

of El Caudillo that took up one whole wall of the room.

They started on the driver first, and as he showed his papers and shifted his weight from one foot to the other, I caught the gist of the questions. Why did we stop? Why no license numbers? Why no witnesses? Maybe we had caused the accident ourselves? Well, then, why had we interfered? By the time they turned to me, I felt the best I could hope

for was another six months in Spain answering questions and signing affidavits. And I didn't even know where to find a consul, provided they would let me look for one. But ten seconds after my passport hit the table we were on our way downstairs, unescorted and free.

"It must be fine to be an American," said the driver, not without bitterness, as I helped him wipe his upholstery. "If they hadn't thought

you were English, they probably wouldn't even have arrested us."

ON THE WAY HOME, we passed a deeply shadowed doorway out of which protruded the legs and feet of a prostrate Spaniard. Drunk? Siesta? The feet had that peculiarly flaccid, horizontal attitude of the freshly dead. I leaned back on the damp cushion and lit a cigarette as we drove on.

# Warning to Young Musicians: Learn a Useful Trade

JAMES HINTON, Jr.

UPON LEARNING that a young person he has just met hopes to make a career of serious music, seldom does anyone ask bluntly, "Why?" He may wonder, but he doesn't ask. There is a strong social taboo against anatomizing the artistic impulse. So conversation is confined to little verbal gestures of wonder and approbation on the one side and embarrassed responses on the other. Another, more mundane, question doesn't get asked either: "How?"

Both "Why?" and "How?" are perfectly good questions, but, like most good questions, they are much easier to ask than to answer. The first, of course, is a real invasion of privacy. A perfectly justifiable response would be: "None of your business." Actually, "Because I want to" would cover the ground in a good many cases.

"How?" touches less pointedly on matters of the soul, perhaps, but it is not much easier to answer. It must be answered in practical terms, and if a satisfactory answer cannot be found, the whole subject is likely to become much too painful for discussion.

TAKE a case in point. The most unhappy person I knew in the Navy was a sonar officer who was

really a pianist. Plenty of people were unhappy all around him, most of them simply because they were in the Navy at all. His trouble was different. When he got out he would go back to a middle-sized town in Indiana and teach children to play the piano. Eating would be no problem; his mother had money.

But all he had ever wanted to be was a concert pianist. His whole life had been built around that idea. He wasn't going to have a career, and he knew it. The thought made him miserable, and he thought it all the time.

At the age of four and a half he had crawled up onto the piano stool and hit part of a C major chord on the family Mason & Hamlin. As mothers will, his mother heard and marveled. Her son was musical—like Mozart. That was all there was to it.

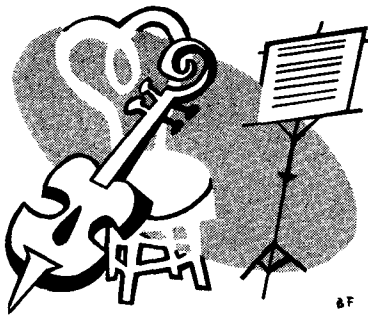
He began taking piano lessons. He practiced for hour after hour, never complaining, never questioning that he was going to grow up to be a great pianist. Everybody said that he was a prodigy, and, by definition, he was. He outgrew teacher after teacher. He went to college and kept right on practicing—five hours, six hours a day, seven days a week, year in and year out.

When he graduated he practiced

for a year, took a summer course, and gave a New York recital. No managers rushed to sign him, so he practiced for another year and played in New York again. The results were no different. Finally he opened a studio in his home town and began taking a few pupils, at a higher fee than any other piano teacher around. Parents paid gladly. He had played in New York and been away a lot; he was a real concert pianist. When the war came, he had a degree in music and four one-paragraph, yes-no-maybe reviews from the New York morning papers as proof of his status.

