

# RENAISSANCE

*Volume One*

*Number Three*

*December, 1945*

# RENAISSANCE

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# MINUTIAE

With this issue of RENASCENCE, the Usher Society closes its first year of formal existence. This presented somewhat of a problem to the editorial committee, which was faced with the question of whether or not to close the first volume of the magazine at the same time. There was, we felt, a good deal to be said for beginning a calendar year with a new volume number, especially since it reduced the bookkeeping attendant upon overlapping subscription dates to the necessary minimum; and when it became evident that the third issue was to be an extraordinarily fat one, the decision was made. Next issue, then, will be Volume 2, Number 1.

For those of our readers who customarily bind their magazines, we have prepared a sheaf of additional pages which make up an invaluable supplement to the first volume. It consists of:

1. An attractive printed cover
2. A special introductory note, including historical and bibliographical material
3. Seven pages of musical essays and criticism reprinted from V-R Record Review, RENASCENCE's predecessor, with V. K. Emden's original cover, and new material by Wm. B. Danner
4. A complete index, by author and title, of the volume, including the material in the supplement.

The supplement is 12 pages long, set up on eight sheets, which will be sent loose to the purchaser. The price is 10¢, and well worth it. \*

With the reprint in this present issue, we begin a policy of publishing for general circulation the best work which comes to our attention through the amateur press associations. This type of journalism is virtually unknown to students, and frequently contains some striking material. Our first selection from this large body of material, Yerke's fantasia upon a steam-driven Victorian theme, comes from "The Bedside Fassbeinder", a publication from the mailings of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Subscribers who receive the Supplement to Volume 1 will see "The Hollywood Menace", by William M. Danner, from Stefantasy, a Vanguard a.p.a. magazine. Your comments are requested.

Last issue's speculation about European music publishing houses, from the pen of Harry Warner, Jr., proved just half right. Musical America reports that while Breitkopf und Haertel was completely destroyed in the fire-raids on Leipzig, Peters miraculously has suffered very little damage.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* The supplement will be sent free of charge to subscribing public libraries, and, of course, to Usher Society Members.

R     Note     The opinions expressed herein are based  
 E                upon the viewpoint of a listener, rather  
 C                er than that of a trained musician. Further,  
 O                the reviewer is more concerned with the perfor-  
 R                mance than with sheer, reproductive excellence.  
 D                Thus, many ancient sets, reproduction wherein  
 I                may be rather feeble by high-fidelity standards,  
 A                will be recommended over some of the latest re-  
                  leases. Since records are something one lives  
                  with, I feel that a moving interpretation that  
                  can be heard at all (bad surfaces or not) is to  
                  be preferred over a superb recording of a run-  
                  of-the-mill, or a poor reading.

                 Sound depends upon range. Readers are warned  
 A                that what I heard from playing these records may  
                  not be what they will hear from their own ma-  
                  chines at home. It should be noted, however,  
                  that the evidence seems to indicate that most  
                  recordings, up to now, have been made to sound  
                  well on small table players, or combos, rather  
                  than on large, high-fidelity record players with  
                  virtually no distortion.

                 In the reviews, the following symbols are  
 used:

                 V -- Victor (single discs) V-DM (or AM) Vic-  
                  tor sets in automatic sequence. V-DV -- Victor  
                  vinylite set.

                 C -- Columbia (single discs) C-MM -- Colum-  
                  bia sets in automatic sequence. CX -- Columbia  
                  two-disc album.

                 D -- Decca (single disc) DS -- Decca set.

                 With other, lesser known companies, the full  
                  name is used at all times. Prices quoted are  
                  exclusive of tax.

                 Thanks are due to Coyne's Music Shop, 58  
                  Cortlandt Street, New York, NY for their cour-  
                  tesy in allowing me to hear new releases, and  
                  their cooperation in assisting me to uncover  
                  older recordings not in my own collection.

B A R B E R     Symphony #1, Op. 9 (In One Movement). Bruno Walter  
                  and the Philharmonic-Symphony of New York. Two 12"  
                  discs; 4 sides. CX-252. \$2.50

                 Commenting upon the death of Sergei Rachmaninoff, Sir Thomas  
 Beecham stated: "The last link is now severed with the spacious  
 nineteenth century when great musicians were many-sided in their  
 gifts and not limited to specialized tasks." This is a criticism  
 which has often been flung at the entire mass of twentieth century  
 composition, particularly those composers in the period following  
 the First War. While justified in some cases, we do not feel that  
 it is entirely valid; this era has seen a number of polyphasic ta-  
 lents (Hindemith, Stravinsky, Villa-Lobos, Milhaud, Prokofiev, and  
 Shostakovich immediately come to mind), men who showed awareness of  
 the multiple paths which musical styles have taken in our time.

Samuel Barber, we feel, is another such talent.

At the end of the Seventeenth Century, Johann Sebastian Bach undertook, and successfully mastered the prodigious task of summarizing and integrating the musical styles and thought extent in the Western world up to his time. Today, so diverse and varied are the trails that musical development has taken, only Superman could be another Bach. As with poetry, the heritage is so rich, so diversified, that a single person can only be aware of the general outlines and apply his talent to that particular section or sections most suited to his abilities -- or to create still new directions. Barber does not strike me as being an innovator (and innovation of this sort is not necessary for excellence in the musical creation of any epoch); his material is, "conservative". We apply the label only for the purpose of better comprehending what the man has done up to now, and subject it to withdrawal should greater quantity effect a change in quality.

Co-Editor Blish notes that, in this work, Barber uses staccatos much in the same manner as Carlos Chavez, as differentiated from the manner of Roy Harris, to whose Third Symphony this opus has a sort of spiritual kinship, without being an imitation. I see a kinship to the Seventh Symphony of Jan Sibelius, again without imitation or derogatory derivation. At any rate, despite some passages in the first half which strike me as being uncomfortable, out of the sphere of the composer's best capability\*, this symphony is a viable work, eloquent, and the last half excellent.

The performance seems to be generally good, but the evidence of my ears indicates that this is probably a couple of years old, dating back to the days of a less excellent Philharmonic-Symphony, before Dr. Rodzinski effected the remarkable come-back it has made. How else can the ragged playing in much of the first half be explained? Reproduction, for the most part is very good. Recommended to all who are willing to give "modern" composition a hearing.

