the diamond, and covers the two ruffians with his revolver. When the slow-witted Sam cries out, "But, I say, what about that bloomin' fiddle! I hear it yet," Holmes serenely answers: "Tut, tut! You are perfectly right. Let it play. These modern gramophones are a remarkable invention." His stratagem, of course, is obvious. He has merely put a record of the *Barcarolle* on the gramophone in the bedroom, stolen back into the room where the villains were conversing all unaware, eavesdropped on their discussion, and, finally, seized the diamond itself from them. "A fair cop!" as Sam Merton himself was grudgingly forced to admit.

But—there is more here than meets the eye, to say nothing of the ear. What was this record played by Holmes? How came he to have it? And just what kind of a record was it?

One's natural impulse, of course, is to assume that the record Holmes played that summer evening in 1903 was simply a recording of the *Barcarolle* from *The Tales of Hoffmann* purchased from the local record shop. But was it? Curiously enough, the *Tales of Hoffmann*, although it was then twenty-two years old, had not yet been performed in England in 1903! Conceivably, the *Barcarolle* had crossed the Channel in advance of the rest of the opera, but recordings of it surely must have been rare

outside of its home country in an era of limited foreign trade in records.

But even if Holmes had somehow managed to purchase a recording of the *Barcarolle* in 1903, where would he get a recording of it *for unaccompanied violin*? This is what he played for Count Negretto Sylvius and Sam Merton, for even the merest hint of a piano accompaniment would have killed the illusion that Holmes himself was "trying over" the *Barcarolle* in his bedroom.

And yet it is a stark and simple fact that no record catalogue anywhere at any time ever has listed a recording of the *Barcarolle* from *The Tales of Hoffmann* played on an unaccompanied violin. How then did Holmes come to have such a record? Surely the answer is obvious: *he made it himself*.

Strictly from the musical standpoint, playing the *Barcarolle* on the violin would be child's play to a fiddler accustomed to tossing off Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*. Holmes probably could have done it with the violin thrown carelessly across his knee. And even if he had never heard the *Barcarolle* in England, he had had opportunities to make its acquaintance in his Continental travels. In 1891, for instance, he had been engaged by the French Government "upon a matter of supreme importance" and during his stopover in Paris he might well have dropped in on a performance of the Offenbach masterpiece at the Opéra-Comique.

But to a detective in quest of the kind of musical deception by which Holmes hoodwinked Count Sylvius, the Hoffmann *Barcarolle* offers one serious shortcoming—its brevity. The tune is heard in the opera three times: at the commencement of Act II, where it is sung as a duet; at the end of the same act, where it appears both instrumentally and as a chorus; and, finally, as an orchestral intermezzo between Act III and the Epilogue.

In none of these instances does the *Barcarolle* proper—that is, the famous tune itself—consume more than two minutes forty-one seconds. In fact, the Intermezzo following Act III, which was the most suitable for adaptation by Holmes since it is purely orchestral in character, takes only two minutes six seconds.

Now Holmes was undoubtedly aware of this difficulty; indeed, he probably selected the *Barcarolle* because its sinuous and winding contours permitted it to be repeated almost ad infinitum without the listener's becoming aware of the repetition and, consequently, of the passage of time.

When Holmes leaves Count Sylvius and Sam Merton to talk over their predicament he tells them that "in five minutes I shall return for your final answer." How much time does he actually give them? You can find out quite easily by reading aloud for yourself the conversation between them while Holmes is out of the room presumably playing his violin. It occupies three pages in *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*. If you make the test, you will discover that Holmes, as always, is a man of his word, for not quite five minutes elapse from his departure to the moment he seizes the gem. And all this time, the *Barcarolle* has been continuing! It continues even after Holmes reveals himself, for he distinctly says to

Merton: "Let it play! These modern gramophones are a remarkable invention." There is nothing to prove that the machine ever shuts itself off, but we can reasonably assume either that it possesses what modern science calls a "siesta switch" or (more likely) that it is stopped by Watson two or three minutes after the police have led away Count Sylvius and his befuddled partner. In that case, the total playing time of the record would have been some seven or eight minutes—perhaps more—and the *Barcarolle* has been played through at least three times. We may note, in passing, that it even seemed unduly long to Count Sylvius; at the three-minute mark he interrupts his conversation with Sam to remark testily: "Confound that whining music; it gets on my nerves."

Actually, Count Sylvius had every right to be surprised by the length of the selection. In 1903, and for forty-five years thereafter, the maximum duration of a standard record was around four minutes. How did Holmes manage to lay hands on a disc that lasted at least seven minutes? One might conjecture that he manufactured the actual record himself, just as he recorded the actual music. After all, his knowledge of chemistry was "profound," and he had once written a monograph upon the tracing of footsteps, which included "some remarks upon the use of plaster of Paris as a preserver of impresses," certainly suggesting some basic understanding of the engraving process. Then, too, it is curious that *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone* should open with Dr. Watson's taking especial notice of such Baker Street fittings as "the scientific charts upon the wall, the acid-charred bench of chemicals, the violin-case leaning in the corner"—all of which blend into a highly provocative picture.

And yet we need not assume that Holmes actually produced his long-playing record in his own rooms at Baker Street. For it so happens that in 1903 a manufacturer called the Neophone Company, with headquarters on Finsbury Square in London, was already preparing to put an LP record on the market. The discs, twenty inches in diameter and playing from eight to ten minutes, actually were offered for sale in 1904. Alas, the world was not prepared for the LP just then, any more than for the story of the giant rat of Sumatra. The Neophone LP had to be withdrawn from the market in 1906, and two years later the company went bankrupt. But can any one doubt that Sherlock Holmes knew all about the Neophone? And is it not reasonable to suppose that he may even have suggested the whole idea to them? One can easily picture him walking into their offices on Finsbury Square, a scant two miles from Baker Street (and a few blocks from St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where he first met Watson) to outline his needs for a record of extra duration, suggesting the use of an outsize disc and, finally, standing before the recording horn pouring out the *Barcarolle* upon the Stradivarius he had picked up at such a bargain in Tottenham Court Road.

At this point, someone may say with Dr. James Mortimer in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: "We are now rather into the region of guesswork." To which we may reply, with Holmes: "Say rather into the region where we balance probabilities and choose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to start our speculations."

And, if we may put our imaginations to one final scientific use, can we not, with the help of records, solve one of the most puzzling of Holmes-Watson mysteries? There is associated with these two great men one strange phrase which, though it is repeated endlessly in legend, never once appears in the text of their adventures. Some attribute it to Holmes's short-lived habit of taking a seven per cent solution of cocaine from time to time; others have merely made a joke of it.

Yet we, balancing one probability with another, can proffer still another explanation. For we know for a fact how those old records scratched and those old styli stuck. And so we can see the two old friends, contentedly sitting in their rooms at Baker Street, listening raptly and serenely to Sherlock Holmes's favorite record—the Hoffmann *Barcarolle*—playing on, and on, and on, and on, and on—until that well-remembered voice breaks in, sharply but kindly: "Quick, Watson, the needle!"

Maestro of the Player Piano

by Paul Moor

ALTHOUGH MY JOINTS have not yet begun to creak audibly, still I appear to have reached that estate where my own frame of reference has begun to jibe less and less with that of the generation which has begun to help me with my coat and call me "Sir." For example, being on hand in Studio 8H to hear Horowitz play the Brahms Second in open concert with Toscanini for me seems, to coin a phrase, only yesterday; but scarcely is my tale of this event out of my mouth than the opaque regard of younger auditors reminds me that for them this unique constellation of talents means mainly an LP of such antiquity that RCA Victor issues it only with special, explanatory notes. Not long ago I made some reference to the player piano; one of my listeners, a strapping youth with a blue-black beard and a draft-registration card, replied simply, "The what?"

Unhappy generation! What do they have, what can they possibly have, to replace the transports I experienced as a child visiting at my Uncle Ol's and Aunt Q-Belle's, in Mississippi, manipulating the levers, pumping like a fury, and somehow, almost miraculously, eliciting from the upright piano before me such expressions of contemporaneous *Zeitgeist* as *In a Little Spanish Town* and *Where the Shy Little Violets Grow*.

The seizure of nostalgia induced by the poverty of that callow youth's experience refused to leave me. It was renewed last year when I found myself in the superb, rugged landscape of southwest Germany, and recalled that one of the leading figures of player-pianodom lived in the region. Edwin Welte, who died only this past winter, was inventor of a process whereby the world's greatest pianists had recorded their interpretations on moving rolls of paper long before Mr. Edison's talking-machine achieved its first vogue. In the five decades after Welte

patented his "reproducing piano" mechanism, he saw it rise to world fame, flourish for about a quarter of a century, and then fade, a victim of the phonograph and, especially, the radio. I had heard that long-forgotten performances by some of the giants of modern pianism—Busoni, D'Albert, Leschetizky—still existed on piano rolls in Herr Welte's archive of some five thousand titles. Among these were rolls by such composers as Grieg, Mahler, Debussy, and Richard Strauss, playing their own works.

During that Black Forest visit I put in a long-distance call to the number listed in the Freiburg telephone book for "Welte, Edwin—engineer, rtd." The feminine voice which answered said her father could not come to the phone, but after I explained my interest she returned to say they would expect me that evening after dinner. I drove over, taking not the shortest but the most scenic route—unforgettably spectacular, the mountains, gorges, streams—and, after dinner in a restaurant facing Freiburg's cathedral with its scatological gargoyles, I left my car in the square and took a cab to Silberbachstrasse, number nine.

Edwin Welte's wife, dressed for company, received me in the foyer of their apartment. "I must tell you a little bit about my husband," she said, with a rehearsed manner and in the emphatic, singsong dialect of the Schwarzwald, which seems to italicize every syllable. "He's eighty-one years old, you know. Early in 1957 he suffered three strokes, the last one quite serious. He has to stay very quiet, and he tires easily. Also, you may find him difficult to understand—the last stroke made his speech rather unclear." I mumbled something about perhaps not seeing him at all, but Frau Welte said, "Oh, no, no—he's *counting* on seeing you."

She opened a door and there sat Edwin Welte, in an armchair with a fleecy blanket tucked about him from the waist down. Raising his hand to put it into mine seemed an enormous effort for him; and his greeting, of which I understood not one syllable, had to be repeated for me, like everything else he said that evening, by his wife, with the occasional help of their unmarried daughter, who also had joined us. Yet even felled by heart disease, paralysis, and deafness, Edwin Welte at eighty-one made a forceful impression; in his prime, he must have been a tornado. In his lapel he wore a ribbon denoting a coveted German World War I decoration, and a cluster of medals also hung on the wall in a box-frame. It was not hard to visualize the old gentleman forty years earlier as a spruce officer of the Imperial Army.

The three Weltes gave me a bit of background information. Herr Welte's grandfather Michael, a Black Forest music-box maker, achieved a measure of fame as inventor of the Orchestrion. This glorious machine-driven instrument, the apotheosis of the music box, was composed of pipes, reeds, and drums, and played selections triggered by a sort of enlarged music-box cylinder. A sensation greeted the one exhibited at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1848. Eight years later found even the Grand Duke Leopold of Baden ordering one, and King Charles of Rumania took delivery on another in 1878, two years before the inventor died.

In 1885 his three sons brought out an Orchestrion which played from perforated paper rolls far more convenient than the cumbersome wooden cylinders; but the demand for Orchestrions, never overwhelming, gradually dwindled to the vanishing point, even despite a special award won at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Alarmed by the disappearing

Orchestrion market, Edwin Welte, old Michael's grandson, and his brother-in-law Karl Bockisch retired to the workshop and duly emerged with the reproducing piano, which adapted the Orchestrion's roll of paper to a more convenient and conventional household instrument. By 1905 they were corralling the leading pianists and composers of the day to record for the instrument they had rather whimsically christened the "Welte-Mignon." Their success was immediate and electrifying.

For that pitiable generation not old enough to include among its souvenirs the Welte-Mignon, Ampico, Duo-Art, or other player pianos whose cheery, preternatural jingle-jangle enhanced the less anxious years of this century, we perhaps had better pause here for a brief breakdown on how they worked. A roll of paper, about eighteen inches wide, passed at a slow, uniform speed over a metal bar that contained a row of holes—one for each note on the keyboard, plus extras at each side controlling the pedals, respective volume of treble and bass, and so on. A pump (electric in the Welte-Mignon but operated by foot pedals in humbler versions, such as my Aunt Q-Belle's) developed a suction exerted, through the holes in the metal bar, upon the moving paper. When a perforation in the paper admitted air to a hole in the bar, pneumatic action would bring the corresponding hammer (or pedal, or whatever) into action.

If the principle sounds somewhat primitive in a civilization endowed with stereophonic tapes, there are plenty of testimonials to show that the Welte-Mignon hit the musical world of that time like a bomb. Felix Weingartner wrote of ". . . this instrument of genius." The Scots master pianist Frederic Lamond in 1905 voiced the common sentiment: ". . . it is only a matter of regret that it was not invented some seventy years ago, when the two great masters of piano playing, Chopin and Liszt, were at the height of their fame."

Then came the phonograph, movies, and radio, and the player piano went the way of the also once numerous carrier pigeon. In 1931 the Welte firm turned out its last reproducing instrument, and Edwin Welte resigned, disillusioned, to work on an idea for an electronic organ. It was the second time he seemed defeated, and not yet the last: World War I had resulted in confiscation of the lucrative piano branch-factory he had established at Poughkeepsie, New York, after a trip to the United States in 1906; the bombs of World War II brought total destruction of the only working model of his electronic organ ever completed. From that time the Weltes lived on one floor of what, before French occupation troops moved into Freiburg, used to be entirely their own house.

During my call on the Weltes, our conversation ranged widely. Among other anecdotes I was told about a prank the Kaiser once played on Edvard Grieg. The Kaiser's yacht, equipped (as was every self-respecting ocean liner of the day) with a Welte-Mignon, put into Bergen one summer's day, and Grieg was invited aboard. The Kaiser greeted the composer and, remaining standing, engaged him in chitchat, during which Grieg, naturally, also stood. During this exchange, an attendant of the Kaiser's, under instructions revealing a side of Wilhelm for which he is not primarily remembered, set in motion in an adjoining salon a Welte roll of Grieg playing one of his own works, but a roll which, it transpired, he had not yet heard. According to Welte, Grieg at once recognized his

own style of playing; but not imagining there could be a Welte-Mignon on a *boat*, he was in a frenzy of curiosity, shifting from one foot to the other until the Kaiser should release him to see who this incredibly accurate imitator was. The Kaiser finally had pity; he admitted his little joke and erupted into ponderous Prussian guffaws. Grieg's own reaction unfortunately is not recorded.

Another shipboard incident concerned the wife of Ferruccio Busoni, who was returning to Europe after her husband's death. Although all but paralyzed by grief and the loneliness of the just-bereaved, she had borne up heroically until, one day when she was lying in a deck chair and staring immobile at the sea, there drifted out from the saloon the sounds of a piano. She listened, unbelieving. "Ferruccio!" the new widow sobbed, finally breaking down, "Oh, Ferruccio *mio*!" By unlucky coincidence, the music was one of the many recordings Busoni had made for Welte, and for the widow the faithfully reproduced sounds once evoked by those beloved hands were a sudden call from beyond the Styx.