Sometimes he would get slightly tight on crème de menthe frappés and sit down at an officers' club piano and play. When he did, everybody in the club stopped talking to listen, and when he finished they applauded and bought him drinks. Those years of practice had given him a keyboard technique that not even destroyer duty could ruin. He was not just a good piano player; he was a cultivated, sensitive musician. In fact, he was almost good enough to have a career—which is not unlike saying that a race horse is almost good enough to run in horse races.

So he hung around the sonar gear,



explaining the Doppler effect to passing seamen, identifying pitches for anybody who cared, waiting uneasily for the war to end. His present pupils probably don't like him much. I'm sure he is too impatient with their fumbling to be a good teacher. But what can a pianist without an audience do except teach other people to play the piano?

### Art Is Its Own Reward

Certainly the would-be concert artists who fail have no corner on frustration. Plenty of people without an artistic bone in their bodies suffer from ambitions unfulfilled. Relatively few, though, work so agonizingly hard and long, reach so high a level of competence, come so close to success, and, failing, hit with such a dismal thud. It is easy enough to say, "Well, he has his music; art is its own reward." Maybe so, but if you had worked for more than thirty years to become another Paderewski and wound up teaching little girls to play "The Happy Farmer" you might not feel so very serene either.

The classified columns are filled with ads urging young college graduates to assemble and be selected for training as executives, line of business not specified. "Excell oppy, fine co," they say; "\$55 wk st." But what of the young man who does not want to become an executive, no matter how excell the oppy, no matter how fine the co; who does not want to break the sound barrier on the drawing board or make his way to the top of the atomic pile?

He may be deluded. Perhaps his ambition to become an actor or a pianist or a writer is doomed from the outset because of his own lack of talent. Nobody can tell him this; he has to find out for himself. There is no other way.

In New York alone thousands of

no-talent cases are bedded down in furnished rooms each week when the rent comes due. They live off their families or dredge little livings out of Macy's Basement, stoking their illusive hopes by talking with each other. Eventually most of them give up. They either go home, where dreaming is cheaper, or face up to the problem of making a living in realistic terms. Replacements are always arriving; the ranks never seem to thin.

There are others who are not deluded, though. They are the ones with enough talent, or almost enough, to succeed. What of them?

**T**HE BRIGHT young college graduate who wants to be "a writer" is in sad enough plight, but he can usual-



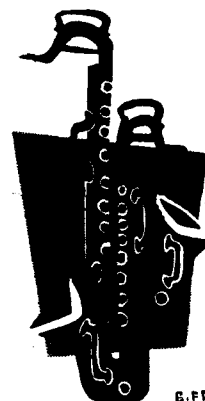
ly earn enough to keep himself in milk and peanut butter. Enough printer's ink is dispensed each day to keep a huge number of typewriters clattering. If his skill with words is sufficient and his willingness to sell it unscrupled, he may make a great deal of money. The spiritual rewards to be gained from writing copy for toothpaste advertisements or please-remit letters or mail-order catalogues are said, by those who know, to be slight. But then, the average aspiring writer hasn't spent six hours a day, seven days a week, ever since he got out of diapers, mastering his technique, polishing his style. Neither has the average aspiring singer, painter, or actor, for that matter. The aspiring concert instrumentalist has, though, and if he fails he does not merely fall short of an adolescent ambition, sought systematically, if at

all, only in young manhood; he loses the moral investment of his whole young lifetime.

### Is Anybody Listening?

Why must the chasm between success and failure in the concert field be so great? America is a musical country, if capacity for absorbing decibels is any criterion of music appreciation. Radios, record players, jukeboxes, and television sets pour music out hour after hour, day, night, and in between times. People get up to music, eat to music, do the housework to music, work to music, drive automobiles to music, drink to music, and go to bed to music. But most of the time nobody seems to listen. A kind of harmonic Gresham's law becomes effective, and the worthless music drives out the good. Music is used as a sort of sedative, as aural padding to ease the shock of such harsh intrusions as conversation. This variety of musical experience, like most movie music, presents a psychiatric rather than an aesthetic problem. It is simply background noise, arranged in more or less regular patterns. Its relationship to music seriously considered is about that of dime-store statuary to the Parthenon.

