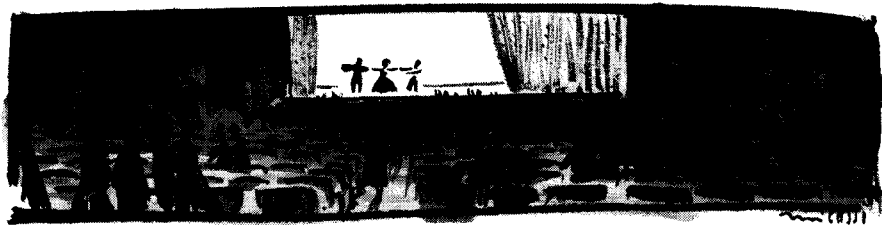


Boston where, in a back room, about twenty-five thousand dollars a week was changing hands in illegal betting. With lenses trained from a window across the street and a hidden mike on "customer" McMullen, the strange and ceaseless activities of the joint became plainly visible. Thousands of people entered the "key shop" during the week, among them a daily assortment of uniformed police. It is almost certain that the shop would be doing business as usual if this accurate and wholly damning report had not burst Boston wide open, infuriating the police, forcing long-delayed legal action, causing the governor of Massachusetts to demand the resignation of the police commissioner, scattering the bookies. Most remarkable of all, the program aroused the thunderous ire of Cardinal Cushing. In the prelate's view, it seems, there are two moralities—or immoralities. One is gambling, of which he said in a speech at the annual Boston Police Ball: "In my theology, gambling itself is not a sin any more than to take a glass of beer or of hard liquor is a sin." As the *New York Times* wrote, "Cardinal Cushing said he had not seen the program nor was he interested in seeing it. But he asserted that 'whoever is behind it owes an apology to the City of Boston,' which had been 'betrayed.'" This betrayal was the immorality.

If Cardinal Cushing had seen the film—which was not shown in Boston because of pending proceedings rising largely out of CBS evidence but which, of course, he could easily have had access to—he would have been faced with a vivid exploration of the mighty river of crime which these small bookie tributaries all over the country joined and swelled toward the corruption of society itself. One illicit fifty-cent bet might be a "glass of beer." Ten million such bets were the breakdown of law, of respect for law, and of adherence to law. Yet here was a religious leader extolling the very police who condoned this anarchy and soothing the conscience of the very people who contributed to it.

Apparently it is left for mass communications, those reporters who serve it best, and playwrights to awaken the public conscience.



Folk Finds a Voice

NAT HENTOFF

ALTHOUGH the renaissance in folk music—both from the performing and the listening ends—continues to grow, the lines of division among the motley enthusiasts remain sternly drawn. On the one hand there is the mass audience which has settled for the hollow high spirits of Harry Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, the Brothers Four, and the Limeliters. Directly opposite in criteria is the minority of specialists which is contemptuous of all but authentic ethnic singers.

In between are the followers of the city-bred singers of folk songs, earnest apprentices who are trying to be musically honest while caught in an inevitable eclecticism. It is among these city-billies that most of the hope for re-energizing the tradition exists. But until recently the more musically sensitive in the audience for the urban folk have been troubled by the lack of substantial artistry among them.

Pete Seeger is widely honored in some circles, but more for his stand on public issues and his contagious

enthusiasm than for his stature as an artist. Richard Dyer-Bennet is now generally considered too dry and detached. The Weavers appear weary, and although there are younger, more rambunctious groups—notably the New Lost City Ramblers—no one had appeared who could hold an audience by musical excellence alone until the emergence of Joan Baez.

Now twenty, this exceedingly slim, stubborn girl has been seized upon by her admirers as a kind of folk-music Joan of Arc. Her first album for Vanguard (*Joan Baez*, VRS-9078; stereo, VSD-2077) was released toward the end of 1960 and has already sold more copies than the work of any other female folk singer in record history. A recent second collection (*Joan Baez*, Vol. 2, VRS-9094; stereo, VSD-2097) is following the ascent of the first. Miss Baez's total record sales are behind only those of Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, and the Weavers. Sales of the first Baez album, moreover, still increase each succeeding month.

Miss Baez's first extended tour this past fall resulted in large, hushed audiences with several sellouts. The tickets for a Chicago appearance were bought up more than three weeks in advance. The journey's climax came at Town Hall in November, with fifty seated on stage, fifty standees, and more than two hundred turned away. "Actually," the promoter mourned, "I could have filled a whole second house with no trouble."

