Page Five

What Is This Mad Thi

The Story Behind America's **Case of Musical Jitters**

(Continued from page one.) which need not concern us here. Swing's bitterest opponents can hardly deny that swingsters use melody, harmony, rhythm, and tone color in a manner exactly analogous to that of our old friends Beethoven and Schubert and Brahms and the rest.

But, says a heckler, we do not leap into the ailes during a performance of a symphony! And we virtually never embrace the handsome woman in the next seat when the violas sneak in with the "Romeo and Juliet" love theme! How, then, can the effects of swing and the effects of standard music be compared?

Certainly this objection must be met before we can go into detail on the effects of music. Very well, then. Swing produces more spectacular symptoms than standard music for the following reasons:

(a) The stimulus is more violent. In general swing uses wilder melodies, bluer harmonies, more compelling rhythms, and brasher tone colorings. And the very sight of the players in a swing band (of the drummer, for instance) adds immeasurably to the violence of the stimulus.

(b) The average age of a swing audience is much lower than the average age of a symphony audience. Youth is less self-conscious, less prone to inhibitions. Within certain limits youth does just about what the impulse of the moment demands.

(c) Swing surroundings are usually --- though not always---less formal and inhibitory than those among which standard music is heard. A dance hall or a theater frowns less heavily on crazy demonstrations than a dignified auditorium.

(d) Swing addicts infect one another. The sight of a few giddy youngsters beginning to wiggle their shoulders (a sight never seen at symphony concerts) acts as a spark on the youthful tinder all about. The stage is then set for almost any sort of conflagration. (The importance of large groups of youngsters can hardly be exaggerated. A swing fan all by himself is likely to be a rather tame phenomenon. Did you ever hear of such a one listening alone at home to a broadcast of recorded swing music and proceeding to tear the fixtures out of the wall? Things like that happen most easily in groups.)

and mid-brain responses may be studied under almost ideal conditions. If your dog cows when you say, "Bad Maximilian!" and beams at the words "Nice hound!" the reason must be sought for in the actual tone of the voice rather than in the animal's ability to grasp fine shades of verbal meaning. Try saying "Bad Maximilian" slowly and softly and lovingly and see if the

phrase does not induce in the cur a smug and pleasurable state. Despite man's vastly greater development of the fore-brain, he shares with the animals a responsiveness to pure sound which is sufficient to account for much of the emotional potency

of music. Psychologists have long known that emotion is intimately connected with physical changes. Extremists, in fact, once believed that these physical changes constituted or caused



(Tribune photo.) Moderns do the minuet.

the emotion. (You see the lion, tremble, and are therefore afraid, rather than you see the lion, are afraid, and therefore tremble.) Workers in the field of the psychology of music have proved conclusively that physical changes of the sort that is intimately connected with emotion take place while a person is listening to music. Blood pressure, heart action, internal secretions-all are affected by musical experience. And even laymen have always noticed such obvious phenomena as

"cold chills" and misted eyes. An uninhibited person usually does things when he is subjected to strong emotion. In fact, emotion has been thought of as primarily a preparation for motion of some sort. Acted upon by the violent tonal stimulus of swing (its strident strivings toward a supereffectiveness, its bold and unearthly color effects), young-

By DONALD DAY

OLSHEVISM'S prepara-

measures to combat another

major famine in central and

northern Russia, affecting

some ten million inhabitants.

No attempt will be made by

the government to feed strick-

en provinces. Instead every

precaution is being taken to

prevent news of this famine

from leaking abroad. In 1933-

'34 there was a major famine

in the Ukraine. The Tribune's

exclusive reports that 4,000,000

people died of starvation were

denied by newspaper men sta-

intensified. Deported foreign-

omy in Russia has broken

down. Inertia, inspired by ter-

ror, has taken its place. The

five-year plans are a bluff. The

peasants are hungry half the

year and the workers are hun-

The 370,000 tractors that re-

placed horses are held respon-

sible in great part for the

present famine conditions.

The problem of supplying trac-

gry the year around.

D

had lied.

tions for its recent twen-

ty-first birthday included

Riga, Latvia.



sters who leap dementedly are doing nothing unnatural at all. At the sudden entrance of screaming, biting trumpets a listener may turn and tear up a tree simply as a means of discharging emotions which have

(Kadel-Herbert photo.)

The aeroplane step of 1922.

become too strong to endure. Music arouses emotions not only by means of tone itself but by the patterns into which tone is organized. The contour of a melody, so meltingly analogous to human speech in its expressive rise and fall, is one. Harmony colors the feeling tone of colorings. As to rhythm, swing the listener by suspense, unfulfilled desire, the satifaction of the usual or the impact of the ful, forthright basic meter, and novel. The pitter-patter of ex- by allowing the melody to seem

(Remie Lohse photo.) THE DANCE.

feel."

Swing's melodies are untrammeled. They break away from the old ideas of balance and simplicity and take on an excited, spur-of-the-moment quality. Their crazy curves and wild journeyings hither and yon play havoc with a listener's feelings. And the harmonies of swing jar the organism powerfully enough to produce emotional and physical effects very similar to those which result from bizarre tone exploits its possibilities in two ways-by establishing a powercited rhythms actually helps to to be wandering around of its

(Wallinger photo.) Turkey trot, 1911. Argentine fox trot, 1922.