B A C H Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins and Orchestra. Adolf Busch and Frances Magnes (violins) with the Busch Chamber Orchestra. Two 12" discs; 4 sides in CX-253. \$2.50

((Yehudi Menuhin and Georges Enesco (violins) with orchestra by Pierre Monteux. Two 12" discs; 4 sides in V-DM-932. \$2.50 Joseph Szigeti and Carl Flesch (violins) with orchestra led by Walter Goehr. Two 12" discs; 4 sides in CX-90. \$2.50))

As a subsidized musician, Johann Sebastian Bach was required to produce innumerable arrangements of his compositions for various ensemble combinations as well as bringing forth fresh opi regularly. It's not known for what combination this present work was written -- it's entirely possible that no instruments were specified in the original score (now lost), as Bach frequently composed without any particular instrument or combination in mind. What we have, now, as a double concerto derives from Bach's notations of parts for the solo violin and an unfigured bass. These notations were compared with the completed score of the Concerto #3 for Two Claviers and Orchestra (itself a transcription of the Concerto for Two Violins), and reconstruction was done thereby.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* An acquaintance, himself a composer and acquainted with Barber suggests that this may be due to poor cuing in the orchestra, rather than a clumsy score in itself. The fine integration of Barbers other opi on records tends to substantiate this theory.

The performance of Menuhin-Enesco is of high order, but the faintness of the recording and virtual inaudibility of the orchestra for the most part, is a count against it. Despite the high number of the set, I suspect that this performance is actually the old Victor discs 7732/3, re-labelled and put into an album. However, it is the somewhat slower pace in the final allegro, rather than the reproduction which makes me look askance, and causes me to find it less compelling than either of the Columbia offerings. Reproduction of the Szigeti-Flesch reading is little more than adequate, but their performance has long been a marvel of technical proficiency and joyful understanding. Moreover, a harpsichord, rather than a piano is used here. Now Columbia offers a new version, wherein the fine compatibility of the soloists, and the verve and bounce in the two outer movements make it a worthy challenger to the old CX-90.

I would not suggest that those who already own the Szigeti-Flesch set to scrap it for this new one, for their treatment of the adagio remains unsurpassed on discs, but for those who can only find the two newer versions on the market, the Busch-Magnes selection is to be recommended.

B E E T H O V E N Sonata #23 in F Minor, Op. 57 (5 Sides) & Sonata #18 in E Flat Major, Op. 31 #3 -- Minuetto, only (1 Side). Artur Rubenstein (piano). Three 12" discs in V-DM-1018. \$3.50

((Walter Gieseking (piano) in C-MM-365. Three 12" discs; six sides. \$3.50))

The opening paragraphs of notes on cover two of Victor's new set are worth repeating: "Beethoven, perhaps more than any other composer in the history of music, has fallen victim to some of the choicest nonsense, and some of the worst prose penned in the entire century since his death. The culprits were, of course, his friends and adulators. It is easy to understand why this was almost inevitably so. Works like the so-called Moonlight Sonata, the C minor Symphony, the so-called Appassionata Sonata, etc., seem so pregnant with extra-musical meaning that it has been the rare admirer of Beethoven's art who could resist the temptation of coming away from the music minus a new literary 'interpretation' of its significance."

RENASCENCE cheerfully adds to the Lord High Executioner's little list innumerable critics and writers of program notes who insist upon dubbing titles into musical compositions, ad gushing forth with programs or "inner revelations". If Beethoven himself gave his opus titles beyond category numbers, that is one thing; such titles merit consideration at least.

The commentator continues with: "To tell the reader that the Appassionata Sonata lacks the customary repeat sign at the end of the exposition section in the first movement, is a woefully bankrupt way of describing what there is in this masterwork that makes it so fantastically compelling. The alternative is either to remain silent, or to attempt to render in a kind of prose-poem the same mood, or emotional state which Beethoven induces with his music. It goes almost without saying that it is the critic's business never to remain silent no matter how urgent the occasion; hence the library of prose poems still accumulating around a work like the Appassionata. It is a matter of history that no critic has ever come near rendering in 40 pages of literary effusion the mood of the Appassionata one tenth

as well as Beethoven has in 4 bars of music." Naturally. What can be delineated as well as music in prose, to paraphrase Ezra Pound on poetry, can be delineated better in prose.

The old Giesecking set features immaculate piano playing, and good reproduction, but I have always felt that his reading was on the cool side, despite the vigor he imparts. This sentiment is substantiated by the impressions received from hearing the Rubenstein version, warm, the tone no less impeccable; nor is his treatment in any respect lacking on the count of virility. And the faster pace at which he takes the final allegro ma non troppo is an asset.

The Minuetto on the final side of this album is finely executed, and for the majority of record buyers must remain the only available recording, as the complete work exists now only in one of the exclusive and rare Beethoven Society sets, featuring the piano sonatas, played by Artur Schnabel.

B O R O D I N Prince Igor - Excerpts. Soloists, Bolshoi Theatre State Choir (in Russian) and Orchestra of the USSR. Five 12" discs; 10 sides in Asch Set M-800. \$13.00

This album contains: Scene between Jaroslavna & Prince Galitsky (2 sides) from Act 1; Girl's Chorus (2 sides) from Act 2; Aria of Khan Kontchak "How Goes it, Prince?" (2 sides) from Act 2; Polovtsian Dances (3 sides) from Act 2; and Duet between Jaroslavna and Igor (1 side) from Act 4. Pressed on unbreakable vinylite, the album is not entirely satisfactory on that score, inasmuch as there is considerable surface noise.

In fact, nothing about the set's as good as it should be considering the price. Performances in all cases seem adequate, but no more. There is, though, a general air of naturalness about the performance which I find especially pleasing, and the presentation can be considered as authoritative for the purpose of checking against other, domestic or foreign interpretations. Not recommended for proletarians at this price.

M E N D E L S S O H N Concerto In E Minor, Op. 64, for Violin & Orchestra. Nathan Milstein (violin) and the Philharmonic-Symphony of New York, conducted by Bruno Walter (7 sides) & Midsummer Night's Dream: scherzo, (1 side). Four 12" discs in CM-577. \$4.50

The customary conception of Mendelssohn, living the graceful & carefree existence of a humming-bird, tossing off masterpieces with an élan akin to that of the Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze, is somewhat difficult to dispel -- especially when many of his opus sound as if they couldn't possibly have been difficult to write, or that the composer couldn't possibly have ever really been unhappy.

In comparison to most of the life of Beethoven, Schubert, or Moussorgsky, perhaps there is something to this -- but not a great deal. Anti-Semetism existed in those days, too, and Mendelssohn's career was not untouched by it.

This concerto, one of the war-horses in the standard violinist repertoire, may have been dulled for many from sheer overwork. For these unfortunates, it should be stated as quickly as possible that Bruno Walter imparts a freshness and vitality to the orchestral section that is truly astonishing, and that Milstein's solo violin is eminently delightful. The scherzo on the final side is done better here than in Rodzinski's set, C-MM-504.