At first appearance, Miss Baez, who accompanies herself on the guitar, does not make a particularly strong impression. ("Joan Baez, the superb folk singer," a hasty Boston columnist wrote, "should be heard and not



seen.") At Town Hall, she was dressed simply in a red sweater and a hand-woven white skirt with red trimming. A silver necklace was her only jewelry. Her long, oval face is solemn though wary in repose, and the only dramatic element in her appearance is her long black hair.

When she sings, however, Miss Baez, who is as spare with gestures as she is with smiles, draws the audience to her as if she were about to foretell the future. She communicates uncommon intensity through a penetratingly pure soprano voice over which she has complete control. Although she rarely sings at full volume, she "sounds loud," as one entranced undergraduate noted. She can soar through three octaves with an even range from top to bottom, and on her occasional Spanish numbers she becomes a richly expressive alto.

Her tone is full and firm, and by the supple use of a strong but disciplined vibrato, she makes vivid all the multicolored strands of joy, loss, and tenderness in her material, which is largely composed of Anglo-American ballads along with some Negro folk songs. She further illuminates her stories with a sure sense of dynamics, and even at her softest diminuendo her diction is utterly clear.

Miss Baez has wisely avoided the "fake ethnic" approach of some of her more strenuous contemporaries, and there is also no trace of sing-along commercialism in the way she shapes her music. Her style is im- pregnably her own. Although she does not profess to be an expert on the socio-economic context of each number she chooses, she clearly understands the emotional motivations of the songs and is faithful to their spirit, from the luminous urgency of "The Cherry Tree Carol" to the troubled Negro lullaby "All My Trials."

As one of her more analytical admirers points out, "Joan does not pretend to have been a Negro or a British maiden broken by a feudal lord. What she gives are her own feelings about these people. She's like a passionate biographer; and more than that, she makes these songs contemporary by identifying with their emotional content as herself—as Joan Baez, 1961. In that way,

her audience immediately identifies with *her*. She's not imitating the Earth Mother. She's one of us who happens to be able to sing beautifully." Like a number of other contemporary folk-song singers, Miss Baez has definite views on such non-musical subjects as racial integration and nuclear warfare. But unlike many singers, she does not preach. All her introductions are swift and her own views are usually expressed indirectly, as in her decision to open some of her concerts with Ed McCurdy's "Strangest Dream" ("I dreamed the world had all agreed



to put an end to war"). She does, however, pointedly dedicate a number to Pete Seeger in each performance as an expression of support in his current time of troubles with the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Nor does she ever add pamphlet- eering lyrics to traditional folk songs in order to further a cause, as do several other young singers. "When they do that," she observes, "the words simply aren't attractive. After all, the songs are so clear emotionally that they can speak for themselves."

She is, moreover, determined to keep herself on guard against the various temptations that have come from her sudden success. Since a brief stay at the Gate of Horn in Chicago a couple of years ago,

Miss Baez has refused all night- club engagements because "Most of the people there don't really come to listen." With rare excep- tions, she rejects all requests for interviews. "I don't want to be- come a product," she has explained to a friend. In her first year of fame, she has turned down nearly \$100,000 worth of concert dates because she will work only when she wants to. The rest of the time she remains at her home in northern California, where she raises animals (including assorted lizards) and reads without plan. She is unmarried.

Her address is classified informa- tion, and even her occasional visits to the offices of Vanguard Records in New York are rather stealthy. "Who does she think she is, J. D. Salinger?" a reporter recently com- plained that he had failed to trap her into an interview during one of her flights through New York.

Having not been entirely happy with her only two national television appearances (Robert Herridge's *Folk Music U.S.A.* and *A Pattern of Words and Music* on CBS), Miss Baez will now perform in that medium only on her own terms. "My point is simply that if the surroundings are wrong, I get to feeling gripy and nasty and then I don't sing well, so what's the point?" This season *The Bell Telephone Hour* has offered a resplendent sum for her services, but she has told her agent she will consent only if she has a segment of the show entirely to herself—without such production "extras" as a chorus—and only if she has enough time to build a performance. Her require- ments are being pondered.

BORN of a Quaker family, she is Mexican, Irish, and Scotch in descent. Her father, a physicist, has taught in California, New England, and abroad. At present he is with UNESCO in Paris, helping to establish training centers in physics in a number of underdeveloped countries. In her early teens Miss Baez began to sing and play casually, but her seri- ous introduction to folk music did not take place until three years ago when she was a desultory student at Boston University's Fine Arts School of Drama. At the time the only folk song she knew was "The House of the Rising Sun." After some coach-



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THE REPORTER

660 Madison Avenue
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ing from a local folk-music enthusiast, Debby Green, Miss Baez became part of the Boston-Cambridge folk-singing community, which is probably the most stimulating workshop for apprentices in the country.

