

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(Continued from page 5)

MODERN MUSIC

The Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—May I be permitted to express my views about the recent correspondence in your columns re the above?

I object to using the word "music" at all in this connection, because my Oxford Dictionary tells me that it means "the art of expressing or stirring emotion by melodious and harmonious combination of sound."

Obviously, such a definition cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be applied to the noises that emanate from dance bands to-day, nor to those produced by orchestras and other mediums when registering the perpetrations of Stravinsky, Honneger, Schönberg, Bartok, Schostakovitch, etc., etc., and all their imitators — among whom, I regret to say, are several British composers who ought to know better.

The genuine musician's objection to jazz, or swing—it's all one and the same—lies much deeper than his dislike of its surface vulgarity, musical illiteracy, and negation of harmonic principles. I have long sensed a definitely debasing influence in this form of alleged music, so I was extremely gratified to read, not long ago, a corroboration of my diagnosis. There is, or was, published in London, a magazine devoted to dance matters, called "Swing Music," edited by Leonard Hibbs. He was recently requested by a correspondent to explain just what "Swing Music" means, and this was his reply:

"Frankly, I find it as impossible to define my pleasure in 'swing' as I do to define any other of my natural senses. One acquires a taste for 'swing' as one does for alcohol. When I am asked by beginners—what is good jazz?—i.e., Swing Music—I generally give them a list of negro records, with instructions to play them over and over

again until they like them. After that, they usually become swing drunkards.

"Many of the best exponents of 'swing' are almost completely illiterate, musically. It is music improvised by those who can translate their emotions momentarily in terms of sound. It is a perfectly sincere manifestation, but not what the ultra-sensitive would call 'quite naïve'—for the simple reason that 'Nature in the raw is seldom mild.'

"The appeal of 'swing' is sensual rather than mental; its urge is almost exclusively physical. This may seem an indictment of it, but the fact remains. The white-hot atmosphere of sensual excitement produces 'swing,' it is the outcome of stark naked self expression.

"Finally, I might say that 'swing' certainly means something, but only to those who like it."

The above quotation from an authoritative source should dispel any lingering doubts concerning the insidiously baleful effects of modern dance "music."

One of the more noticeable evils resulting from its indulgence was, until lately prohibited by law, the constant drunkenness at dance halls; there have been other very deplorable results, too, which are unmentionable here. These things were absolutely unknown in days gone by, when people danced to music which, whatever its artistic value, was at least decent and unprovocative.

In conclusion, sir, I think the condition of much modern, and nearly all dance music, is akin to that of the Augean stables. Let us hope that one effect produced by the war will be a thorough cleansing process.

Yours, etc.,

L. D. AUSTIN.

Wellington,
June 15, 1940.

FEDERAL UNION

The Editor,
"The Listener"

Sir,—Your correspondent, "True Democracy," has made a grave tactical blunder. He quotes, in support of an argument, two writers whose opinions are as apart as the poles. How can he expect this to convince anyone?

His first quotation, which he dates 1931, announces that, while we are trying to rid the world of the curse of national sovereignty, "we are denying with our lips what we are doing with our hands."

His second quotation is not dated, but the ideas put forward are definitely out of date. Perhaps "True Democracy" knew this, and was afraid to give the publication date of the book. That the democratic conception of society is based upon the principle "Love thy neighbour as thyself," cannot be disputed, but many of the other statements of the quotation can.

For example, Byrne says, "the basis of Democracy is sovereignty," and by this he means "national sovereignty." Any sixpenny dictionary would explain to him that it is government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Indeed, national sovereignty is the main stumbling block to true democracy.

HOW MUCH DID YOU KNOW?

Here are the answers to the questions on page 15:

SUNDAY: "Water Music" Suite (Handel) (1YA at 9.15 p.m.)

MONDAY: "Narcissus" (Nevin) (2YA's Dinner Music)

TUESDAY: "Masaniello" Overture (Auber) (4YA at 8.17 p.m.)

WEDNESDAY: "The Last Rose of Summer" (Moore) (2YA's Dinner Music)

THURSDAY: Fergus Hume's "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" (3YA at 8.15 p.m.)

FRIDAY: "Skye Boat Song" (Lawson Boulton) (1YA's Dinner Music)

SATURDAY: "Rigoletto" Selection (Verdi) (4YA's Dinner Music)

Recorded Personalities in Caricature (26): J. H. Squire of "Celeste Octet" fame.

Almost all people, of all countries, desire peace, so under democratic rule we should have it. Why do we not? The reason is that so long as there is unlimited national sovereignty, the governments of the 80 or so countries of the world work at cross purposes. Almost all their acts have in view the advantage to the State, whether such acts are damaging to other countries or not. Under such conditions, real co-operation between them is virtually impossible.

The proposed "Federal Union" plan is to limit national sovereignty and place under a central parliament, democratically appointed, the control of the defence force, the currency, the customs-free economy, citizenship, and the postal and communications system of the constituent countries. In all matters other than these the national governments would be free to indulge in any social experiments or reforms their members thought fit.

The five above-mentioned powers, vested in a central government, working for the good of the Union, as such, would result in action, where necessary, which would be both swift and sure, AND completely democratic; which, apparently, is what "True Democracy" desires.

Yours, etc.,

"FEDERAL UNION."

Hastings,
June 29, 1940.

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