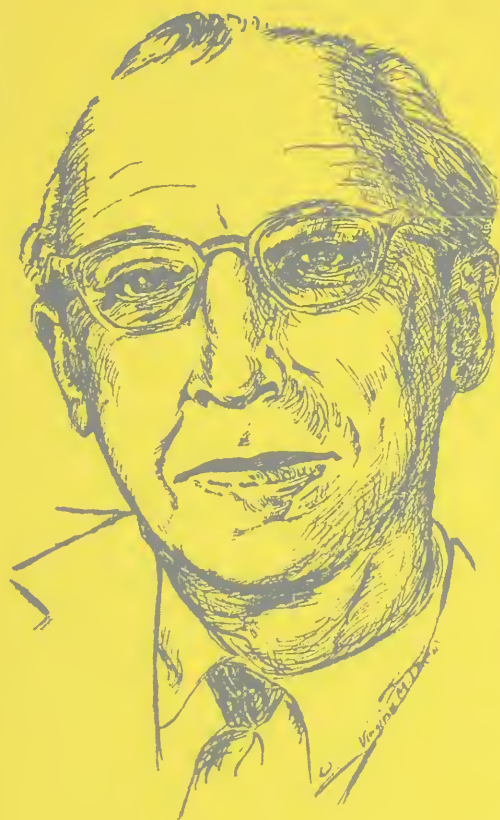


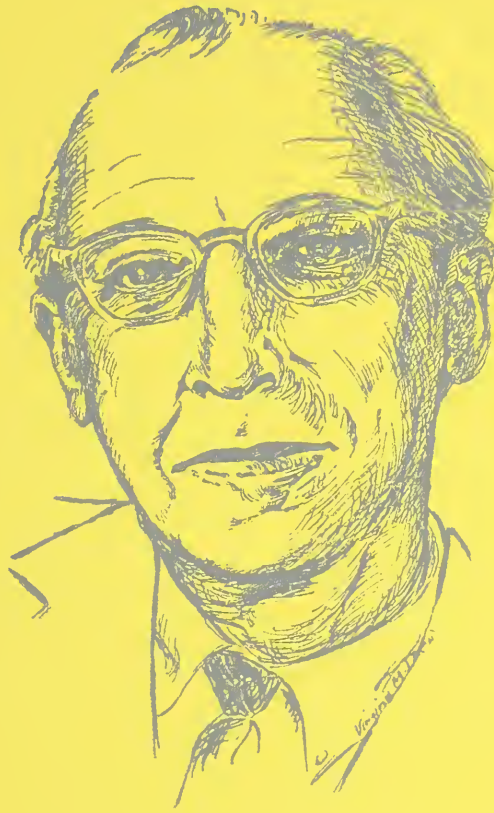
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The Pleasures of Music

By Aaron Copland

An address at the University of New Hampshire
April 16, 1959



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This address was one of a Distinguished Lecture Series, established in 1957 at the University of New Hampshire to bring to the campus the most distinguished men of letters, arts, sciences, and public affairs. The lecturers were asked to prepare a special address for the occasion, and in addition to remain on the campus for two days to meet with classes in their own fields and to talk informally with faculty and students.

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The Pleasures of Music

By Aaron Copland

PERHAPS I had better begin by explaining that I think of myself as a composer of music and not as a writer about music. This distinction may not seem important to you, especially when I admit to having published several books on the subject. But to me the distinction is paramount because I know that if I were a writer I would be bubbling over with word-ideas about the art I practice, instead of which my mind — and not my mind only but my whole physical being — vibrates to the stimulus of sound waves produced by instruments sounding alone or together. Why this is so I cannot tell you, but I can assure you it is so. Remembering then that I am primarily a composer and not a writer, I shall examine my subject mostly from the composer's standpoint in order to share with others, insofar as that is possible, the varied pleasures to be derived from experiencing music as an art.

That music gives pleasure is axiomatic. Because that is so, the pleasures of music as a subject for discussion may seem to some of you a rather elementary dish to place before so knowing an audience. But I think you will agree that the source of that pleasure, our musical instinct, is not at all elementary; it is, in fact, one of the prime puzzles of consciousness. Why is it that sound waves, when they strike the ear, cause “volleys of nerve impulses to flow up into the brain”, resulting in a pleasurable sensation? More than that, why is it that we are able to make sense out of these “volleys of nerve signals” so that we emerge from engulfment in the orderly presentation of sound stimuli as if we had lived through a simulacrum of life, the instinctive life of the emotions? And why, when safely seated and merely listening, should our hearts beat faster, our temperature rise, our toes start tapping, our minds start racing after the music, hoping it will go one way and watching it go another, deceived and disgruntled when we are unconvinced, elated and grateful when we acquiesce?