At the height of the Welte-Mignon's vogue, Welte and his brother-in-law held regular recording sessions in Freiburg and Leipzig. For such lions as Debussy and Ravel they took their equipment to Paris, and for the numerous Russian titans of that era they went to what was then still called St. Petersburg. Among those whom Welte persuaded to record for him were the composers Debussy, Granados, Saint-Saëns, Grieg, Richard Strauss, Mahler, and Reger, plus such pianists as Busoni, Eugen d'Albert, the great Venezuelan keyboard empress Teresa Carreño, Alfred Reisenauer, Lamond, Leschetizky, Alfred Grünfeld, Max Pauer, Nikisch, Dohnányi, Franz Xaver Scharwenka, Emil von Sauer, Stephan Raoul Pugno, Bernhard Stavenhagen, Vasseli Sappelnikov, and Olga Samaroff. Others in the long, long list were Backhaus, Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler (a Liszt pupil, as were a fistful of these other names), Falla, Fauré, Edwin Fischer, Ossip Gabrilovitch, Giesecking, Josef Hofmann, Horowitz, Landowska (playing Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, and Liszt's transcription of the *Dance of the Sylphs* from Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust!*), Josef Lhevinne, Elly Ney, Vladimir de Pachmann, Paderewski, Egon Petri, Ravel, Schnabel, Alexander Scriabin, and Serkin. There were giants in those days, and at one time or another Welte enticed most of them to his piano.

That same evening at the Welte's, I listened to a wide selection from the old inventor's treasure chest. In view of the unquestionable boon of having these piano rolls at all, it is perhaps ungrateful to start finding faults. Unfortunately there were a number of faults to find, with the reproduction as such. The greatest flaw, I felt, was a lack of fire—and this from the greatest pianists of an epoch when, due to Liszt's influence, pyrotechnics enjoyed a tremendous vogue. All the notes were there, but the volume was not. The fault lay purely and simply in the suction motor of Herr Welte's piano, at least of the one in Freiburg: it simply did not have the pneumatic power to bring the hammers crashing against the strings as the music and its interpreters at times cried out for them to do. There also was an occasional irritating small unevenness of tempo, caused, apparently, by a fluctuation in the roll's speed of movement in relation to the number of perforations passing simultaneously over the bar; it is inconceivable that this could have passed, in any era, for rubato.

And while separate dynamic controls affected treble and bass, the bringing out of an inner voice, for instance, was technically impossible. There also were no nuances of quarter-, third-, or half-pedaling: for the literal mechanism of the Welte-Mignon, if the pedal is not up, then it's down and that's that.

Some of the music on these rolls seems today ridiculously banal, tasteless, and even cheap, unless one has a sense of period and of humor. There are Liszt transcriptions galore: *La Campanella*; the Schubert *Soirées de Vienne*; the Fantasy on Beethoven's *Ruins of Athens*; a side-splitting potpourri from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, superbly played by Busoni; *Reminiscences* based on *Don Giovanni*; Mendelssohn's *On Wings of Song*; Chopin's *My Joys*. The listings probably scrape bottom with Carreño's playing of her own simpering *Petite Valse*, and one must seek consolation over Nikisch's hatchet-murder of three Brahms *Hungarian Dances* in the indisputable fact that he was a great conductor.

But there also were many estimable qualities. First of all there is the advantage that the instrument being played is right *there*, and not coming at you via wires and loudspeakers. And also, aside from the trivia of a bygone day, there was plenty of good music in Herr Welte's closet. Eugen d'Albert's playing of Schubert's F minor Impromptu, Op. 142, No. 4, came startlingly to life, its filigree work transparent and rippling, its *sforzati* good and gusty, its scales swift and even. Lamond, taking a treacherously slow tempo, brought an enormous, high-tragic dignity to the Chopin Funeral March. Among the composers, Debussy and Strauss stood out. Adherents of the too-too school of impressionistic pianism would be startled by the masculinity and the forthright, almost metronomic lack of rubato with which *La Soirée dans Grenade* and three of the *Préludes* (*Danseuses de Delphes*, *La Cathédrale engloutie*, *La Danse de Puck*) were set forth. It also was amazing how effective Strauss made Salome's *Dance of the Seven Veils*, of all things, sound on a piano.

When I rose to leave the Weltes that evening, Herr Welte motioned for me to sit down again, and his wife interpreted his accompanying utterance: "He says he hasn't told you about his 'light-tone organ' yet." Herr Welte talked with animation. His conception—roughly coeval with the Hammond Clock people's initial pitch to the Muses—was, in brief, of an organ that instead of banks of pipes would have for every stop an apparatus operating on the principle by which a sound track is recorded on and reproduced from film. Welte's hope was that this would bring the exact tones of the world's oldest and finest organs within the reach of modest pocketbooks: he thought one could draw up specifications for an organ with its various stops taken from various organs in various countries of the old and new worlds. Instead of a pipe for each tone (some of them thirty-two or even sixty-four feet long), there was to be only a loop of sound track, on a transparent glass or plastic disc or cylinder, passing over a photoelectric cell, with the recorded tone emitted through loudspeakers.

I said good night to the Weltes, thanked them, and came away, deeply grateful for the privilege the old gentleman had granted me. And the more I thought about his *Lichtton-Orgel*, the more sense it made. Herr Welte did not live to see his last brain-child materialize but it is not inconceivable that the world has not yet heard the last of it.

So Musical a Discord

by C. G. Burke

EMERGING FROM CARNEGIE HALL after a performance, a vehement man named Earl was clubbing two companions with his indignation: "It's punk, it stinks, it's lousy."

Strong in triumphant outrage, he glared truculently at both in a way to make assent a surrender. Herzog with an inner sigh asserted his manhood by pursing his lips in demurral and saying, "Not all that bad; say it was ordinary—say it was proficient."

"Proficient! You mean they finished together."

Earl liked to manure his aesthetic understanding with a richness of hatred. Many men do, but few are so pertinacious. He turned a hot challenge to Chevalier in the middle, who, having no opinion, was inclined to be conciliatory and hence looked judicial and superior. That was intolerable, and under his nose Earl flapped the detestable muleta of assumed broader experience:

"It's easy to see that neither of you ever heard Stravinsky himself do it."

Hackles up, Chevalier declared that he had, trying to remember if it was true, and propping his hope that it was by adding firmly, "No great over-all difference in the way Stravinsky handled it from Paladin tonight."

Stricken and quivering, ashamed for humanity, a holy clerk anguished by blasphemy, Earl stopped and held wide two deploring hands.

"No over-all difference! From Paladin!" Then his voice weakened to listless despair: "But it's fruitless and unkind to dispute with the deaf."

Chevalier smiled but Herzog was now aggressive in defense of his impression, which under Earl's flogging was becoming a certainty.

"Rudeness to Chevalier doesn't qualify as evidence," he observed. "Is it indiscreet if we ask you to stick to the point? Can you?"

Earl replied volubly and Herzog was hot in rebuttal. Earl brandished sarcasm and Herzog pretended patience. Steering each by an arm, Chevalier, again indifferent to the values of the debate but hardened against one of the debaters, guided them into a comfortable bar and left them with drinks while he telephoned.

Returning, he announced, "Thegn's got the Stravinsky record. He's expecting us."

"Who's Thegn?" Earl demanded.

Chevalier reflected soberly. "A highly cultivated loafer, I would say. More envied than despised, I can assure you."

"Friend of yours?"

"Thegn's too formidable to have friends—or enemies. He has everything else."

Thegn at home did not seem formidable. Slow in movement and speech, he smiled easily and irrelevantly and was punctilious in courtesy. Earl did not hesitate to contradict Chevalier's statement of the nature of the disagreement, and he rearranged Herzog's amendment with the skillful mendacity that evades literal lies. Both the latter protested, Herzog with resentment, Chevalier resignedly. Thegn held up a silencing hand, which was immediately effective:

"Please. These subtle distinctions, so creditable to you, are bewildering to a slower mind. Will you forgive if I clarify—for myself—your difference?" His inflection was diffident, but he pursued without waiting for the requested permission. "Mr. Earl found outrageous a performance of *The Consecration of Spring* in which Herzog and Chevalier found a fair measure of expression. Isn't that the essence?"

It was the essence, but both Earl and Herzog objected, ashamed that it was so meager. Neither would assent to the simplification until a lively haggling over words had equipped it with synonyms.

"Too bad the evidence has fled," Thegn observed. "I think that that part of your disagreement can never be settled. But it doesn't matter, the corollary being so much more challenging, and quite provable."

"Exactly," said Chevalier.

"Mr. Earl maintains that conducted by the composer *Le Sacre* is a revelation no other conductor can hope to contrive, and that Herzog and Chevalier will heartily curse tonight's Paladin performance after they have heard Stravinsky."

After more haggling the diction was amended and Thegn rose to his feet. "Nothing to do then but play it."

"I wouldn't say that," said Earl.

He was preparing his retreat, and Thegn smiled engagingly.

"I mean," said Earl, "a phonograph record won't prove a thing."

"I wouldn't say *that*," said Thegn.

He walked to the nearest wall, which like the others was entirely paneled in taut silk, brave with huge maps. A panel opened and he spoke some indistinguishable words into a microphone. A voice could be heard faintly in reply.

"That's Wight, his factotum," Chevalier whispered. "Shops, cooks, and

presses; and sends records up from the basement on a dumbwaiter."

Thegn opened another panel, exposing the thick, polished rim of a substantial turntable. He took a record from its envelope and centered it around the spindle. He had rejoined the others near the middle of the room before the extraordinary pre-puberty bassoon had begun its slimy wriggle. Then he relaxed to enjoy the excitement of his guests while the dank reptiles oozed from the walls and writhed underfoot.

No one hears *Le Sacre du Printemps* undisturbed in his nerves, and a neurologist would have exclaimed in delight at the spectacle of three men shattered in that large room, with their hair on end, lineaments convulsive with dilated eyes and twisted mouths, babbling unheard under the invasion from every direction of a surging, thudding, twisting steam of tangible and corrosive music. They were enveloped in the enormous seine of the bass strings and choked by the smoke from the horns, and the clarinets and oboes crawled into their clothing and along gooseflesh the length of their bodies. They were pricked by the flutes and dazzled by trumpets; and while the bassoons were felt all over burrowing like chiggers, a phalanx of strings and brass loomed up rapidly in a contracting square, the walls of *The Pit and the Pendulum*, threatening to whoosh the breath from their bodies and squeeze the blood from their veins.

At the abrupt end of the first part Thegn brought restoring drinks to them from the dumbwaiter.

"I acknowledge the truth of everything you've said," said Herzog weakly to Earl; and to Thegn, "Where does it come from?"

From fifty speakers in the walls and the floor and the ceiling, he was told; and while this rather incredible thing was discussed, Earl, who had collapsed into glass-eyed stupor during the tumult, slowly revived under the stimulus of his walkover victory.

"You see what I mean . . ." he began, and was interrupted by Chevalier's fervent, "God, yes!"

But Earl felt he had a right to bask. "Stravinsky," he said kindly, "of course understands all the implications of his score better than anyone, but it is amazing that he is the only conductor able to convey any of its subtleties. Take the foot-stamping of the basses. Take . . ." and he continued pleasantly.

At length Herzog interposed, quietly, since one is polite to the victor, "I really don't need any more convincing."

Earl laughed lightly, and purred at Thegn. "Wonderful machine. I wouldn't have believed it. It doesn't compare too unfavorably with the original."

"Why, thanks," Thegn replied, but Chevalier had a point to make:

"It's not for comparison—it's a different experience. At Carnegie Hall tonight we were spectators and aloof, while here. . . . You can't be aloof from something that grabs you by the throat."

The second part of *Le Sacre* excited the same responses, a little diminished, as the first; and leaving Earl to expatiate to Herzog, Chevalier strolled over to the turntable, where Thegn was carefully lifting off the record.

The disc was slipping into its envelope when Chevalier asked, "May I

look at it?" Thegn handed it to him.

"I thought Stravinsky conducted for a Columbia record," Chevalier explained.

"So he does."

"But this has a green label—it's a Parthenon."

"No!"

Chevalier pointed out to him on the envelope Parthenon in word and photograph. Thegn's composure did not alter, but his eyelids flickered. He slid the record far enough out of its envelope to expose the label, and Chevalier read "Gregor Paladin, conducting."

"Wight sent up the wrong record," Thegn remarked evenly. "I must chide him." Their eyes met. Chevalier felt a rush of devotion for the man.

"Not for my sake," he said softly. "On the contrary."

He rejected an impulse to dance a few steps, and burst into cleanest, purest laughter. Thegn put the record on the dumbwaiter. The others came sauntering over, both grinning with the infection of Chevalier's pleasant mirth. "Let us in on the joke," Earl suggested.

"Not yet," Thegn responded. "Once a day is enough. No doubt Chevalier will tell you—sometime."

"It was a great demonstration," said Earl. "Your machine is certainly the highest possible fidelity."

He regarded Chevalier, rocked again by laughter, with humorous commiseration, and patted his arm, grinning. "There, there. You'll get over this spasm. It certainly must have been a wonderful joke."

Uncontrollably Chevalier threw an arm about Earl's shoulder and hugged him. At last he was beginning to feel affection for this man, like a huntsman for the buffalo framed in his sights.

Where Sound Sounds Best

by Eric Salzman

A METHODIST MISSION HALL in London, an abandoned basilica in Milan, the lobby of the opera house in Brescia, a handful of faded ballrooms in New York and other American cities, an out-of-the-way chapel on New York's East Side, an old St. Louis beer hall—all have one thing in common: the making of records.

Good recording halls are hard to find. The industry's musical directors and sound engineers have searched everywhere from barns to ballrooms, clapping hands, firing pistol shots, and shouting across empty rooms in an effort to locate acceptable sites for their work. With every advance in sound reproduction—and stereo has compounded the problems—the choice of a recording location becomes more and more crucial. Hall acoustics can mean the difference between a genuine musical re-creation and an artificial imitation. The finest performance can be severely damaged if recorded in an acoustically inadequate auditorium.

Long ago, performers went to the studio—to the recording equipment. Engineers merely wanted musicians close enough to the horn so that something—anything—would be heard. Even after the development of better and more flexible recording equipment, the studio retained the advantage of convenience. Solo and chamber music are still often recorded in the studio, and it is the usual locale for pops recordings, where special effects may be desired and where artificial gimmicking is often introduced. But for orchestra, choral, and operatic music, the studio today plays a secondary role.

Aside from the fact that few studios have the space to accommodate large instrumental and vocal ensembles and that the older ones (and even some of the newer) are often inferior acoustically, the much-proclaimed ideal of "concert hall sound" led logically to the choice of actual concert

halls for recording. Their acoustic properties are well known, and they provide comfortable, familiar surroundings for the musicians. The recordings made in Boston's Symphony Hall and in Chicago's Orchestra Hall serve as examples of the fine results that can be obtained in concert halls. Their use, however, is not without problems. Some have bad acoustics—the Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls in London, the Salle Pleyel in Paris, and the Ford Auditorium in Detroit are notorious cases in point. Furthermore, since the microphone does not hear the same way human ears do, a good concert hall isn't necessarily a good recording hall. The ear listens selectively; the microphone picks up everything, with brutal objectivity. Omnidirectional microphones in large halls reproduce reverberation that our ears (aimed forward as they are) and mental attitudes (trained to notice only what we consider important) note only slightly, while strongly directional mikes miss great areas of complex reverberations and make the hall sound drier than it would in concert. Conversely, a hall not accounted good for concerts may be excellent for recording. A first-rate concert hall must have even diffusion of sound through most of its area, but recording engineers need only as many choice listening spots as there are microphones.

Another significant difference between the sound of a hall for concert and for recording purposes relates to the presence or absence of an audience. Performers know of the vast difference in sound between an empty hall and a full one, and many a concert hall is not at its acoustical best unless full of people. And there are further difficulties in using established halls: they are engaged for other, conflicting functions; a rival firm may have exclusive use of the wanted hall; street and traffic noises (enormously magnified on recordings) may be audible inside—Carnegie Hall's subway rumble is a famous example.

These factors, complicated by the industry's growth (and need for quality reproduction), have triggered a search for adequate halls and forced engineers to face the very difficult basic question—what makes a good hall good?

To understand the magnitude and complexity of the problems, consider the physical characteristics of a hall: size and shape of the stage; curve of the back wall; presence or absence of reflectors; construction of the roof above the stage; proscenium arch; size and shape of the hall itself, including the shape of the walls, roof, and floor; number and arrangement of seats, balconies, and boxes as well as the variety of materials used in each. Every surface reflects or absorbs sound; thus materials, shapes, construction, and even decoration are significant. Rococo curlicues on the boxes make a difference. Distance between surfaces means differences in reverberation and diffusion. Hall acoustics result from a fantastically complex interplay of sound waves reflected or absorbed by the myriad surfaces of the hall.