Yet, in spite of this, there are people all over America who really listen seriously to music. They may outrage the professional by misusing a technical term in calling everything they listen to "classical" if it has an intellectual content greater than that of a Lehár waltz, but they do listen. They buy recordings by famous artists of music by famous composers; they listen to certain broadcasts at certain times; they go to concerts, weather permitting, when they are within driving distance.



B. FREUND

Many of them are listeners of real taste and discrimination; many more are becoming so with the boom in high-fidelity phonographs and long-playing records. A good many, though, still take exactly what they are offered and love it all without differentiation. Music is Heifetz and Horowitz and Toscanini and Frank Black and Mishel Piaastro and Oscar Levant and José Iturbi and Marian Anderson and Mario Lanza and James Melton and Marguerite Piazza. It is the Metropolitan Opera broadcast on Saturday afternoon and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony on Sunday. Brahms had a beard; Beethoven had none. All great composers are dead composers except Stravinsky; he wrote a piece, very modern, about spring. People who speak confidently about music on the radio are famous music critics—like Milton Cross, Boris Goldovsky, and Sigmund Spaeth.

It is useless to feel insulted by this crazy-house of musical and quasi-musical images. Remember, for every one of them you can place in proper perspective you have a neighbor, not far distant, who neither knows nor cares a rap about such distortion. There is no compelling moral reason why he ought to, any more than he ought to care about the distinction between Marcel Proust and Mickey Spillane or be able to sense the fine shade of difference between Michelangelo and Al Capp.

**T**HERE ARE two inferential points here that affect the prospects of the would-be concert performer.

First, to most musically literate or semi-literate Americans, serious mu-

sic is still a project that involves the importation, either bodily or by electronic means, of brand-name performers to play or sing or explain a severely limited repertoire of brand-name compositions, most of which are a hundred or more years old. The implications of this for the young composer are serious indeed; but we're talking about the performer. His position in this: If he is to build a successful career he must make his name one of the favored brands; to accomplish this he must devote his energies to the performance of brand-name music, whether he likes it or not. If he feels an affinity only for music of his own century, he may as well give up his dreams of winning recognition from any but a



small and special metropolitan audience.

Second, it will be observed that the brand-name status of performers relates only in a haphazard way to absolute artistic worth. There is one thing they all have in common: They are personalities. To become a brand-name personality it is necessary to have the essential ingredients and to have them skillfully promoted. If the potential musical personality is also an expert musician, so much the better.

This is not to say that the reputations of artists like Horowitz and Heifetz are not merited; they are. It is to say that imaginative advertising and good public relations are just as important in selling a musician as they are in selling a cellophane wrapper full of pig meat. Advertising campaigns and careers are charted in New York. So are musical careers.

So far, so good. Our would-be concert performer must come to New York. For the sake of particular discussion, let us make him a pianist.



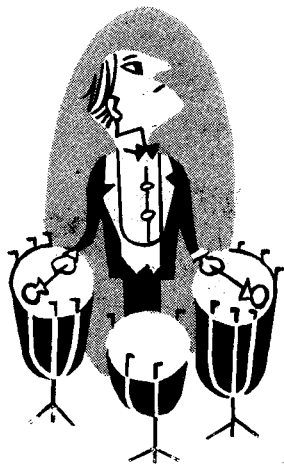
There are more pianos than other kinds of musical instruments in American homes, hence more pianists than other kinds of musicians.

His object is to enlist the aid of one of the big concert management bureaus in the campaign to make *his* name a brand name. He has his eye on two managements as potential sharers in the coming glory—Columbia Artists Management and National Concert and Artists Corporation. They are the two biggest in the business. Either will serve his purpose. Smaller, independent managers have their trouble booking scattered individual dates for even the most promising newcomer, but Columbia and N.C.A.C. have strange and wonderful tentacles called, respectively, Community Concerts and Civic Concerts, and, collectively, the organized-audience plan.