We have a part answer, I suppose, in that the physical nature of sound has been thoroughly explored; but the phenomenon of music as an expressive, communicative agency remains as inexplicable as ever it was. We musicians don't ask for much. All we want is to have one investigator tell us why this young fellow seated in row A is firmly held by the musical sounds he hears while his girl friend gets little or nothing out of them, or vice versa. Think how many millions of useless practice hours might have been saved if some alert professor of genetics had developed a test for musical sensibility. The fascination of music for some human beings was curiously illustrated for me once during a visit I made to the showrooms of a manufacturer of electronic organs. As part of my tour I was taken to see the practice room. There, to my surprise, I found not one but eight aspiring organists, all busily practicing simultaneous-

ly on eight organs. More surprising still was the fact that not a sound was audible, for all eight performers were listening through earphones to their individual instrument. It was an uncanny sight, even for a fellow musician, to watch these grown men mesmerized, as it were, by a silent and invisible genie. On that day I fully realized how mesmerized we ear-minded creatures must seem to our less musically-inclined friends.

If music has impact for the mere listener, it follows that it will have much greater impact for those who sing it or play it themselves with some degree of proficiency. Any educated person in Elizabethan times was expected to be able to read musical notation and take his or her part in a madrigal-sing. Passive listeners, numbered in the millions, are a comparatively recent innovation. Even in my own youth, loving music meant that you either made it yourself, or you were forced out of the house to go hear it where it was being made, at considerable cost and some inconvenience. Nowadays all that has changed. Music has become so very accessible that it is almost impossible to avoid it. Perhaps you don't mind cashing a check at the local bank to the strains of a Brahms symphony, but I do. Actually, I think I spend as much time avoiding great works as others spend in seeking them out. The reason is simple: meaningful music demands one's undivided attention, and I can give it that only when I am in a receptive mood, and feel the need for it. The use of music as a kind of ambrosia to titillate the aural senses while one's conscious mind is otherwise occupied is the abomination of every composer who takes his work seriously.

Thus, the music I have reference to in this talk is designed for your undistracted attention. It is, in fact, usually labelled "serious" music in contradistinction to light or popular music. How this term "serious" came into being no one seems to know, but all of us are agreed as to its

inadequacy. It just doesn't cover enough cases. Very often our "serious" music *is* serious, sometimes deadly serious, but it can also be witty, humorous, sarcastic, sardonic, grotesque, and a great many other things besides. It is, indeed, the emotional range covered which makes it "serious" and, in part, influences our judgement as to the artistic stature of any extended composition.

Everyone is aware that so-called serious music has made great strides in general public acceptance in recent years, but the term itself still connotes something forbidding and hermetic to the mass audience. They attribute to the professional musician a kind of masonic initiation into secrets that are forever hidden from the outsider. Nothing could be more misleading. We all listen to music, professionals and non-professionals alike, in the same sort of way — in a dumb sort of way, really, because simple or sophisticated music attracts all of us, in the first instance, on the primordial level of sheer rhythmic and sonic appeal. Musicians are flattered, no doubt, by the deferential attitude of the layman in regard to what he imagines to be our secret understanding of music. But in all honesty we musicians know that in the main we listen basically as others do, because music hits us with an immediacy that we recognize in the reactions of the most simple-minded of music listeners.

It is part of my thesis that music, unlike the other arts, with the possible exception of dancing, gives pleasure simultaneously on the lowest and highest levels of apprehension. All of us, for example, can understand and feel the joy of being carried forward by the flow of music. Our love of music is bound up with its forward motion; nonetheless it is precisely the creation of that sense of flow, its interrelation with and resultant effect upon formal structure, that calls forth high intellectual capacities of a composer, and offers keen pleasures for listening minds. Music's incessant movement forward exerts a double and contradic-

tory fascination: on the one hand it appears to be immobilizing time itself by filling out a specific temporal space, while generating at the same moment the sensation of flowing past us with all the pressure and sparkle of a great river. To stop the flow of music would be like the stopping of time itself, incredible and inconceivable. Only a catastrophe of some sort produces such a break in the musical discourse during a public performance. Musicians are, of course, hardened to such interruptions during rehearsal periods, but they don't relish them. The public, at such times, look on, unbelieving. I have seen this demonstrated each summer at Tanglewood during the open rehearsals of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Large audiences gather each week, I am convinced, for the sole pleasure of living through that awe-full moment when the conductor abruptly stops the music. Something went wrong; no one seems to know what or why, but it stopped the music's flow, and a shock of recognition runs through the entire crowd. That is what they came for, though they may not realize it — that, and the pleasure of hearing the music's flow resumed, which lights up the public countenance with a kind of all's-right-with-the-world assurance. Clearly, audience enjoyment is inherent in the magnetic forward pull of the music; but to the more enlightened listener this time-filling forward drive has fullest meaning only when accompanied by some conception as to where it is heading, what musico-psychological elements are helping to move it to its destination, and what formal architectural satisfactions will have been achieved on its arriving there.