She gradually acquired a style and an audience, and made her first national impact at the 1959 Newport Folk Festival, at which she appeared as an unlisted guest of one of the performers (*Folk Festival at Newport*, Vol. 2, Vanguard VRS-9063; stereo, VSD-2054). After more seasoning in off-campus coffeehouses, Miss Baez left school last February and has been a part-time professional entertainer ever since.

Except for the brief training from Debby Green, Miss Baez has had no formal instruction in voice or guitar. Her musicianship is stunningly natural; and although Pete Seeger and Odetta were early influences, she quickly stripped her singing of obvious influences and is now clearly an unshakably individual performer



in her own right. "The public may demand this and that," she has said, "but if you don't want to give in, you don't have to. I just don't think in terms of being well known or not well known."

"If she keeps on feeling and acting that way," adds an active promoter of folk-music concerts, "she'll make more and more money, no matter how genuinely uninterested she is in such irrelevancies. Her kind of audience must believe that she is entirely truthful. If she begins to hedge a little, they'll know it, and her record sales and concert receipts will drop. With these kids, it's a different kind of show business. To be commercial, you have to be non-commercial."

BOOKS

Lion at Home

GEORGE STEINER

THE LETTERS OF BEETHOVEN, edited by Emily Anderson. 3 vols. *St. Martin's Press*. \$40.

Paper is tenacious. It survives war, fire, and the natural death of the wastebasket. Despite the dispersions and physical ruin caused in Europe by revolution and world war, troves of private writing—letters, journals, memoirs—keep coming to light. In part, the reason is psychological: before the mid-nineteenth century, the written word, whether in print or manuscript, retained an aura of specific value and commitment. Few eighteenth-century correspondents would have sent a letter (actually an "epistle") without preserving a draft or copy. The receipt of a letter, particularly if it had traveled far, had a touch of wonder and occasion. The flood of written words had not yet swollen to a mechanical deluge.

That is why it has proved possible for connoisseurs of Walpole, Boswell, or Voltaire to construe so fantastically detailed and circumstantial an image of the daily lives and thoughts of their heroes. We know more about certain eighteenth-century personages than about eminent contemporaries.

Such knowledge is itself fascinating, not only in an antiquarian vein. It adds to the repertoire of sensibility as does the gradual control one can gain over the twist and flavor of a foreign language. To have in hand some sixteen hundred letters written in Vienna and points adjacent between 1787 and 1827, at the very time when the French Revolution and Napoleonic empire were recasting the modern world, is to be allowed unusual entry to that imagined remembrance we call history. The fact that these letters are written by Beethoven adds to their fascination. But it does not account for the whole of it, for what comes through with graphic detail is the daily life of a busy, harassed, ailing man in an age of crisis. The musical giant stays elsewhere.

This edition contains 450 letters not available in the previous standard collection; 230 are now published for the first time. Each is annotated, and the names and topical references with which the text bristles are explained with rare economy. Only those who have dealt with the ungrateful craft of textual criticism or who have confronted samples of Beethoven's idiosyncratic, hurried script will have a clear notion of the patience and skill these three volumes represent.

Their editor, Miss Emily Anderson, is that characteristically British phenomenon: an amateur whom obstinate passion has carried to complete authority. Trained in modern languages, she served from 1923 to 1951 in the Foreign Office and the War Office. Her edition of *The Letters of Mozart and His Family* appeared in 1938, the product of a hobby pursued outside official hours. The Beethoven letters have sent her scouring the map during the past fifteen years.

THE MAN who emerges is utterly human, in a vulnerable, strident, at times unattractive way. He needed servants but had difficulty keeping them. Looking for a new valet, he observes: "If he is a bit hunchbacked I shouldn't mind, for then I should know at once the weak spot at which to attack him." He treated the copyists who had to decipher and transcribe his music with a mixture of rowdy humor and bitter scorn: "Stupid, conceited ass of a fellow. . . . Correct the mistakes you have made through your ignorance, arrogance, conceit and stupidity. That is more fitting than to want to teach me. For to do so is exactly as if the *sow* should want to teach Minerva."

Guardianship over his nephew Karl involved Beethoven in severe financial strain and constant threats of litigation. The merits of the acrid quarrel between Beethoven and his sister-in-law remain in dispute. What