

REVIEWS

curtains they draw, the doors they open and shut, remain invisible. Yet the result is more thrilling and convincing than the most utter realism.

The story is the universal one of the maid of high degree who loves a beggar, but in the course of centuries the play has acquired a delicate sophistication. There is nothing primitive about the drawing of the henpecked Prime Minister (Mr. Esmé Percy), or the witty, subtle women who over-rule him (so beautifully represented by Louise Hampton and Maisie Darrell). Humour and farce mingle with a pathos incomparably conveyed by the restrained, symbolic gestures that are all the Chinese technique allows. The result is an exquisite *divertissement*, like a Chinese porcelain, one of the loveliest and most satisfying things now showing. The People's National Theatre deserves our gratitude on a gallant venture in which the managers of fifteen—or was it nineteen?—'commercial' theatres had seen no prospect of success.

BARBARA BARCLAY-CARTER.

GRAMOPHONE

Jazz, remarks Mr. Spike Hughes, is no more than the secularization of the Spiritual, the transferring of this negro music from voices to instruments. Swing music existed long before it was popularized in Europe by the gramophone and monotonized by the dance bands; the blare of trombones was a feature of religious music way back in the eighteenth century. Berlioz, adds Mr. Hughes, knew a thing or two about brass, and as early as the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Masses were written on score paper of fifty-two staves, most of which were occupied by trombones. The serious devotees of jazz do not claim that it is the only representative music of our time; they recognize that it is new in neither its rhythms nor harmonies.

In origin jazz would seem to be a method rather than a conception, a method of improvisation on a simple theme or series of chords; executant's music that began by being played, not composed or orchestrated. 'Several of the boys,' says Mr. Leonard Hibbs in *A Short Survey of Modern Rhythm on Brunswick Records* (1/-), 'would foregather at a friend's house and they would play just for the sheer enjoyment that it gave to themselves as performers. A few chords would be struck on the piano, and one by one they would all join in taking it in turns in a friendly way to take solo choruses. And in the concerted passages the harmonies came naturally and spontaneously.'

A far cry to many of the collections of sounds we now accept for jazz; the deadly dullness behind the excitement, the cotton

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wool and syrup of the crooners. But abuse does not damn a thing. Nevertheless, an inherent limitation may be noted in jazz even when it is taken as a free expression of feeling: the players in improvising together must adopt a common and simple ground for their cadenzas if they are to avoid chaos, and this perpetually recurring harmonic ground makes for monotony.

However, according to Mr. Constant Lambert, jazz has been taken beyond this restriction; has been constructed, not merely improvised. 'The best records of Ellington can be listened to again and again, because they are not mere decorations of a familiar shape, but a new arrangement of shapes. Ellington, in fact, is a real composer, the first jazz composer of note.'

The subject, obviously, is one for the expert, but all who are interested in music and fascinated by jazz are referred to the above mentioned Brunswick *Short Survey*—Hibbs on Hot Music, a serious little pamphlet, written with a swing, and illustrated by eight discs (O 2000-7), the first of which with its eight tracks serves as a précis. There are, or have been, various schools of jazz: the original Dixieland—the first exponents of which could not read a note of music between them; the Mound City Blue Blowers—combs and kazoos; the White School—dexterity and finesse; and finally, jazz as she is played in Chicago—few notes played with force and swing. Everything, in fact, from the importunate klaxon to the die-away tenor sax. Then there is West End jazz, nearer Vienna, and of this Ambrose and his orchestra are good representatives, for instance, in a rumba, *La Cucuracha* (F 5283).

Who's afraid of the big bad Wolf?—the chief sound effects of Walt Disney's famous film impression are contained in a record that is bound to be popular (F 5312). The one and only Douglas Byng singing *I'm a tree* and *Naughty Nellie Gwyn* (F 5320) can be recommended to those whose tastes are not too austere to let pass a lapse here and there for the drollery of the whole.

Prokofiev's use of cross accent and clear-cut syncopation has been called cubism in music, not a happy description when one listens to the living effects he achieves, for example, in *Chout*, the ballet of a buffoon (CA 8188-9, six numbers of the suite played by the Lamoureux Orchestra under Albert Wolff). To many the overtures to *Figaro* and *Il Seraglio* are an immediate and lasting pleasure (CA 8187, Furtwangler and the Berlin Philharmonic), while to some Schlusnus singing *In Danzig* (PO 5109) should prove a lovely little find.

(Key. Brunswick: O series, 2/6. Decca: F series, 1/6. Decca Polydor: CA series, 4/-; PO series, 2/6.)

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