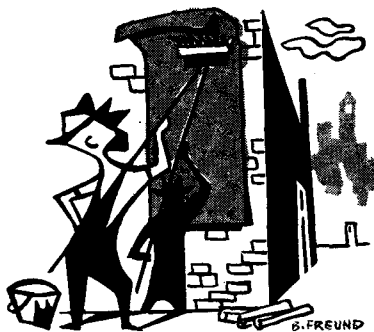
The organized-audience plan is basically simple. It applies the principles of mass merchandising to the art of music. Between them, Community and Civic control ("supply" is a nicer word) almost two thousand concert series in the United States and Canada.

They work like this: An *agent provocateur* sells the leading citizens of a town on the idea of having a concert series. A campaign is conducted to sell tickets. The money is put on deposit. Did somebody say something about a pig in a poke? Not at all. They can talk about artists when the money is safely in the bank. Columbia and N.C.A.C. are both reputable firms.

The machinery is efficient, and lots of audiences hear lots of music only because the nice young men from Civic and Community come around selling concert series. From the artistic point of view the results are by no means always above reproach. Many







hard words have been passed about both organizations. But the point here is that our young pianist needs audiences if he is going to play recitals, win applause, and eventually become a brand-name performer; and either Community or Civic can give him more audiences than he could possibly get any other way.

### Buying a Papered House

Whether either Columbia-Community or N.C.A.C.-Civic needs *him* is another matter. What can he do to make himself attractively conspicuous? Well, he can enter a big contest and win it—if any big contests are being held, if he plays well enough, and if the judges like the way he walks and the way he sits on the piano bench. He can request management auditions; if he does, he will be heard, but a bare audition studio is a cold and cheerless place to make the effort of a lifetime. Or he can give a New York recital, draw rave reviews, and wait for the managers to come pounding at his door the next morning.

Carnegie Hall is the place to play, he thinks. But a recital in Carnegie Hall will cost him at least two thousand dollars. And where is the money to come from?—money for rental of the hall itself; money to pay a recital manager capable of handling such details as giving away enough free tickets to keep the auditorium from being completely empty; money to have the tickets themselves printed; money for an advertisement in the *Times*; money (he almost forgot) to rent a piano. He is relieved when he finds that it is considered unbecomingly ostentatious to play in Carnegie Hall the first time around.

Town Hall is the next in line. There he can squeak by on a little less than \$1,500 and still pay for the most important trimmings. Also, there are fewer seats, fewer tickets to

be given away. Maybe he borrows the money; maybe he has a rich uncle in Texas.

Of course, he could pay a good deal less and play his recital in one of the smaller, more “intimate” auditoriums around the city, but careful study of the music pages in the daily newspapers has revealed that critics usually pass them up entirely or drop in just long enough to confirm their suspicions that nothing of much interest is happening.

So Town Hall it is. The young pianist engages the recital department of Columbia, say, to take care of arrangements and show him where the stage door is. He chooses Columbia to perform these services partly because the talismanic name costs no more than any other, partly because he hopes (vainly, it should be added) that this move will win him favor with the big managers upstairs in the Steinway Building.

The best Town Hall dates have been booked months in advance, but there is a Thursday in February still open. He snaps it up, little realizing that while he is playing his recital the New York Philharmonic-Symphony will be giving the American premiere of a new French work in Carnegie Hall and that down at the Metropolitan the first performance of Rudolf Bing’s latest Verdi revival is scheduled.

Happily unaware of these competitors (they are unaware of him, too), he plans his program with Pentagon seriousness. He includes a nice, inoffensive Beethoven sonata (so as not to scare the brand-name managers), Moussorgsky’s “Pictures at an Exhibition” (to lure Olin Downes), a group of neglected pieces by Satie (to lure Virgil Thomson), a Coplandesque piece by a friend of his (to show the critics that he is interested in new music, in case they care), and some miscellaneous Liszt (to bring the evening to a pyrotechnical close and draw encores).