Today's taste in recorded sound—especially in stereo—calls for considerable reverberation with absorption held down. Among American firms particularly, clarity is achieved by close miking. At its best, this technique results in a lush, reverberant "aura" around a basically focused primary sound. In stereo, it tends to emphasize directionality rather than depth. European companies often place the microphones at a distance, to

take more advantage of the hall's natural resonance. This procedure is coming into favor in this country, even though directionality is somewhat lessened thereby. The ideal for microphone placement has been defined as finding the point farthest away from the musicians where definition and clarity are retained. Beyond that point, sound tends to haziness and mushiness.

Add to these problems the humidity, the temperature, and the temper of the musicians—all of which change from day to day and, with them, the resulting sound. The type of music, the style, the medium, the number and kind of performers, and even the performing style of the musicians should also be taken into account. What may work for a string orchestra might be dreadful on a solo piano disc. What is clear and incisive for a percussion ensemble might be hideous for Italian opera. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven might benefit from a drier, cleaner sound, while Debussy and Ravel would be better off with rich reverberance.

To top it off, the recording director's listening point makes a difference. The best location is usually considered to be the monitoring room, where the sound is supposed to be heard exactly as it will be inscribed on the record. The acoustics of the monitoring room then come into play, and they can differ greatly. They undoubtedly differ from the living rooms in which the music will be ultimately heard. The record buyer's impression of the quality of the sound will depend, of course, not only on his playing equipment, but on the acoustics of his own listening room.

Ideally, potential recording halls should be tested under actual recording conditions—with the performers in their seats playing the music at hand. But obviously, no one puts one hundred and ten musicians in a hall, only to decide—after a few tests—that the place isn't really suitable. Even trial runs for minor adjustments are held to a minimum since a symphony orchestra's time is valuable from a number of points of view. Engineers have to rely on past experience, often gained through sad trial-and-error methods. Many a much-used hall has been sacrificed when technology and public awareness passed it by. In unfamiliar halls engineers depend on their ability to spot the likely qualities of the locale, abetted by some simple tests.

Old halls are generally more desirable than modern ones (this is true of concert halls as well). Perhaps they have mellowed with age. They often have much wood; desirable, since wood does not sop up sound or give the sharp, ugly rebound of harder materials. They have heavier, thicker walls, well settled and apparently less affected by climatic changes. More importantly, most older halls abound in columns, chandeliers, niches, friezes, and other forms of rococo ornamentation far more likely to produce even, rich sound or optimum reverberation than the starkness of a sleek modern hall composed of synthetic materials. Harold Lawrence of Mercury Records compares a hall to a speaker enclosure—both are frequency-selective, and the gingerbread hall is most likely to have a smooth frequency response without peaks.

Hall-testing procedures are simple and limited. Talking and shouting at different distances give some notion of clarity, and loud handclaps,

sharp percussive noises, or even a pistol shot will reveal reverberation time as well as special disturbing echo effects—shatter echo (a kind of breaking-glass effect), ta-ta-ta-ta echo (repetitions of the sound fading away at distinct time intervals), and slap-back (a sharp split-second return of the sound). The most desirable kind of reverberation produces a very distinct kind of fade-out (technically referred to as decay), very fast at the beginning and then slow and steady.

Once the hall is chosen and musicians assembled, further tests are in order and many minor adjustments are made. Players are moved, curtains hung, and even temporary structural changes may be made. Dario Soria recalls, for instance, a fearful session at the Teatro La Scala in Milan when Victor de Sabata was recording *Tosca*. He drove everyone to tears (and close to financial ruin) by making the assembled orchestra and singers stand by while every possible modification of the hall was attempted. Seats were covered, curtains hung, boxes boarded up, and musicians shifted from one position to another for days before he was satisfied.

If the engineers are aware of the quirks of the hall, many adjustments can be made in advance. They have learned, among other things, that the best position for the musicians is often not the one normal for a concert performance. The space above the stage and the proscenium curtains seems to soak up sound aimed at the recording microphones and, for some of the reasons outlined above, this seems more pronounced on recordings than in concert. Also, one hears on discs what is sometimes described as the "room within a room" effect; the proscenium pushes the sound together and, in stereo, makes it appear to come from a single source. So out come the seats in the hall and the orchestra moves down from the stage. On the floor of the hall (either directly in the center, somewhat off-center, or directly in front of the stage—depending on the hall and the calculations of the engineers) the full reverberation of the hall comes into play, giving the much-prized richness and depth. This procedure, common nowadays, is often supplemented by completely closing the stage curtains.

There are variations. In the Munch recording of the Berlioz Requiem, chorus and soloists stood on the stage of Boston's Symphony Hall while the orchestra was down on the floor. In recordings of piano concertos, the piano has sometimes been placed on the stage in order to make it project over, yet blend with, the orchestra. In some cases, the orchestra has been divided between stage and floor—to get an antiphonal effect or to correct instrumental imbalances resulting from special acoustical problems of the hall. Orchestras have even been placed on the stage backwards, with performers facing the back wall and the conductor facing the drawn curtains of the stage. In this way, the large area above the stage can be a good resonator.

In the London recording of the final scene from Strauss's *Salome*, the orchestral sound would not blend properly with the voice of Inge Borkh. Either her soprano would soar above or be submerged by the masses of orchestral sound. Since the vocal sound should blend with the orchestral texture, someone finally hit on the idea of putting her right smack in the center of the orchestra. When, in the heat of a passionate delivery, she

flailed out a bit, two music stands and a second violinist took precipitous flight.

Often musicians are turned around to aim the sound at some part of the hall (usually made of wood) which reflects. On the other hand, when Everest records in Pittsburgh, the engineers remove the wooden shell in the Syria Mosque. This reflector supposedly enhances sound, but Everest finds that it actually soaks up the lows of the double basses, tympani, and big drum. The brick wall at the back gives those instruments "something to push against."

Walthamstow Town Hall, a British auditorium much favored for recordings, has a big balcony which the engineers must decide either to cover up or leave open. The problem is solved according to the taste of those working there or the requirements of the situation at hand. Curved ceilings are notorious for slap-back, and at Manhattan Center in New York (a difficult hall to work with in spite of its popularity) goboes—an acoustical shield—are sometimes placed on the ceiling to prevent sound from leaking into the balcony.

Most engineering triumphs have been achieved over exceptionally lively halls. Excess reverberation can be dampened and brought under control with drapery and careful miking, but there is relatively little that one can do with a dead hall where the sound is blotter-dry and high frequencies die aborning. The result: most engineers prefer an overlive hall.

But wait: the choice is not always clear-cut. Once a recording has been made, reverberation cannot be eliminated. It can, however, be added. Some engineers would rather risk an overly dry recording, knowing that a nice, round echo can be added later. The classic technique for this is the echo chamber. The recorded sound is simply played into the chamber and re-recorded en route from its resonant walls. The echo chamber is *de rigueur* in the pops and semi-pops field; it produces a poly-voiced-Presley or creamy-Melachrino effect—the sort of I-love-you-even-though-I'm-way-out-here kind of sound. Pop records, so the story goes, are made by setting up an echo chamber and then deciding whose voice will be sent into it.

The echo chamber apparently saw more use in recordings of classical music some years ago, when skills to bring about consistent sound at the recording session were lacking. To this day Columbia has a famous stairwell in which very well-known recordings have bounced up and down stairs picking up some needed reverb. A while back, *Scheherazade* was sent down the stairwell, awakening a stray dog who sought refuge from Seventh Avenue. The dog was, it turned out, something of a music critic. His opinions may be heard occasionally on the finished recording.

Columbia, Everest, and Capitol acknowledge the use of the echo chamber and electronic reverberation devices, arguing that any means of improving sound is legitimate and desirable. Many others, however, feel that their effect hardly approximates the resonance of a real hall. The discovery and exploitation of halls with fine acoustics thus remains a subject of major concern.

Any list of recording locales in common use has to begin with London and Vienna—the two major international recording centers. In London

the halls most prized and used are Kingsway Hall in the building of the West London Mission of the Methodists and Walthamstow Town Hall. From the plethora of recordings made by many companies at these places one can mention as examples from Kingsway Hall the London *Daphnis and Chloë* under Pierre Monteux and the Angel *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Abduction from the Seraglio*, and *Falstaff*; the London *Peter Grimes* and the Angel recordings of Delius and Sibelius under Beecham tell what is being done at Walthamstow. One or the other is ranked first by nearly every company recording in London. When they are unavailable, the Town Halls of the suburbs of Wembley, Hornsey, and Watford are often used. The only other really important recording site in London for orchestral music (the Royal Festival Hall is virtually never used) is the EMI studios in Abbey Road, St. John's Wood (the Handel-Beecham *Solomon* is an example of EMI studio sound).

Vienna's halls are many. The Musikvereinsaal (home of the Vienna Philharmonic) is popular; its elaborate baroque interior produced the quality sound of Beethoven's Ninth under Karajan (Angel). The Sofien-saal (a ballroom in which Johann Strauss used to conduct) is used exclusively by London, and was the scene of the *Rheingold*, *Aida*, and *Fledermaus* stereo recordings. And, of course, Vienna's bulky Konzerthaus has three different halls that are frequently employed by the smaller companies.

In Paris, the Salle Wagram (a big, barnlike convention-hall structure that was the scene of Capitol's *Carmen* under Beecham), the Salle Pleyel, the Salle de la Mutualité (favored by London's engineers), and the Théâtre de Champs Elysées have been used but without really exceptional results. In Milan, the Scala theatre is commonly used for operatic recordings but it has drawbacks—its plushiness eats up the brilliance of the sound, and streetcars bang and rattle outside. An abandoned basilica is sometimes used as an alternative but it too has the streetcar problem—solved only by recording in the dead of night.

The lobby of the Brescia Opera House served for Mercury's recent recording of Paisiello's *Barber of Seville*. The theatre itself was deemed unsatisfactory; as the engineers were on their way out, dejected and discouraged, one of them took note of the lovely resonance produced by their footfalls in the lobby!

In Rome, the small hall of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, the Rome Opera House, and the Foro Italico concert hall of the Italian Radio are used. Victoria Hall in Geneva (for the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande) and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam are two fine European concert halls which hold up as recording studios—their rich, mellow sound is distinctive. Germany has many new halls and studios—the old ones were gutted during the war. Good results have been obtained in Berlin and Cologne.

In New York, ballrooms are the thing: Manhattan Center (favored by RCA), the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn (favored by Columbia), and the Great Northern Hotel (favored by Mercury). All provide spacious quarters well adapted to stereo recording. Elsewhere in this country, the big concert halls are commonly used: Boston's Symphony Hall and Chicago's Orchestra Hall (noted for its proscenium which radiates out

into the hall itself, obviating the usual proscenium problems) are considered particularly good. The Syria Mosque in Pittsburgh, Northrup Memorial Auditorium, Minneapolis, and the Eastman Theatre, Rochester, are used in recording the orchestras of those cities. Other locales include a beer hall in St. Louis, the Capitol Tower in Los Angeles, and the Broadwood Hotel Ballroom in Philadelphia. In Detroit, what with the shortcomings of the Ford Auditorium, a dilapidated old theatre and a high school auditorium have been used. Several years ago Columbia/Epic abandoned Severance Hall in Cleveland in favor of the more resonant Masonic Hall; but the former has since been renovated, the acoustics are now satisfactory, and the recording engineers have moved back in.

According to the people who ought to know—recording directors—stereo has not signaled any fundamental change in recording philosophies. But it has enormously magnified old problems and introduced some new ones. Stereo demands more room to work in so that directionality can be achieved. Even more important, it demands optimum reverberation for its sense of depth. Columbia's move from the Academy of Music to the Broadwood Hotel Ballroom for their Philadelphia Orchestra recordings was prompted by the need for better stereo separation.

The ultimate choice of a hall for recording and the use made of it rests on a subtle combination of taste and technique. "Realism" is a relative and a subjective term, and recording acoustics is still more art than science. Like any art, it demands skill, knowledge, taste, and discretion; it is certainly not the easiest to master.

The Role of the Record Producer

1) *Elektra*: A Stage Work Violated? or a New Sonic Miracle?

by Conrad L. Osborne

T IS A TALE of the powers and limitations of the producer. The powers are such these days that a producer is free to create almost any ambience, any effect he wishes. The limitation is that his efforts won't necessarily do what he thinks they will do for the work at hand.

Both these conditions seem to me to be true of London's interesting but, so far as I am concerned, unsuccessful production of Richard Strauss's *Elektra* (OSA 1269). It is a highly sophisticated piece of work, in that it seeks to make statements about the characters and the nature of the drama through the technical means of presentation, and it carries the search to its logical conclusion. What it says, in effect, is that this recording stands in relation to a live presentation much as a movie stands in relation to a stage original: it treats of the same material, but by different means, and must therefore be conceived in its own terms, no more a mere "recording" of a performance than the movie is a "photograph" of the play.

Thus, we are given not only the radio mellerdrammer sound effects by now familiar through some of the other London operatic recordings (occasionally helpful, but more often heavy-handed and tasteless) but an attempt to establish a recognizable sound environment for each scene, sometimes for different characters within a scene. (*Elektra* and *Klytemnestra*, for example, exchange lines across a sonic boundary; they inhabit different worlds. And the choice has been intelligently made—*Klytemnestra* is the one who sounds extranatural, *Elektra* the one who sounds "real.") The technique is analogous to the cinematic one—why should the camera remain bound to the set, when it can establish the true setting for

every scene, every speech, every line? And why should we continue to judge the results by the standards of stage presentation?

Legitimate questions, but they happen to have good answers. When record producers assert that they have hold of a new and different medium, they are of course right. But the hard question follows: can a work conceived and written by masters of the live theatre be translated into this new medium without extensive alteration? I don't say the answer is no—some boy genius will prove me wrong next week—but I say that it has not yet been done. I use the phrase "without extensive alteration" because there have, of course, been excellent motion pictures made from novels and plays—in precisely those instances where the producers have not simply changed the method of presentation but have changed the material itself, have dispensed with the play or novel and rethought its materials in terms of their own medium. Rewritten it, in other words.

On records, the opera producer has no such option. While it is possible in certain instances to add or delete arias or scenes, or to change their sequence, it is not possible (except perhaps in a few atypical instances) really to take apart a score and put it back together in such a way as to make a new entity, logical in terms of the new medium. Consequently, the record producer really has nothing new to work with at all; he can only try new techniques on a piece of work calculated for the theatre. Since everything about the work—its shape, its musical balances, its technical apparatus—is evocative of the centuries-old combination of proscenium stage, orchestra pit, and auditorium, we have no basis for thinking that we can undermine the assumptions upon which it rests and emerge with the thing intact.

The thing that is wrong with the presentation at hand is, again, analogous to the thing that is wrong with movies made out of operas (note: there hasn't yet been a satisfactory one—of hundreds made, not one): it forces us to lose our bearings. Where *are* we? What *is* the audience/performer relationship? If *Elektra* and her mother occupy different worlds (do they? did Hofmannsthal think so? and Strauss?), how is it that they inhabit the same musical texture, share the same stage, hold converse with each other? Are we here in the room with *Elektra*? Really? Then why does she sing so loudly? Why isn't the whole scene whispered?

Because this is an opera, that's why, and the performers have spent years learning how to project words and music to the back wall of a big theatre over the sound of a huge orchestra. If, assisted by their acting talents and the *mise en scène*, they succeed, we are convinced. On a recording, they must sing and play with all the more abandon and passion—but that is really all that's needed. Listen to Caruso's "*Vesti la giubba*."