Musical flow is largely the result of musical rhythm, and the rhythmic factor in music is certainly a key element that has simultaneous attraction on more than one level. To some African tribes rhythm *is* music; they have little more. But what rhythm it is! Listening to it casually, one might never get beyond the ear-splitting poundings, but act-

ually a trained musician's ear is needed to disengage its polyrhythmic intricacies. Minds that conceive such rhythms have their own sophistication; it seems inexact and even unfair to call them primitive. By comparison our own instinct for rhythmic play seems only mild in interest, needing reinvigoration from time to time.

It was because the ebb of rhythmic invention was comparatively low in late nineteenth century European music that Stravinsky was able to apply what I once termed "a rhythmic hypodermic" to Western music. His shocker of 1913, "The Rite of Spring," a veritable rhythmic monstrosity to its first hearers, has now become a standard item of the concert repertory. This indicates the progress that has been made in the comprehension and enjoyment of rhythmic complexities that nonplussed our grandfathers. And the end is by no means in sight. Younger composers have taken us to the very limit of what the human hand can perform and have gone even beyond what the human ear can grasp in rhythmic differentiation. Sad to say, there is a limit, dictated by what nature has supplied us with in the way of listening equipment. But within those limits there are large areas of rhythmic life still to be explored, rhythmic forms never dreamt of by composers of the march or the mazurka.

In so saying I do not mean to minimize the rhythmic ingenuities of past eras. The wonderfully subtle rhythms of the anonymous composers of the late fourteenth century, only recently deciphered; the delicate shadings of oriental rhythms; the carefully contrived speech-based rhythms of the composers of Tudor England; and bringing things closer to home, the improvised wildness of jazz-inspired rhythms — all these and many more must be rated, certainly, as prime musical pleasures.

Tone color is another basic element in music that may be enjoyed on various levels of perception from the most

naive to the most cultivated. Even children have no difficulty in recognizing the difference between the tonal profile of a flute and a trombone. The color of certain instruments holds an especial attraction for certain people. I myself have always had a weakness for the sound of eight French horns playing in unison. Their rich, golden, legendary sonority transports me. Some present-day European composers seem to be having a belated love affair with the vibraphone. An infinitude of possible color combinations are available when instruments are mixed, especially when combined in that wonderful contraption, the orchestra of symphonic proportions. The art of orchestration, needless to say, holds endless fascination for the practicing composer, being part science and part inspired guess-work.

As a composer I get great pleasure from cooking up tonal combinations. Over the years I have noted that no element of the composer's art mystifies the layman more than this ability to conceive mixed instrumental colors. But remember that before we mix them we hear them in terms of their component parts. If you examine an orchestral score you will note that composers place their instruments on the page in family groups: reading from top to bottom it is customary to list the woodwinds, the brass, the percussion, and the strings, in that order. Modern orchestral practice often juxtaposes these families one against the other so that their personalities, as families, remain recognizable and distinct. This principle may also be applied to the voice of the single instrument, whose pure color sonority thereby remains clearly identifiable as such. Orchestral know-how consists in keeping the instruments out of each other's way, so spacing them that they avoid repeating what some other instrument is already doing, at least in the same register, thereby exploiting to the fullest extent the specific color value contributed by each separate instrument or grouped instrumental family.

In modern orchestration clarity and definition of sonorous image is usually the goal. There exists, however, another kind of orchestral magic dependent on a certain ambiguity of effect. Not to be able to identify immediately how a particular color combination is arrived at adds to its attractiveness. I like to be intrigued by unusual sounds which force me to exclaim: Now I wonder how the composer does that?

From what I have said about the art of orchestration, you may have gained the notion that it is nothing more than a delightful game, played for the amusement of the composer. That is, of course, not true. Color in music, as in painting, is meaningful only when it serves the expressive idea; it is the expressive idea that dictates to the composer the choice of his orchestral scheme.

Part of the pleasure in being sensitive to the use of color in music is to note in what way a composer's personality traits are revealed through his tonal color schemes. During the period of French impressionism, for example, the composers Debussy and Ravel were thought to be very similar in personality. An examination of their orchestral scores would have shown that Debussy, at his most characteristic, sought for a spray-like iridescence, a delicate and sensuous sonority such as had never before been heard, while Ravel, using a similar palette, sought a refinement and precision, a gem-like brilliance that reflects the more objective nature of his musical personality.

