

plant. "How many people have got \$18 million?" a big publisher plaintively asks.

The commitment to the bank for such enormous new capital outlay is a reason often given for failure to launch new editorial enterprises. Revenues have reached a peak, in the publisher's mind, because he feels unable to raise advertising rates, lest he lose an even larger slice of the advertisers' dollar to the more dramatic competition of television. He has raised the reader price to five, seven, eight cents, and looks to the dime as an attainable ceiling. But this is only to catch up, not to finance a foreign service, to strengthen staff resources, or to set standards of taste in his community by informed criticism of books, music, theater, the arts, or even of public planning.

The publisher feels in a bind that forces him to make whatever savings can be secured by relying more on syndicated features and wire-service news, which shrink the individuality and enterprise of the paper.

The current trend is toward ever more mergers—some have occurred while this piece was on the type-writer—and thus to increasing concentration of control. The ultimate economy the publisher sees is a round-the-clock operation, publishing a morning and evening paper in the same plant, with no local competition. This is indeed the primary objective of mergers, and in all but a handful of cities it is already achieved, or on the drawing boards.

The American sentiment against monopoly or near-monopoly has not got us very far in other fields, even though the government is armed with anti-trust weapons. It is not apt to be effective in the newspaper business until there are technological developments, not now in sight, to cut down the tremendous capital requirement. Or else there will have to be a public awareness of the importance of diversity and independence—not in sight either—that will bring support of smaller newspapers that can be more representative of the diverse elements in American life. For these the reader will have to pay a higher price—the price of independence from the revenues of mass advertising. Until then, except in rarely fortunate communities, the reader will have to look

beyond the daily press, as many have learned to do, for fuller dimensions and more independence of discussion of public issues.

This is not at all to say that the

daily paper has no vital function or that it is not in many instances performing it competently; only that it is limiting its role to less than the readers' needs.

A Long Way from Houston

NAT HENTOFF

SAM ("LIGHTNIN'") HOPKINS is a gaunt blues singer and guitarist in the dying tradition of Blind Lemon Jefferson, Texas Alexander, and other Southern Negroes who found they could escape the cotton-picking servility of country life by singing for nickels and dimes on city streets, eventually working at dances and bars, and maybe making extra money from quick recordings. They sang stories about their own lives and knew that their listeners would have no trouble understanding and sympathizing with the lyrics.

Economically, the blues players lived a more precarious existence than their neighbors, preferring to take their chances in the night world of gamblers, pimps, and hard-drinking laborers out for a few explosive hours away from "Mister Charlie." Like his predecessors, Hopkins is proud that although he has lived in Texas most of his life, he has had little to do "with people that call me 'boy' and then wait for me to say 'yessuh.' I stay with my own people. I have all my fun and I have my trouble with them."

Hopkins is close to the last of his line. Negro youngsters, including those in the South, have long been exposed to more sophisticated ways of expressing the blues. Those with musical capacity go into jazz ("not deep enough," says Lightnin') or a career in commercial pop music. Most young Negroes regard Lightnin' as old-fashioned. They tend to associate a harsh country voice and an unorthodox guitar style with the "old times" from which they want to get as far away as they can. When Lightnin' and such of his contemporaries as John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, and Sunnyland Slim are dead, there will be no one to replace them. The blues will continue, but without the unhurried beat, raw

warmth, and unself-conscious down-home imagery of the adventurers from the country.

OF THOSE country-reared blues singers still alive, Lightnin' is by all odds the best. Like the most powerful of his predecessors, he makes up his own songs, and can improvise a tune and lyrics simultaneously. His subjects are those long common to the blues—women, whiskey, prison, death, and wandering. When there is social commentary, it is not a New York Post editorial but comes out of a particular place and time in Lightnin's experience, as in his memory of the bitter seasons when he was hired out to a Mr. Moore, a landowner with property north of Dallas:

"You know I got a telegram this morning.

It say your wife is dead.

I showed it to Mr. Moore. He says, Go ahead, nigger, you know you gotta plow a ridge.

That white man said it's been rainin'.

Yes sir, I'm way behind.

Yes sir. I'm way behind.

I may let you bury that woman On your dinner time."

Lightnin' farmed for some years before he acquired the confidence to try to make a living out of the blues. Born in Leon County between Houston and Dallas, he started making music when he was a child. "I was eight or before, and my family come in from chopping cotton and plowing in the fields and they find me sitting down in the middle of the floor playing that guitar. Right then I had it in my heart that I could play it."