I do not mean to set myself against experimentation with recording techniques. I'm all for it, and mistakes along the way should be indulged. This *Elektra* should be heard by everyone seriously interested in opera and/or recordings, if only to ponder the aesthetics of the questions it raises. And something will come of this sort of work, something new and absorbing. But it will happen when London (or some other firm) takes

the logical step and commissions an important composer to write a stereo opera—an opera conceived for phonograph listening exclusively. It might bear little relation to the sort of opera intended for the theatre and a close one to some of the sonic experimentation that has taken place in other fields. Good or bad, it will be more valid than the technically accomplished violation of stage works.

For me, even a great performance would be unlikely to succeed under these conditions—one's concentration on a single line of continuity, and therefore all hope of the work's essential cumulative impact, is shattered. And the performance at hand is something less than a great one, though it has elements of greatness—namely Birgit Nilsson and Regina Resnik as Elektra and Klytemnestra. (The recording, incidentally, is absolutely complete, restoring the traditional cuts in the Elektra/Klytemnestra confrontation, the second Elektra/Chrysothemis scene, and the Recognition Scene.)

Nilsson is really altogether incredible. There were reservations expressed about her Elektra when she sang it in New York last year ("Oh, great *singing*, but . . ."). I did not much share those reservations then, and I certainly don't share them (if they exist) with respect to the recording. Though Varnay has been wonderful in this role and I have also admired Borkh, in my opinion all the Elektras since the war do not add up to the Nilsson performance. Yes, it is great singing—the only great singing of the role I have ever heard. I mean by this that Nilsson is the only soprano I have ever heard to fulfill what is clearly marked down on the pages of the score—all the dynamic gradings, all the notes, all the time values, to encompass the entire proposition with fullness and concentration; to turn up the volume in the last scene as if twirling a knob on an amplifier; and to leave enough in reserve to give the impression that she could start all over again. This I take to be a *sine qua non* of any great operatic interpretation, and Nilsson is the only Elektra I have heard capable of it. Naturally, this is not quite so impressive on records as it is in the theatre—you miss the physical impact of her voice, and the sense of appreciation at seeing it all happen in one large gulp. But it's still astonishing.

It is quite true that she is not the kind of operatic actress, either visually or vocally, to excite the admiration of the "What she did with that line!" or "The way she arched her eyebrow!" contingent. But whether that makes her a less effective operatic actress than certain other performers is moot; it is astounding to see the sort of patently phony indication and preposterous hysteria that can be swallowed as "exciting acting" or "profound interpretation" by opera fans. There is not a line of Nilsson's interpretation that is not intelligent and understandingly projected. I too could use more intensity at a few points; it will probably come with the passing of seasons, as it has to some of her other roles. If anyone cares to choose those moments in preference to brilliant singing of the whole role, he's welcome.

And Resnik is splendid, again the best in my own experience, though in this case that's less of a statement, since it was prior to World War II that we had the great singing Klytemnestras. Not that Resnik is an insignificant singer, but purely from a vocal standpoint I doubt that she

is to be compared with Olszewska, for instance; and she is in any case a bit past her very best in the role—I heard her do it in the 1960-61 season at the Met, and it is not quite that overpowering anymore. But it's still very good; the desperation, the emotional ambivalence of the woman are really projected, and the eagerness with which she pounces on Elektra's hints about the sacrifice, yet keeps it within a singing framework, is about as well done as it could be. Unfortunately, her triumphant exit is one of the things botched on the recording, what with the laughter echoed and bounced around the place like a free-falling football. We don't mind being snowed, but it'll have to be done better than that.

From here, the level of performance drops at something approaching the perpendicular. Marie Collier's Chrysothemis is vocally tense and tattered, and her efforts at telling us who the character is are clumsy and exaggerated. Tom Krause constantly jabs at the music and words—no sense of a sustained line, and therefore none of the calm and stature that Orest should have. Oh, for a younger Schöffler now that stereo's here! Gerhard Stolze is a good Aegisth, though I like a genuine *Heldentenor* in the part, because I think every character in the piece should have a certain basic theatrical size and dignity. The small parts are well enough taken, though the only standout is Gerhard Unger as the Young Servant.

Solti? Wonderful detail, wonderful sharpness of execution, really fine accompanying at some points, as with the gorgeously tender playing under Elektra's "*Orest! Orest!*," etc., in the Recognition Scene. But as with several of the singers, I miss a sense of weight and importance, and I miss something of an over-all line. Yet with this complaint, we are back to the matter of the recording—how can a conductor build and sustain the shape of a work that is constantly being looked at from different angles? Beautiful closeups of the buttresses and gargoyles do not a picture of a cathedral make.

2) The Record Producer Strikes Back

by John Culshaw

NOW THAT I AM NO LONGER an active recording producer, I am free at last to join battle with Conrad L. Osborne, HIGH FIDELITY'S long-time reviewer and opera expert. In the past, it wasn't so easy to speak out, because anything I said might have been construed as company policy; and while record companies are not overly fond of most critics, they do try very hard not to upset them. I may also be writing here on behalf of colleagues in other firms whose work occasionally arouses Mr. Osborne's wrath—though never, I am rather pleased to say, have they brought him anywhere near the paroxysms of rage with which he has regularly greeted even my most innocent and gimmickless recordings. The wrath has been fairly consistent over the years; but it came to the boil, so to speak, with the release of Strauss's *Elektra*. "A

stage work violated?" asked the headline, "or a new sonic miracle?"—and you really did not have to read Mr. Osborne's review to know that he would opt for the former.

I am the villain, the fiend. It seems that I have torn *Elektra* from its right and proper environment in the theatre, and in putting it on records in the way I did, I have massacred a masterpiece. It is a strange thought that while the massacre was going on nobody at all raised a finger in protest. Even poor Georg Solti did not object when the musical "line" he was trying to impart to the performance was ruined by the infernal microphonic obstacles which the villain and his technical devils placed in his path. It is a daunting, nay, a terrifying account of persecution which Osborne draws for us. There is Solti, bullied and beaten into a state of total musical submission. There is Birgit Nilsson, paralyzed with fear at the prospect of the fiend coming out of the control room to taunt and terrorize her into yet another different type of acoustic. By comparison with the reviewer's vision of the recording producer, the Grand Inquisitor is a lady-in-waiting.

What, according to Osborne, has the fiend done? For a start, he has imposed himself between the opera and its audience. His total fallacy is the assumption that a work conceived and written for the stage can, and should, be molded to fit another medium of communication. To support the charges, Osborne cites the case of movies made from operas—"there hasn't yet been a satisfactory one: of hundreds made, not one!" Well, in the first place I question the figure: I doubt that *hundreds* have been made; and even if they had been, I doubt that Osborne could possibly have seen them all. And I can think of one case where an opera worked better on film than on the stage—Britten's *Billy Budd*. It's a pretty poor batting average, I agree; but then it's a very difficult game.

I don't want to cover ground that has already been well plowed. The clue to all Osborne's objections lies in the word "violation." His protest is the classic one: leave things as they are, leave opera where it belongs, in the theatre; in other words, *don't touch!* For Conrad Osborne, a reording of an opera is something that he feels bound to relate to his own experience of the same work in the theatre. He reviews a record, with vast knowledge, from the standpoint of that very tiny minority of people who constitute the world's opera house audience. The record producer, on the other hand, is concerned to look beyond that minority—and his motive is not just that of an artistic crusader. It is much more pragmatic, for if he doesn't reach an audience beyond that minority, the company he works for is going to lose a great deal of money, and the artists appearing on the record are going to grumble about miserable royalties. The way to reach this extra audience, especially in the case of a relatively unpopular and "difficult" work like *Elektra*, is to make the sound of the music more immediate than it could ever be when heard from most seats in most opera houses. For these listeners, a recording is not a souvenir to remind them of an evening at the Met, nor does it need to bear any essential relationship to anything that ever happened in any opera house anywhere. Their question is: does this record bring the drama to life in my living room? If it does, it works; if it doesn't, they don't want to know about it. It follows that, generally speaking, such people are not collectors

of old recordings, nor are they interested in "transcriptions" straight from the stage. I accept the possibility that this part of the potential audience may now be getting a bit too much attention from recording producers—but it gets none at all from Conrad L. Osborne. I don't think he knows it exists.

The listener-at-home and the listener-in-the-theatre are not, however, necessarily different people. I myself happen to be able to accommodate this sort of schizophrenia, for I know and *expect* my reactions to be different in the two environments. In the theatre everyone, including a critic, is a member of a herd, and responsive in a thousand ways to all sorts of communal influences. At home, the listener is virtually master of his fate. He can alter the sound if he so desires; he can play all or part of a piece, or play some parts twice; he can drink throughout the performance; he is vulnerable to all sorts of domestic distractions. And he cannot see. The producer, sitting in his control room, should have this sort of listener constantly in mind. He never asks himself the question: "Is this how it sounded when I heard Nilsson do it at the Met?" or "Didn't she sing it differently the night I heard her at Covent Garden?" Instead, he asks himself endlessly: "Will this make dramatic and musical sense in domestic surroundings to someone who may even be hearing the opera for the first time?" In a word, the recording has to have impact, and I use the word without relating it to loudness.

It is time for some specifics. What does the villain actually do? This brings me back to Osborne's review of *Elektra*, which I read with a mixture of amusement, annoyance, and sheer bewilderment. Here was someone writing with evident authority about what I, specifically, was supposed to have done during certain professional hours of my life—but whatever flights of sonic imagination I may have indulged at that time, they were as nothing compared with Osborne's fantasies. He informs us that in *Elektra* I had sought "*to establish a recognizable sound environment for each scene*" (italics mine). I did nothing of the sort; what's more, I wouldn't really know how even if I wanted to. I'm not saying that we didn't provide any special effects in *Elektra*; but I am saying that we didn't create, or even try to create, a different sound environment for different scenes. Yet Osborne heard, or thought he heard, such a difference, because he has become abnormally sensitive to what he supposes to be the influence of the recording producer. His imagination is revealing wondrous and wicked things unto him.

What *did* we do? Well, we followed the score in all its complexities. We refused to assume that the opera's superb orchestration necessarily sounds at its best in the cramped and dead conditions of most orchestra pits in most opera houses. Because it so often has to be played under such conditions doesn't mean that the resultant wretched sound is what Richard Strauss wanted when he wrote the piece. Look at the score: look at the subtleties, and you quickly see at work a mind that, consciously or unconsciously, was looking to a future when opera would be liberated from the confines of inherited tradition and architecture. The record producer does not alter a score; he just does the best he can to make it sound the way it's written. And when you are dealing with an orchestra of almost a hundred and twenty musicians, this is precisely the aim that

cannot be achieved in ninety per cent of the extant opera houses because they weren't built to accommodate anything like such forces. If Osborne can fault a recording in relation to the score, he has a valid point; but to fault it in relation to the theatre doesn't make musical or logical sense.

As for Osborne's allegation of "different environments" for different characters, about the only thing that could remotely support such an assertion is that we tried to make a mild aural point of the fact that Klytemnestra first appears at a window and actually approaches Elektra only some time later—there is a slight difference between the sound of Regina Resnik's voice when she is at the window and when she is at Elektra's side. (If an artist merely turns her head while singing there is another sort of aural difference, not decreed by the producer and evident on every opera recording ever made.) Frankly, it's so gently done that I myself hardly hear it, and now wish I'd made it much more emphatic: but in any case it's the only instance of a special acoustic for an *on-stage* voice in the entire recording. And in connection with off-stage voices, I wonder why Osborne didn't make a point about the chorus? In the theatre there is only one way to make the chorus audible, and that is to suppress and thus contradict Strauss's orchestral dynamics. On the recording, we were able to record the orchestra as written and still make the chorus sound audible and off-stage. Does this also come into the category of "violation"? Does virtue lie in the score, or in theatrical compromise?

Again, with reference to Klytemnestra's exit, which HIGH FIDELITY'S reviewer found "botched," his criticism proceeds from his insistence on referring everything to opera house practice. It is a fact that theatre stages are acoustically dead, and thus all you can hope to get in a live performance is a series of short "dry" laughs—which don't, of course, convey the terrible madness of the scene. (DGG, in the only modern rival recording, stuck to those few close, dry laughs—and very silly they sound, to my ear.) I once heard an old Italian hag screaming at some American tourists who were visiting a castle. I don't know how they had upset her, but she followed them all the way down a long corridor until she and they were well off-stage from where I was; and as the intensity of her rage mounted, so, it seemed to me, that though with every step she was getting farther away, her voice kept getting *louder*. Her screams, of course, were being assisted by the very open and live acoustic of the corridors and rooms, until the whole place seemed to reverberate with her mania. This, and this precisely, is what we tried to create for Klytemnestra's exit. But because it doesn't sound like a performance in the theatre, where backstage areas are dead for architectural reasons, Osborne hates it. There is a serious failure of imagination somewhere, and I don't think it was ours.

Enough of the specifics, for in the end specifics come down to taste. So what is the villain up to? In my career as a recording producer, was I looking for self-glorification? Or had I become bored with theatrical opera and fallen in love with sonic technology? Neither is the case. You can divide recording producers into two categories, and, although I do not mean to be presumptuous, a sort of parallel comparison can be made about conductors. There are some conductors who, in performance, try to

minimize their own presence and contribution to the music—they are the ones who are said to give us the music “straight.” Likewise there are recording producers who are concerned only to ensure that the notes of the score are properly played or sung. They are known affectionately by the engineers as “dot readers,” for that is exactly what they do, and all they claim to do. They tend to make respectable records that don’t sell.

The other kind is, if you like, the extrovert. If he is a conductor, he puts his own firm imprint on the music—he can’t help doing so. If he is a recording producer, he probably has a passionate conviction about how the music should sound in domestic surroundings, and he works to make his enthusiasm communicate with other people. He doesn’t let his engineers iron out the dynamics of a score, and he probably doesn’t believe that every single word of an operatic text must at any cost be audible. He is a curious hybrid, for although his job is basically musical he needs every bit of technical advice and assistance he can get. What he achieves is nearer to technology than to art; but if he doesn’t use the technology, the art he tries to serve must be compromised. I say he should use the technology—for otherwise the record, as a growing means of musical communication, will die.

And look at the facts. The really risky ventures for the record industry are the big operas and choral works, which cost a fortune to make and cannot ever be assured of the initial sales almost certain for the standard orchestral repertoire. Yet the really big successes of the past decade have been the so-called blockbusters; and in just about every case, from whatever source, they have exemplified the co-operation between a committed conductor and a committed recording producer, both of whom accepted from the start the fact that they were not working in the opera house or the concert hall. Ten years ago, would anyone in his senses have thought that *Das Rheingold* would become a worldwide best seller? Would it have done so if, in 1958, we had made it “straight”? If you think it would, please ask yourself why both modern recordings of *Die Meistersinger* have failed—for both are very straight indeed. I believe that not more than five per cent of those who have bought *Elektra* have ever heard it in the theatre, or have any prospect or intention of hearing it there.

I have been doing some figures. It is probably reasonable to suppose that one per cent of the population of the United States—rounded off, that amounts to some two million people—show some active interest in what we call serious music. My suspicion is that an accurate figure might be quite a bit higher, but let us be utterly pessimistic and assume it is less—say, one million people. Even at this estimate, any modern opera recording that in its first two years reaches *one* percent of that figure will be counted a resounding success. The proportion is about the same for any other territory in the Western world. So although it may be true that records like *Elektra* are breaking through to audiences who a generation ago would not have given half an ear to Strauss, the real pioneer work has still to be done among those who already have a basic interest. The figures until recently at my disposal show without question that the response is growing, and with such rapidity that it must be the

converted who are now turning to the sort of recording Mr. Osborne most dislikes. Why?