S T R A U S S Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Op. 28. Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Two 12" discs; 4 sides. V-DV-1. \$4.50

((Rodzinski and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. CX-210. Two 12" discs; 4 sides. \$2.50))

((Klemperer and an unidentified orchestra. D-25421/2. Two 12" discs; 4 sides. \$1.50))

Victor's vinylite records are more pleasing, both in appearance and sound than those offered by Asch, for the Victor discs are virtually devoid of surface scratch so far as most players will be concerned. However, the recording is at such a high frequency as to make the needle in many players jump and rattle in spots; so that distortion replaces what should be peerless clarity. Further, a number of flaws in various sets have been found, suggesting that Victor's undue haste in getting this set upon the market has resulted in less satisfactory results than can be expected in later presentations.

Here again, I cannot recommend a new release. For those who already own Columbia's excellent set X-210, the better horn-playing in the Boston set is not sufficient (at double prices) to offset the often-spurious tempos Koussevitzky adopts, and the heaviness of the performance. Victor will release this album, later, on its regular shellac-astate discs, and those who want a Boston performance of this, one of the least pretentious and most delightful of Strauss' tone-poems, will probably do well to wait.

However, the best version I have yet heard upon records is that of Klemperer. It has a jauntiness, fully in keeping with Strauss' intentions, that cannot be found elsewhere, and the un-named orchestra plays admirably. As a recording, it is at least as good as many of the war releases, and better than some.

V I L L A - L O B O S Bachianas Brasileiras #5. Bidu Sayao (soprano in Portuguese) & 8 'cellos and bass, conducted by Heitor Villa-Lobos. 12" disc; 2 sides. C-71670D \$1.05

A hauntingly affective work, exquisitely sung by Miss Sayao. I cannot recommend this disc too highly. While the absence of any sort of translation of the Portuguese is something of a deprivation, it is not enough to offset the solid beauty inherent in the singing and playing.

The work is in three sections: a cantilena (covering the entire first side of the disc); a brief aria, and a repeat of the cantilena as a finale.

-- .RWL



V. K. Emden:

## How Many Angels

### An Inquiry into the Merits of Anna Lucasta and the State of the Drama

Eric Russell Bentley read a sheaf of plays recently, in order to "try...to identify and characterize several different levels of dramatic art as it now exists."

This attempt, entitled "Drama Now", (PARTISAN REVIEW, Spring 1945) took the form of a lethal spray of criticism in a number of directions at once. There are penetrating and perceptive evaluations here, particularly with reference to William Saroyan and Sean O'Casey, but Mr. Bentley's spleen leads him also into certain injustices. Philip Yordan suffers most, and most unjustifiably at his hands.

"The box office never lies" appears to be the irritant which has set Mr. Bentley off on his denunciation of today's drama. (Lee Schubert's dictum was employed by Bennett Cerf and a collaborator as criterion in editing the anthology S.R.O.) It should be apparent to any critic by this time that it is waste effort to Try and Stop Mr. Cerf, and it should be equally apparent that both Cerf and Schubert can safely be ignored in an honest attempt at evaluation of an art-form. Canny dicta and tasteless anthologies have little bearing on the question Mr. Bentley seems to be treating.

A "self-appointed director with a theatre in his own mind," Mr. Bentley raises specific objections to the whole field of present-day drama after "experiencing and appraising" the seven plays under consideration by him in the seclusion of his own study. This is the way plays should be read; it is not, however, a broad enough base upon which to erect a structure of dramatic criticism, nor is it a wide enough window through which to view the death throes of the art - if indeed drama has come to such a pass. "The most one can say", he has concluded, "is that the theatre at present fulfills the first pre-condition of renaissance. It is dead." Mr. Bentley's spleen has now led him into empty rhetoric, and it seems sufficient to oppose to his conclusion the equally flat statement: The theatre is not dead.

One can then proceed to a consideration of the rather cavalier treatment accorded Philip Yordan's Anna Lucasta, a viable play. Other critical judgments as well as Mr. Bentley's will be adduced, including my own; to the best of my knowledge all critics quoted in this paper - except Bentley - have abided by the reactionary and old-fashioned custom of attending a play in performance.

#### 1.

Anna Lucasta concerns itself with the attempts of the Lucasta family to get its individual and collective hands on a small fortune owned by a young and marriageable son of a friend. Anna, who has been whoring on the Brooklyn waterfront for several years, is brought home to achieve this end, but falls in love with the intended victim - "being one of those soulful whores", (Bentley's summary of plot action is so biased as to be insufferable and also inaccurate; if there is any kind of a whore Anna isn't, it's a soulful one.) Pathologically obsessed by Anna's beauty, her father must inevitably

prevent the wedding, and does so by exposing her past. Anna returns to the waterfront and a former lover, but is followed, found, and carried off, presumably to a fairy-tale sort of "happiness-ever-after." It is worth noting that there is sufficient evidence in the body of the play to indicate that the sugary ending may have been intended to leave the impression that the marriage could not possibly last, and that Anna would again return to her Brooklyn stamping ground.

The original ending, which one reviewer referred to wryly as "classic", differed somewhat. In the Harlem version, just before the marriage, Anna acknowledges her own perverse, incorrigible nature, and leaves him in order not to jeopardise his career; once back on the waterfront, she sinks rapidly lower on the social scale, even among prostitutes, and eventually throws herself into the river. It is debatable which ending might be considered better, if one is willing to grant the seeming inevitability of the implied disaster in the supposedly happy ending.

Yordan had written the play with a Polish-American background, in which form it kicked around unnoticed for quite a while. As I heard the story, when the American Negro Theatre put on the play (in a tiny Harlem basement) he altered the background to that of a Negro family; several other changes were written into the script for good and obvious reasons. Acclaim was unprecedented. When the play was brought downtown to the Mansfield, major changes were made in the plot structure with an obvious eye to the box-office; I believe both the happy ending and the incest motive were products of this revamping.

## 2.

It is felt rather generally that the happy ending was a mistake. Wolcott Gibbs, of the New Yorker, opened his review by stating that "With the exception of a foolish and quite unbelievable final curtain, . . . Anna Lucasta . . . is a dignified and often exciting enterprise." Similarly, Rosamond Gilder, of Theater Arts: "to turn inevitable tragedy into hopeful comedy, the Broadway ending is given a Hollywood twist." It is my feeling that Mr. Yordan may have been more subtle here than these critics indicate, but the incredibly naive curtain superimposed upon a play dealing with two or perhaps three somewhat sordid themes is susceptible of varying interpretations, according to one's taste in such matters.

According to Mr. Bentley, Yordan has tailored the entire play with the box office in mind. Anna Lucasta is considered in the category of plays "in which some attention is paid to certain perennial tasks of the drama such as telling the truth about people's lives and problems." By sneering implication, Bentley accuses Yordan of feeling a "truth" altered to conform to a somewhat inadequate First Cause: the holy Box Office. Bentley entirely misrepresents the reason for switching the Polish-American to Negro background, and ties it in with a swat at the happy ending, ascribing both to the facile Hollywood approach. "A tragic ending is indicated. But Mr. Yordan learnt all about endings in Hollywood," says Bentley, and "Negroes are lovable. They're nasty, too, and you can put coarser words in their mouths than Broadway would otherwise accept. And they're always marrying prostitutes. Oh yes, Mr. Yordan knows the truth." It seems that Bentley deserves castigation here rather than Yordan, for displaying very bad manners indeed; whereas Yordan wisely and oblig-

ingly changed the milieu of his play to suit the only group that would put it on.

