



Readers Comment

Legitimizing Jazz

■ In the late thirties, the Superintendent of Schools in West Chester, Pennsylvania, authorized the development of an elective music listening course for senior high pupils who, for one reason or another, were not involved in music activities. In this course, which carried the harmless designation of Music Analysis I, jazz music, hot and hybrid, was studied. Later the program was carried by a Philadelphia radio station for twenty-six weeks as the "ABC's of Popular Music."

Both the high school program and the radio series received good press reviews and attracted the attention of some prominent music educators. Many of these educators were impressed by the serious approach to the music and the interest of the pupils. However, they were primarily concerned with how this interest could be transferred to what they considered "legitimate" music. They gave the teacher no encouragement.

In Seattle, Washington, March 18, 1968, the National Association of Jazz Educators was officially accepted with much fanfare as an Associated Organization of the Music Educators National Conference. The proceedings left the teacher of the early Music Analysis I course confused and bewildered. Why, he asked, is a separate organization needed if jazz music is now, as one of the speakers proclaimed, "legitimate"? Does it mean that eventually there may be a National Association of Rock Educators, a National Association of Country Music Educators, a National Association of Aleatoric and/or Stochastic Educators, all with separate organizational and dues structures?

Obviously, the proceeding is based on the fallacious idea that the Music Educators National Conference or, for that matter, any organization can de-

cide what is or what is not "legitimate" music for the citizens of a democratic, electronic society. Music educators should know better, either with or without Marshall McLuhan to tell them how things are happening.—FLOYD T. HART, *State Supervisor of Music Education, Dover, Delaware 19901.*

Provocative Series

■ I wish to commend the *Music Educators Journal* for its recent series of articles by Lothar Klein, entitled collectively, "Twentieth-Century Analysis: Essays in Miniature" [December 1966 to May 1968]. It has been one of the most interesting, provocative, and insightful series of articles I have seen in a professional musical journal in years.

The most impressive aspect of the series, it seems to me, was Mr. Klein's even-handedness in dealing with the most diverse trends in twentieth-century music. He was particularly fine when treating the major, and thus most challenging, composers of the period. The article on Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum* was a gem, offering a clear outline of the work's formal structure while placing it firmly in the context of Stravinsky's sizeable output. To be able to discuss so cogently a work of great traditional authority like the *Canticum* and still to be sympathetic with the contributions of Cage and Stockhausen is the sign of a mature and penetrating musical and critical mind.

Mr. Klein's jargon-free prose was a welcome change from the kind of thing we are so used to in many technical journals. He proved that it is possible to discuss important matters seriously without inventing a special language in which to do it. I wish it could be a lesson to the Milton Babbits of the musical world.

In thanking you for offering us these

articles, may I voice the hope that the *Music Educators Journal* will continue the excellent policy of printing significant critical articles? The series by Mr. Klein was an outstanding idea.—FREDERIC GOOSSEN, *Professor of Music, University of Alabama, Department of Music, P.O. Box 2886, University 35486.*

■ Lothar Klein's analysis of John Cage in the *Music Educators Journal* [May 1968, p. 57] is the first one that anybody has written about him that has made sense.—G. V. ENSINGER, *1126 West Vernon Drive, Flint, Michigan 48503.*

■ Lothar Klein's article on "Brahms, Boulez, and the Beatles" [April 1968, p. 55] demands a comment, if only to lament its disappointing comparison with other essays in this series.

With the publication of summary reports on the Tanglewood Symposium, and the regular appearance of articles exhorting the educator to make a positive commitment to the teaching and performance of twentieth-century music, it remained only a matter of time before the anguished groans of the far-right, rear guard would rise through the din. But what a desperate, unsophisticated, sophomoric attempt! Drawing an analogy between serialist thinking and Marxist thinking is as frightful a bore today as it was when heard over thirty years ago in Nazi Germany. True, Mr. Klein wasn't equating Marxist thought with serial composition, since he had already made it clear that, via Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus*, serial composition equates with the existential philosophy of the absurd. However, this observation hardly saves his article from the quagmire of half-truths and generalizations that glare contemptibly from the printed page.