Because we are in the middle of the twentieth century, that's why; and because if performed art doesn't adjust to life, life won't adjust to performed art. Osborne, and others like him, are crying for a past which has gone forever, except for a very tiny and elite minority; and his anguish is revealed in the very emotive language he chooses to describe our approach to *Elektra* ("radio mellerdrammer") and the recording producer of the future ("some boy genius"). He goes further. "Where *are* we? What *is* the audience/performer relationship?" These are good questions, but I don't think anyone who has ever paid hard cash for opera on records would have the slightest difficulty in answering them. Where are we? We are not in the theatre; we are where music belongs: in the mind and in the emotions and in the imagination. And what is the audience/performer relationship? It is closer than it has ever been, precisely because there is no proscenium arch when you listen to records. Indeed, the falling of proscenium arches is becoming a familiar clatter these days, for in the modern theatre itself there is a continuing trend towards closer audience involvement. The trend has its off-shoots in every direction: in pop music with its layers of sound; in serious music where the audience for, say, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gruppen* is surrounded on three sides; in Karajan's staging of *The Ring* and his other productions in the Salzburg theatre with its Cinerama-type wrap-around stage; and in Benjamin Britten's church operas when, in their original setting, the audience can almost touch the performers.

Whatever mistakes are made along the way, I do not believe that this is an unhealthy development. I do not believe that composers want their work restricted to a minority which in the case of opera is determined and conditioned by the availability and suitability of theatres. I don't think we should perform the plays of Shakespeare only in the way they were originally performed in the Globe Theatre. But what has happened in the last quarter of a century has happened with such rapidity that only young people have been able to adapt, precisely because they have had no time for the sacred cows of the generation before. I still meet people in England who pine for the old-time music hall or vaudeville theatres, the last one of which, in London at any rate, went out of business ten years ago. Pine as they may, the fact is that such types of light entertainment are now provided domestically by television. You can't go back.

On a single cold February evening this year more people saw *Aida* on BBC television than the total audiences for that opera in Covent Garden since it was first given there in 1876. In almost every way this was a splendid event, and I think Conrad Osborne would have approved because the production came straight from the stage and wasn't in any way "violated." It gave much pleasure, and *absolutely no cause for thought*. I make the point here, because it is the focus of our dispute. What is opera? Is it just an acquired taste, a getting-to-know-about-vocal-conventions, a theatrical ceremony with its own rituals just as much for the audience as for the stage? Or can it, should it, be more?

Yes, a thousand times yes. Without going any further back than the last hundred years one can see an entire literature, the literature of

opera, struggling to break from the fetters of convention. I mean convention in production, in style, and in environment. I submit that we are only just beginning to grasp the immensity of opera as a total experience, and to see that there is a really profound difference between, say, *The Barber of Seville* and *Wozzeck*. From *The Ring* onwards opera has been growing, penetrating regions of the human mind with a totality and directness unparalleled elsewhere in the arts. The future for opera lies in removing the convention and obstacles and fashions which impede that directness of communication. Wieland Wagner was working in that direction; so, in her great years, was Maria Callas; and it is the hardest path to tread.

Conrad Osborne completely missed the point about *Elektra*: we set out consciously to do the one thing that no other recording of the opera had even attempted; we wanted to make it extremely disturbing, because it *is* disturbing. We didn't want to make a nice comfortable recording for the canary fanciers to chatter about: we wanted it to hurt in the way Strauss meant it to hurt, and to involve in the way Strauss meant it to involve. This is what really matters, because it is what the composer wrote. This is what the fiend was *really* doing; and if you don't believe me even now, look at the score.

Letter from John McClure, Director of Masterworks, CBS Records, to the Editors

When I received your October issue, I read John Culshaw's article, "The Record Producer Strikes Back," straight through twice without pausing and then sat back, relieved that someone had finally said very well what has long needed to be said.

The issue is a real and an important one. There are certain critics who feel the pressure of change in the arts and the media and react with vertigo and panic, coming to see themselves as Keepers of the Sacred Flame. Preoccupied with the purity of their artistic memories and experiences, they must defend their citadel against the imagined encroachments of hustling, brash, young media like recordings. In other areas this Don Quixote syndrome has damaged countless windmills in its futile efforts to defend the theatre against movies, to rescue the English language from the Random House Dictionary, and to protect literature from Marshall McLuhan and TV.

The psychological orientation is: "If I don't do this, no one will and God knows it can't defend itself." Paradoxically, their efforts to preserve old viewpoints and old standards against a presumed threat could inadvertently hasten the decline.

It should be clear from the healthy activity in the theatre after its collision, first with movies and then TV, that new media do not replace old ones. Despite panic reactions, they live side by side and even augment each other.

Example: in generous terms perhaps 2,000,000 people have seen Horowitz perform on stage during his career, but even with an "artistic" Nielsen rating, five times as many watched his first TV concert, and probably as many again will watch when it is rerun. This is destroying music or the concert hall? Rubbish.

If opera is to be preserved as a public form of entertainment, it is more John Culshaws, Humphrey Burtons, and Zeffirellis that we need and not more Metropolitan Operas. The stultifying lack of adventurousness and innovation in many established opera houses is precisely what is causing the operatic flame to flicker ever more dangerously.

We need the creativity and innovative enterprise of the Culshaws to rock the operatic boat, to combine it with new media such as records, films, and television if it is to spread beyond its parochial, limited audience into a larger public that can keep it alive.

In a recent article for the New York Times, Harold Schonberg seemed shocked that we record people were thinking of our medium in its own terms rather than as a painstaking photograph or newsreel of "real life," i.e., what he hears in a concert hall. He accused us of being "Culshawites," and if that means that we see recording as a legitimate medium in its own right and try to help it mature as films have matured, then we all plead guilty to the charge.

3) The Opera Reviewer Strikes Again

by Conrad L. Osborne

I HAD MORE OR LESS resolved to hold myself aloof from the letters column melee occasioned by Mr. Culshaw's *contra* C.L.O. essay; far safer to hibernate in my Victorian den, alternately stroking my beard and wiping the tears of nostalgia from rheumy eyes, than to venture into the field. But the positively wild epistle from John McClure poses the prospect of continuing discussion on the supposed views of an entirely imaginary C.L.O. In other words, I'm being stuck with a bum rap, and I don't appreciate it, men.

Some recapitulation is in order. In my review of the Culshaw-produced *Elektra* that set off all this agitation, I made the following points, in what I thought were sober tones, and in this sequence. 1) The recording is representative of efforts to establish recorded opera as a medium in its own right, not necessarily dependent on the standards or assumptions of performance in the theatre. 2) While there is nothing wrong with such efforts in principle, they pose certain difficulties which must be met, since they after all involve the transference of material created for one medium into another for which it was not conceived. 3) These difficulties are analogous to those faced by a movie producer attempting transference of material conceived in dramatic or literary form, except that the operatic record producer has far fewer options open

to him, since he is bound by the sequences and relationships established by the score, and may not truly rewrite or otherwise reorder his material to make it more suitable to the new medium. 4) Films made from operas invariably fall on their faces because, in the absence of the framework of the live theatre, they fail to establish a stylistic basis or a performer/audience relationship that will enable us to accept operatic conventions, or the very use of the "legit" singing voice, as necessary, desirable, or believable. 5) This *Elektra* seems to me to miss the boat for similar reasons, using technical expertise to a) create an impression that the events of the opera are actually taking place in the indicated locales (which, to the extent that it is successful, renders the piece absurd—operas and plays take place on stages, not in castles); and b) reproduce the orchestral score in a manner which destroys the over-all effect that Strauss aimed for, and substitutes a kind of dissection of the score's innards. 6) Experimentation with recording techniques should nevertheless be encouraged; that this *Elektra* should be heard by all serious collectors and operaphiles; and that the obvious step for the record companies to take is the commissioning of new works composed solely for the phonographic medium. The review goes on to discuss the performances themselves, but this discussion has not been subject to dispute, except as it touched on one of the above points (as with the exit of Klytemnestra).

In his article, Mr. Culshaw made the following points. 1) Osborne has been consistently and violently opposed to all of Mr. Culshaw's efforts, painting him in blackest colors. 2) There has, too, been a successful movie made from an opera (*Billy Budd*). 3) Since the number of people that attend live opera is relatively small, it is economically advisable to make recordings in such a way as to attract people who have heretofore known nothing of, and cared nothing about, opera. 4) The listening situation at home is not the same as the listening situation in the theatre. 5) What Culshaw intended in certain scenes and what Osborne heard are two very different things, and this difference is due to Osborne's eagerness to impute to Culshaw intentions he never had. 6) Strauss wrote many notes that are never heard, and it is up to the record producer to see that they are heard. 7) The best record producers are those who make full use of up-to-date technology, in a creative partnership with the highest musical sensitivity. 8) Such producers also produce the recordings that sell well; the tremendous success of the Culshaw *Rheingold* and the relative failure of the "straight" recordings of *Meistersinger* demonstrate this point. 9) Educated guesswork leads us to suppose that a wider audience can be built with this type of recording, and that this audience is perhaps 95 per cent separate from that which attends opera live. 10) Osborne is trying to clog the wheels of progress by clinging to a vanished past, but Culshaw and a few other Brave New Types are fortunately determined to press on towards a new kind of operatic theatre, unbound by conventions of the past. The *Elektra* recording is a step in this direction.

Now along comes Mr. McClure. We cannot tell whether or not he has read the original review, for he discusses none of the points it raises. But he has read Mr. Culshaw, twice, and I must in all modesty assume that his reference to "certain critics" takes in yr. humble servant. By indirection

and implication he suggests the following points. 1) C.L.O. sees himself as a "Keeper of the Sacred Flame," afraid of the impact of "hustling, brash young media" on the cherished old ones. 2) C.L.O. considers the television appearances of Horowitz, for example, destructive of live music. 3) The timidity of repertory opera companies is largely responsible for the current low state of the operatic art; and Osborne to the contrary, what we need are more Culshaws and fewer Metropolitans—again, to widen the operatic audience. 4) Harold C. Schonberg is another fuddy-duddy who doesn't want producers to have any fun.

Let us consider these points. First, to Mr. Culshaw, taking his arguments in order. 1) Demonstrably untrue. Simply refer to the reviews in question, written over a nine-year span. 2) I concede this point. 3) The economic argument may or may not be sound; sound or not, it has nothing whatever to do with the artistic merits of the product—which it is the critic's responsibility to discuss—unless it implies a deliberate downgrading for the purpose of appealing to the ignorant. 4) I also concede this point. But the Culshaw approach to recording does not necessarily follow from it. 5) I have never had any opinion about Mr. Culshaw's intentions or state of mind during recording. I only comment upon the results, and my ears tell me the same thing now that they told me over a year ago. 6) Strauss scored for the theatre, and was an accomplished enough orchestrator to accurately gauge what would and wouldn't come through in the theatre. The unheard notes contribute to textures and over-all effects; if Strauss had badly wanted them to be heard, he would have scored in such a manner as to make them audible. Mr. Culshaw is fascinated by the workings of the clock; we only want to know what time it is. 7) This is self-evident. But again, these qualities are not necessarily synonymous with Mr. Culshaw's philosophy. 8) Phony market analysis if I ever saw it. It is preposterous to compare the case of *Rheingold* (the first recording ever of this major work, brilliantly cast with the magical name of Kirsten Flagstad at the head of the list, released to ride the crest of stereophony's first wave and recorded in a manner to showcase the possibilities of the new technique—and, finally, a very fine job from both the musical and technical standpoints) with the case of *Meistersinger*, an opera which had already received several complete recordings at the time of its first stereo effort, including a couple of quite satisfactory ones, and whose first stereo recording was a poorish one, wretchedly cast except for the Eva and Walther, flabbily conducted, indifferently recorded *in its own terms*. Last summer, the "live" DGG recording of *Lulu* was at or near the top of the classical charts in this country for several months, topped most of the time by only one or two freaks, like the "Elvira Madigan" album or the "West Meets East" album. This, despite what we would have assumed to be a pretty limited readymade audience; despite the almost simultaneous release of the Angel recording, also "live," which also remained high on the charts for many weeks; and despite damaging reviews in several influential journals (not this one). Does this prove that "live" recordings are the answer, or "straight" recordings, or that Mr. Culshaw has been wasting his time with all those fancy studio effects? What, indeed, do the "facts" show? If Mr. Culshaw will make his sales figures available, we can analyze them together. 9) Again, this may or

may not be so. Mr. Culshaw simply asserts it, he doesn't document it. And again, it has no bearing on artistic quality. 10) See below.

As to Mr. McClure: Points 1 and 2 are simply false. They bear no relation to my opinions on these matters, and cannot be inferred from my writings except (to borrow a McClure-ism) by a Don Quixote in search of a windmill. And to 3): Sure, the Met and other international companies are unadventurous, and it does none of us any good. But I hardly see this as a root cause of our difficulties, which also relate to such matters as the paucity of contemporary pieces that anyone cares to see more than once, and the easily documented (by recordings, of course) decline in the standards of singing of the sort that is required for large portions of the repertory. I might add that if I had accorded Mr. Culshaw's recordings as severe a treatment as I have the Metropolitan's new productions over the same period of time, he might have real grounds for complaint. 4) No comment. Mr. Schonberg can handle himself.

Now. Apart from the dubious validity of most of these points, and their very tenuous connection with anything I've ever said, in print or otherwise, there is the interesting fact that not one of them goes head-on to meet objections raised in my review on aesthetic grounds. They deal with my presumed transgressions or attitudes, or with the economic justifications for certain decisions; they quite precisely evade the artistic issues, against which Mr. Culshaw bumps fitfully and tangentially in his article, Mr. McClure not at all in his letter. These gentlemen simply declare themselves the point men of some operative advance patrol, and cannot imagine that objections to their work may be raised on specific aesthetic grounds, rather than as products of a frozen attitude.

If the record companies are all this fired up about charging off into a new operative sunrise, I've got three tough and serious suggestions to make:

1) Instead of encouraging and feeding on the premature exploitation of each and every loud young soprano, why not set up an industry-wide clearinghouse for such talent, for the purpose of steering it towards good teachers, level-headed managers, and the employers in the business who still have some human qualities glinting through the muck? Admittedly, it may for a time prove a bit harder to keep up with the planned-obsolescence cycle, based on extremely short catalogue life, off which the industry has been living. But in the long run, this is surely a wise capital investment.

2) What *about* the commissioning of works for the stereo medium? Why *not*? An original drama-through-song for the home music system. Perhaps not for legit voices, but for mike voices. Perhaps with a synthesized accompaniment, or extramusical sound track co-ordinated with the score. How about an industry-supported foundation to finance such projects?

3) How about an industry-supported workshop of the audio-visual arts, an open laboratory in which the artistic equivalent of "pure research" may take place, with composers, singers, instrumentalists, conductors, actors, dancers, playwrights, choreographers, scenarists, arrangers, directors, designers, artists, audio and video engineers—even a & r men and critics—experimenting creatively with any and all means

of combining tape and film (audio and video), and live performance towards the evolution of a new kind of lyric theatre? (But with entirely original material, of course.)

All three of these suggestions seem to me eminently sound, and full of potential. Considered as investments, any of them could enrich the industry many times over. But of course, they really *are* new, and do not sit particularly well with the financial short haul. So I suppose that the industry's idea of operatic modernity will continue to consist of slathering century-old stage works with irrelevant melodramatic sound effects.

If that's *nouvelle vague*, I'm Stanley Kubrick.

The Color of Sound

by Robert Long

THERE IS A PRESENCE in musical history that has stood in dim corners of the imagination, sometimes beckoning, sometimes impassive, but almost always wraithlike: elusive and indistinct, more felt than understood. Long before "pot" and "acid" took on their current vernacular meanings, it spooked composers as diverse as Jean Philippe Rameau and Olivier Messiaen into believing that there must be some relationship between our musical perceptions and our sense of visible color. And more recently it has assumed the proportions of a poltergeist within those halls sacred to the acid-rock ethos.

Are those who feel the presence and do its bidding deluded? Or are there intrinsic bonds between our perceptual faculties that would link the sensibilities, making natural partners of sound and color? Literal minds tend to reject the idea as an unscientific, if possibly charming, belief akin to spiritualism and astrology—though with it they must dismiss one of history's greatest scientists as a credulous fool. On the other hand mystical minds that seek unity under the heterogeneity of temporal experience will welcome a spirit veiled in a web of cross-relationships—though such an enveloping unity is hard to reconcile with the patently divergent manifestations defined by those who claim to see the vision.