3.

Bentley sneers at the coarse language and immorality of the Negro cast, with little justification. The New Republic's critic goes farther with less.

Stark Young postulates that if the question is approached with the attitude that Negroes are just the same as white people, then Anna Lucasta may be praised with some very faint damns. It is "less tedious and fatuous" than Candle in the Wind, and "less vulgarly pretentious" than The Searching Wind, and, in fine, "ne worse than we often see on Broadway." But if, on the other hand, approached from the point of view that there are "qualities that, at present, anyhow, are specially and highly characteristic of the Negro race, we may say that Anna Lucasta throws away most of the possibilities in rich warm feeling, in vividness, in a sense of rhythmic movement, and in the engaging and dramatic voices so often found among Negroes all of which make such excellent stage material."

Mr. Young was born in Como, Mississippi, where niggahs probably have nothing better to do all day long than to walk about the streets being rich and engaging stage material in the raw.

The obvious point is brought out in this same connection by Rosamund Gilder, who observes that Anna Lucasta presents "an all-Negro cast in a play that had nothing to do with Negro problems as such but was concerned with the sins and wickednesses, the hopes and fears of a group of ordinary human beings." It is a matter of rejoicing that Negroes have at last been able to overcome the handicap of the roles and plays to which their color has limited them, and have appeared on Broadway in a play whose problem is not bounded on the north by accent, on the south by melanin, or on the east and west by prejudice.

4.

Astute as ever, Time, Inc. had a reporter on the premises when the play was still an amateur enterprise. With characteristically over-written understatement, Hilda Simms is described as stopping the audience cold, and this on a very hot night. Underneath a torrid picture of Miss Simms was carried the line, "The audience forget to fan." This means a good deal, both in typical Time innuendo and in fact. "More of the time than seemed possible, she /Simms/ remained persuasive. And an unusually talented company backed her up." The Time reporter also felt that "the play had something too. Anything but a good play, fissured with faults, encrusted with crudities, it was yet vivid theatre. It had also, along with the sprawl, some of the scope of a novel. Its characters did too much and sometimes talked too fancily but . . . they had an absurd, audacious vitality."

I do not myself go quite so far overboard - it is doubtful whether that Time reporter has even yet come up for air - but I do agree that Hilda Simms has something in addition to her superlative good looks, that the supporting company is unusually talented, and that the play has something, too.

## 5.

There is widespread agreement that the first act has an edge over the rest of the play. Gilder's conclusion is that "...especially in the first act /the play/ holds attention for the freshness and vigor of its presentation." Gibbs feels that Yordan's "first act picture of the domestic life of the Lucastas, who combine the good, the bad, the silly, the selfish, and a hundred other qualities that make up almost any family group is, I guess, as honest and convincing as anything I've seen for a long time." The rest, he feels, "is never quite up to the beginning, since Mr. Yordan seems to have some weakness to the picturesque, but it is continuously moving . . ."

I subscribe to this latter estimate entirely.

## 6.

Bentley's claim is that it's a little rough on the critic to be confronted with a printed play only, since in such a case "he has little excuse for airing his knowledge of actors, electricians, designers, directors, producers and box office managers." It seems more likely that it is a little rough on the reader to expect him to swallow a one-dimensional evaluation of a play.

The Bentley method ignores three things which are absolutely essential in any consideration of drama "as it now exists" and is intended to be presented. I plead guilty on the count of having no knowledge whatsoever to air of actors, electricians, etc., etc., except that I once knew an usher to speak to. However, I expect this neither strengthens nor invalidates what I have to say concerning the very well-handled presentation of Anna Lucasta.

Pacing was excellent, if at times a little hurried. The actors, being so recently amateurs, were not always certain as to just when they would get a laugh or as to what to do with it when they got it, but the play moved along in exemplary fashion. There were no dead spots.

The sets, which were done by Frederick Fox, are unusually effective. Wolcott Gibbs summed it up when he concluded his review with a slight shudder: "...Fox's domestic interior and Brooklyn bar gave me the horrors, which naturally is just what they were supposed to do."

Harry Wagstaff Dribble's direction takes full advantage of the varied talents at his disposal. Alice Childress, as a less complicated sort of whore than the heroine, plays a very convincing tart; the gentle sister-in-law, Katie, is played with sensitive restraint by Edith Whiteman; the ruffianly brother-in-law, on the other hand, is done by Frederick O'Neal with a bluster and blow that hovers at times perilously close to slapstick, but never quite crosses the line between characterization and caricature. Canada Lee puts a good deal into a small part; he is, I believe, the only professional in the cast, and perhaps does more than is evident in serving as a seasoned actor among amateurs. Certainly the group works unaccountably well together, resisting what Gibbs says "obviously must have been a considerable temptation to act all over the place." All the other supporting players are well-cast and turn in excellent jobs; Hilda Simms takes top rank as, first, an extremely talented actress, and secondarily, an extraordinarily beautiful girl.

(concluded on page 62)



WORKSHOP

Robert W. Lowndes:

## MASKS

2

Not dominion, or the kingship  
had Adam, only aptitude  
to be the beast, the swimming one, the winged,  
the cloud, the wind that flung it, or the rock  
that broke the wind.

All; some; none; all and none; or  
the simpering jest of fecundity learned,  
to end.

We for whom infinity exists  
looped in a stable symbol of definition  
know not inconsequence of misbegotten shapes,  
whichever mirror holds them, only know  
terror at the almost-finished.  
We whisper "master,"  
bow,  
and seek the shadow of his warts for consolation.

3

Robert W. Lewndes

Who is climbing the stairs with muffled steps?  
Someone. Constricted thoughts shrill: someone is climbing.  
But what of the house surrounding the stairs, shape,  
function and ownership of it?  
What of the length and height of the stairs, the carpet  
conveniently deadening?

You sought a rope, despair-hands clutching, remember?  
Despair-eyes looking at ghosts parading the street,  
solitude taste in your mouth; you searched the room, hearing  
your heart and the silence and underneath  
the silence, sureness.

Outside the house, outside the room, outside the stairs,  
(Remember, you did not answer the question; you said:  
I am the fruit of the tree with which she tempted  
me, the fruit and the eater thereof, parallel.)  
the (phantom) sun beat down; you saw the ghosts  
in the street (ghosts?) the children, the strangers.  
(Parallel children, parallel strangers, their being,  
thoughts, despair, blood that beat in them parallel.)  
You, eyes widening, heart pounding,  
saw from the vise of silence; and in its heart  
your thought: how horrible  
to be quite alone.

