



Hark to Julian Bream—Cziffra's Liszt—Opera Week

AS THE race is not always to the swift, so the battle to make music out of air and vibrations is not always to the loud. On the last Thursday of October Julian Bream took the place on the Town Hall stage so often occupied by Andrea Segovia and wrote a new chapter in the lore of lower-case, unitalicized, intimately musical music. Bream's abilities as guitarist have preceded him from England by recordings, but what he has added to his special quiver of well-fletched arrows is the twelve-string lute, which he plays like a wandering spirit out of the Elizabethan age.

Indeed, arrow-fletching is hardly more of a lost art than the one Bream has restored so resoundingly (if one listens hard) to concert hall utility. In a preliminary pair of works by John Dowland ("Queen Elizabeth's Gailliard" and a "Melancholy Gailliard") Bream took the measure of the well-filled hall, adjusted himself to his instrument's projectile potential and made some other subtle soundings. It was when he got into a fantasia entitled "Forlorn Hope" that he revealed the remarkable contrapuntal possibilities of his handsome (modern) instrument, the variety and character of the sounds he could draw from its nylon strings.

In these and the succeeding works of Daniel Batchelor, Francis Cutting, and Robert Johnson, Bream led his attentive listeners by willing ears into a new, old concept of sound. As he stroked the smooth speaking instrument, he revealed an unsuspected confluence of two timehonored musical streams: homophonic (chordal) and contrapuntal (linear) within a compass of sound in which the extrinsic was intolerable. There were deep strumming refrains and thin echo effects, according to where he provided the vibratory force, but there was always music powered by a strong spirit as well as an inquiring mind. In addition to being a specialist, Bream is possessed of the general qualities of rhythmic fervor, melodic sensitivity and dynamic differentiation which determine the listening appeal of any performer. Conflicting commitments prevented attention to Bream's guitar playing, but it is a certainty there will be other opportunities in the future. When knights were bold, nights were also

musical, as this cavalier of the concert hall made us gratefully aware.

At the opposite end of the dynamic scale was Gyorgy Cziffra, who made a series of pianistic appearances at the Philharmonic Orchestra concerts in Carnegie Hall directed by Thomas Schippers. In his local debut, Cziffra confirmed the credentials, issued elsewhere during a brief American tour in the summer of 1957, as a licensed operator of such freewheeling vehicles as Liszt's E flat concerto and "Hungarian Fantasy." He also established himself as an exponent of splash and glitter, utilizing his impressive mechanical means in a pattern of extremes. He can play very fast and very loud, or very slow and very soft: whether he can also play very fast and very soft seemed more open to question. His is one way of playing Liszt, and not necessarily the best, for with all his ostentation Liszt was a composer of some purposefulness. When he was not striving to keep pace with Cziffra, Schippers was occupied with such matters as Rossini's "Siege of Corinth" overture, an unfamiliar symphony by Mario Zafred, and Stravinsky's "Firebird" suite. All of these showed his flair for leadership, but each had a generalized kind of sound neither his own nor the composers'. Zafred's work, inscribed "To the Memory of the Resistance," shows musical motivation, but also an unproductive allegiance to the esthetic of Shostakovich.

THOSE who followed the Metropolitan's post-opening sequences of "Boris," "Rigoletto," and "Tales of Hoffmann" with more than a vague sense of dissatisfaction discovered why when "Madama Butterfly" returned to the repertory on Saturday afternoon. For here was "the standard of the house" in being, with the subtle and imaginative scenic dress conceived for last year's new production by Motohiro Nagasaka, and the action subjected to the fresh attention of its deviser, Yoshio Aoyama. The wise precaution of having Aoyama on the scene again preserved the miraculously integrated *mise-en-scène*, and gave Victoria de los Angeles (Cio-Cio-San) and Barry Morrell (making his debut as Pinkerton) the benefit of on-the-job training.