Consider the matter of synesthesia. As usually defined these days, synesthesia is the perception of an effect by one of the five senses when another of the senses is stimulated, particularly the perception of visual effects in response to aural (usually musical) information. An older generation used the word "synaesthesia" as the generic term and called color responses to sound stimuli "chromaesthesia" or "color hearing."

Even today some physiologists say that synesthesia does not exist as an objective phenomenon, preferring to relegate it to the purview of

psychologists (or even parapsychologists). Still, music teachers, doctors, and clinical researchers have been statisticizing and describing synesthetic reactions for well over a century. Some have written detailed accounts of individual cases; others have theorized on the neurological principles by which one sense might interact with another; still others have tested sizable samplings of university students or other handy subject groups to determine the extent of synesthetic response.

Their methods of inquiry—and their results—vary widely. Some researchers have claimed that as much as sixty per cent of the population (or even ninety per cent if definitions are made loose enough) experience some sort of synesthetic reaction; others have put the figure as low as nine per cent. A median value might be fifteen to twenty per cent. Some have asserted that synesthetic response tends to be strongest among children or young adults. Some take olfactory responses as important; others limit themselves to color hearing. Some would allow any sort of associative response as synesthetic, even if the subject goes no further than mentioning the color blue when listening to the blues. Others concentrate on color responses that are both abstract and detailed.

But it is when specific reactions are classified and described that the most striking discrepancies appear. Given the same musical stimulation, some subjects will see images that relate to a song's text or other extramusical associations. Others will receive a vague, over-all color impression. ("I see that number as a sort of blue-green.") Still others will see specific, and specifically-colored, abstract shapes that change with the music. And so on. If one color predominates in the response of one subject, another subject may specify a radically different color. And while a particular piece of music may elicit the same response from a given "synesthete" even after an interval of several months, another may describe a very different response on second hearing.

On the basis of published studies, then, it would appear impossible to describe any single "system" governing the way in which sounds are transmuted into colors by human sensibilities. But that has not stopped a great many people from trying. Aristotle drew the basic parallel (in *De Sensu et sensibili*) between musical chords and harmonious combinations of colors. But most authors who have followed his lead have lapsed into relative oblivion. Only the concept—the presence—persists.

The concept persists above all in the idea that sound and light can be made to work together, assaulting the senses and touching the emotions in a way that either cannot alone. In its most extreme form it postulates that colored light can even form an exact analog of music and produce the same emotional response. Ignoring some earlier theorizers (like the sixteenth-century painter Archimboldo), the groundwork of the practical approach to music-plus-color was laid by Sir Isaac Newton, whose claims as primogenitor are recognized in several disciplines of modern science. Among these of course is color theory itself: Newton was the first to conceive that if a prism could split white light into a rainbow, then all the colors of the rainbow must be contained within the white light.

He also appears to be the first to assign color values to notes of the musical scale. The prime frequency relationship in musical harmonics is the 1:2 ratio of the octave, representing the difference between the

REPRESENTATIVE COLOR SCALES

Note	Newton 1700	Castel 1720-1735	Finn 1881	Lind* 1900	Maryon c. 1920
C	red	blue	red	259 Hz, red (476)	red
C#		sea green, blue-green	vermillion		red-orange
D	orange	green, bright green	orange	289 Hz, orange (511)	orange
D#		olive, yellow-green	yellow		orange-yellow
E	yellow	yellow	yellow-green	322 Hz, yellow (546)	yellow
F	green	apricot, yellow-orange, aurora	green	342 Hz, green (588)	yellow-green
F#		orange	blue-green		green
G	blue	red	turquoise blue	385 Hz, blue (630)	blue-green
G#		crimson	blue		blue
A	indigo	violet	indigo	427 Hz, indigo (665)	blue-violet
A#		agate, blue-violet, light purple	violet		violet
B	violet	indigo	purple	485 Hz, violet (721)	violet-red

It is interesting to note that only in the scale of Father Castel does the frequency of the light decrease as the frequency of the sound increases. The multiple color listings in his column may reflect slight alterations apparently made by Castel between publication of his basic theory and the detailing of practical principles for the organ scheme itself. (Others may be caused by equivocation over such words as "celadon," which Castel assigns to C sharp.) Among the other scales—all of which appear to be based on Newton—the small discrepancies in color values may be accounted for to some extent on the basis of the imprecision of color terminology (hence Lind's numerical specification of colors as explained in the footnote*). More important, however, are two somewhat antagonistic principles that influenced attempts to derive a color scale: the spacing of note assignments across the visible spectrum should be even as possible, without significant gaps and avoiding colors so closely contiguous that visual differentiation would be difficult; and the well-recognized "primary" colors should be fitted as much as possible to the whole-tone scale, with the in-between colors falling on the sharps and flats. Endless minor adjustments are possible in trying to attain these two ends simultaneously. The word "primary" is used in quotes here because of conflicting ideas about just what the primaries are. Theoreticians with experience as painters often took them to be red, yellow, and blue. Newton's primaries were contradicted by Goethe, who was criticized by Helmholtz for confusing additive with subtractive primaries. The well-recognized complementary triads of red, green, and blue for additive (light) colors and magenta, yellow, and cyan for subtractive (paint and ink) colors have established themselves only in the twentieth century.

* Lind presumably derived the full chromatic musical scale, though Klein, from whom this listing is reproduced, does not give the half tones. The first figure represents the pitch of the original tone, the second (in parentheses) the frequency characteristic of the light color. (For instance, the 546 listed for yellow would indicate a center frequency of 54.6 billion Hz for the band-pass characteristics of the yellow filter.) While all the light frequencies are specified in numbers that are evenly divisible by seven and Klein comments that the sound frequency given for G appears to have been altered from 388 to make it divisible by seven "for mystical reasons," the frequencies for D, F, and B are not. They could easily have been made so; larger changes are required in deriving a tempered scale from that of natural intervals and the consequent changes in pitch would have been discernible only to the most practiced of professional ears. Note that the A is well below the 440 that even Helmholtz, writing a quarter-century earlier, took as standard. Moreover, the color frequencies advance at a relatively even pace, while the sound-frequency intervals are of course uneven, allowing for the half steps between E and F, and B and C.

fundamental tone (first harmonic) and the first overtone (second harmonic). The frequencies of light within the compass of the visible spectrum also reflect this relationship since the highest (extreme violet) is very nearly twice the frequency of the lowest (extreme red). Hence the concept that ruled color-sound theory for two centuries from Newton's promulgation of it about 1700 right up to Rimington's work at the turn of the present century: that the spectrum could be fitted into the notes of the octave and repeated octave by octave over the range required for the music, and that the result—properly accomplished—would embody some sort of objective relationship between the music and the colors representing it.

The first practical instrument to make use of Newton's theory appears to have been that of Father Louis Bertrand Castel, a Jesuit priest, mathematician, and philosopher who was born in Montpellier in 1688. In 1720 he published *Musique en Couleurs*, which appears to have been no more than a theoretical treatment of the subject. In 1725 he announced in the *Mercur*e a project to build a color organ, the *clavessin oculaire* as he called it most frequently. A pilot model capable of playing only one note at a time and having a range of but a single octave was completed on December 21, 1734, and its operating principles were made public the following year.

A rambling description of the *clavessin oculaire* was published posthumously in *Esprits, Saillies et Singularités du Père Castel* (1763)—what we might call today *The Wit and Wisdom of Father Castel*—but here we enter somewhat difficult ground. The Reverend Father, in his expansiveness, is not altogether consistent in his description of the design. At times he writes of it as an instrument containing both the strings for making audible music and the mechanism for coloring the light of candle flames. Alternately he seems to be talking only of a color organ. And it is difficult at times to tell whether he is describing the single-octave model he produced or the full-keyboard (or perhaps even dual-manual) instrument he envisioned.

Be that as it may, the basic mechanism consisted of a cylinder surrounding the candle and enclosed in a slotted box. Ports in the cylinder were to be covered with tinted paper that cast an appropriately colored light through the slits when the cylinder revolved in response to keyboard action, lining up a port with a slit. Presumably whole ranks of these rudimentary color projectors would have to be built for the full-scale *clavessin*. Indeed, Castel expounds on the loveliness of seeing a *rigaudon* projected onto the tapestries while hearing the lilt of the music. A single candle glimmering through a paper-covered slit could hardly be expected to make much effect when used this way.

Although some writers have said that Castel built the organ he described, this appears not to be the case. Castel himself implies that such a task should be left to the mandolin makers rather than undertaken by a philosopher with higher matters on his mind. Nonetheless, his anonymous editor asserts that the inventor labored in vain during his remaining years to accomplish the feat. The *Musical Times* in 1815 makes reference to the public display of Castel's color organ but the instrument probably was either the pilot model or a subsequent realiza-

tion by other hands of Castel's scheme. Diderot described the *clavessin* in the *Grand Encyclopédie* of 1753, and one English commentator on Castel's design is said to have built and exhibited an instrument with Newtonian modifications. Color organs along those lines were built in France during the nineteenth century and later used for public entertainment at the Expositions Universelles.

Before leaving the subject of Castel altogether, mention must be made of his editor's comments on the *clavessin*. In a passage both prophetic and unusually succinct as a summation of the subject he says: "Is this thing basically possible? And from the demonstration that there are between colors proportions analogous to those of sounds does it follow that the color organ can affect the eye as the musical instrument affects the hearing, though the soul experiences from these two a sensation that is hardly equal? We doubt not that one might likewise demonstrate that odors and flavors are susceptible to a combination and a comparison similar to that of musical tones; must we therefore admit the possibility of a keyboard instrument for the sense of taste and another for the sense of smell?"

Castel's work appears to have aroused the interest of Rameau, Grétry, and perhaps Rousseau (who was a composer as well as a philosopher, of course) though there seems to be little evidence to suggest that any might have had first-hand familiarity with his *clavessin* itself. Newton continued to arouse interest too; his color theories prompted Goethe to some twenty years of labor on the subject, culminating in the *Farbenlehre* of 1810, considered by Goethe himself as his most important work. It is, however, only marginally concerned with color-sound correspondences.

From the Napoleonic era to the Second World War there appeared innumerable books and articles dealing with some aspect of the subject, from synesthesia through various schemes for audio-visual devices, to treatises on the possibilities of painting with light—often claiming it to be the new art form. But few have showed much staying power. The color scales of Guert Gunsevoort Finn and Edward Maryon (shown in the table) are derived from relatively obscure sources. But a book by A. B. Klein, published in the Thirties under various titles but usually referred to as *Colour-Music*, has become something of a standard text.

Among its most provocative statements is one quoted from a 1900 manuscript written by E. G. Lind, a Baltimore architect: "And here I would remark that only very recently, it has been discovered that when the colored light of the solar spectrum is cast upon worsteds placed in a vessel convenient to receive the rays, sound will be emitted, louder or fainter according to the color of the rays directed upon them, the green ray upon the red worsted, or the red upon the green worsted, giving the most powerful sounds, thus demonstrating that colored sounds are not so speculative after all."

The most interesting of the remaining major works on the subject unquestionably are those by public practitioners of the art. A. Wallace Rimington, professor of fine arts at Queens College, London, was such a one. His color organ, completed in 1893, was built along Newton/Castel lines in that colors were the same from octave to octave, the difference in

each octave being one of brightness, with darker colors in the lower range and brighter colors above. He did not conceive of an objective music-light relationship, however; that is, he considered the assignment of a particular color to a particular note to be arbitrary and, apparently unlike Castel, did not expect that a musical composition played on the color organ would produce a visual effect comparable to the aural effect of the music.

The earliest public concert on record using his instrument was one (possibly a series) he played with an orchestra in St. James Hall in 1895. According to Klein, the audience found that music and light enhanced each other. But most subsequent performances took place in Rimington's studio before an invited audience. The cause of this inertia, perhaps, was that his equipment was extremely bulky, using an organ console and a series of fourteen arc lamps that required a power source capable of delivering 150 amperes. The lamps projected through filters onto a fabric hanging that Rimington would arrange in careful folds to catch the colors precisely as he wanted.

By the time that Rimington's book appeared in 1911, Alexander Scriabin appears already to have heard of his color organ; Scriabin's *Prometheus: A Poem of Fire*—still the only work of a major composer specifying a part for color organ in the score—was conceived with Rimington's instrument in mind, though composition was completed by 1910.

Scriabin's sense of the relationships between color and sound was far more complex than any we have mentioned so far. In the first place he was a mystic, who perceived abstruse influences where others might be aware only of naked facts. Between the completion of *Prometheus* and his death on April 27, 1915, he grew increasingly concerned with total involvement of the audience's faculties, trying to create musical, visual, and even olfactory imagery that would convey his vision.

Furthermore, he made strong connections between keys (as well as individual notes) and colors, as have a number of other composers. In the comparison between his correspondences and those of Rimsky-Korsakov, shown on the next page, it is interesting to note the many similarities—as well as the contrary view they take of both A major and F major. Beethoven is credited with having described one key as black. Arthur Bliss—whose *Colour Symphony* has four movements, each devoted to a different color and its associations—always experienced color sensations while composing (though the dissonance of the *Colour Symphony* makes any key-color relationships problematical). Like Bliss and Scriabin, Messiaen has expressed elaborate sensory and mystical correspondences. Conductor Serge Koussevitzky, a sometime friend of Scriabin's, once told British musicologist Percy Scholes, "Surely for everybody sunlight is C major and cold colors are minors. And F sharp is decidedly strawberry red." Hardly a confirmation of Scriabin's view.

The importance of *Prometheus* to the present subject is that it marks the high point—or perhaps the last great manifestation—of the concept that there are precise and fairly objective correlations possible between music and color. Although he moved toward a more flexible view in the last years of his life, Scriabin has left an elaborate account of the effects

he wanted from the color organ. The score itself has the organ part written out in standard notation. It may be some index of the capabilities of Rimington's organ that there are nowhere more than two notes indicated at any one time and that many of the notes are sustained for bars at a time, even though the orchestral material is moving much more rapidly.

Specific colors were assumed for each note of the color-organ part (C is red, D is yellow, and so on, analogous to Scriabin's own key-color correspondences). Though there is some disagreement on the point today, this arrangement was followed in the first full performance of the work, played by the Russian Symphony Society under Modest Altschuler in Carnegie Hall on May 20, 1915—less than a month after Scriabin's death. Sir Henry Wood had conducted the work in 1914, but without a color organ; a performance with Rimington and his instrument was planned for 1915, but World War I caused its cancellation. Rimington's name is linked to a performance of the work in 1916, and there have been several in the Soviet Union more recently (the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* to the contrary notwithstanding). But the most significant—and mysterious—surely was Altschuler's.

He and the Russian Symphony had collaborated with Scriabin during the composer's U.S. tour as a pianist in 1906 and 1907, though the two drifted apart in the intervening years and, according to Faubion Bowers, Scriabin's biographer, there is no hint in the correspondence that Scriabin was consulted during preparations for the 1915 concert. Since Scriabin never returned to the U.S. after 1907 (two years before he began writing *Prometheus*), it is difficult to understand the persistent story that he worked with the Chicago Edison Company in developing a transportable color organ that was used in Carnegie Hall. Scriabin was in Chicago during his tour and did conceive some ideas for the work while he was there; but the instrument used by Altschuler was designed by Preston S. Miller and built by the Electrical Testing Laboratories in New York, using lamps made by General Electric for the purpose.