Breath coming short, eyes lidless, thoughts stallions,  
rockets, cylinders, pistons, valves plunging,  
you said to yourself, the forced voice calm; this  
is a fine thing; this is a moral thing; this  
is as it should be.  
(The gods you made looked up; the gods drew near,  
snuffing the air, the pleasing air of your soul.)  
And despair-hands threw the rope over a rafter.

Occupied, you didn't see  
a ghost pause, a parallel ghost stop at your window,  
ghostly eyes wandering briefly up  
the parallel stairs.  
(The gods brought forth a scale; the gods leaned forward.)

It didn't last long, the plunge, the thunk of the rope;  
not long, only eternity, the gods watching,  
and dead things watching; dead things knowing; dead things  
climbing,  
climbing, climbing, climbing the parallel stairs.

You hung there limp, dead as the climbing things,  
clever and decent and moral you hung there swaying.  
Unanswered the question; unseen the ghosts. Despair.  
And the gods you made with balanced scales waiting. Remember?

Carlton J. Fassbeinder:

# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE LAST TRIP OF GREAT BEELZEBUB \*

It was with considerable consternation that I read in the morning paper of the disaster at the Hoper Arms only the day previous. But far worse than this, in my opinion, was the decision of the management to replace Great Beelzebub, the last remaining steam elevator on the North American continent, with an Otis Automatic Lift. This move is somewhat akin to replacing the Viennese Orchestra down at the Hübischmädchen Cafe with a juke box. I couldn't believe that Great Beelzebub, the impregnable, had actually broken down, and I resolved to look up Jack, the engine man, and obtain the true story.

Jack, and the elevator captain, Oskar Gest, were two colorful remnants of the book which saw the construction of the Hoper Arms and the installation with much publicity thirty years ago of Great Beelzebub, the largest steam elevator in the world. Jack and Oskar had been piloting this majestic lift up and down its ornate shaft in the Hoper Arms for nearly three decades.

The shaft for Great Beelzebub was a late nineteenth century style spider-web of iron work, faintly resembling the Eiffel Tower. This imposing and complex monstrosity rose out of the middle of the Hoper Arms' spacious lobby and climbed in a dizzy maze for eight stories to the roof garden. In the midst of this formidable web reposed the equally ornate cage of Great Beelzebub herself. Beelzebub was something like fifteen feet deep and twenty feet long, and contained three lounges and several easy chairs, all equipped with cigarette trays and magazines. Every day since its installation Great Beelzebub had puffed in awesome splendor up her spidery shaft and hissed back down to the lobby, somewhat like a gigantic spider hanging fatefully over the inhabitants of the hotel.

Oskar, the captain, opened the sliding door, the passengers filed in with customary ceremony, and sat down in the seats provided for the journey. Oskar would then step outside and call, a la conductor, "All ab-e-ard! First floor, second floor, and up to the roof garden!" He would then step back in, sliding the gates shut, and pick up the engine-room telephone.

"Are you ready, Mr. Fitzpatrick?"

"Yes," would faintly echo the metallic reply.

"First floor, please," Oskar would command.

Then the shaft would tremble slightly. Down in the engine room Jack would be frantically shovelling coal. The cylinders and pistons flashed and huffed, and Great Beelzebub, with passengers cheering, began to ascend the giant shaft amid deep, powerful puffings and wisps of stray steam from the cylinders trailing up after the cage.

It is no wonder that this powerful and famous spectacle was firmly established in my life, and the thought of an Otis Automatic Lift replacing this Victorian Colossus was revolting and disgusting.



The newspapers stated that, after thirty years of valiant service, Great Beëlzebub had broken down at last, seriously imperilling the lives of Commodore Lemuel G. Hoper and several bank dignitaries who had been on an inspection tour of the hotel chain in which the Hoper Arms was the most glittering link.

I found Jack at his usual booth in the Hübbschmädchen Cafe, and I am now proud to state that Great Beëlzebub died a glorious death from other than some ignominious internal weakness. I am privileged to say that the blame for the entire catastrophe may be placed on the Acme Ice Company, and a crew of illiterate truck drivers.

When Horace Grewlinggaw, manager of the Hoper Arms, learned that the Commodore and other owners of the chain were going to pay his hotel an inspection visit, he immediately instructed Jack and Oskar to polish up Great Beëlzebub for the occasion. This they did, checking and rechecking the parts, bars and controls. Jack even built up an extra head of steam to insure the noteraries a smooth, even trip.

Commodore Hoper arrived that afternoon about 2:30, and after a brief visit in the lobby rounded up his party and approached Great Beëlzebub who was hovering at the lobby stop in all her glittering splendor. Oskar, attired in a new and freshly-pressed Captain's uniform, smartly clicked his heels as the group solemnly entered and sat down, while the floor staff gathered outside to wish the party bon voyage.

"Are you ready, Mr. Fitzpatrick?" Oskar intoned resonantly into the engine room telephone.

"Ready, Captain Gest," echoed the prompt reply.

"Prepare for a non-stop trip to the roof gardens," Oskar commanded in a ringing voice, and with a visible swelling of pride, he slid the gate shut.

Slowly Great Beëlzebub began to rise in her shaft. The floor trembled to the pounding of the mighty engines under full pressure, and wisps of steam billowed up from the shaft after the steadily rising behemoth. The staff cheered lustily.

Down in the steaming engine room, Jack Fitzpatrick, stripped to the waist, threw shovel after shovel load of coal into the gaping maw of Great Beëlzebub's firebox, and the cylinder rods and flywheels spun with never-before-equalled rapidity.

Gaining speed, Great Beëlzebub soared past the first floor. With engines puffing and great clouds of steam ascending the shaft, Beëlzebub surmounted the third and fourth floors, still holding and increasing its speed. Oskar stood in rapture before his control levers. Never had Great Beëlzebub gone beyond the fourth floor without having to stop and build up steam! This was truly an occasion. Even Commodore Hoper and party stopped talking as they sensed the terrific powers playing beneath and about them.

And then, as Great Beëlzebub steamed majestically past the fifth floor, Jack, in the engine room, heard above the puffing and rumbling of the wheels, a loud trundling sound, and suddenly the basement doors of the Hoper Arms flew open and a large Acme Ice Company truck crashed into the steam-filled chamber. Husky stevedores descended from the cab and threw open the back gates of the vehicle.

"Hold on, old fellow," one of them shouted, "We will have that fire out in a jiffy!"

As Jack looked on in incredulous horror, the fellows commenced pitching hundred-pound blocks of ice into Great Beëlzebub's firebox!