He practices and waits for the big event. When it comes, who hears him? The kind, helpful recital manager from Columbia is there. The few friends he has made in New York are there. His composer friend, of course, is on hand to hear his composition and share in the applause. A few wan students from music schools around the city have come



to hear the Satie. A trio of soldiers have been given tickets at the U.S.O. His mother is there, and a few relatives on his father’s side. And there are a sprinkling of strangers who have just wandered in.

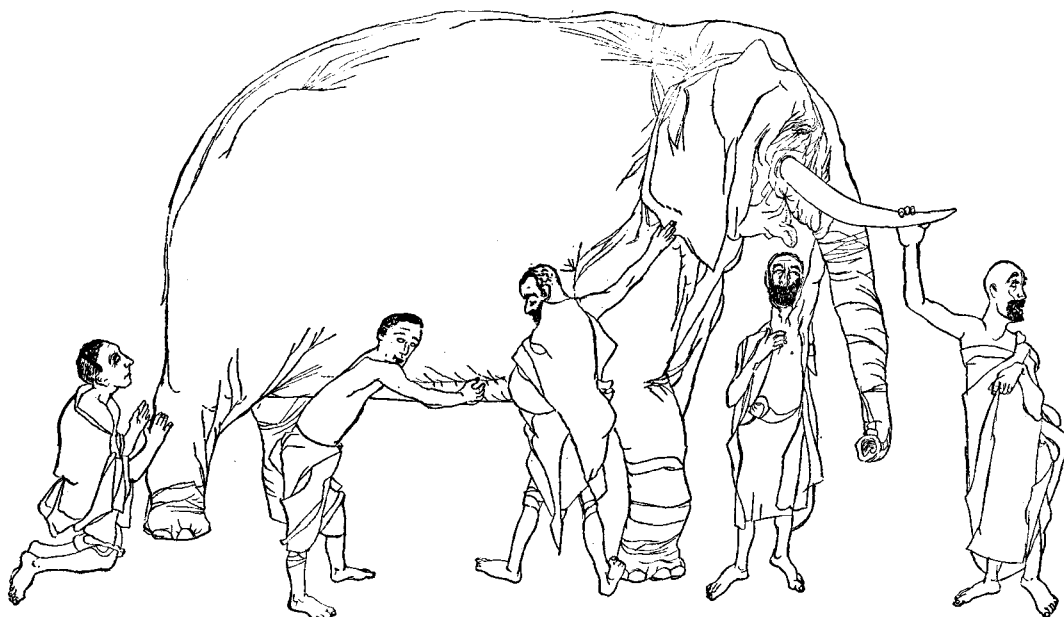
Where are the critics? Virgil Thomson is at Carnegie Hall; Olin Downes is at the Metropolitan; the evening-paper critics, unable to make up their minds, are shuttling back and forth between the two major events, trying to cover both. But both the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* send lesser reviewers. They leave before the Liszt.

Despite the dismal pall that hangs over an ill-populated concert hall, despite his nervousness, our young pianist plays quite well. A few wrong notes, a snubbed phrase here, a jittery tempo there, but quite well. That is precisely what the brief reviews say: on the one hand this, on the other hand that. No managers come pounding at the door next morning; the telephone is silent.

There is nothing left to do but give up the labors of a lifetime and quit, or try again next year. The young pianist has spent \$1,500 on a New York recital and has proved nothing whatever, except that he, like most of his fellows, is not considered a salable musical commodity.

**T**HIS PATTERN is repeated week after week, season after season. The human and economic waste is tremendous, the largely meaningless parade of debutants heartbreaking to watch. Seldom does one win a contract with a major management on the strength of reviews alone, even if they are superlative. And superlative reviews of debut recitals are rare indeed; critics cannot afford to confuse human with artistic values.

There are vacancies, few but regular, on management rosters. Very infrequently a *Wunderkind* like Ervin



## *To get the whole truth you have to get the whole picture*

**T**HE BLIND MAN who touched the elephant's head said "An elephant is like a water pot." The one who felt his ears said "like a basket." Another fingered the tusks and said "An elephant is like a plow." Feeling the legs, a fourth said "like a post." And the blind man who touched the elephant's belly asserted "An elephant is like a granary."