Color ideals change for composers as their personalities change. A striking example is again that of Igor Stravinsky who, beginning with the stabbing reds and purples of his early ballet scores, has in the past decade arrived at an ascetic greyness of tone that positively chills the listener by its austerity. For contrast we may turn to a Richard Strauss orchestral score, masterfully handled in its own way, but over-rich in the piling-on of sonorities, like a

German meal that is too filling for comfort. The natural and easy handling of orchestral forces by a whole school of contemporary American composers would indicate some in-born affinity between American personality traits and symphonic language. No layman can hope to penetrate all the subtleties that go into an orchestral page of any complexity, but here again it is not necessary to be able to analyze the color spectrum of a score in order to bask in its effulgence.

Thus far I have been dealing with the generalities of musical pleasure. Now I wish to concentrate on the music of a few composers in order to show how musical values are differentiated. The late Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony, never tired of telling performers that if it weren't for composers they would literally have nothing to play or sing. He was stressing what is too often taken for granted and, therefore, lost sight of, namely, that in our Western world music speaks with a composer's voice and half the pleasure we get comes from the fact that we are listening to a particular voice making an individual statement at a specific moment in history. Unless you take off from there you are certain to miss one of the principal attractions of musical art, namely, contact with a strong and absorbing personality.

It matters greatly therefore, who it is we are about to listen to in the concert hall or opera house. And yet I get the impression that to the lay music-lover music is music and musical events are attended with little or no concern as to what musical fare is to be offered. Not so with the professional, to whom it matters a great deal whether he is about to listen to the music of Monteverdi or Massenet, to J. S. or to J. C. Bach. Isn't it true that everything we, as listeners, know about a particular composer and his music prepares us in some measure to empathize with his special mentality. To me Chopin is one thing, Scarlatti quite another. I could never confuse them, could you? Well, whether

you could or not, my point remains the same: there are as many ways for music to be enjoyable as there are composers.

One can even get a certain perverse pleasure out of hating the work of a particular composer. I, for instance, happen to be rubbed the wrong way by one of today's composer-idols, Serge Rachmaninoff. The prospect of having to sit through one of his extended symphonies or piano concertos tends, quite frankly, to depress me. All those notes, think I, and to what end? To me, Rachmaninoff's characteristic tone is one of self-pity and self-indulgence tinged with a definite melancholia. As a fellow human being I can sympathize with an artist whose distempers produced such music, but as a listener my stomach won't take it. I grant you his technical adroitness, but even here the technique adopted by the composer was old-fashioned in his own day. I also grant his ability to write long and singing melodic lines, but when these are embroidered with figuration, the musical substance is watered down, emptied of significance. Well, as Andre Gide used to say, I didn't have to tell you this, and I know it will not make you happy to hear it. Actually it should be of little concern to you whether I find Rachmaninoff digestible or not. All I am trying to say is that music strikes us in as many different ways as there are composers, and anything less than a strong reaction, pro or con, is not worth bothering about.

By contrast, let me point to that perennially popular favorite among composers, Guiseppe Verdi. Quite apart from his music, I get pleasure merely thinking about the man himself. If honesty and forthrightness ever sparked an artist, then Verdi is a prime example. What a pleasure it is to make contact with him through his letters, to knock against the hard core of his peasant personality. One comes away refreshed, and with renewed confidence in the sturdy, non-neurotic character of at least one musical master.

When I was a student it was considered not good form to mention Verdi's name in symphonic company, and quite out of the question to name Verdi in the same sentence with that formidable dragon of the opera house, Richard Wagner. What the musical elite found difficult to forgive in Verdi's case was his triteness, his ordinariness. Yes, Verdi is trite and ordinary at times, just as Wagner is long-winded and boring at times. There is a lesson to be learned here: the way in which we are gradually able to accommodate our minds to the obvious weaknesses in a creative artist's output. Musical history teaches us that at first contact the academicisms of Brahms, the longeurs of Schubert, the portentousness of Mahler were considered insupportable by their early listeners, but in all such cases later generations have managed to put up with the failings of men of genius for the sake of other qualities that outweigh them.

Verdi can be commonplace at times, as everyone knows, but his saving grace is a burning sincerity that carries all before it. There is no bluff here, no guile. On whatever level he composed, a no-nonsense quality comes across; all is directly stated, cleanly written with no notes wasted, and marvelously effective. In the end we willingly concede that Verdi's musical materials need not be especially choice in order to be acceptable. And, naturally enough, when the musical materials *are* choice and inspired, they profit doubly from being set-off against the homely virtues of his more workaday pages.

Verdi's creative life lasted for more than half a century, advancing steadily in musical interest and sophistication. So prolonged a capacity for development has few parallels in musical annals. There is a special joy in following the milestones of a career that began so modestly and obscurely, leading gradually to the world renown of "Traviata" and "Aida," and then, to the general astonishment of the musi-

cal community, continuing on in the eighth decade of his life to the crowning achievements of "Otello" and "Falstaff".