He cried out to them to stop this madness, but the stevedores, imagining he was cheering them on, only increased their efforts. Immediately the pressure, built up to the critical point in the thundering boilers, began to drop. High, high up in the shaft, a frown suddenly crossed Oskar's face as he felt the pace begin to slacken. Was she only going to make the seventh floor before she had to stop? For nearly thirty years Oskar had imagined Great Beëlzebub could climb sixteen stories if she had room enough... had he been wrong?

Oskar lifted the engine room telephone from its hook. "Pressure?" he queried tremulously. All that greeted him were strange shoutings and crashings from the boiler room.

Commodore Hoper looked up sharply. "I believe the pace is slowing, Captain," he observed critically.

Indeed, it was apparent to anyone that the behemoth was slowing. She puffed slowly past the seventh floor, losing speed alarmingly. Oskar tightened his hold on the emergency brake. Beëlzebub rose more and more slowly, and then, just a yard short of the eighth floor, stopped completely. She hung for a moment. Then with a protesting rumble of gears, she began to settle slowly.

Oskar worriedly lifted the phone again. The strange metallic shouting and crashing in the engine room was continuing unabated.

With rising speed Great Beëlzebub glided down past the seventh floor. Commodore Hoper leapt to his feet. In sudden alarm, Oskar threw the safety brake. But too late! Beëlzebub was now descending too rapidly for the claws to catch! They merely commenced ratcheting, setting up a tooth-jarring vibration within the cage. The inspection party held their hats, and gripped their seats.

All over the hotel, the guests and employees knew a terrible mishap was in progress, for as Great Beëlzebub shudderingly descended, the very walls of the Hoper Arms began to vibrate. Mirrors were smashed; china closets collapsed; water pipes burst, and those with rooms near the shaft were jarred out of their chairs and beds. A porter carrying a stack of dishes fell into the dumbwaiter shaft and created a miniature Beëlzebub of his own as he slid clattering down into the kitchens.

A huge crowd gathered in the lobby, to peer in horror-stricken fascination up the great shaft for the first sign of the falling giant. With a rising crescendo of vibrations and sound, Great Beëlzebub burst into the lobby from the upper floor, amidst a shower of plaster, shaking as with the palsy from the slipping emergency ratchets. A great moan went up from the throng as the shuddering cage clattered past them and disappeared in clouds of steam into the depths below. The onlookers caught a brief glimpse of the trapped occupants, clinging desperately to the bars and ashtrays in that tragic moment.

The Hoper Arms jumped as if struck as Great Beëlzebub crashed into the bumpers at the bottom of the shaft. The entire scene was hidden by great clouds of dust and billowing steam, but a few sharp-eyed observers report they caught a glimpse of the top of the car recoiling almost to the lobby level, before the lobby had to be evacuated while Vesuvius quieted down.

It was over an hour before ladders could be lowered into the black pit, and still longer before the battered occupants, none seriously injured, could be extracted from the maze of twining bars and wires that had once been Great Beëlzebub.

The Acme Ice Company stevedores left as soon as Beëlzebub started descending, thinking the building was about to collapse, and Oskar Gest has remained mysteriously absent all the time. He must have escaped somehow through the basement. He hasn't been back to get his salary.

And that's the unknown truth about the last trip of Great Beëlzebub, as told by Jack himself. Today I went over to the Hoper Arms and looked at that black, vacant shaft, and shed a silent tear for the genial Leviathan that had once occupied it. No more Great Beëlzebub on Thanksgiving, to carry turkeys up and down to all guests -- no more bell-boys singing Christmas carols under the tree in the far corner of the cage, as she puffs up and down the shaft fillinf every floor with Joyeux Noël. A great tradition is truly passed. I will miss my chair and ashtray in the spacious interior of Great Beëlzebub.

I wonder if we can even smoke in the proposed Otis Automatic Lift.

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Copies of "The Bedside Fassbeinder", which contains the above essay and seven others, with an introduction by Philip R. Bronson, are available for 5¢ from the Usher Society.

William Hulse:

## *The Lyric*

An image  
 How veiled,  
 Corrupt  
 Or left to ornament,  
 Receives no less an edge  
 Than  
 Its linear craftsman.

Marcus Lyons:

*Frame of Reverence*

David Herrman could sense the uneasiness as he came out on the porch. The men went by in groups of two and three, not talking, their faces enigmatic in the brief Nebraskan dusk; and women, too, scuffed toward the field behind the school at the edge of town, moved in the same unwonted silence, wearing Sunday clothes and Monday expressions.

He shook his head. Three months had not been enough to understand the grim Calvinism these people made of their religion. He had, he estimated quickly, seen all but a few of the town's six hundred and fifty inhabitants. He had heard the Saturday night band concerts and the Sunday night revivals, listened to the rumors which grew like sulphuric snowballs between issues of Sam Bloch's newspaper. He had seen the expanses of cracked, baked mud which should have been cornfields, but which now looked like a vision of the Sunward side of Venus, over which the night fell suddenly as if over a desert; he had stood in the scalding, ceaseless wind and wiped black mounds of accumulated dirt from his ears and nostrils each night.

As he stood in the stifling gloom the dust ran feathery fingers along his throat, the last traces of the long-departed topsoil. The instantaneous night which had fallen around him was guage of how long ago that soil had been borne on into Kansas and other states, how long forgotten were the sinisterly-flaming sunsets of the dust-storm years. The people had been fed from the Ever-Normal Granery; and in winter passed by the sprawled bodies of dead trees to chop up one more of the few yet living, and in the summer accepted with bespelled bitterness the dubious anodynes of lay preachers.

"You, Herrman? Are you coming?"

David stepped carefully over the rotted second step and joined Sam Bloch in the street. "Hello, Sam. Bill not coming?"

Sam shrugged. "He says he don't want to see it. Thinks we're in for more trouble."

"I think so, too. Bill's advice was sound stuff, for all the lying involved. The preacher owns this town now."

"So what else could I do?" Sam demanded, making an exasperated sudden gesture. "This Unholy Roller comes to town and says all Jews are pimps, and we've got to nod sweetly and just suggest maybe he exaggerates a little?"

"Did he say that?"

"Well, no, but he said Julian Gold got his dough from a vice-ring, and Gold's one of the biggest philanthropists in the country I guess. Biggest in Sioux City, that's a cinch. And he implied that all the rest of us were the same."

"Why didn't you print the facts on where the money came from, and wire for a few testimonials on Gold's character from prominent people? You can see the sling your editorialising's got you into."

"You sound like Bill." They walked on for a few moments in silence, but David could feel the stubborn anger beside him. "Look at this, Sam," he insisted. "These five blocks of Main Street represent the only pavement for fifty miles around; the water tower is the highest thing for a hundred. The feeble celebration you had at Christmas was so unusual that the lights are still strung across the street. Business is extinct - you left the only safe in town untended to show me where I could get a room when I came here."

