

## "The Men that God Made Mad"

**F**IFTY YEARS and two world wars ago the final Irish uprising began, to end in victory and a free Ireland in 1922. There had been other uprisings in 1798, 1867, and every now and then until Easter Week of 1916. In that week of holy national pride an uprising reached proportions the British absentee landlords could not ignore and, though the heroes of 1916 were put down in bloody contest with the Black and Tans, Irish liberty and nationhood were now inevitable. They came six years later, the Great War their catalytic agent and Lloyd George their patron.

The album, *The Irish Uprising: 1916-1922* (Columbia LP-32-B5-0001), celebrates the great deliverance in ballad and jig music, interviews with survivors, and excerpts from speeches by surviving leaders of the uprising, including President Eamon de Valera, once sentenced by the British to die as a revolutionary. Much of this was recorded live in Dublin, and the pressings are accompanied by a 164-page book—a product of the Macmillan Company — loaded with excellent gravure pictures of the fateful six years. The project is part of the CBS Legacy Collection, whose previous issues have included part of *The Revolution*, *The Confederacy*, *The Union*, *John Fitzgerald Kennedy . . . As We Remember Him*, and *The Mormon Pioneers*.

Almost all of the albums in the series have made first-rate listening, and *The Irish Uprising* is no exception. The reasons, as in earlier cases in the series, are twofold.

First, the voices used are not operatic but folk, their bell-like quality enhanced and not diminished by an occasional quaver and departure from pitch. The names of the songs and ballads again tell the story: "The Bold Fenian Men," "The Rising of the Moon" (the tune is "The Wearing of the Green"), "Wrap the Green Flag 'Round Me Boys," "Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week," "Tipperary So Far Away," "Down by the Glenside," "The Foggy Dew," "The Dying Rebel," "Grand Oul' Dame Britannia," "Shall My Soul Pass Through Ireland," and "The Soldiers Song" which has now been designated the national anthem of Ireland.

Of these tunes, most of them lilting, many of them pure folk music, by far the most beautiful is "Down by the Glenside," a nostalgic salute to the



**Eamon de Valera (center) "once sentenced to die as a revolutionary."**

rebels of 1867; the most stirring, "Grand Oul' Dame Britannia"; and the liveliest, "The Boys From County Cork." How this correspondent, whose paternal grandfather came from Bantry Bay during the Great Hunger of 1849, could have missed such rousing music and a line that goes "the boys that beat the Black and Tan were the boys from County Cork" is beyond knowing. Most of the music is sung by piping Irish voices in the great folk tradition, the accompaniment often being lonely fife or fife and drum, sometimes with guitar, accordion, or harmonica added, and usually with bagpipes in the background when there is talk instead.

And point two in the album's favor is that the talk is good. President de Valera's fortieth anniversary speech punctuates the music nicely and Charles Kuralt of CBS News narrates but never gets in the way of the ears. Original voices of those few lucky enough to have survived the triumphant debacle of Easter Week 1916 are unmistakably Irish, and the emotional quaver kosher. You have but to listen for a few minutes before recalling G. K. Chesterton's great stanza:

For the great Gaels of Ireland  
Are the men that God made mad,  
For all their wars are merry,  
And all their songs are sad.

—RICHARD L. TOBIN.

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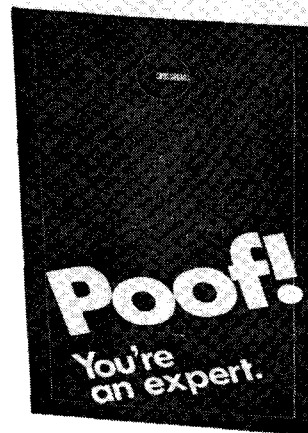
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## Benchley

*Continued from page 59*

The Fiendish Thingies, The Midnight Judges, The Rogues, The Country Gentlemen, The Barnyard, and The Dead. These lads play songs with titles such as "Boys," "Well-Respected Man," "Point Panic," "Get Off My Cloud," "High Heel Sneakers," "House Of The Rising Sun," "Beethoven," "Slow Down," "Route 66," "She Said Yeah," "Baby's In Black," "Walkin' The Dog," "Another Girl," and "Off The Hook."

The personnel of The Bushmen consists of Benchley, leader and lead guitar; Tom Adams, rhythm guitar; Ned Dominick, bass guitar; Don Hayes, drums; and Kevin Weaver, who blows harmonica, serves as a background singer for Pat Daily, the band's regular vocalist, and incessantly shakes a tambourine-like instrument called a "ching-a-ring." The ching-a-ring has no hide on it like a regular old-fashioned gypsy tambourine. It is a naked apparatus made entirely of metal. It is rhythmic in the effect it produces, and it can be made to sound horrendous if it is shaken hard enough.

The songs—those listed above and the fifty-odd others that The Bushmen play—are as naked as the ching-a-ring. Nearly every number features a vocal by Pat Daily, with Kevin Weaver—and, for that matter, the rest of the band—sometimes chiming in. Most of the songs they play are sad or angry. They do not seem to know any happy music. It is as though they always are getting back at their parents, teachers, preachers, and that lot, or trying to show those elders that they, too, have feelings.