The most beneficial of the new factors was, however, not a vocalist

but conductor Erich Leinsdorf, who realized the shimmer and sheen of this score to a more luminous degree than any director in years. Carefully detailed and yet alive, the orchestral playing blended into a satisfying whole with the well-trying Cio-Cio-San of Miss de los Angeles, the increasingly assured Sharpless of Mario Zanesi, and an able-bodied Pinkerton by the New York born Morrell. His is a pliant, well-produced, considerably used voice, somewhat lacking in volume for the big theatre, but firm through its range and with a promising ring in the upper register. His acting was conservatively uncomplicated, but he presented a reasonable likeness of a seafaring man.

TAKEN all together, the overpowering artistic event of the week was Leonard Warren's "Rigoletto," as massive and compelling in sound as ever, and enriched by a number of new dramatic details (especially in what is Act III of this production). Conceivably they could relate to his over-the-summer trip to the USSR, where Warren came in contact with some suggestive theatre brains. Increasingly more the father than the jester, Warren's progress shows that character is as much in the mind as in the voice—and that he is as well-supplied, operatically, with one as the other. As heard in this act, Roberta Peters was not at her best for Gilda, and the promising start Eugenio Fernandi made with "Questa quella" was offset by a "Parmi veder" that sagged sorrowfully from pitch. However, he has a suitable sound and advantageous build for the Duke, and may be indulged for a second try.

NEITHER the first "Boris" nor "Hoffmann" attained the status of distinction, for dissimilar but not unrelated reasons: in the first, insufficient integration under the direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos, in the second a lack of response to the particular kind of effect for which Jean Morel was striving. Not enough rehearsal would seem basic in both cases. Cesare Siepi, Giorgio Tozzi, Ezio Flagello (Varlaam), and Clifford Harvuot (Rangoni) provided a solid base of low voices for "Boris," but Kurt Baum was an improbable appearing, also tight-sounding Grigori and Nell Rankin a quavery Marina. In "Hoffmann" Nicolai Gedda, Mattiwilda Dobbs, and Rosalind Elias (Giulietta) provided desirable qualities of youth and sound to balance the artistry of George London in the four character parts, but the spirit did not come to the aid of the flesh.

—IRVING KOLODIN.

T IS FOR TEAGARDEN



Teagarden—"inspiration and sincerity."

By JAY D. SMITH

NOT long ago Jack Teagarden endured the tortures of a jazz seminar conducted by an erudite and overly loquacious critic-writer. The subject was the blues and particularly, the trombonist's uncanny ability to produce the music with an authentic Negroid flavor. Back in his hotel room Teagarden sank wearily into a chair. "Man," he sighed, "those sessions kill me. Polyphony, flatted fifths, half tones—they don't mean a thing. I just pick up my horn and play what I feel."

For nearly a half century Teagarden has been feeling and playing the same way—dispensing jazz casually yet with unflagging inspiration and sincerity. His trombone and a husky baritone voice have maintained for him a position of technical and musically emotional superiority over his contemporaries. He has, upon occasion, flirted with the vagaries of com-

mercial success and temporarily jettisoned a principle or two. Yet, for all of it, he has remained a shy, introspective person, baffled by the many faceted perplexities of his profession, embarrassed by the ardor of his admirers and friends.

It has been a favorite and sometimes necessary goal of jazz writers to seek out "influences" which bear on the essential style of the musicians about whom they were writing. Laudable as this approach may be it has in a number of instances provided a pitfall of clichés. The case of Teagarden is no exception.

Rudi Blesh, jazz critic and author of "Shining Trumpets" (Knopf) blandly stated in his book that "Glenn Miller's trombone solo derives from the manner of Jackson Teagarden, a style that came originally from the Negro, Jimmy Harrison." This cliché is probably the most overstated fallacy which has crept into the reservoir of Teagarden lore.

By fact, Teagarden joined Billy Lustig's band in early 1928, a scant few months after he arrived in New York from Texas. Lustig was serving as the relief unit for Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra in the popular Roseland Ballroom. It was there that Teagarden and Harrison first met and were enthusiastically perplexed by the similarity of phrasing and tone. Two men—one white, the other Negro—had pursued separate paths in jazz, hundreds of miles apart, yet had developed along parallel lines. Rather than analyzing the coincidence they revelled in it by constant companionship and the exchange of musical ideas mutually offered and accepted. They were not, however, as alike in technique as has been the contention of many jazz historians. Jack, handicapped because of his short reach during childhood struggles with the trombone, employed only nominal use of the slide and resorted to faking many positions with his lips. Harrison, on the other hand, was of the swooping-thrusting school of playing. And if further proof of Teagarden's style prior to his introduction to Harrison is required, one has only to listen to his solo on the 1927 recording of "I Just Roll Along" by Willard Robison.