"Music sounds the way moods contoured melody but even from pure tone and exact pitch. A great wailing smear from a swing band has a more demoralizing effect on the emotional stability of a listener than almost anything which a standard composer could put down or a legitimate performer dare to execute.

(Kadel-Herbert photo.)

riations on the part of the per-

former from absolute regularity.

This is what your aunt calls

playing with expression." A

player accents here and slurs

there, hurries one phrase and

wells fondly on another. By

means of these and similar de-

vices he tries to express and

communicate the feeling which

Think how swing music justi-

fies the belief that its general

timulus is more violent. The

st swing is highly personal,

great deviations not only

strict time and suavely

the music holds.

Getting away from detail and considering music's general purpose, we remember that this art, like any art, is a means of conveying feeling. The feeling which violent swing conveys is violent feeling, the kind of feeling which in itself would be capable of stirring up the organism tremendously and producing all kinds of unexpected

Call Swing?

tion of the very young, which may explain the fact that swing has little power over the mature. A person who has passed 25 does not ordinarily take seriously the sort of thing which swing is trying so hysterically (and often so successfully) to express.

. . .

One of the most interesting of the discoveries which musical psychologists have made is this: Music prepares the organism to receive and react to other stimuli. That is, a person under the influence of music is more alert to the surrounding world than a person not under such influence. Experiments have proved that sights and tastes and colors are more vivid, that things too subtle to be noticed under ordinary circumstances take on a new power when a person has already been conditioned by music. One investigator discovered that a decayed tooth, whose subdued growling had kept thoughtfully beneath the threshold of consciousness, caused him acute pain during an experience with music!



Style and steps of 1921.

Every one knows how the influence of music can change our opinion of the person with whom we are chatting across a café table. Excellences of mind and of appearance which we had never noticed suddenly become as plain as day. This truth goes far to explain the conduct of young, uninhibited persons under the spell of swing. The power of suggestion is multiplied a hundredfold. The need for pulling up a tree becomes suddenly apparent. Empty ailes which had seemed perfectly satisfactory begin to cry for the presence of a battalion of fevered, strutting performers.

. . .

and it acts constantly as a stimulus to the muscle senses. We want to translate the movement of music into actual movement. Even when we suppress the desire (and it is considered good manners, for some reason or other, to suppress it) our muscle sense returns a sort of imagery of movement. The muscles are always preparing to translate imagined motion into real motion. What wonder, then, that uninhibited young persons, acted upon by all of the other excitements of swing, allow this imagery of movement to become real movement?

Nature knows nothing about good manners and is always playing sly tricks on even the most dignified of her children. Witness the dowager's tapping foot, the judge's restless thumb. All the time the dowager and the judge may be actively disapproving (with their minds!) the music which is going on. Yet even in their cases a stimulation of the muscle sense has led to real movement. How much easier is it in the case of a swing addict, and how much more violent the motion!

Besides accounting for much bouncing and jiggling, the kinesthetic element in music is an important cause of other types of excitement. It is known that a singer listening to another singer is unconsciously making the incipient motions (of the vocal organs) which are necessary to produce the sounds which he is hearing. More important, because more general, is our continuous sense of the difficulties which a performer is encountering. We imagine these leaps and scales and the muscle sensations which they would involve if for some reason or other they would have to be reproduced in real life.

The mental excitement of music (an excitement expressed by swing addicts in a multitude of ways) is partly due to the impossibility of realizing physically the movement pattern of music. We are too tired and we creak too dreadfully. Also the patterns are too complicated. But a real swing fan will scream with ecstasy or tear up his shirt when a trumpeter threads his way safely through a motion pattern which flesh and blood could never hope to reproduce.

This is one of the ways in which music becomes a sort of vicarious life, a life in which obstacles vaguely analogous to real-life obstacles are met and overcome - in which triumphs analogous to real-life triumphs are engagingly frequent. This embodiment in music of the experience of life itself helps to account for the effect of music on the human organism. The excitement of recognition and understanding is at the bottom of most of our excitement over

These reasons are related and are cumulative. No single one is sufficient to account perfectly for the wondrous differences between the effects of swing and the effects of standard music. In combination they account quite adequately for such differences.

Now for a discussion of the effects of music. In the light of the following facts most of the antics of swing addicts lose their aura of incomprehensibility and take their place at the end of an orderly cause-and-effect sequence.

Music arouses emotion by means of sound itself and by means of the patterns into which composers arrange sound.

The sense of hearing, eternally alert for danger even when the other major sense (sight) is drowned in sleep, has come in the course of long ages of development to be intimately connected with those mid-brain centers which are involved in emotional behavior. - Hearing the clank of chains on the cellar stairs at night, you leap throbbing and trembling from bed. The sense of hearing has stimulated the mid-brain and stirred up the emotions tremendously.