One night recently I went to hear The Bushmen as they were playing in Broad River, New York, in a community hall that is a converted church. The music was intelligible; frighteningly so. But I could not understand any of the words of any of Pat Daily's vocals. He held his mouth close to the microphone as he shouted them in a voice that was not unmelodious but hardly was intelligible. "How come I can't understand anything he says?" I asked Benchley III. He giggled and had himself another Rupertian shake. He did not explain it until later.

On the job, these children, the oldest of whom is seventeen, conduct themselves with the dignity of a sextet from Juilliard. They are intensely serious about their music, as can be seen in their rather stiff demeanor, their cleanliness, and their stonily somber faces. What is so wondrous is that they sometimes play numbers that first were heard by me in my childhood thirty-five years ago on the "race" records made by various companies for the Negro trade, done

by such artists as Brother John, Big Bill, Johnny Temple, and—my all-time favorite—Peetie Wheatstraw, The Devil's Son-in-law. None of these boys ever heard any of these records. When I asked them if they ever had, they looked as though I were asking if they had been there when Charlton Heston came lumbering down the mountain with the tablets.

It is far too easy to assume that the artists they imitate, after listening to current records, heard those old "race" sides. None of them ever did, I am sure, for none of the imitated is much older than these kids. Knowing the present crop of agents and personal managers, I am not prepared to say that they took time off from munching sandwiches and drinking iced coffee to go out and get some of the old records for their clients to hear and imitate. They couldn't be bothered with anything as diligent as that.

What is even more wondrous is the series of Debussyan and Ravelian overtones that come up from time to time in solos by young Benchley and his compatriots. On the night I went to hear them at Broad River, the young man went into a solo lasting three choruses which could have been a respectful parody of Ravel. It was done on the framework of a song called "I'll Follow The Sun," and it was excellent. "I'll Follow The Sun" bears as much resemblance to anything written by Ravel as my writing does to that of Henry James, but nevertheless Ravel was present in the boy's attempt—and so were Big Bill, Johnny Temple, and the rest.

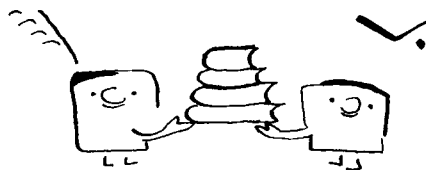
All very mysterious. Throughout the country, kids are doing what The Bushmen, The Rogues, and The Dead are doing. Even more mysterious is their unwillingness to express themselves in lucid terms. Not one word uttered by the boys in these combinations can be understood by the average adult, even one of more-than-normal alertness and sensitive hearing.

"Why can't that young rascal make himself heard?" I asked Robert Benchley III after the Broad River date.

"He does," he said, "to us." He was putting away his electric guitar, but he rose from that chore and gave himself a fourth nice shake. "If you want to know the truth, when there're parents present, he kind of leans into the mike because the words are too dirty."

Poetry is not invented, J. D. Salinger once said, it is *found*. The same can be said for these kids' music.

—RICHARD GEHMAN.



## Music to My Ears

*Continued from page 56*

opening performance of the City Opera's fall season was concluded. It is, of course, customary to genuflect at the mention of "Handel" and "opera" and echo the common lament that they are performed all too seldom. There is, however, a profound difference between performance and recreation which was all too often evident in this high-minded endeavor.

For my taste, the production scheme of Tito Capobianco, ingenious though it was, did not solve the problems of monotony (a shapely monotony, but a monotony nonetheless) inherent in a score in which arias alternate with choruses and choruses with arias. The unit set conceived by Ming Cho Lee was typically economical and well proportioned, the central structure in the form of an X providing several playing levels on which the chorus could be arranged above or around the principals. It also provided floor space in which the dance group, cleverly conceived by Capobianco to give a semblance of action where there is none in the original, could perform.

The core of the matter is that Handel's vocal writing in *Cesare*, for all its frequent beauty, tends to fall into two categories: fast and slow, further subdivided into spirited or sad. The problems of investing them with character and other shades of meaning are entrusted to the performers, of whom Beverly Sills, as Cleopatra, was by much the best in this group. She has mastered the technical requirements of the part, and if the voice is not an impressive one, what she does with the trills and embellishments is. Norman Treigle, whose Caesar has stature as well as firm sound, shares the common problem of most low voiced singers today in lacking florid technique. Maureen Forrester, borrowed from the concert stage to sing Cornelia, produced her usual succession of beautiful sounds in which verbal values were as obscure as dramatic ones. The list of principals was completed by Beverly Wolff, a rather undersized Sextus (Cherubino should be a very good part for her).