This unique ability to express the blues in the idiom of the Negro was either an inborn quality or one developed by associations. Sadly, there

is no positive evidence to support either theory. Until he was fourteen, Jack lived in his hometown of Vernon, Texas, isolated because of strict parental control, from the influences of other children, Negro or white. When his father died, Jack worked the Southwest and Mexico with various groups composed largely of mediocre musicians. Occasionally he found the opportunity for musical rapport with Pee Wee Russell, Leon Prima, Wingy Manone, and Leon Rappolo. But the social inequities of the South and the ebb of jazz in a nearly direct line from New Orleans to Chicago precluded any contact with Negro musicians.

"I learned from everyone and no one," says Teagarden. "Something from the good ones rubbed off and stayed with me. The others just left a bad taste in my ear."

When Jack arrived in New York he was twenty-two. He replaced Miff Mole on a recording date with Roger Wolfe Kahn's Orchestra and almost overnight the trombone as a jazz voice was released from the sweeping glissandi, deep-throated brays and other techniques theretofore employed by jazzmen. Kahn described his last-minute replacement as "wearing the largest hangover on Manhattan Island, yet reading the arrangements like a veteran and booting out a pair of choruses which were mildly sensational." Jack's delivery was not unlike that of a mellophone. He punched his solos with the brashness of a trumpet, substituting for glides a series of triplets or runs designed to treat each note in the tonal scale as an entity. His tone was unbridled, rich, and raw, an urgent voice shouting for recognition.

Recognition was not long in coming. He stayed with Ben Pollack and Paul Whiteman's Orchestras for a total of almost twelve years. Then he broke out on his own and fronted a series of nearly successful bands which threatened to break him both in spirit and health. But after the hundreds of days and nights on the stand playing the gamut from plodding pop tunes to the heavy-handed arrangements of Grofé and Ravel, there seemed to be only one appreciable change—his tone. The exciting urgency of it has smoothed out and rounded off to compliment the superb technique which never faltered. And through it all, the blue tinge which could never desert him and which he could never desert, continued to lend to his horn something wonderfully refreshing even when foundered in the jungle of third rate ballads and noisy novelties.

Tributes are seldom paid a man like Teagarden. He remains a seeker rather

(Continued on page 58)



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Young Norwegian soprano, often likened to Flagstad, whose 1957 London debut had critics commenting on the "glorious and quite individual beauty of her voice...natural womanly expressiveness" (*London Times*). Her first Angel recording includes 9 songs by Edvard Grieg, sung in Norwegian, with Robert Levin, pianist, and 8 songs by Richard Strauss, sung in German, with Gerald Moore, pianist.

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Six Hours of Dylan Thomas

By JOHN CIARDI

FIVE YEARS ago on November 9 Dylan Thomas, already more a legend than a man, and as much a socio-academic hurricane as a poet, died in New York, mourned in a number of boozy wakes that seemed to center at The White Horse Tavern, and by many more and quieter griefs in the minds of those who had heard and read him. He had, in fact, been more heard than read. Nor has that fact changed with time. Caedmon reports that his Volume I recording has sold 150,000 copies to date—almost \$900,000 worth at list price. New Directions has released no figures on the sale of the "Collected Poems," but it is certainly impossible to believe that the book (\$3.75) is remotely in sight of the sale of the recording (\$5.95).

Heaven knows what to make of such figures. Certainly it is now the established fate of the twentieth-century poet that he must leave to time not only his words but his voice. Who can say what such a double legacy will do to our future way of taking poets? Imagine having six hours of all past poets on demand—what would such an addition do to our sense of these poets? And what of the portentous fact that we already have a poet who survives more in being heard than in being read?