When he finally moved to the city, Lightnin' at first supplemented his precarious income from music by running policy slips, taking charge

of a gambling room, and "maybe even had a few money women on the line." He sang in the streets, waiting for a call to go into a bar, perform, and pass the hat. "I'd get on busses too. Bus drivers used to stop and say, 'Get on, boy.' Wouldn't cost me nothing, and I'd pick up some change."

Lightnin' began recording in 1946, and gave up some of his extramusical activities. He picked up his nickname when he went that year to Los Angeles to record with a Texas pianist named "Thunder" Smith. Lightnin' made some two hundred records in the next eleven or twelve years, and some were hits. A few of them are still worth collecting, but most of his performances were tastelessly gimmicked by the record companies to conform to what was selling.

In the late 1950's, Lightnin' was hardly recording at all any more. Even with the heavily amplified guitar he was told to use in record sessions and the crudely battering accompaniment, his records didn't sell. He moved from furnished room to furnished room, staying as close as he could to Dowling Street, center of the action in Houston's Negro business section. At times money was scarce and it was hard to pick up enough for rent, food, and whiskey. But he was at home, and there were stretches of regular work at dances. Lightnin' didn't prosper, but there was always a way for him to stay alive in a neighborhood he knew so well.

As his commercial recording sessions dwindled, Lightnin' seemed certain to end his life in Houston, working on the streets and at dances. A couple of years ago, however, two writers sought him out. One was Sam Charters, who recorded Lightnin' for Folkways and devoted a chapter to him in his book *The Country Blues* (Rinehart). The other was Mack McCormick, who recorded two Lightnin' albums for Tradition, and encouraged him to try a part-time concert career in view of a sudden rise of interest in classic blues.

THOSE FIRST THREE LPs present the full expressive range of Lightnin' as singer and blues writer. For once, he was allowed to record all by him-

self. He wasn't limited by commercial considerations in his choice of repertory, he played the unamplified guitar he prefers, and the conditions for recording were much warmer and more informal than the cold studio briskness to which he had been accustomed. The albums—*Lightnin' Hopkins* (Folkways FS 3822), *Country Blues* (Tradition TLP 1035), and *Autobiography in Blues* (Tradition TLP 1040)—contain bitterly lonely prison songs, infectious party invitations, stories of the gambling life, exasperated work songs, spoken reminiscences, an oddly unsentimental but touching report of a child trying to get his parents to stop their fighting, and Lightnin's best-known song among Negroes, *Short Haired Woman*.

Following the long-play records, invitations came for Lightnin' to play in folk-song concerts before predominantly white audiences. Lightnin' was reluctant, and was especially disinclined to leave Houston for the concert route. "Here in Houston I can be broke and hungry and walk out and someone will buy me a dinner. It ain't always like that in a strange place."

But there was money in the concerts, and so he tried a few near home. The first was given in July, 1959, at a hootenanny in the Alley Theatre in Houston. To his surprise the audience responded enthusiastically, particularly to his lighter material.

In describing an appearance by Lightnin' at the Alley Theatre last May, Mack McCormick, Lightnin's personal historian, has observed: "It is very, very difficult for him to sing seriously of sorrows or tragedies to a group of strange white people. He prefers to pluck for the easiest response, to make them laugh. On several of these shows he threw away songs such as 'Penitentiary Blues' with a leer or a comic gesture. One night he actually got a laugh with the line 'One kind favor I ask of you, please see that my grave is kept clean.'"

The song was originally created by Blind Lemon Jefferson, who came from the same part of Texas and whom Lightnin' first saw many decades ago as a "great big fat dark man with a big stomach" playing at a Baptist picnic. "Lemon showed me

some things on the guitar," Lightnin' recalls, "and then hollered at me, 'Boy, you better play it right.' We played together that day and I never forgot it. And I just come up to be one of those people myself, and now I'm an old man."

Lightnin' did finally gather courage to leave Houston and went to California last July for a concert at the University of California in Berkeley. Again, he didn't sing the darker and more painful parts of his repertory and worked instead on getting the quickest and most predictable response from the white audience by concentrating on bawdy songs, tales of fickle women, and general clowning. "Lightnin' figures that white audiences never have experienced the hard blues he knows," a friend has pointed out. "He's got a leg scar, among other memories, from the chain gang. He doesn't think they'll understand what he's talking about, and I must say most of those 'folk' audiences encourage him in that belief. To them, he's an 'exotic.' And so he only gives them a small part of himself."