"I know, I know. It's a little town and everybody in it knows me and Abe and Pa run the newspaper, and that Bill is sort of out numbered from the racial standpoint. But if Bill don't mind -" He hooked his thumbs in his belt and scowled at the still-hot asphalt. "I don't understand the Gentile mind. In the big towns it's just the same. A Jewish boy commits a crime and the papers and everybody make a special point that he's Jewish. If somebody Jewish does something good, nobody mentions his religion at all. Why the hell shouldn't we kick? We got reasons."

"Sure," David replied. The nearby, rhythmical chanting of the gathering crowd was a turgid, ominous sound like an Earthmovement. He wondered why Sam asked the question. Vividly he remembered the conference the four newspaper-owners had had, after the first outburst from the travelling revivalist: the old grandfather angry, breaking into the discussion with irrelevant, self-contradictory complaints in the same pattern as the one Sam had just finished -- Sam himself insisting doggedly on "taking a firm line"; Abe, Sam's 22-year-old son, wavering cautiously from one stand to another; Bill Thomas, patiently trying to keep the argument centered on the facts. David, being a visitor, and unwilling to suffer the silent censure of the family when he took Bill's side, had said nothing; but it had been obvious to him that the desire to display family solidarity before the Gentile had motivated the decision.

Since Pa would not back down, the others had to back him up - an elementary principle of survival, instinctive since the Dark Ages.

The torches made a vast shifting confusion of the meeting, and David was jostled away from Sam, beset by leathery seamed faces all looking with glittering eyes at the stand. The edgy, hysterical voice darted here and there through the mass, spitting each word into it with the virulence of a puff-adder. The rapt faces were picked out of blurry amoeboid darkness by the torchlight; the shouted responses and the preacher's incantatory phrases made the night pulse with a Sabbath-like rhythm.

Go ahead, David thought. Tell them their farms were lost out of their own greed. Show the blank, hostile faces the rainfall charts of the last ten years. Tell them this is cattelands now, and corn is going out. Scrape the peeling, wind-blistered paint off their houses and souls.

"- Prince of Liars!" the evangelist cried. "You know, my brothers! You know! Brothers -"

The crowd thundered antiphonally. David's feet were trampled; he fought to resist the nauseating sway, struggling toward the edge of the crowd. He began to be frightened.

"- to attack Jesus Christ who saved -"

No one noticed the jab of his elbows. The ground throbbed. Under his feet the whole planet bobbed up and down in space like a rowboat. Somewhere on the north side of the crowd a swirling movement began.

"- brothers -"

The torches twisted slowly in a fiery whirlpool that broke suddenly and overflowed toward the town. The crowd was sucked away from him. The preacher looked smaller in the roaring, incoherent tumult, as if deflated by fear. He called out once more, but whatever protest he might have been making was drowned in the sound of

the flood; down Main Street the torches shouted with his voice, and a greater red glare responded angrily: the newspaper office.

Two or three figures stood alone in the light, looking toward the stand. The preacher had the look of a man who has not been given time to pass the hat.

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HOW MANY ANGELS (continued from page 51)

7.

It is not often that I agree with PM, but I can only mark down my wholehearted agreement with their opinion that "Despite its many faults, this story of a young prostitute and her family is fresh and vigorous theatre. . ."

You can fool too many of the people too much of the time, Mr. Bentley, as I would be the first to admit. But in this case, the box office is unquestionably not lying, just as it failed to lie in the case of many other good and great plays in the past.

Anna Lucasta is perhaps marred by a weak curtain; if the curtain is accepted at face value, it is then certainly weakened.

Anna Lucasta is not a great play; Philip Yordan is young and still new at the business of being a playwright, but for all his faults, he has made of Anna Lucasta a good play. The careful and to my mind subtle, handling of the "once a prostitute always a prostitute" theme is valid drama. Rosamund Gilder remarks that the "somewhat turgid, Freudian theme...raises its spectral head but never seems clearly defined as an element of the plot;" on the contrary, the incest motive is clearly delineated from the very beginning and serves as the turning point of the plot, when Anna's father interposes his mad jealousy and resentment between the lovers. This aspect of the play is particularly well handled. A third aspect, the greed of the Lucastas - inevitable result of the grinding poverty, and sordid surroundings in which they live - is handled in more routine fashion, but makes for excellent characterization and convincingly rapacious dialogue.

Finally, Anna Lucasta is a play performed by Negroes which is not about Negroes, but about people. This is a major virtue.

8.

I am not inclined, then, to roll up my eyes with Mr. Bentley in horror at the number of angels who can be found to back dramatic productions. I am more inclined to wonder how many angels can be found dancing on the point of Mr. Bentley's pin.

If I could afford the gesture, I would sand him two on the aisle for Anna. The moving, exciting, funny, dramatic production at the Mansfield might easily convince Mr. Bentley that the theatre is not dead, but only - as is to be expected - lacking in vitality when compressed between stiff covers.

# CRY in the NIGHT

Cyril Kornbluth

James Blish  
Opus 5, No. 1

*Andantino con rubato*

Cry in the night, gulls; inside her skull, behind her green eyes,

*mp* *p*

*8va*

is the lean, lu-natic Inqui-si-tion.

*pp* *ff*

*8va*

Cry in the night; re-mem-ber, she hath no fear, though her

*mp*

*8va*

heart burst a-sun-der.

*p* *pp*

*8va*

S. C. Lange, 1944

for  
Larry Shaw



C. DALE HART:

Poem  
for the Man Who did not Recognize  
Death in a Slouch Hat

It was difficult for him to think of dissolution.

He saw death in a broken branch of wild thyme  
or in the mad gyrations of a web-entangled fly,  
but never saw its sullen face in the mirror of  
thought.

In a narrow lane he plucked flowers that opened  
as years within the vase of his body, smiling  
when he found the snakes of dissolution under every  
blossom.

RENASCENCE, December, 1945

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### CAVIL

For a magazine which hopes to please a large audience, one of the most valuable features of membership in an amateur press association is the opportunity it gives the editors to examine a known percentage of reader opinion at regular intervals. Most of the magazines circulated in Vanguard carry review columns; and since the mailings fall exactly two months apart, RENASCENCE automatically receives a batch of criticisms on any given issue in the same mailing which carries the succeeding issue.

In Vanguard's Fourth Mailing, which carried RENASCENCE No. 2, there was a total of eighteen publications; of these, two were devoted to the business of the organization, two entirely to poetry, and four to material for which Blish and Lowndes were editorially responsible. Of the remaining ten magazines, which might be expected to review RENASCENCE, one carried no reviews at all, and one did not think us worth mentioning.

