



## BRITAIN'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO MOTORING

While other countries were the pioneers of the motor-car itself, it fell to Britain to make the greatest single contribution to motoring — the practicable pneumatic tyre invented in 1888 by John Boyd Dunlop.

Then, at the stage when no further progress could be made on the motor-car because of the restricted speed imposed by solid tyres and the uncomfortable jolting, came Dunlop's historic invention, which smoothed the way for motoring as we know it today.

Dunlop made the first practicable pneumatic tyre. The name Dunlop is still the last word in tyres.

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*means Leadership in Rubber*



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# MENCKEN AND MUSIC

(continued from page 28)

"That instrument provides noise for yahoos. I would rather listen to the Salvation Army."

"Well, Mr. Mencken, the public is continuously bombarded with the so-called 'classical' music via radio and recordings. Is it your opinion that, through over-saturation, the country will tend to become unmusical rather than musical?"

"The country is already unmusical, and could scarcely become more so. The vast majority of its morons never listen to good music. I am reminded of Philip Hale's 'Exit in Case of Brahms.' Whenever anything beyond *La Paloma* begins, 95 per cent. of all dials are switched."

The question was then put whether Mr. Mencken advocated that music, like reading, writing and arithmetic, should be a compulsory educational subject.

"No," was his rejoinder. "I think it is not only useless but also brutal to inflict music upon children who have no natural taste for it. There is no reason why they should be ashamed of their indifference or try to disguise it by false pretences. It is folly to waste money trying to educate the uneducable. Either a given individual is born with a taste for music, or he is not. If he is not, then ramming it into him can only annoy him. I do not subscribe to the notion that music is ennobling. If that were true, then all of the great composers would have been men of high dignity, whereas everyone knows that some of them were not. I have known musicians in my time, and good ones, who were hardly to be distinguished from Methodist evangelists, movie actors, or racetrack touts. Music is not a device for improving the mind or saving the soul; it is a device for ravishing the ear. Some of the best music ever written is anti-moral, anti-intellectual and even anti-social—for example, the second act of *Tristan* and Johann Strauss' *Mein Schatz* waltz. James Huneker once argued that no virgin could ever sing *Isolde*. By the same token, no virgin can dance to *Mein Schatz* without wondering if she hasn't been badly advised. I am myself almost anesthetic to painting, though I enjoy good drawing. It is probably because I have a defective colour sense. I care not a damn who knows it. My taste for poetry is also limited. I get pleasure out of the very best—for example, Shakespeare's, but that of the fifth-rate poets now flourishing leaves me cold, because I believe that most of these poets are frauds. The fact is proved by their effort to eke out their puerile inspirations with metaphysical, economic and political flubdub. Poetry can never be criticism of life. It is essentially and inevitably an escape from life. This is especially true of the magnificent poetry of the Bible."

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On the subjects of polytonality, atonality, tonality, quarter, eighth and sixteenth tone scales and tone clusters, Mr. Mencken had the following to say:

## Acoustic Experiments

"All interesting experiments for the acoustical laboratory, but I am not aware that they have yet yielded any music fit for the concert hall. Polytonality, of course, is not new. You will find it in Bach. I once arranged four German folksongs in perfect polyphony—each in a different key. Such exercises are for the days when musicians tire of their trade, and turn to spoofing it."

"How, then, should a composer compose sensibly?"

"A good composer, when he is in a serious mood, chooses his key, invents his subjects, develops them as best he can, recapitulates them, writes a coda, and then shuts up."

Venturing a somewhat delicate line of inquiry, the writer sought his opinion on women as composers.

## On Women Composers

"I have no theory to offer as to the failure of women as musical composers," he replied thoughtfully. "So far as I know they have never done anything in creative music worthy of the second class. Even in the field of jazz, women have done very little worth hearing."

At this point it was asked if Mr. Mencken, even now, felt it was still too late for him to make his debut as composer.

"Yes," he responded. "If I had any real talent for music I'd have undertaken it seriously in my youth. I have a taste for it, but not capacity, either as composer or executant. I am in the position of the sad idiots who itch for literary fame, but have nothing to say. The country swarms with these literary folk. I can't recall a day for 30 years that I have not received at least one letter from them begging for light and leading."

"But do such aspirants not need leading?"

"No. A genuine artist needs no light and leading—he lights his own way and leads himself."

A quarter of a century ago James Huneker opined, "Mencken never coddles." The words still hold good! Mencken never coddles.

## London Audiences Demand Tchaikovsky

EILEEN JOYCE, the famous Australian pianist, in a recent BBC shortwave broadcast from London, spoke of the changes that have taken place in the London music world since before the war. She mentioned the shortage of concert halls due to the German bombing of London and the vast growth of musical audiences. There are more symphony orchestras and more concerts today.

This vast new audience has a different taste in music. The appeal of Beethoven seems to have strengthened, but the popularity of Wagner, who could always be relied upon to fill a Promenade Concert, seems to have died out almost completely, giving way to Tchaikovsky, who is now easily a first favourite with Beethoven. The demand to-day is for Beethoven concertos, Tchaikovsky concertos, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, a little Mozart, and a limited few other favourites.