THERE WAS some apprehension among Lightnin's friends in Houston when bookings were finally arranged for him in New York this fall. He had been in the city briefly a few years before to record, but these would be his first big-time concert and night-club appearances in the North. A college tour was also arranged, and even a television appearance on *A Pattern of Words and Music*, one of the CBS-TV Television Workshop series. "This is going to be a lyrical entertainment," a producer told Lightnin', "a show that will please the eye and be meaningful to the heart and head. It won't have a dramatic form as such, but will increase in intensity as we weave the various elements into an hour."

"Uh-huh," said Lightnin' uncomprehendingly. "How many minutes do you want me to do?"

His official debut was to be at a hootenanny in Carnegie Hall October 14. A list of suggestions concerning repertory and the care and handling of Lightnin' was sent from Houston to the New York promoter in charge of his appearances. After listing the songs and stories Lightnin' tells most graphically, the tip sheet



PASSION AND PYROTECHNICS

Leonard Bernstein's Berlioz is passion and pyrotechnics...hear the Bernstein way with "Romeo and Juliet" and the blazing "Roman Carnival" Overture.

ML 5570/MS 6170/Berlioz: "Roman Carnival" Overture; Excerpts from "Romeo and Juliet"/New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, conductor.



EVERYBODY'S GIRL IRMA

"Irma la Douce," a wayward but of course goodhearted wench, is chronicled in the score of a new Broadway musical, a kind of French "Three Penny Opera" imported by way of London. Try it in French—with the redoubtable Zizi Jeanmaire as Irma—or in English with the stars of the American cast. Either way, "Irma" is brash musical comedy with a touch of bitters. OL 5560 English/WL 177 French/Irma la Douce.



PUCCINI AND THE BLUES

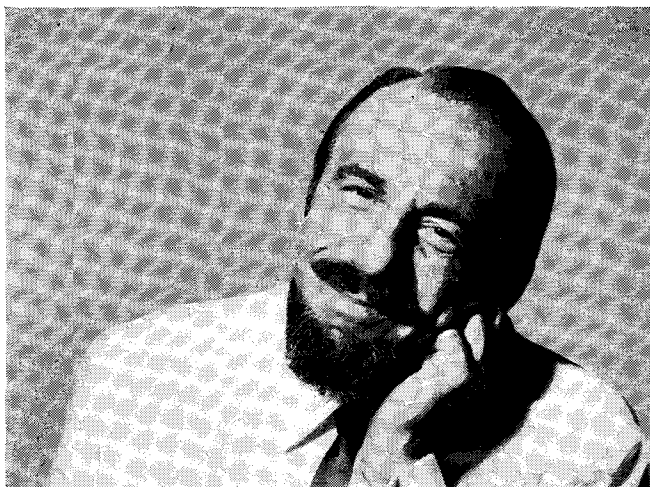
Grand Opera's Eileen Farrell is a heartbreaking "Madame Butterfly"—or "Tosca" but the vocal surprise of the year is her newest role, the heroine of the blues. She lights a tender torch in "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues."

CL 1465/CS 8256/"I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues"/Eileen Farrell.

ML 5483/MS 6150/PUCCINI ARIAS/Eileen Farrell.

ML 5484/MS 6151/"An Eileen Farrell Song Recital."

the newest SOUNDS®



MEMORIES ARE MADE OF SONGS

Mitch Miller, a bearded piper who leads a splendid new national pastime—Sing Along with Mitch—this time with a melodic memoir.

CL 1542/CS 8342/Memories/Sing Along with Mitch/Mitch Miller and the gang.

THE VOICE OF SHAKESPEARE

Sir John Gielgud is the true voice of Shakespeare. New—and exclusively on Columbia Records—is the sequel to Gielgud's "Ages of Man." In a new Shakespeare program—"One Man in His Time"—Sir John goes to the very heart of matters in Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Richard II and Henry V, among others.

OL 5550/One Man in His Time/Sir John Gielgud.

FROM "HANSEL" TO "WOZZECK"

Thomas Schippers is a spirited maestro with a gift for opera that has carried him triumphantly to La Scala and the Met. His premiere Columbia recording is a rousing "Lp" of orchestral interludes from operas that range—astonishingly—from "Hansel and Gretel" to "Traviata," "Vanessa" and to "Wozzeck." ML 5564/MS 6164/Orchestral Music from the Opera/The Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Thomas Schippers, conductor.



33 singles: A happy new note. Many of your favorite singers and their songs are now available too on neat 7-inch single records at your favorite speed—33.

always YOURS on COLUMBIA® RECORDS

ended with a stage direction unique to the New York concert scene: "Lightnin' does drink quite a bit but understands that he is at his best when he holds off and does not drink himself to the point that he becomes sloppy. When he is waiting to go on, it is best to discourage his drinking except in small bits and then encourage him to have a large slug before he goes on."

