

on the relation of Mozart and Haydn, though the qualification of Haydn as an "entertainer" certainly needs further qualification. William Alexander Percy in his "Lanterns on the Levee" quotes the exclamation of a true Haydn enthusiast which will serve the purpose, redeeming the balance between the two great geniuses and devoted friends: "Presently he'd be laughing like a Franz Hals, exclaiming: 'Ach! Haydn! He knew more than all the rest. Chopin—sick! Beethoven—too religious! Mozart—too elegant! But Haydn—that is music, happy and sober, sane as sunshine!'"

Daniel Gregory Mason has been a popular writer on matters musical ever since his "From Grieg to Brahms" was published forty-seven years ago. "The Quartets of Beethoven" is Dr. Mason's latest critical opus.

## A National Heritage

JAZZ: A PEOPLE'S MUSIC. By Sidney Finkelstein. New York: Citadel Press. 1948. 278 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by DOROTHY BAKER

I DON'T believe Sidney Finkelstein wrote "Jazz: A People's Music" with the idea of grinding any personal axes or selling any novelties. Apparently he just wanted to say what he had to say on a subject he's interested in and knows an uncommon lot about. And this is fortunate, because the result is a totally exceptional book, written without any of the strain of exclusive partisanship, and yet giving jazz music its due in the best possible way, honestly and philosophically.

It's a book about jazz, and it sticks to the subject, but in a larger way than is usual, seeing also all around the subject. It starts by locating jazz in the history of music, and then it describes, closely and precisely, its own particular history, making it inseparable from the history of the people who, of necessity, invented it. The Negroes, in destitution and deprivation, had to make their own entertainment. And so they made it, and it became a national heritage—a very considerable gift, and purely indigenous. As far as African roots are concerned the evidence indicates that Stravinsky seems to have got more music out of Africa, consciously, than the American Negro ever has, unconsciously. And it's a relief to have this big vagueness about Congo chants and jungle drums in jazz sensibly scrutinized and minimized. We end up at home where we belong, with jazz music a home product. It's

also a product of slavery in the beginning, poverty after abolition, and struggle all the time. But it's a great product, emotionally sincere and powerful, and it has been able to build itself with what it had to work with, step by step, from extreme simplicity to extreme complexity, because "the world moves and art must change."

Descriptions of the musical style of the great names of jazz, from Jelly-Roll Morton to Duke Ellington, are as brilliant and accurate as any I've ever come across. They do what illuminat-

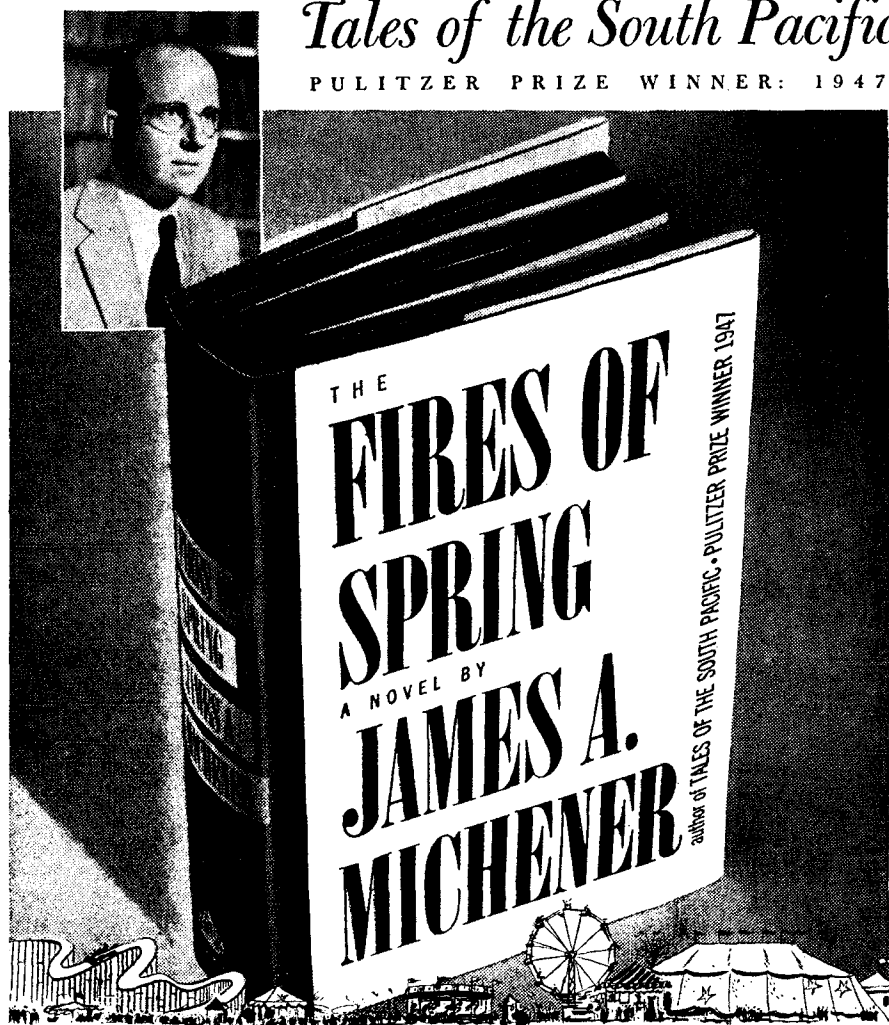
ing and perceptive criticism ought to do, send you back to the source, straight to the phonograph to play the records again, hear the music for yourself, and know that what was said was said right.