For example: "The compositional act for serial composers consists of tabulating series of pitches, durations, correlating their possibilities on a graph. . . ." This generalization is absolutely utter nonsense. Klein groups all "serial composers" together and then applies an incidental fact that tentatively applies to a few compositions by a few "serial composers" to deliberately lead the uninitiated reader to a completely false conclusion. Incidentally, the "inspiration" expressed on graph paper is intrinsically as valid as those "inspirations" of the "pre-serial composers." Furthermore, ends are confused with means. Unconventional notation does not automatically mean bad, "uninspired" music. Of course Mr. Klein knows that; what I object to is the inference that hokus-pokus notation equals hokus-pokus

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music. Thus, the argument goes, guilty by association.

"One wonders if," comments Mr. Klein, "in the quest for new music, serialists have ever asked themselves whether a composer shackled with the ball and chain of serial method can run faster than the composer employing traditional techniques." It obviously has never occurred to Mr. Klein that any composer worth at least his weight in ragweed grapples with this question every time he begins a new composition. The conclusion by an overwhelming majority of composers today is that one does not only "run faster" but is able to jump higher when "shackled to the ball and chain of serial method" than when shackled to the ball and chain of traditional techniques.

Unquestionably, the most appalling comment in this article is that the "composer . . . must become a prophet of the past." What kind of teacher would be so professionally irresponsible as to advise his student composers to walk into the future backwards with their eyes on the past? Were I to adopt this attitude with my students, I would, fortunately, be laughed right out of the classroom.—ROBERT J. STEWART, Assistant Professor of Theory and Composition, Concord College, Athens, West Virginia 24712.

The Author Replies

■ Mr. Stewart's ire toward my essay seems directed at two points: first, that a sense of outdated reasoning prevails in my logic (paragraph one); second, that I deliberately set up misleading inferences to blacken practitioners of serialism (paragraph three). Both these objections can be quickly clarified.

Mr. Stewart considers my analogy between Marxism and Serialism "as frightful a bore today as it was when heard over thirty years ago." One should be reminded that simply because an analogy is old, this does not necessarily diminish its truth. Is Socrates' statement "man is mortal" invalidated by being 2,000 years old? Also, the inference made in paragraph two—"What I object to is the inference . . ."—is Mr. Stewart's and not mine. Mr. Stewart certainly knows that, in formal logic, to speak of an inference as an assumption weakens one's argument. Consequently, no "guilt by association" was inferred by me. This assumption, then, is wholly Mr. Stewart's. I trust these answers will soothe Mr. Stewart's ire.

But, of course, Mr. Stewart does not wish to quibble about logic, for, judging from the tone of his letter, a sensitive nerve has been hit. Mr. Stewart

seems, in fact, a standardbearer for a singular point of view. There is no mistaking his position—"It remained only a matter of time before the anguished groans of the far-right, rear guard. . . ." These words reveal the direction and weight given a specific historical position, a position made secure by the large number of recruits in its ranks. "An overwhelming majority of composers today," we are told, "believe one can run faster and jump higher" by embracing serial methods. I, for one, never realized creative propriety was a majority affair in the same sense that nine out of ten doctors smoke a particular cigaret. The talent of an individual composer determines musical quality, regardless of the compositional method employed. (Sebastian Bach's fugues are still better than Johann Fischer's.) To glorify one method over another because it is more historically fashionable, is on a logical par with the annual vagaries of the hemline.

Nevertheless, I am sorry Mr. Stewart did not understand the dual nature of my remark "today's composer must become a prophet of the past," for this was insufficiently elaborated on. I was not pitching for a "back to Bach or Brahms" movement, for this would ally me with the very type of historical bias displayed by serialists.

As a "prophet of the past," a composer seeks those qualities in past music that make it supremely great, propelling them, through new syntax and setting, into our present. Examples of such attempts are Lukas Foss's *Baroque Variations*, George Rochberg's *Music for the Magic Theater*, and perhaps I may mention my *Paganini Collage*. The common emphasis in these works is to unite past and present musics, to find parallel points of reference between old and new, and to trace the flow of musical and historical continuity. The former methodological concern of serialism has given way to the poetics of all musical situations. In other words, Mr. Stewart, the scene is wide open and one must simply come to realize that every age unwittingly possesses its own frailty.—LOTHAR KLEIN, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.