If one were asked to name one musician who came closest to composing without human flaw, I suppose general consensus would choose Johann Sebastian Bach. Only a few musical giants have earned the universal admiration that surrounds the figure of this eighteenth century German master. America should love Bach, for he is the greatest, as we would say, or, if not the greatest, he has few rivals and no peers. What is it, then, that makes his finest scores so profoundly moving? I have puzzled over that question for a very long time, but have come to doubt whether it is possible for anyone to reach a completely satisfactory answer. One thing is certain; we will never explain Bach's supremacy by the singling out of any one element in his work. Rather it was a combination of perfections, each of which was applied to the common practice of his day; added together they produced the mature perfection of the completed *oeuvre*.

Bach's genius cannot possibly be deduced from the circumstances of his routine musical existence. All his life he wrote music for the requirements of the jobs he held. His melodies were often borrowed from liturgical sources, his orchestral textures limited by the forces at his disposal, and his forms, in the main, were similar to those of other composers of his time, whose works, incidentally, he had closely studied. To his more up-to-date composer sons Father Bach was, first of all, a famous instrumental performer, and only secondarily a solid craftsman-creator of the old school, whose compositions were little known abroad for the simple reason that few of them were published in his lifetime. None of these oft-repeated facts explain the universal hold his best music has come to have on later generations.

What strikes me most markedly about Bach's work is the marvelous rightness of it. It is the rightness not merely

of a single individual but of a whole musical epoch. Bach came at the peak point of a long historical development; his was the heritage of many generations of composing artisans. Never since that time has music so successfully fused contrapuntal skill with harmonic logic. This amalgam of melodies and chords, of independent lines conceived linear-fashion within a mold of basic harmonies conceived vertically, provided Bach with the necessary framework for his massive edifice. Within that edifice is the summation of an entire period, with all the grandeur, nobility, and inner depth that one creative soul could bring to it. It is hopeless, I fear, to attempt to probe further into why his music creates the impression of spiritual wholeness, the sense of his communing with the deepest vision. We would only find ourselves groping for words, words that can never hope to encompass the intangible greatness of music, least of all the intangible in Bach's greatness.

Those who are interested in studying the inter-relationship between a composer and his work would do better to turn to the century that followed Bach's, and especially to the life and work of Ludwig von Beethoven. The English critic, Wilfred Mellers, had this to say about Beethoven recently: "It is the essence of the personality of Beethoven, both as man and as artist, that he should invite discussion in other than musical terms." Mellers meant that such a discussion would involve us, with no trouble at all, in a consideration of the rights of man, free will, Napoleon and the French Revolution, and other allied subjects. We shall never know in exactly what way the ferment of historical events affected Beethoven's thinking, but it is certain that music such as his would have been inconceivable in the early nineteenth century without serious concern for the revolutionary temper of his time and the ability to translate that concern into the original and unprecedented musical thought of his own work.

Beethoven brought three startling innovations to music. First, he altered our very conception of the art by emphasizing the psychological element implicit in the language of sounds. Because of him, music lost a certain innocence but gained instead a new dimension in psychological depth. Secondly, his own stormy and explosive temperament was, in part, responsible for a “dramatization of the whole art of music.” The rumbling bass tremolandos, the sudden accents in unexpected places, the hitherto unheard-of rhythmic insistence and sharp dynamic contrasts — all these were externalizations of an inner drama that gave his music theatrical impact. Both these elements — the psychological orientation and the instinct for drama — are inextricably linked in my mind with his third and possibly most original achievement: the creation of musical forms dynamically conceived on a scale never before attempted and of an inevitability that is irresistible. Especially the sense of inevitability is remarkable in Beethoven. Notes are not words, they are not under the control of verifiable logic, and because of that composers in every age have struggled to overcome that handicap by producing a directional effect convincing to the listener. No composer has ever solved the problem more brilliantly than Beethoven; nothing quite so inevitable had ever before been created in the language of sounds.

One doesn't need much historical perspective to realize what a shocking experience Beethoven's music must have been for his first listeners. Even today, given the nature of his music, there are times when I simply do not understand how this man's art was “sold” to the big musical public. Obviously he must be saying something that everyone wants to hear. And yet if one listens freshly and closely the odds against acceptance are equally obvious. As sheer sound there is little that is luscious about his music — it gives off a comparatively “dry” sonority. He never seems to flatter an audience, never to know or care what they might like. His

themes are not particularly lovely or memorable; they are more likely to be expressively apt than beautifully contoured. His general manner is gruff and unceremonious, as if the matter under discussion were much too important to be broached in urbane or diplomatic terms. He adopts a peremptory and hortatory tone, the assumption being, especially in his most forceful work, that you have no choice but to listen. And that is precisely what happens: you listen. Above and beyond every other consideration Beethoven has one quality to a remarkable degree: he is enormously compelling.