The organ had a short keyboard the keys of which were fitted with

MUSICAL KEYS AND COLOR

Key	Rimsky-Korsakov	Scriabin
C major	white	red
G major	brownish-gold, bright	orange-rose
D major	yellow, sunny	yellow, brilliant
A major	rosy, clear	green
E major	blue, sapphire, sparkling	bluish-white
B major	somber, dark blue shot with steel	
F sharp major	greyish-green	bright blue
D flat major	dusky, warm	violet
A flat major	greyish-violet	purple-violet
E flat major	dark, gloomy, bluish-grey	steel color with
B flat major	_____	metallic luster
F major	green	red

contacts in a low-voltage DC circuit. When a key was pressed, closing its contacts, the DC triggered a relay that in turn closed the 110-volt AC circuit to one of the projector lamps, whose filaments were specially formed for this use. Each lamp was fitted with a filter—the C projector had one of ruby glass, the others of colored gelatin enclosed in clear glass—and threw its tinted light onto a gauze screen of varying textures. The entire projector assembly was made to rotate back and forth through 180 degrees, moving the patches of colored light back and forth on the screen to take advantage of the textures.

Some doubt has been expressed about the operation of the projector. One story has it that the projector sputtered and broke down early in the performance, and *Prometheus* was completed without benefit of visual effects. It has even been suggested that the projector was found unsuitable before the concert and never used publicly. But neither account appears to be accurate. Esther Mipaas, whose recently prepared manuscript for a book dealing with the entire field of color organs has not yet been published, says that contemporary evidence confirms the use—if not the unqualified success—of the color organ in the 1915 concert.

Its color effects may have been somewhat vague by comparison to the more controlled light from the Rimington equipment. On the basis of critical reviews, Bowers has described the color organ as a failure; but he adds, "When it comes to color and light everyone *expects* to be knocked off their seats and that doesn't often happen. Besides *any* realization of an idea must fall short of expectations." Considering the cosmic prose in which Scriabin had described the effects he wanted ("tongues of flame," "fountains of fire," "lightning bursts"), it is indeed hard to see how a performance of *Prometheus* could match the ideal.

After the First World War, experimentation began afresh—but with a difference. New technology was fast opening up a vast array of techniques impossible before the war, and those who used them almost invariably abandoned the attempt to construct a literal translation of music in the new visual vocabulary. In concert work, two figures dominated the postwar period: Mary Hallock Greenwalt and Thomas Wilfred.

Mrs. Greenwalt was a concert pianist who demonstrated her first color organ at a recital in Philadelphia's Egyptian Hall in 1912 and was active well into the Thirties. Her book on the subject, *Nourathar*, published in 1947, reveals her as extremely mystical and somewhat embittered in her struggle for recognition. Edith J. R. Isaacs, reviewing the book in the *New York Times*, divides the objects of her complaints into four categories: untalented or imitative competitors, the Electrical Stage Worker's Union, sycophantic patent attorneys who sacrifice an individual's rights in favor of big business, and greedy big business itself. As for the mysticism, the following passage from *Nourathar* speaks for itself: "Even the play of expression on a face cannot pretend to reach the fields that Nourathar [defined as the art of light-color painting] may and does exploit. In it we grasp the centre of centres. To explore such innermosts within the being's face, his flesh; there where these hitch-on-to-kernels of the Universe, through the light that helped

make him—this is the purpose of this work and its writing about here.”

Thomas Wilfred may have been one of the imitators that Mrs. Greenwalt had in mind, though from contemporary accounts his color-organ concerts must have been extremely effective. He was born Richard Edgar Növström in Denmark in 1889 and died in 1968 in Nyack, New York. He too was trained as a professional musician and came to this country immediately after the war as a lutenist and singer.

His first concert on the Clavilux—the name he gave to several color-organ designs of varying complexity—was in January 1922 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. In the years that followed he toured as a concert performer on the Clavilux. During these concerts and in his later regular performances at New York's Grand Central Palace it was the light show, featuring his own compositions for the instrument, that was pre-eminent, though he sometimes combined light with music—as did Mrs. Greenwalt.

It must be understood that neither her instrument nor the Clavilux was an organ in the sense of having a conventional keyboard. The banks of controls on the largest Clavilux contained an admixture of dimmers and mechanical devices. The instrument could project a wide variety of abstract shapes, causing them to move and alter their forms at the performer's bidding. Some forms were the result of specially shaped filaments in lamps that Wilfred had ordered built to his specification. Specific lantern-slide images could be projected and altered as well. Overall colors could be laid in as a background and modulated in various ways. The imagery—both abstract and concrete—and the rhythms and interplay with which they were handled produced in many viewers an emotional reaction as satisfying as that experienced from aural music, and enthusiastic applause followed many compositions.

Wilfred apparently made only one sally into the big-time musical concert field. In 1926 he appeared at Carnegie Hall with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, in a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. Reactions to that concert were mixed. While individual effects appear to have been extremely effective, many in the audience found the color projections to some extent an intrusion into the prescribed concert-hall experience.

Stokowski's other major foray into the area where color and music overlap was of course *Fantasia*. Many other films could be cited as well, some dating from much earlier. Artists as eminent as Fernand Léger and Man Ray worked in the medium, combining music with moving images. So did Len Lye in this country and Norman McLaren at the Canadian National Film Board. And in 1965 a color film of Scriabin's *Prometheus* was made in the U.S.S.R.

By now the field has been split into three main areas of endeavor: unique lighting performances that aim at the greatest expressiveness, usually in conjunction with music; relatively “canned” or mechanized audio-visual displays of one sort or another; and lighting effects and devices totally (and electronically) controlled by music.

The great bulk of performances in the first category are associated with rock music and are often dismissed as “psychedelic lighting

effects." Considering the ingenuity, the flair, and the devotion that is lavished on the medium by such light artists as Thomas Shoemsmith, Rudi Stern, Jackie Cassen, and a number of others, relegation of their work to the category of ephemeral frills is grossly unfair. Shoemsmith, for example, describes his use of color projections as a response to the music, its performance, and the audience. He seeks to complement the music, rather than mimic it; and the emotional reactions that control his hand at the projection equipment are influenced not only by basic musical content but by the way the individual performance is going. Like a Broadway actor, his sense of audience reaction helps to determine the precise way he articulates his basic material. And like a jazz musician, he chooses repetitive patterns when the musical action is most interesting, saving his most telling effects for music that is relatively static.

While he is associated with the Joshua Light Show and Fillmore East, he was (with Bill Schwarzbach) the light artist of Hilde Somer's mixed-media Scriabin piano recital in New York's Alice Tully Hall on December 17, 1969, and of a more recent concert in Miami, Florida. Scriabin again! Although he was born a Capricorn, his music is making a big bid for a comeback in the age of Aquarius—largely because of his interest in color and in the involvement of the total consciousness. *Prometheus* has received four major performances recently in this country: one in Rochester using light effects designed by Alex Yshakoss with technical assistance from the Eastman Kodak Company; one with the New York Philharmonic under Ozawa and lighting by Peter Wexler; a third by the Yale Symphony Orchestra in New Haven with lighting, perfumes, smoke effects, and even special silver tunics to be worn by the audience, all provided by the Yale Environmental Design Program and Richard Gould; and finally a pair of performances at the Edwardsville campus of Southern Illinois University with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra under Walter Susskind and lighting by the Electric Rainbow. The effect of the New Haven performance was described (once again by Faubion Bowers, writing in the *Village Voice*) this way: "People jumped to their feet, cheering, clamoring, whistling, stomping. . . . It was a massive mixture of high art, high spirits, high-mindedness, and a high time for everyone. This was what the music is all about—the opening of the senses to enjoyment. As Scriabin would phrase it, 'To the new . . . ever the new.'"

The second class of contemporary music-and-light phenomena is huge, diverse, and—since it overlaps both creative light shows and automatic devices for generating color effects directly from music—exceedingly vague in its outlines. The mechanically produced audio-visual presentations that are a feature of everything from "Expos" to white sales these days are not particularly new, however. The color organs used at the French Expositions Universelles have been mentioned already; P. T. Barnum owned a similar unit built by Bainbridge Bishop of Essex County, New York, and appears to have used it both in his Bridgeport home and in the circus. Such undertakings sired an endless race of "dancing waters" displays tintured with colored lights and brass band or amplified orchestra at just about every world's fair within memory. During the Twenties and Thirties, color organs of sorts entertained along

with the Wurlitzer between features at movie palaces, and spawned cretin offspring in the gaudy juke boxes of the Forties and Fifties. The examples—and the variations—are endless.

Much more interesting are the many devices in the third class—usually, and inexactly, called color organs—that seek to derive color displays directly from music. Mrs. Greenwalt invented “a device for playing color in connection with talking-machine records” (Fenn Germer, an associate of Wilfred’s, writing in *Musical America* in 1926). Since the device is differentiated from her color organ, it might perhaps be the prototype of the automatic-color instruments used today. But how it managed to do so in the days before modern circuitry—indeed, on the eve of electrical recording itself—is hard to imagine.

The current boom began with the Los Angeles high fidelity shows of the early Sixties, at which a “color organ” was used as a promotional display. That device, which was the direct antecedent of most of the equipment of its type available for purchase today, looked like an audio amplifier. And essentially it was a three-channel amplifier fed by a three-way crossover network. The network divided the audio fed to it into the usual three bands (bass, midrange, and treble). The amplifier section for each band drove lights of one color or another, the intensity of a particular color depending on the loudness of the music in the corresponding frequency band.

The only major changes that have overtaken this type of equipment recently are the shift from standard lighting fixtures to light-display boxes looking a little like loudspeaker systems with some sort of diffusing or diffracting translucent cover instead of a grille cloth, and the introduction of gating circuits that cause a sharp on/off action to the lights instead of the fading and brightening of the earliest model. A classic example of this gating technique was its use by the Canadian National Film Board in the Labyrinth pavilion at Expo '67. An unusually wide variety of equipment for generating color effects is available from Edmund Scientific Corporation. Among those companies selling consumer color organs in the narrower sense are Eico, Bowman Leisure Industries Corporation, The Psychedelic Shak, APM Enterprises, Benjamin Electronic Sound, Allied Radio Shack, Castle Lighting, Curtis-Electro Lighting, Olson Radio, Creative Leisure, ATC Electronics, Wald Sound, CesCo Research, and several others.

What colors represent which frequency bands? That’s a matter that each manufacturer works out for himself. As if to sum up the situation, a representative of one of these manufacturers once pointed to a four-band unit flashing red at high frequencies, yellow in the mid-highs, green in the mid-bass, and blue in the lowest register and said that though he has the same unit at home, he has reversed the order of the bulbs. “Deep bass is warm to me,” he said, “and the high frequencies cool. Anybody can change these things around so that they work best for whoever’s doing the looking. But they do work. I don’t care about why they work; I just know that when I’m listening with that thing turned on I get an extra feeling out of the music—an extra element that isn’t there when it’s turned off.”

In other words—and in spite of the direct cause-and-effect relation-

ship between music and light display—we can't say that these devices represent any more of an immutable relationship between sound and color than Father Castel's color organ did. Perhaps their function, like that of every successful experiment in the field, is to turn the consciousness back upon itself by assaulting two or more senses simultaneously with related material, much as we comprehend a man's meaning from both the expression in his voice and that on his face.

In discussing with me my plans for this article—then almost complete—Esther Mipaas exclaimed, "But you're omitting so much: everything that happened in Eastern Europe. . . ." She is kind. There are literally dozens of names in my notes that have not found their way into the article; and many avenues of inquiry, while piquing my curiosity, had to be abandoned as beyond its scope. Because this represents all too brief and personal an overview, I'm indebted to Mrs. Mipaas for her comments on the manuscript. Anyone who has dipped into this fascinating subject can only hope that her book—presently titled *The Electronic Media: the Art of Light*—will appear soon.

With that, let me end (as Germer begins) by quoting from the last act of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*:

*But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.—Unite!
See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.*

Everyman's Guide to Discmanship

by Patrick J. Smith

I SUPPOSE that every record collector who possesses a library of a hundred discs or more is prey to that fever akin to love which takes the form of The Special Favorite Record. The Special Favorite Record is the one that the collector will produce and play on an evening when he most wants to impress his listener: it is an album handled with a care more exquisite than that bestowed on any ordinary recording, and which is served with the same ceremony as its owner would employ were he uncorking a 1947 claret. To a record collector the mere decision to listen to a Special Favorite can improve the quality of the entire day.

Most often The Special Favorite Record is not one that a panel of eminent critics would choose as a Great Recording of the Century. The very fact that so many people have agreed on the merit of a Great Recording somehow dims its attraction: the collector wants his Special Favorite to be his alone. A Beethoven sonata played by Schnabel has been elevated to a plateau too austere and remote. Yes, it is great, acknowledges the collector; yes, it may be definitive (this said with a trace of acidity); but let me play you *this* recording of the Opus 111. It may not have quite the same insight or even the control, but it does have a certain indefinable something.

Since that "certain indefinable something" is so subject to the whims of each individual collector, it is as elusive to analyze as love itself. Nonetheless, the Special Favorite does fall into several definable categories. This is so, I suspect, because however much the collector may persuade himself that he is enraptured with his Special Favorite solely by reason of its musical values, outside influences will have intruded (as they always do) to affect his choice. Thus, the first and largest of these

categories of Special Favorites is comprised of those records that are out of print. The sight of the Black Diamond in the Schwann catalogue seems to act as an immediate activator of the collector's love-gland; the disc that last month had been but one of a hundred is now prized as a unique treasure. This tendency-to-make-a-Special-Favorite-out-of-an-ordinary-out-of-print-performance (the Germans would have a wonderful word for it!) is accentuated when the black-diamonded item is the only recording of the work available—or even better, when it is the sole recorded example of a given composer's work. A gleam comes into the collector's eye; if he owns the record, he puts it aside to be cherished as a precious object; if he does not have it, he spends time out of all proportion ransacking dusty shops for a stray copy. In the days after Angel deleted its recording of Gounod's *Mireille* and before it could be imported on the Pathé label, I nosed all over New York and beyond for a set, locating, in a shop in Quebec, what I confidently believed was the last available copy in the Western Hemisphere. Please do not disabuse me. The plain fact is that the recording, though a good solid performance of that lovely and neglected opera, is hardly a great or a definitive one, yet while I was searching it out, it could have been a recording of Bach himself at the organ.

A truly crafty addict of the Special Favorite will do his best to obviate the capriciousness of record company a & r men by buying a second copy of a Special Favorite so that when the first one wears out he will be partly protected from the depredations of Black Diamond Rot. This approach, however, only succeeds when the Special Favorite is nominated before the Black Diamond appears. Although my recording of Roussel's Third and Fourth Symphonies (Ansermet/Orchestre de la Suisse Romande) might be included in the charmed circle today, I doubt that it would have achieved this distinction before the Black Diamond appeared.

A second category of Special Favorites is comprised of records that inspire their owner to imagine that he is engaged in a crusade of private discernment against collective opinion. The appeal of a recording for which a collector merely has a mild liking may be greatly enhanced—enhanced to the point of Special Favoritism—if it has been ill treated by the critics or by his musical friends. Its appeal may be even greater if it has been entirely dismissed by them as totally eccentric. Performances by Wilhelm Furtwängler often fall into this category. I have a friend who thinks that the highly individualistic account of the *Eroica* by Hermann Scherchen (Scherchen/Vienna State Opera Orchestra) is the finest imaginable reading of that Beethoven symphony—and every snicker at its accelerated tempos only makes him cherish it the more. I myself feel that Toscanini was at his most consistently inspired not in German or even Italian music, but in French music. His recording of the Saint-Saëns Third Symphony appeals to me far more than any other I've ever heard, including those by French conductors. Whether my liking of that recording alone led me to the general conclusion, I don't know (I would of course say that it didn't); but among my Special Favorites are Toscanini's performances of the *Mignon* Overture and the Suite No. 1 from *Carmen*. And I regard as a Special Favorite his recording of Act II of that

"French" opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* by that "Freneman" Gluck.