It's the same way with the news. You touch a part and you think "This is how it is"—*but you may be wrong.* Even when you understand one or more parts of the news perfectly, you may still put the parts together incorrectly, you may still base an inexact over-all picture on them. To get the whole truth, you have to get the whole story.

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*The* **Reporter**

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Laszlo will get reviews that render him marketable as a prodigy. Even less frequently a Byron Janis (a protégé of Horowitz) will be signed after an audition and actually make his New York debut after his career is already a fact. The best entrants in contests like those sponsored by the Rachmaninoff Fund (Seymour Lipkin, Gary Graffman), the Philadelphia Orchestra (Sigmund Weissenberg), or the National Federation of Music Clubs (Jacques Abram) are frequently signed to contracts and sent out to face the organized audiences.

Those who have failed to attract the attention of managers sometimes hint darkly that if they had "had money" the story would have been different. Maybe so. All other things being equal or nearly equal, a manager would be foolish to choose an impoverished newcomer over one able to invest a few thousand dollars in the promotion of his career. If this is a matter for blame, where does the onus rest? On the artist? On the management? Or on the advertising mentality of the public?

The fact that the artistic (and even financial) benefits to be gained from playing Community or Civic tours are highly questionable does



not make competition for the chance to do so any less keen. Far fewer even than those who get the chance are those who, like William Kapell, survive to win recognition as serious, mature artists, for the young recitalist who does not show clear brand-name potentialities is almost always dropped after the few seasons it takes him to travel around the circuit—unless he has been dropped sooner because of bad press notices or (far worse) a series of we-were-not-amused letters from chairmen of local concert committees. The need to succeed is great, but success too often means pleasing audiences whose enthusiasm for flashy technique exceeds their responsiveness to more legitimate musical values.

The whole situation is, to say the least, unhealthy. There is a constant tendency in the press and in mo-

tion pictures, on TV and the radio, to glamorize a few careers far beyond any intrinsic worth they could possibly have. Certainly any town should be delighted when a Heifetz or Horowitz finds time to pay a visit, play a recital, and collect his fee. But a year is 365 days long, and half a dozen recitals by peripatetic virtuosos, near-virtuosos, and miscellaneous groups is not a very well-rounded musical diet, even when augmented by the rich and growing literature to be heard on records.

**T**HERE is still a wide difference between the positions occupied by the respected local musician in Europe and the local teacher ("He used to be a concert pianist") in this country. Until local music making becomes a matter of pride rather than apology, until it becomes the rule rather than the exception to admit fully the status of local musicians whose talents, although considerable, are not great enough to give them a chance in the international market place, America's musical development will remain more apparent than real, and the young man who wants to make a career of serious music will continue to have a pretty tough row to hoe.

# Parent-Teacher's Meeting In a French Village

CHERRY COOK

**I**T BECAME apparent the moment Monsieur Bordeaux, the schoolmaster, entered the mayor's office that he was going to be the star of the meeting. Young, untidy, typically French in gesture and in the steady flow of his words, he peered with bright eyes through heavy-rimmed glasses at each parent as he gave us each a vigorous handshake.

"Ah, Madame l'Américaine," he greeted me, his smile, full of humor, revealing tobacco-stained teeth.

He slipped out of a heavy khaki

trenchcoat, hoisted it onto one of six clothes hooks which decorated the end of the bare office, and then in a swift and energetic movement crossed the room and fell into animated conversation with the village mayor.

We parents, six of us, returned to our stilted, self-conscious exchanges. We had all come to the meeting in response to careful, ink-written invitations, prepared by the fourth-graders, to attend a sort of primitive parent-teacher's meeting. This is

held once a year when theoretically all of the families of the village are brought together to determine how much of a fee will be levied upon them for the maintenance of their children in the two small communal schools.

**T**HE SCHOOLS present no great problem of upkeep, for they are so dilapidated that it does not seem to occur to anyone to try to improve them. The girls' school, downstairs directly underneath the mayor's of-