What is it he is so compelling about? How can one not be compelled and not be moved by the moral fervor and conviction of such a man. His finest works are the enactment of a triumph — a triumph of affirmation in the face of the human condition. Beethoven is one of the great yeasayers among creative artists; it is exhilarating to share his clear-eyed contemplation of the tragic sum of life. His music summons forth our better nature; in purely musical terms Beethoven seems to be exhorting us to Be Noble, Be Strong, Be Great in Heart, yes, and Be Compassionate. These ethical precepts we subsume from the music, but it is the music itself — the nine symphonies, the sixteen string quartets, the thirty-two piano sonatas — that holds us, and holds us in much the same way each time we return to it. The core of Beethoven's music seems indestructible; the ephemera of sound seem to have little to do with its strangely immutable substance.

What a contrast it is to turn from the starkness of Beethoven to the very different world of a composer like Palestrina. Palestrina's music is heard more rarely than that of the German master; possibly because of that it seems more special and remote. In Palestrina's time it was choral music that held the center of the stage, and many composers lived their lives, as did Palestrina, attached to the service of the

Church. Without knowing the details of his life story, and from the evidence of the music alone, it is clear that the purity and serenity of his work reflects a profound inner peace. Whatever the stress and strain of daily living in sixteenth century Rome may have been, his music breathes quietly in some place apart. Everything about it conduces to the contemplative life: the sweetness of the modal harmonies, the step-wise motion of the melodic phrases, the consummate ease in the handling of vocal polyphony. His music looks white upon the page and sounds "white" in the voices. Its homogeneity of style, composed, as much of it was, for ecclesiastical devotions, gives it a pervading mood of impassivity and other-worldliness. Such music, when it is merely routine, can be pale and dull. But at its best, Palestrina's masses and motets create an ethereal loveliness that only the world of tones can embody.

My concern here with composers of the first rank like Bach and Beethoven and Palestrina is not meant to suggest that only the greatest names and the greatest masterpieces are worth your attention. Musical art, as we hear it in our day, suffers if anything from an over-dose of masterworks, an obsessive fixation on the glories of the past. This narrows the range of our musical experience and tends to suffocate interest in the present. It blots out many an excellent composer whose work was less than perfect. I cannot agree, for instance, with Albert Schweitzer who once remarked that "of all arts music is that in which perfection is a *sine qua non*, and that predecessors of Bach were foredoomed to comparative oblivion because their works were not mature." It may be carping to say so, but the fact is that we tire of everything, even of perfection. It would be truer to point out, it seems to me, that the forerunners of Bach have an awkward charm and simple grace that not even he could match, just because of his mature perfection. Delacroix had something of my idea when he complained in his Journal

about Racine being too perfect: “that perfection and the absence of breaks and incongruities deprive him of the spice one finds in works full of beauties and defects at the same time.”

Our musical pleasures have been largely extended in recent years by familiarity (often through recordings) with a period of musical history, “full of beauties and defects”, that long antedates the era of Bach. Musicologists, sometimes reproached for their pedanticism, have in this case put before us musical delicacies revived out of what appeared to be an unrecoverable past. Pioneering groups in more than one musical center have revived a whole musical epoch by deciphering early manuscripts of anonymous composers, reconstructing obsolete instruments, imagining, as best they can, what may have been the characteristic vocal sound in that far-off time. Out of scholarly research and a fair amount of plain conjecture they have made it possible for us to hear music of an extraordinary sadness and loneliness, with a textural bareness that reminds us at times of the work of some present-day composers. This is contrasted with dance-like pieces that are touching in their innocence. The naivete of this music — or what seems to us naive — has encouraged a polite approach to the problems of actual performance that I find hard to connect with the more rugged aspects of the Middle Ages. But no matter; notions as to interpretation will change and in the meantime we have learned to stretch the conventional limits of usable musical history and draw upon a further storehouse of musical treasures.

A young American poet wrote recently: “We cannot know anything about the past unless we know about the present.” Part of the pleasure of involving oneself with the arts is in the excitement of venturing out among its contemporary manifestations. But a strange thing happens in this connection in the field of music. The same people who find it

quite natural that modern books, plays, or paintings are likely to be controversial seem to want to escape being challenged and troubled when they turn to music. In our field there appears to be a never-ending thirst for the familiar, and very little curiosity as to what the newer composers are up to. Such music-lovers, as I see it, simply don't love music enough, for if they did their minds would not be closed to an area that holds the promise of fresh and unusual musical experience. Charles Ives used to say that people who couldn't put up with dissonance in music had "sissy ears". Fortunately, there are in all countries today some braver souls who mind not at all having to dig a bit for their musical pleasure, who actually enjoy being confronted with the creative artist who is problematical.