Joe Kennedy's JOE'S JOTTINGS and TALES OF ANTIQUITY mentioned, in passing, the "solid seriousness" of the music reviews, which he considered a "creditable commentary;" his writing contains, as well, some hilarity at the expense of the discontinued Vanguard Record Company, whose appearance in our first issue does not concern us editorially. Donald A. Wellheim's K'TAGM-M, one of VAPA's three left-wing magazines, remarked acidly,

Though we cannot boast of any charmingly overripe mementos of the Tinsel Twenties, K'Tagm-m herewith bashfully admits that it, too, like its contemporary Renaissance, is a dogmatic review, a vehicle for the expression of aesthetic values free from commercial considerations, and above all, a laboratory for experimental creative work of all kinds - including architecture, mountain-side sculpture, and mass choral chants.

After remarking that RENASCENCE, in the matter of esoteric prose and enigmatic verse, was "the worst offender, with, to my mind, the least excuse," Judith Zissman's TEMPER! goes on to say:

....esoteric, narrow in scope, certainly not a fulfillment, or even an expression of the stated aims of the Usher Society...and above all, it's dull. If it is to be devoted almost exclusively to things musical, why not keep it as the VR Record Review, and thereby offer fair warning to those who have no interest? If its aim is broader than that, it seems a society of artists should be able to offer more, either in creative work, or criticism, than a translation of someone else's work of twenty years ago.

Larry Shaw's FLING sounded equally uncomfortable:

Nothing about Renaissance was as good as it should have been. In spite of the effort I know went into the format, both of the exclusively VAPA sheets put out by the editors were much nicer looking. The material bored me, ex-

cept for Doc's record reviews - which were too numerous for the size of the magazine, however.

V. K. Emden, a contributor to the first issue, offers a rather extended criticism, containing several comments which have been echoed by a number of others in letters. We abstract from DISCRETE:

Renaissance has made a good, if somewhat one-sided, beginning. For instance, the material on the Knacklein material is of very real interest...The record reviews are also valuable material, but I feel that the department is overlong and not sufficiently discriminating...Also, I should like to see a more complete covering...of the field it is proclaimed to cover - "all the arts" ...material on painting, ballet, the modern dance, and the theater is in order, is it not? In any event, this will stand up well enough as a first issue, in spite of its lacks.

The organization's official organ, the VANGUARD AMATEUR, carries a letter from Emil Petaja which declares, "The thing which naturally hits my interest most is Renaissance and the record reviews. That is right up my alley." The record reviews also enlisted the attention of William Danner's STEFANTASY, which took issue with several of the comments, but had nothing to say about the magazine as a whole.

Tabulation of the correspondence up to October shows three complaints to be in the majority:

1. Imbalance of types of material
2. Unselectivity in the record reviews
3. Difficulty in reading solid pages of Elite type

RENAISSANCE's policy on (1) will continue to be what it has been: as perfect a balance between all the arts as contributions allow us to attain. The record reviews already have been cut down to consider only those releases which Mr. Lowndes believes important; and beginning with this issue, the Elite type will be used only for short quotations, fillers, and footnotes.

And if anybody has music for a mass choral chant, original architectural drawings, or sketches and/or photographs of proposed or completed sculpture in any medium, we'll be glad to consider them for publication. Our usual offer of 350 copies of the reproduction to Usher contributors still applies.

Among other comments on the previous issue, we cull the following sceriac paragraph from Robert Bloch:

"On page 26..., the guy who likes Gershwin puts in a plug for a swell new composer, name of Stravinski. Apparently he wrote a Capriccio but it didn't sell and he is from hunger. Contrast him with a successful man like Stravinski. Tell Blish to listen to his stuff sometime, particularly his Song of the Nightingale and Chinese March on Victor....On second thought, to hell with Blish, he doesn't like Grofe."

Nor the two pieces mentioned, either; though he pleads Not Guilty on the typos, and on Recordia, wherein the Gershwyn typo appeared, as well.

T. Bruce Yerke comments on the Usher Society:

"I have been following a rather isolated course, working out personal philosophic and aesthetic problems which have been bothering me for some time. Prime problem in this group is the question of the validity of the group enterprise as an outlet for individual expression, and whether or not in the long run, the fuller personal realization of the values and benefits of the arts are appreciated most fully by an individual alone or by an individual through a group.....I am still...sympathetic to the first postulate...

"Might I suggest that letters be written to both Victor and Columbia by as many of your friends as possible, urging that a recording of Mahler's Fifth Symphony be made?...(An example of group action being superior to individual, I grant you... though group appreciation may not be.)"

The Society agrees that such letters are worth sending, and urges its members to send them. We are inclined, however, to view your suspicion of group appreciation as academic in our present milieu. The existing realities in the arts make it impossible for the individual to attain to anything like understanding without laborious and expensive research; a student by himself is constantly handicapped by infrequency of performance of important music, lack of available reproductions of significant paintings, suppression of important books by Leagues of Decency and Boston hypocrisy, crowding of important plays by Minsky's. Would you consider your knowledge of American literature complete without an acquaintance with Henry Miller? How often can you see Phedre or Doctor Faustus or The Dream Play on the stage where they belong? No one of these deficiencies may be dealt with on a personal level. It is much easier to contribute some small amount of time and money to a pressure group than to spend three years learning Swedish, and in the end much more fruitful.

Marshall P. Grassly, a member of the Society's Conference Committee, summarises the Society's opinion of its publication:

"Lowndes' Recordia has been well received. I think, however, that his reviews are at times a little shallow; I think they would be improved if he would listen to his subject matter with less preoccupation.

"You are to be complimented on the originality and simplicity of the format. May I add, though, that RENAISSANCE does not seem to know how to smile?" I do not mean that it should be built around cartoons or humorous anecdotes, but thus far it does seem to be rather humorless."

Further letters from readers are always most welcome.

NOTE The varied-colored paper upon which this issue is printed is not a reflection of the editorial views on art, but is merely due to the fact that 20lb mimeo paper is extremely difficult to find at all these days, and we have to accept what we can get. ... Our thanks to Lawrence T. Shaw, Ed Advisor of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association, for obtaining lithographed copies of "Cry in the Night".

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THE EDITORS: JAMES BLISH, a musician and veteran of World War II, is now a graduate student at Columbia University. His background includes work in medical and biological research and a score of published short-stories and articles. . . ROBERT W. LOWNDES is presently director of a chain of pulp magazines and the author, under as many as ten pen-names, of stories and novels of all kinds. Recent work in poetry and musicology has brought him to the attention of students all over the country

The USHER SOCIETY is an organization for the practising artist, and is designed to provide him with laboratory facilities and a discriminating audience of fellow-practitioners in all fields. Membership costs \$1 per annum and places upon the member a small activity requirement, which may be satisfied by representation in RENASCENCE, or by participation in a Society Committee of the member's selection. Memberships are subject to review upon expiration. The organization is run in compartmental fashion - each committee is answerable only to its own members, and to the Editorial Committee which must handle the reports.

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