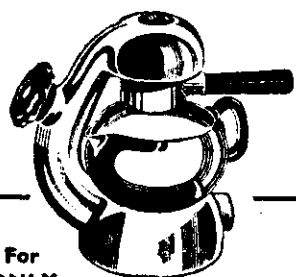


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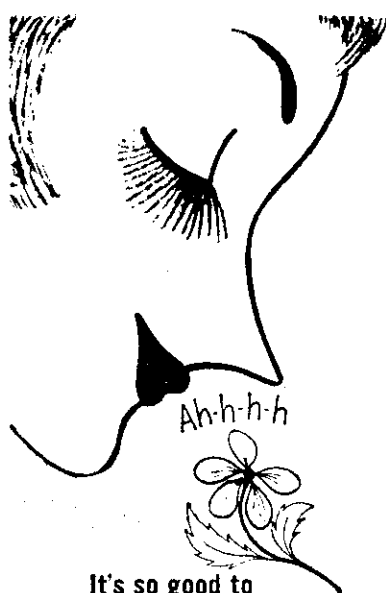
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Orchestrating from the Primitive

A KEY man in the Katherine Dunham extravaganza which recently toured this country is the conductor and the young man at present filling this role is Leslie Harnley, trained at the Juilliard School in New York and a friend of Richard Farrell, who was there at the same time. He had never worked with a ballet company before, most of his previous experience having been with opera, but he is a great believer in getting as wide a musical experience as possible. His present job certainly keeps him on his toes. "We carry a tremendous amount of music," he told *The Listener*. "Four full trunks—the arrangements ranging from 100-piece symphonic works to those for a seven-piece jazz band. Some of the jazz arrangements have been made by such people as Duke Ellington, Brad Gowans and Bobby Hackett—certainly some of the biggest names in their field. Arrangements have also been made by foreign composers like Georges Auric, of France, Gilberto Valdez, of Cuba, and Bernaido Noreiga, of Brazil. It's startling to find scores all marked up in Swedish as well as in all the more common languages of the world—one has practically to be a linguist to play the music."

The big symphonic scores have been used when the company performed with full scale symphony orchestras such as the San Francisco Symphony, and those of Buenos Aires, Cologne and Los Angeles.

One of Mr Harnley's specialties is the Argentine Tango. "I really learned to play the Argentine tango with Miss Dunham," he said. "It takes an extremely heavy left hand. Miss Dunham says in Argentina they wear out a piano a week in the cafés! Now she says I'm the first American she's known who can play a real Argentine tango."

A great deal of interest has centred on the drummers in the orchestra, two of whom come from Cuba and the other from Haiti.

"The drummers have all been very prominent in the drum cults that exist in their own countries," said Mr Harnley. "One of the Haitian drummers is a drum priest, which has something to do with the primitive cults from America. In Haiti they're tied up with Voodoo and have a religious significance. It's interesting the way the drummers guard their secrets from each other. Their skill is something fantastic at times—they'd drum away for 24 hours a day if they could."

The orchestration for the West Indian dances, which are important in the show, has often been built up from the traditional dances and songs. Many of these go on for hours, and if left in their original form would be "deadly dull," said Mr Harnley. "They are

considerably adapted to make interesting theatre. Originally the music may have been played on primitive, crude instruments. In Mexico, for instance, the little street bands, the *mariachi*, are notorious for their raucous cornets. When we orchestrate this music we try to catch its character without distorting it too much. Where a simple theme is repeated endlessly as in "Vera Cruzana," built on a Mexican folk tune, we get variety by giving it to various instruments. Sometimes we can use a dance more or less in its original form. "Los Indos," based on a Peruvian Eagle Dance, has been shortened a little, but otherwise it's very much in its pristine state. Sometimes as well we get composers to write something for us."

In the world of opera Leslie Harnley's favourites are Mozart, Puccini and some of the moderns, which includes Menotti. Before setting out on this tour he had seen a new chamber opera in America which is winning its young composer national recognition. This is Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, a kind of morality play based on the Apocryphal story of Susannah and the Elders, but set in an isolated community in the mountains of Tennessee. "It's very popular, it reveals tremendous operatic talent, has beautiful arias and is not a pastiche," said Mr Harnley.

As Mr Harnley moves from country to country his orchestra changes, and his next assignment will be a very different one. He will have to train an orchestra made up entirely of Filipinos.



LESLIE HARNLEY

"In Argentina they wear out a piano a week in the cafés"

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 24, 1957.

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