Another class of the Special Favorite is that of works considered "owned" by certain performers. Of course, what works are "owned" by whom can be the subject of endless and vituperative debate, but—aside from Beecham's "Lollipops," for which he clearly holds the patent—two examples would be Sir Thomas and the Beethoven Second Symphony and Walter Gieseking and the Debussy Preludes. What is even more interesting than a debate on the works "owned," however, is the dispute that occurs when a musician re-records an "owned" work at a later date. Which version is more "owned"? Which is the Special Favorite? More often than not it will be the first recording, since that has a prior claim on the collector's heart. Collectors of Bruno Walter records can have magnificent fur-flying contests over this problem—contests which end in an elaborate and usually misinformed quarrel about the quality of the recording itself or the playing of the orchestra. If Herbert von Karajan lives to re-record the Beethoven cycle three or four more times, the ensuing debates could become cosmic.

The most cherished of all the Special Favorite records, however, belong to none of the above categories. They are brought out at the very end of the evening, after such others as, in my case, the Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto (Curzon/Knappertsbusch/Vienna Philharmonic) or the Columbia recording of Richter's *Pictures at an Exhibition* have been played and digested. These final additions to the program are the discs reserved for the most precious moments with the closest of friends. And they too have extramusical attractions, for their classification as Special Favorites comes from the fact that they cannot be found in Schwann or any other catalogue. They are the "clandestine" records, special because of their rarity as well as their extra-legality: one-shot pressings of live performances, or pressings of tapes or masters of music rolls pirated from some archive somewhere. To a person uninitiated in the cult of The Special Favorite Record these items may seem amateurish, or full of the dust and noise of age and wear, or just plain boring. But heaven help him if he tells the collector so. When listening to these Special Favorites there can be no debate or criticism: one misjudged word and the collector is an enemy for life.

These recordings are of the type, say, of a performance of *Götterdämmerung* by the Lapland Symphony Orchestra conducted by Wilfred Lapp, an undiscovered genius at Wagner who gave up conducting at age twenty-five to milk reindeer, and starring two unknowns who also gave up music for more profitable careers but who infused Siegfried and Brünnhilde, on that night, with a freshness of voice and essence of characterization that Wagner himself only dreamed of. Of course, the collector will tell you, the performance was live, in the Lapp Town Hall in the middle of a midwinter gale and a flu epidemic (hence the periodic rattling of the roof and hacking coughs), and was engineered by Wilfred's brother, a fisherman (hence the fading out for stretches and the prominence of the tuba, which was next to the microphone), but the performance that emerges! This type of recording is helped if Birgit Nilsson is heard in her first recorded appearance as one of the Norns, or even as one of the female chorus in the Second Act. "Can't you hear her,

can't you hear her?" the collector will ask, excitedly, turning up the volume to full crackle-and-pop. "The silver voice floating above them all: that's Birgit Nilsson!"

There is no cure for the devotee of the Special Favorite, just as there is no cure for falling in love. And while he may add to his collection, the collector will remain faithful to his old Special Favorites too. His friends should only smile, and listen politely, and prepare their own Special Favorites to play for him when he comes over. It may be revenge, but such revenge is indeed sweet.

Gran'pa's Talking Machine

by Oliver Berliner

MY FATHER'S GIFT for recollection is responsible for my lifelong illusion that I knew my grandfather, Emile Berliner, who invented the microphone, the gramophone player and disc, and the first practical system for mass producing the last. It is a fantasy that is very real to me even though Gran'pa died when I was but two months old. Like the son who had heard so many details of his parents' wedding that he knows he must have attended, I feel I know this formal-looking gentleman of middle height whose German-accented English and pince-nez imparted a tutorial mien. He affected a stiff starched collar and string bow tie all his life, the natural accouterments of any European American who had made his mark in life and upon society.

Perhaps I should start with my father's recollections of his brother, Herbert. Uncle Herbert was head of Canada's Compo Company (Decca). Prior to that he was head of Berliner Gramophone Company of Montreal. But Gran'pa grew perturbed when Gramophone began losing money, so he brought in a younger son, Edgar, my future father, recently graduated from MIT, who had worked summers at the Company. My dad quickly discovered that under present management the firm had grown fat, wasteful (the secretaries had secretaries), and complacent. Herbert resented being supplanted by this slip of a lad. He placed spies in the company. They arranged to make him carbon copies of my father's correspondence while he, Herbert, sewed up the Canadian rights to the competitive Decca catalogue and left Gran'pa's employment.

Berliner Gramophone prospered, became Victor Talking Machine Company and ultimately RCA Victor. My father had the unique distinction of being president of all three successive firms. My dad's only regret was that he never got to do any mechanical engineering. About the time

that RCA acquired Victor, he married his secretary, resigned, begat me (May 29, 1929), and, having done more than enough, retired. But now I'm ahead of my story.

Emil (he added the final "e" in America) Berliner was born in Hannover, Germany, on May 20, 1851, and emigrated to a new life in the New World via the *Hammonia* on April 27, 1870, at the age of nineteen. He had little in his pockets and scant knowledge of English—especially as articulated in New York where the ship docked. Fascinated by electricity, he spent his evenings studying at Cooper Union, supporting himself as a dry goods clerk.

Soon it was 1876 and his new land was celebrating its centennial with an exposition in Philadelphia. There an obscure, Nova-Scotia-born Scot by the name of Alexander Graham Bell was experiencing great disappointment at the lack of public interest in his invention, which he called the telephone.

Then came the day the president of Brazil, though weary from wandering through the endless exhibits, insisted to his aides that he be permitted to examine the telephone. His exclamation ("My God, it talks!") and the ensuing hullabaloo got Bell the attention he had been praying for. The telephone was launched.

The instantaneous acceptance of telephony kindled the interest of other inventors of the era, most famous of whom was Thomas Alva Edison. He recognized that the major defect in the telephone was what Bell referred to as the transmitter—the piece into which one spoke—since it could transmit only short distances. Edison was not alone. Emile Berliner already was attempting to build an improved telephone that would eliminate this inherent flaw.

On April 14, 1877, when he was not yet twenty-six years old, Emile Berliner filed with the patent office his "caveat"—a device by which the patent office allowed inventors to stake out claims to the areas they were working on in advance of a formal patent application—covering a battery-operated loose-contact transmitter. It used a principle that passed the limits of scientific credibility at the time—electrical contacts that don't actually make contact yet carry the necessary current.

Being penniless, Emile Berliner prepared his own caveat, but its accuracy and completeness permitted it to withstand subsequent legal attacks from powerful forces.

Later the Bell System purchased my grandfather's invention, but misfortune was to strike the Bell-Berliner interests. The prestigious Western Union Telegraph Company, relying on the microphone patent of Thomas Edison, sued. But by 1879 Western Union conceded the validity of the Bell-Berliner patents on advice of legal and technical counsel and abandoned its telephone activities, paving the way for the Bell System to become the giant it is today.

Even today, after untold numbers of refinements, every telephone in the world uses the loose-contact principle. How did it come about? Well, Gran'pa used to hang around a fire station where his chum Alvin Richards would let him practice on a spare telegraph key.

"No, no," said Richards one day, "you have to press harder; otherwise they won't get the message at the other end."

"You mean, if I press harder more current flows?" queried Emile.

"That's right. In fact, because women don't have the strength we can't use 'em as telegraph operators."

This was the secret of turning mechanical energy of varying intensity into electrical signals, and my grandfather rushed to his attic flat to try it out. That's how, while trying to invent a new kind of telephone, my grandfather created the microphone—a perfect example of serendipity.

Incredibly, the patent issue was not easily resolved. A score of years later the courts were compelled to settle the matter. A group of Southern senators had been attempting for years to establish their own candidate as the microphone's inventor. In the most momentous patent case ever before it, with Mr. Justice Brewer presiding, the Supreme Court swept the interferences aside for all time and declared Emile Berliner the true and sole inventor of the microphone. Simultaneously, the Court ruled that Edison had filed his patent for a nearly identical design (using carbon granules, the commonest form of loose-contact microphone over the years)—but two weeks too late. The once penniless boy from Hannover received the recognition that had so long eluded him.

Ever wonder what a man gets for an invention of this magnitude? Well, my father couldn't tell me for certain. American sources say he got \$50,000 from the Bell System. The Canadians say he got \$100,000, which was pretty big money in 1878 and even today. Deutsche Grammophon, which Gran'pa later founded, insists he received \$75,000.

Before leaving the old country he'd been advised never to trust those strange Americans: always take cash. Had he not heeded that sage advice—had he taken AT&T stock instead—the value of his estate today, or even at the time of his death in 1929, would of course have been astronomical.

By the time my grandfather had reached an agreement with the Bell people, Thomas Edison was introducing a device which he called the phonograph. The cylinder phonograph's rise to popularity was meteoric, and eventually the theatrical stars of the day flocked to Edison's studio to make recordings. But they were dismayed when they learned that the mediocre technical quality of those early cylinder masters was even further diluted by the fact that there was no mass duplication. Artists were compelled to make innumerable cylinders of the same melodies in order to satisfy the demand for the more popular numbers.

Enter Emile Berliner a decade after his invention of the microphone. Realizing that there had to be a way to mass produce recordings and to make the quality of the copies equal to that of the originals, he came up with the flat disc record and player in 1887 and applied for a patent on September 26. He called the device the *gramophone*, from the Latin meaning "sound of letters," more or less. Gran'pa established the Berliner Gramophone Company in Philadelphia, and the record business as we know it was launched. Just as with the microphone, my grandfather's disc—though much improved today—is basically as he conceived it. Unchanged too is his method of pressing millions of copies from a single master. Here for the first time was truly low-cost professional entertainment for the home, which as Gran'pa observed, ". . . taught the plowboy to whistle grand opera." Perhaps, however, this was Gran'pa's way of

showing his disdain for the Gay Nineties newsman who likened the sound from his gramophone to "the braying of a wild ass."

Again, the awesome specter of Thomas Edison loomed on Emile Berliner's horizon. Edison sued Gran'pa, claiming that the disc was stolen from the cylinder, and obtained an injunction prohibiting my grandfather from making gramophones and records. The court, however, eventually declared that the disc did not infringe. (In 1878 Edison had experimented with a disc version of his tinfoil phonograph, but the experiments were not successful.) Emile Berliner was vindicated, and eventually the cylinder was relegated to office dictation purposes.

Edison's strategy hurt Gran'pa financially while the injunction was in effect. But he had a strategy of his own. Though he was enjoined from manufacturing there was nothing to prevent him from licensing someone *else* to make his products. So he arranged for a machinist across the Delaware River in Camden, New Jersey, to produce discs and players. Eldridge Johnson had been making clockwork spring motors to power the gramophones, and now he was to make everything. By the time of Gran'pa's court victory and simultaneous financial ruin, Johnson was getting rich. The Berliner Gramophone Company never surfaced in this country again though the Canadian company continued under that name. Instead, Johnson acquired the Berliner Gramophone assets and a partner—Emile Berliner. To celebrate the court victory, Johnson called his new company the Victor Talking Machine Company.

At least this is the accepted origin of the name, though I have heard others. Johnson's secretary, Robert Hathaway, has written to Robert W. Wythes of the Camden County Historical Society that Johnson chose the name in honor of a brand of bicycle that he admired—but didn't own. (One wonders about the consequences had he admired Columbia bicycles!) There also is a story that Johnson's general manager, Leon F. Douglass, asked Johnson to name the company after Douglass' wife, Victoria.

My dad loved to tell us of the board meetings presided over by the new record tycoon. Whenever possible, Mr. Johnson would hold them on his yacht (and they said that a man who works with his hands can never make it big). All the directors from the American and Canadian companies would gather on board. After lunch one day, the steward passed out cigars and just as everyone was about to light up, Mr. Johnson stopped them, saying, "It'd be criminal to ruin such beautiful cigars by smoking them out on deck." So he asked the steward to pass some cheaper "outdoor" cigars. They turned out to be Corona Coronas. Price: \$1.00 . . . in 1925!

In 1900, prior to his tribulations, my grandfather had been visiting his British affiliate, then known as The Gramophone Co. Ltd. Today it's the behemoth Electric & Musical Industries (EMI). In May of 1899, British Gramophone had been paid a visit by an obscure artist and photographer named Francis Barraud, who'd painted an amusing portrait of his dog listening to a cylinder phonograph. He wanted The Gramophone Company to supply him with a player so that he could substitute its shiny brass horn for the black japanned horn of the Edison machine. At the insistence of Barry Owen, the company's American-born managing director, he borrowed—and painted in—not only the horn but the player

and a Gramophone record as well. Later that year Owen bought the picture and its copyright for £100. Gran'pa saw reproductions of the painting in British record shops. Realizing its true promotional potential (no one-track-minded inventor-type he) my grandfather returned to the U.S.A. and on July 10, 1900, "His Master's Voice" was officially born as a trademark.

Barraud went on to paint many copies of his original. Nipper, the dog, who had passed away in 1895, was given belated honors at a mulberry tree under which he was already buried on Eden Street, Kingston-on-Thames. Though excavation failed to confirm the historic site, Nipper's real memorial surely is as part of one of the world's most famous trademarks.

The original hangs in the EMI board room, insured for a million pounds or so. If you stand at the proper angle you can see, beneath the gramophone, the outline of the old cylinder machine—or phonograph. The primary reason why Edison erroneously gets credit for the *disc* is that in France and the Americas people mistakenly refer to disc players as phonographs, whereas the British and the rest of the world correctly call them by Gran'pa's word: gramophone.

Public acceptance of the disc was good. But at first major artists were less than enthusiastic. It was not until five years after its advent that they were to begin making discs. An up-and-coming Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso, agreed to make some in 1902. He and the gramophone then moved from one triumph to another, and soon almost every major artist of the era was represented on disc.

Although British Gramophone had first access to the "His Master's Voice" trademark, it took them eight years of featuring their "recording angel" (used by Angel Records today) before they bowed to the weight of public opinion and adopted Nipper. On the other hand, Gran'pa took out a U.S. patent on the trademark in 1900 and began using it at once. Deutsche Grammophon, which had been showing Nipper on its issues for the German domestic market—though all ties with the English and American companies had been severed by World War I—sold the trademark to competitor Electrola (controlled by EMI) in 1949 in part to settle a dispute over ownership of the German rights.

By that time another calamity had struck the record industry (and Emile Berliner)—radio, followed by the fantastic costs of conversion to electrical recording and the stock market crash of 1929. Radio brought forth another immigrant lad—this one from Russia. It was the sinking of the *Titanic* on her maiden voyage from England to New York in 1912 that nearly sank the record business in its wake.

Young David Sarnoff was a nighttime wireless operator for the Marconi Company. He was the only man on land to receive the *Titanic*'s distress signals. The fame that he won for his part in the rescue operation led eventually to a managership in a then fledgling company called Radio Corporation of America, a patent-pool venture championed by Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt just after World War I and participated in by electrical giants Westinghouse, General Electric, and AT&T.

Trouble was, both Davie and RCA were short on radio manufacturing

know-how, reputation, distribution, and even plant facilities. But they were long on nerve, money, and Wall Street connections. And there before them was the sleeping giant—Victor Records—with its prestige, trademark, retail outlets, factories, skill, and showmanship. In 1929, RCA acquired the Victor Talking Machine Company of the United States and Canada, taking with them the North and South American rights to the terrier named Nipper.

Gran'pa had years earlier gone into retirement, the recipient of numerous awards and accolades. A modest man, however, he let Edison have the glory, although he later admitted that his modesty had been a mistake.

On August 3, 1929, shortly after RCA acquired Victor, the National Broadcasting Company observed moments of silence over the entire network to mark the passing of Emile Berliner. He left behind a remarkable collection of inventions—the microphone, the disc record, and the gramophone—and was directly responsible for the organization of the companies that led to many of today's giants in the record industries.

But perhaps the most important testimony to the importance of Emile Berliner's work came shortly after his death when Wall Street laid its historic egg. So strong was the appeal of and need for the telephones and gramophones (and radio too) in which my grandfather pioneered, that these industries not only survived the debacle but went on to become a strong and healthy major portion of our economy.