The fore-brain, which organizes ideas, is likewise connected with the hearing apparatus, but its slower-acting mechanism has had no chance to comfort you with the reflection that the noise is nothing but the stirrings of the harmless ghost of the old fellow who was murdered in the basement when the house was new

The best demonstration of the emotional effect of sound is to be found in the behavior of animals. Here the action of the fore-brain is of little importance by imitating and therefore stimulating the physical concomitants of excitement - racing heart, tapping foot, etc. One

psychologist uses the phrase, tion in music consists largely of this sort of thing is a preoccupa-

Red Russia's Plans

That Went Astray

induce excitement in the listener own sweet will before it is pulled relentlessly back into the beat of the music.

> Mention must be made of the truth that the expression of emo-

antics. Swing deals largely with eroticism-hence its restlessness and pain and gloom, its mad excitements and its profound despairs. Incidentally,

But we do not get to the very heart of the bouncing and jiggling business until the subject of kinesthetics is considered. Music consists largely of movement, or of suggested movement.

countries has been ruined. G. P. U. purges have not improved efficiency, saved machinery, or prevented sabotage. The first year of the third five-year plan is coming to a close, but no third five-year plan has been yet announced. The reason for this oversight is that the figures set up for the first five-year plan have not yet been achieved.

The mess resulting from the efforts of the Moscow planners has prepared the ground for another revolution in Russia. The explosion may come at any moment. The average wage paid in state industry is 250 rubles a month. In 1913 the average monthly wage was 25 rubles, but the purchasing power of the ruble is about one-fourteenth of what it was in 1913. Unskilled labor, in terms of commodities, earns only half what pre-war Russian workers earned. Even five years ago the soviet worker was better fed and clothed than he is today.

If the present régime is to survive it must begin to import oil products to run its mechanized agriculture and industry. The mechanized Red army will consume domestic oil production.

Four million kulaks mining gold in Siberia have provided sufficient gold for these needs. But, most important, Russia needs thousands of trained specialists from abroad. The campaign against foreign spies and "wreckers" during the last year lessens the possibility . . .

art.

Psychologists have done some work on the subject of the tactile components of music. It is safe now to claim that tone has not only an auditory but also a nonauditory effect. That is, you are touched (not merely emotionally touched, but literally, physically touched) by the impact of various types of sound wave on the cutaneous organs of the ear. The tactile parts of musical experience do their bit toward the general stirring up of the organism. Swing exaggerates all this by its violence. Its terrific assault on the tactile sense organs of our giddy youths has considerable effect on their general state. This extra stimulation from the tactile sense may push listener reactions far beyond those which normal musical experience produces.

Let nothing in this article convey the impression that all of the effects of music in general and swing in particular are perfectly understood at the present time. Such is definitly not the case.

. . .

Postscript: Is swing here to stay? Certainly not! Nothing is here to stay except death and taxes. Reaction against "sweet" music brought jaz back under the guise of swing. Reaction against swing will bring sweet music back under the guise ofwhat? Two years hence sweet little tunes will once more be heard regularly in our loud speakers.

(Acme photo.) Military demonstration in Red square, Moscow, during twenty-first anniversary ceremonies.

tors with fuel, oil, and spare tioned in Moscow, but who parts apparently was beyond later left Russia for good and communist ability. Moscow is wrote books admitting they still trying to specify sowing and harvest periods, thresh-Together with the famine a ing time, grain collections, general collapse of industry storage, shipments, and seed and transport approaches. Inallotments according to dustrial enterprises of all planned economy. The result descriptions report lowered is that agricultural production production. Wastage has inper capita is less than in precreased. Sabotage of many war Russia and is showing no kinds is reported everywhere, sign of increase. There will and the campaign of terror is

be no surplus for export, ofers report that planned econficial figures admit. In spite of Russia's great supplies of wood, peat, lignite, coal, and oil, exceeding those of all other countries, soviet industries are compelled to shut down for lack of fuel. The quantity of coal mined in Russia is larger than in prewar years, but the total calorific value of the output is less. Published figures of oil production cannot be considered mile Krasnoyarsk railroad dur-

reliable, for Industria, a Mos- ing the first six months of this cow newspaper, reveals that the oil trust has been discovered to be sending false figures to Moscow headquarters.

The timber industry, despite unlimited supplies of forced labor for its lumber camps, continues to lag behind the production program set out by Moscow. In 1913 Russia exported 7,600,000 tons, in 1936 6,044,-189 tons, in 1937 5,103,000 tons, and during the first six months of this year the production is

said to have been only twothirds of that of the same period last year.

Lazar Kaganovich, commissar of heavy industries and railroads, is working eighteen hours a day trying to instil some semblance of order in his departments. His chief trouble, he reports, is defective iron and steel products. On the 800-

year, he says, there were 913 cases of rails breaking.

Few people in Russia know that the high-grade steel used principally in the munition industries is being imported from the United States, England, Sweden, Germany, and Poland. The famous works in Tula once produced an almost equally high grade of armor plate used on Russian battleships.

Soviet industry today consumes the bulk of its own production. The small surplus which remains for the population of Russia is inadequate. The amount of woolen material being produced is sufficient to clothe the army and partially clothe the urban population.

All of the expensive machinery imported during the famous five-year plan from America, Germany, and other of their coming.