As an intermediary between all the other factors involved, Julius Rudel directed an admirably concise and well shaped performance of the orchestral score, also putting himself out to engender the spirit lacking in some of his singers. Baroque opera is admittedly a special case: My complaint is that Rudel did not argue it persuasively enough to win over those previously undisposed in its favor. To judge from the enthusiasm generated by most of those present, the verdict was on the order of eight for, one against.

—IRVING KOLODIN.



## Artificial Resuscitation

**A**T FIRST GLANCE it would seem that George S. Kaufman's and Edna Ferber's 1932 comedy, *Dinner at Eight*, could be as successfully revived as was *You Can't Take It With You* last season. Both of these plays capture the flavor of periods we recall with some nostalgia, and both gently satirize the foibles of typical characters. Unfortunately, Sir Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Dinner at Eight* emerges as far less genuinely entertaining, a spotty series of vignettes sprinkled with ineffectual attempts at humor.

One suspects that Guthrie may have underestimated the difficulty of mixing the play's small number of easily satirized types with so many more who are not. Nor does the director appear to have resolved the problem presented by the plethora of plot details that have lost their dramatic vigor through use and reuse in so many B-movies. Not that these clichés are untrue. Well-bred young ladies still prefer philandering glamour boys to honorably intentioned young conservatives. Wives still stick to decent husbands whom they know to be occasionally unfaithful. And gentlemanly businessmen are still easy prey to dog-eat-dog operators. But this truthfulness in the script makes things more rather than less sticky. For one cannot quite spoof the plot, nor can one present it straightforwardly as if the modern audience could look at it with 1932 eyes.

Of the performers, only one seems to have found a suitable style. As a social matron completely engrossed in the ridiculous task of achieving a successful dinner party, June Havoc is superb. She squeaks, she flutters, she has hysterics, and is completely oblivious of the desperate crises through which she cuts her way to the most superficial objective.

Some of the others, such as Arlene Francis, Ruth Ford, Mindy Carson, and Jeffrey Lynn, seem wasted in skimpy roles. And others appear to be working in isolation at a kind of portrayal that doesn't fit into any discernible entity. Walter Pidgeon is natural and affable as a patient husband. Robert Burr is exaggeratedly grotesque as an unscrupulous tycoon. Pamela Tiffin puts on a tinselly cheapness as a sexpot wife. And Darren McGavin creates a bold, bravura portrait of an alcoholic silent-film star on the skids.

More effective, perhaps, are some of the lesser characters who can shine briefly without worrying about sustaining a style. Thus Phil Leeds, Blanche Yurka,

Judith Barcroft, April Shawhan, Lucille Patton, and Daniel Keyes manage to be mildly memorable.

David Hays's economical settings suggest the period, as do Ray Diffen's slightly satirical costumes. But despite Guthrie's good intentions, Miss Havoc's blessed arpeggios, and a few nice inside jokes about show business, *Dinner at Eight* is all at sixes and sevens.

**S**TRANGELY enough, *Help Stamp Out Marriage!* seems to be a revival, though in fact it is not. For this new British farce uses a dated and shallow approach to play with, but not really penetrate, the modern phenomenon of casual adultery, British style.

Under George Abbott's direction, it extracts plenty of quick laughs from a situation in which a husband discovers that his wife has been putting him through a dreary diet of art films for three months so that her girl friend can deceive a married man, who visits her there every Friday night, into believing that she is a married woman. A few more laughs come out of the wife's discovery

that her husband is carrying on with a teen-age girl who works as a petrol-pump attendant. An elevator in which various combinations of bedmates just miss bumping into others who use the stairs adds to the gaiety.

Nevertheless, the game grows tiresome and the participants unsympathetic. Possibly this is because playwrights Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall have, from the start, accepted a patently artificial tone that does not permit them to find an inner rationale beyond sexual gratification for their characters.

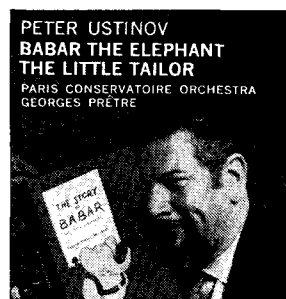
This commitment to artificiality is unfortunate, because on several occasions the new farce stumbles across ironies that could have been profitably pursued. For instance, the "other man" feels obliged to refuse a drink because he only felt justified in drinking his host's Scotch when he had been under the impression that he was committing adultery with his wife. And most significant of all is the wife's fulfilment of a "castration wish" by cutting off the sleeves of her husband's suits, with the gleeful observation, "There's something about infidelity. It puts a complete end to this farce of 'give-and-take' in marriage."

Much as these moments entertain, they also serve to remind us of the play's contrasting triviality of concern, which helps stamp out our interest every time it's lit.

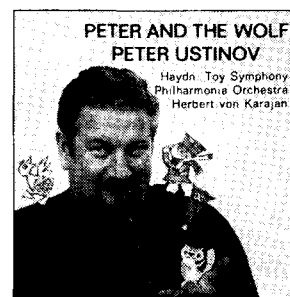
—HENRY HEWES.

# Peter Ustinov, Former child, narrates three musical fairy Tales.

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