But what finally makes this book exciting is its very lack of excitement, its sustained tone of thoughtfulness and understanding and hope. Out of the history and criticism, the ultimate and dominant theme is always progress, the incorrigible progress that has never allowed any art to stay comfortably in one place for

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➡ Though it is a complete departure, in manner and substance, from the book that won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1947, *THE FIRES OF SPRING* is certain to win James Michener as much acclaim as did *Tales of the South Pacific*. It is a wonderfully sympathetic account of the terror, adventure, and amazement of growing up . . . from the incomparable delights that a boy finds in simple things, to the heart-break and exultation of a young man's first wild love affairs. The story shifts from Bucks County, Pa., across America with a Chautauqua show, to New York's Greenwich Village. It is a deeply moving chronicle of a young man's struggle with the desires of the flesh and the spirit.

503 pages, \$3.50. At all bookstores, RANDOM HOUSE, New York



long. "The struggle in art is to remain good. . . . This means the avoidance of meaningless repetitions of old patterns that have served their purpose. It means a constant awareness of new human and musical problems and a struggle to solve them." That jazz will solve its problem (and it's a mean problem compounded of nightclub life, lack of security, lack of everything, just as always) Sidney Finkelstein feels is a good possibility. His own conjecture and hope is that jazz is destined, and about ready, for formal composition. And the fact that formal concert music in this field has so far and mostly been not too good, doesn't mean that it can't be and won't be. "If the blues are given a new lease on life, they will change, just as the blues themselves rose out of and alongside the spirituals."

*Dorothy Baker is the author of "Trio" and "Young Man with a Horn," the latter a novel based on the life of the jazz musician Bix Beiderbecke.*

## Composer's Centenary Critique

**CHOPIN: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC.** By Herbert Weinstock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1949. 336 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by ROBERT LAWRENCE

**I**SSUED for the centenary year of the composer's death, Herbert Weinstock's new biography of Frédéric Chopin is likely to become the standard work in English on the man's life and music. Availing himself of modern research as well as a critical examination of other standard biographical works on the subject, Mr. Weinstock has succeeded in turning out a book that is engrossing, scholarly, and provocative—for this is not only a presentation of Chopin's life but an absorbing exposition of his works.

In the biographical section of the book Mr. Weinstock reaches his stride

with the entrance of George Sand upon the scene. The figure of Chopin's mistress, a colorful one, as well as the background of the Orleanist Paris, against which such personalities as Victor Hugo, Delacroix, Berlioz, Meyerbeer, and Balzac moved with striking prominence, are presented with skill and understanding. It is Mr. Weinstock's thesis that Chopin, during the fruition of his relationship with Sand, produced his greatest music. But where the author has made these Parisian days come alive so that Chopin and Sand are part of a great and vibrant tapestry, the earlier portion of the book does not quite approximate this latter excellence. For the reader interested in knowing more about Chopin's native background, a fuller account of his boyhood at Warsaw would have been welcome.

Mr. Weinstock's treatment of Chopin's music is exhaustive and brilliant, including analyses not only of the standard works, but of the complete Chopin literature. All of them are done with high technical skill and imagination. For this reviewer's taste, more extensive musical illustrations might have been provided to offset a sense of abstractness in their absence. The author has been sparing with examples, limiting most of them to fine points of discussion or to the reproduction of certain works by Chopin and his forerunner, John Field, which are no longer available. What the new biography could arrive at if basic quotes from all of Chopin's works were used—and it is to be hoped they may be included in subsequent editions—may be seen from Mr. Weinstock's admirable analysis of the G minor cello sonata, in which a running musical commentary reinforces at every point his well-chosen and penetrating comments.

Moving from a certain impersonality at the beginning to a warm, honest, and eloquent account of the life and works, this book is clearly the authoritative volume on Chopin. Its thoroughly documented appendices, including the composer's birth registry and baptismal certificate, its careful transliteration of Polish names and introductory notes on Polish music, its fine bibliography and complete listing—as well as discussion—of all of Chopin's works, make it an essential part of every musician's library as well as a desirable volume for the layman.

Robert Lawrence, conductor and critic, is known to music lovers for his regular appearances on the Metropolitan Opera Quiz. At present he is working on the "Victor Book of Ballets."

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### THE MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA

*announces the publication 1 March 1949*

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*By*

SAMUEL HAZZARD CROSS

*Late Professor of Slavic Languages  
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