Paul Valery tells us that in France it was Stephane Mallarme who became identified in the public mind as the prototype of difficult author. It was his poetry, according to Valery, that engendered a new species of reader, who, as Valery puts it, "couldn't conceive of *plaisir sans peine* (pleasure without trouble), who didn't like to enjoy himself without paying for it, and who even couldn't feel happy unless his joy was in some measure the result of his own work, wishing to feel what his own effort cost him. . . ." This passage is exactly applicable to certain lovers of contemporary music. They refuse to be frightened off too easily. I myself, when I encounter a piece of music whose import escapes me immediately, think: "I'm not getting this, I shall have to come back to it for a second or third try." I don't at all mind actively disliking a piece of contemporary music, but in order to feel happy about it I must consciously understand why I dislike it. Otherwise it remains in my mind as unfinished business.

This doesn't resolve the problem of the music-lover of good will who says: "I'd like to like this modern stuff, but what do I do?" Well, the unvarnished truth is that there

are no magic formulas, no short-cuts for making the unfamiliar seem comfortably familiar. There is no advice one can give other than to say: relax — that's of first importance, and then listen to the same pieces enough times to really matter. Fortunately not all new music must be rated as difficult to comprehend. I once had occasion to divide contemporary composers into categories of relative difficulty from very easy to very tough, and a surprising number of composers fitted into the first group. Of the problematical composers it is the practitioners of twelve-tone music who are the hardest to comprehend because their abandonment of tonality constitutes a body blow to age-old listening habits. No other phase of the new in music, not the violence of expression, nor the dissonant counterpoint, nor the unusual forms, have offered the stumbling block of the loss of a centered tonality. What Arnold Schonberg began in the first decade of this century, moving from his tonally liberated early pieces to his fully integrated twelve-tone compositions, has shaken the very foundations of musical art. No wonder it is still in the process of being gradually absorbed and digested.

The question that wants answering is whether Schonberg's twelve-tone music is the way to the future or whether it is merely a passing phase. Unfortunately it must remain an open question for there are no guaranteed prognostications in the arts. All we know is that so-called difficult composers have sometimes been the subject of remarkable revisions of opinion. One recent example is the case of Bela Bartok. None of us who knew his music at the time of his death in 1945 could have predicted the sudden upsurge of interest in his work and its present world-wide dissemination. One would have thought his musical speech too dour, too insistent, too brittle and uncompromising to hold the attention of the widest audience. And yet we were proved wrong. Conductors and performers seized upon his work at what

must have been the right moment, a moment when the big public was ready for his kind of rhythmic vitality, his passionate and despairing lyricism, his superb organizational gift that rounds out the over-all shape of a movement while keeping every smallest detail relevant to the main discourse. Whatever the reasons, the Bartok case proves that there is an unconscious evolutionary process at work, responsible for sudden awareness and understanding in our listening habits.

One of the attractions of concerning oneself with the new in music is the possible discovery of important work by the younger generation of composers. Certain patrons of music, certain publishers and conductors, and more rarely some older composers have shown a special penchant for what the younger generation is up to. Franz Liszt, for instance, was especially perceptive in sensing the mature composer while still in the embryonic stage. In his own day he was in touch with and encouraged the nationalist strivings of young composers like Grieg, Smetana, Borodine, Albeniz, and our own Edward MacDowell. The French critic, Sainte-Beuve, writing at about that period, had this to say about discovering young talent: "I know of no pleasure more satisfying for the critic than to understand and describe a young talent in all its freshness, its open and primitive quality, before it is glossed over later by whatever is acquired and perhaps manufactured."

Today's typical young men appeared on the scene in the postwar years. They upset their elders in the traditional way by positing a new ideal for music. This time they called for a music that was to be thoroughly controlled in its every particular. As heroes they chose a pupil and disciple of Schonberg, Anton Webern, whose later music was in many ways a more logical and less romantic application of Schonbergian twelve-tone principles. Inspired by Webern's curiously original and seldom performed music, every ele-

ment of musical composition was now to be put under rigorous control. Not only the tone rows and their resultant harmonies, but even rhythms and dynamics were to be given the dodecaphonic treatment. The music they produced, admirably logical on paper, makes a rather haphazard impression in actual performance. I very well remember my first reactions on hearing examples of the latest music of these young men, because I noted them at the time. Let me read you a brief excerpt: "One gets the notion that these boys are starting again from the beginning, with the separate tone and the separate sonority. Notes are strewn about like *disjecta membra*; there is an end to continuity in the old sense and an end of thematic relationships. In this music one waits to hear what will happen next without the slightest idea what *will* happen, or why what happened did happen once it has happened. Perhaps one can say modern painting of the Paul Klee school has invaded the new music. The so-to-speak disrelation of unrelated tones is the way I might describe it. No one really knows where it will go, and neither do I. One thing is sure, however. Whatever the listener may think of it, it is without doubt the most frustrating music ever put on a performer's music-stand."