With no least thought of belittling Thomas's powers as a poet, I must believe that Caedmon's luck at the record-counter is due more to the drama of Thomas's voice and legend than to the very real merits of his poems. In a central sense, too, such

a sale has been the luck of all poetry, for through these recordings tens of thousands of listeners have discovered that poetry need not make a narrow "sense"; that it is possible to be deeply and meaningfully moved by poems one does not more than fractionally understand.

It is still necessary to remember that there is no necessary relationship between poetic excellence and the microphone. The final measure of poetry is not the voice but the inner ear. The ability to project that felt-but-unheard power of poetic words and rhythms is the actor's craft rather than the poet's art.

Thomas was our most overwhelming combination of poet, actor, and ham. Certainly he possessed one of the most extraordinary rhythmic and verbal gifts of the century. He owned a voice like an organ and he used it with all the relish of a Welsh pub-declamer. He moved in a puckish humor that was half Dickens and half ribaldry. And he was filled with terror, and with a basic scorn for his audiences, and with a basic love of lavishing that magnificent voice on the magic, rolling words that boiled up from him.

Whatever such a total may come to, it is Volume I that remains the great and final reading. That reading was a studio-improvised affair, unprepared, and without an audience. The informality of the occasion left Thomas relaxed and at home in himself. The reading is quiet, intimate, and inward to the weight and tenderness of the words and rhythms. There is no actor's performance-outward in that evening's voice. Thomas reads "A Child's Christmas in Wales" quietly, rapidly, intimately—and greatly—without raising his voice, not even when Mrs. Prothero cries "Fire!" So for the poems—Thomas does not perform them; he says them. The result is a magnificence.

For Volume II, on the other hand, Thomas slaved to prepare the reading (as Caedmon reports). Would that he had spared himself the labor, for the result is more the product of some unattended dramatic school than of Thomas's own richest rhythmic sense. This Thomas hisses like a bad Shakespearean actor. He holds his aspirates. He hums and quavers and draws the words out l-o-n-g. He rolls out the big voice and makes it boom. When he says "Quick" (in stanza two of

A THOMAS DISCOGRAPHY

Volume I, "A Child's Christmas in Wales," TC 1002. \$5.95.
Volume II, "If I Were Tickled by the Rub of Love, etc.," TC 1018. \$5.95.
Volume III, "A Few Words of a Kind," TC 1043. \$5.95.
Volume IV, "A Visit to America," TC 1061. \$5.95.
"Under Milk Wood" (with original cast), TC 2005. 4 sides. \$11.90.

Lament) it comes out something like "Khhwi-kkkeh!" Yes, of course, it is still Thomas and good enough for many another praise, but it is still far down the scale from Volume I.

Volumes III and IV also strike me as over-projected. Volume III consists of an introduction ("A Few Words of a Kind") taped live before an audience at MIT, and of poems later recorded in the studio. The introduction, half-hammed up by Thomas-the-declamer, almost manages to be a moving statement of the poet's human position, but somehow never quite escapes the tone of its own gags.

The brashest and certainly the happiest of the ham-reading is in the audience-mocking "Visit to America," the talk that opens Volume IV. This talk, too, was recorded before a live audience, and Thomas played it for laughs, with a gift of timing Bob Hope could envy, and with a rapid fire of gags Hope would probably like to get away with. (Sample: "Kind bosomed friends of all kinds and bosoms.") The poems that follow are all from other poets and are read with general but not invariable success. Thomas reads Witlow's spoof of T. S. Eliot with a skill that lets one hear the original-sepulchre-himself groaning behind the lines, but when he tries Henry Reid's "Naming of Parts," for example, Thomas does not really begin to sort out the various voices of the poem until stanza three.

"Under Milk Wood," on the other hand, I shall keep as a treasure to equal Volume I. In it, Thomas is once again the actor, but with a difference. He rolls and sends that magnificent voice, loving it, loving the words and rhythms, loving the other actors of the piece—and the result performs as one doubts it can ever be performed again. It is riotous, brash, seemingly spontaneous, and with a thrill of tears and terror in the way Thomas touched those lines in which he seemed most to remember himself and most to foresee the death he carried in him like a taste he could not drink away. As Volume I is poetry truly spoken inward, "Under Milk Wood" is poetry truly spoken outward. Two great albums, and three that are certainly good enough for the money.

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