As at most "folk" events, the audience was predominantly young, very young. They looked like—and some were—the intense questioners at meetings of the Young Peoples Socialist League and the Saturday picketers of Woolworth's. The folk music they prefer consists largely of ballads and novelty songs they've learned from records by Pete Seeger and the Weavers. They are most moved by traditional songs with new lyrics that condemn Jim Crow and the Bomb.

The Carnegie Hall crowd reacted most eagerly to Seeger and a twenty-three-year-old Negro from Detroit, Bill McAdoo, who had majored in history and English at the University

of Michigan. The exuberant work song "Jumping Judy" has been recast by McAdoo as "I Don't Want to Have a War" ("I will never drop that bomb, and blow this world to Hell"). There is little music and less imagination in McAdoo, but his slogans are correct. The youngsters cheered him, and roared for more.

Lightnin' came on stage wearing his habitual dark glasses and, as always when he works, a towel around his neck. ("It gets hot down in Houston.") He was the only real folk singer on the program as distinguished from singers who "interpret" folk material. He made some contact with the audience, again avoiding his harshest songs and focusing instead on women, those lost and those invited back. The applause was loud but dutiful.

Lightnin' took his place among the other performers on stage and listened politely while another performer delivered a singing editorial on the death of Caryl Chessman. Wisely, Lightnin' had decided to keep "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" to himself. «»

impressions, interpretation, or travel that would have conferred on it an air of romance or historical glamour. We come to Flemish art as strangers.

ANY SERIOUS EXPOSITION of the Flemish school is thus handicapped at the start, and it may be for this reason that a major showing of the Flemish masters is seldom attempted. It is one of the great achievements of the exhibition of "Masterpieces of Flemish Art: Van Eyck to Bosch," currently at the Detroit Institute of Arts, that it confronts this handicap with boldness. It establishes at the outset a workable and affecting basis for a more knowledgeable and intense response than one would have thought possible. This exhibition, which has been organized jointly by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the city of Bruges, is surely the most important museum event of the year—and of many a year. It was shown in the Communal Museum of Bruges during the summer months, to the delectation of thousands of visitors to Belgium, and it remains on view in Detroit until the end of December. It includes an astonishing number of rare treasures: in addition to bringing together the most comprehensive exhibition of Flemish painting in more than half a century, the show includes superb examples of sculpture, drawing, tapestry, gold and metal work, illuminated manuscripts, and historical documents of the period. It is not only a great age of painting that we are shown in Detroit, but a whole civilization: that devout but curiously earthbound civilization which centered on the commercial world of Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels in the fifteenth century. In the end it is this whole panorama of a rich and creative culture that renders its brightest jewel—the masterworks of Flemish painting—both more comprehensible and somehow closer in spirit.

In many period exhibitions, which mingle furniture and crafts together with objects of fine art, one sooner or later feels the need to be done with the decorative setting in order to gain a clear view of the painting and sculpture. Period settings make an appeal to our interest in history and social custom; to the modern eye that has grown used to regarding plastic art as something apart from

Strangers in Flanders

HILTON KRAMER

THE CIVILIZATION of fifteenth-century Flanders is not one for which we feel an instinctive affinity. Whereas the achievements of the early Italian Renaissance and of Elizabethan England may echo in the mind as the very stuff of which the modern world is made, the great age of Flemish culture evokes, for most of us, no comparable mental picture. The paintings of Jan van Eyck or Hans Memling or Rogier van der Weyden that we happen to see in our travels abroad or in our own museums may dazzle us with their technical perfection, their precision and verisimilitude, but they do not strike us as having an immediate relation to any concept of art we now enjoy as an unquestioned habit of mind. On the contrary, the almost unbelievable virtuosity of Flemish craftsmanship is more likely to be an obstacle than an attraction to eyes nourished on the art of the last hundred years.

Since the advent of Impressionism we have grown used to the kind of art that dispenses with finical methods of execution as a mark of superior expressive powers. The probity of modern art consists in its having narrowed to a radical degree the technical distance that formerly separated intention from realization, and this places it at the farthest possible remove from an art like the Flemish masters', which almost made a science of precisely those elements we no longer regard as indispensable in our appreciation of pictorial art. Though it commands our respect as an unrivaled feat of the hand and the mind, Flemish painting has proved incapable of gaining a foothold in contemporary sensibility. Neither the art scholars nor the best of our living painters have given it the kind of attention that would have brought it closer to us. No poet or novelist has produced a book of