Since making those notations some of the younger European composers have branched off into the first tentative experiments with electronically produced music. No performers, no musical instruments, no microphones are needed. But one must be able to record on tape and be able to feed into it electromagnetic vibrations. Those of you who have heard recordings of recent electronic compositions will agree, I feel sure, that in this case we shall have to broaden our conception of what is to be included under the heading of musical pleasure. It will have to take into account areas of sound hitherto excluded from the musical scheme of things. And why not? With so many other of man's assumptions subject to review, how could one expect music to remain

the same? Whatever we may think of their efforts, these young experimentors obviously need more time; it is pointless to attempt evaluations before they have more fully explored the new terrain. A few names have come to the fore: in Germany, Karlheinz Stockhausen; in France, Pierre Boulez; in Italy, Luigi Nono and Luciano Berio. What they have composed has produced polemics, publication, radio sponsorship abroad, annual conclaves — but no riots. The violent reaction of the 'teens and twenties to the then new music of Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud, and Schonberg is, apparently, not to be repeated so soon again. We have all learned a thing or two about taking shocks, musical and otherwise. The shock may be gone but the challenge is still there and if our love for music is as all-embracing as it should be, we ought to want to meet it head on.

It hardly seems possible to conclude a talk on musical pleasures at an American university without mentioning that ritualistic word, jazz. But, someone is sure to ask, is jazz serious? I'm afraid that it is too late to bother with the question, since jazz, serious or not, is very much here, and it obviously provides pleasure. The confusion comes, I believe, from attempting to make the jazz idiom cover broader expressive areas than naturally belong to it. Jazz does *not* do what serious music does either in its range of emotional expressivity nor in its depth of feeling, nor in its universality of language. (It does have universality of appeal, which is not the same thing.) On the other hand, jazz does do what serious music cannot do, namely, suggest a colloquialism of musical speech that is indigenously delightful, a kind of here-and-now feeling, less enduring than classical music, perhaps, but with an immediacy and vibrancy that audiences throughout the world find exhilarating.

Personally I like my jazz free and untrammelled, as far removed from the regular commercial product as possible. Fortunately, the more progressive jazz men seem to be less

and less restrained by the conventionalities of their idiom, so little restrained that they appear in fact to be headed our way. By that I mean that harmonic and structural freedoms of recent serious music have had so considerable an influence on the younger jazz composers that it becomes increasingly difficult to keep the categories of jazz and non-jazz clearly divided. A new kind of cross-fertilization of our two worlds is developing that promises an unusual synthesis for the future. We on the serious side greatly envy the virtuosity of the jazz instrumentalist, particularly his ability to improvise freely, and sometimes spectacularly apropos of a given theme. The jazz men, on their side, seem to be taking themselves with a new seriousness; to be exploring new instrumental combinations, daring harmonic patterns — going so far occasionally as to give up the famous jazz beat that keeps all its disparate elements together, and taking on formal problems far removed from the symmetrical regularities imposed on an earlier jazz. Altogether the scene is lively, very lively, and a very full half-century away from the time when Debussy was inspired to write Golliwog's Cakewalk.

By now I hope to have said enough to have persuaded you of the largesse of musical pleasure that awaits the gifted listener. The art of music, without specific subject matter and little specific meaning, is nonetheless a balm for the human spirit; not a refuge or escape from the realities of existence, but a haven wherein one makes contact with the essence of human experience. I myself take sustenance from music as one would from a spring. I invite you all to partake of that pleasure.

Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn, New York, November 14, 1900. After his graduation from high school, he took private lessons in piano and composition and received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 1925-26. The following year he began lecturing on music at the New School for Social Research in New York and remained there until 1937. He has been on the faculty of the Berkshire Music Center and of Harvard, serving the latter not only as a lecturer in music but as Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry during 1951-52. In 1956 he received an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Princeton.

Since his start as a composer in 1920, Mr. Copland has received a number of awards for his contributions to the field of music. The Pulitzer Prize in 1944 highlights a list of honors which include the RCA Victor Award (1930) and the 1956 presentation of a gold medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. An honorary member of Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome, he has been a director of several organizations including the International Society of Contemporary Music.

Mr. Copland's compositions range from orchestral works such as his "First Symphony" in 1925 to the Oscar-winning film score from "The Heiress". "Appalachian Spring", a ballet he created in 1944, received the New York Music Critics Circle Award. He has also written a number of books devoted to the appreciation of music and its status in our lives.

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