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Jazzletter

P.O. Box 240
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Nov. 15, 1982 *Vol. 2 No. 4*

French Autumn Syndrome Part II

Racial relations in jazz have been vexed since the 1930s, and more so since the 1950s. Prior to 1920, of course, the problem did not exist: jazz, or at least jazz as we now define it, had not come into being. And in its infancy, it was played entirely and only by black musicians. When a few young white musicians began to play it in the 1920s, their mentors seemingly were pleased by their desire to learn it. This is reflected in Louis Armstrong's admiration of Bix Beiderbecke. Any attempt to dismiss this on the grounds that Armstrong was probably tomming must be rejected: he didn't need Bix; and there exists a recorded interview in which Armstrong's anger at those who encouraged Beiderbecke's drinking and regret at his loss need only be heard to be believed.

One American historian has lamented that Americans are taught that history begins in 1492. In this light it is possible to forgive (with a sigh, perhaps), the ignorance of Andrew Young when he said in the United Nations that England invented slavery. In fact almost every people in history has practiced slavery, including the Egyptians, Arabs, Aztecs, North American Indians, Japanese, and the black peoples of Africa. The culture of Greece was supported by the labor of slaves. Later, the Greeks were themselves enslaved by the Romans, and, like most enslaved peoples, worked an ironic vengeance by dominating the surrounding culture, a bit of history that is repeating itself in America. England was in fact the first nation in modern history to *outlaw* slavery, and for long years the Royal Navy maintained patrols in the Mediterranean to intercept Arab slavers and, after removing prisoners, sink them.

Slavery is deeply puzzling to sensitive people. But sensitive people rarely grasp that power is attractive to some people for its own sake (the Hollywood executive extorting sexual favors from an aspiring actress — or actor) and some enjoy inflicting pain. And it is necessary to understand that slavery *always* rests on the rationalization that the enslaved people are inferior. The unique thing about the experience of Africans in America is that their slavery was recent. The memory is very fresh: there are few black Americans over fifty whose great-grandparents were not slaves. (In 1955, as a young newpaper reporter, I interviewed on her hundred and fourth birthday a woman who had been born a slave.) And of course the discrimination against black Americans has not ended. Thus if the French Autumn Syndrome of black Americans contains anger, no one should be surprised. Indeed, I am always more puzzled by those blacks who have passed beyond anger than those who have not: they represent a triumph of the human spirit that is almost awesome. Have you ever had a gang of toughs try to kill you for your color? Clark Terry has. Perceived against that fact, his joyous and exuberant playing must be considered one of the wonders of modern music.

Discrimination exists as an abrasive fact of daily life. A black person aspires to achievement in a white society only to be rejected for his color. It is little wonder, pettiness and prejudice *not* being the exclusive defects of white character, that some black musicians have reflexively elected to turn racism on its head and practice discrimination against the white jazz musician. In this they have been abetted by white critics of liberal persuasion who have had their own axes to grind, including those on the extreme left such as Frank Kofsky. Sometimes, of course, the motive is nothing more than a desire of the writer to ingratiate himself with black musicians, but the attendant distortions of musical history are no less damaging for that.

Stan Getz remarked to a New York *Times* reporter that he doubted that you could find a Republican among jazz musicians. This is not correct. If he had specified among post-bebop jazz musicians, he would have been close to the mark.

The admirer of "modern" jazz is inclined to respect the earlier styles of the music. Whether or not he listens to much of it, he at least accepts its importance in the evolution of the music he does like. The traditionalists do not return the compliment. Some of them despise everything that has happened in the music since 1940, and talking to one of them can be a disconcerting experience, like meeting a member of the Flat Earth Society. The Dixieland fans lean to the conservative in their politics as well. Los Angeles police held a memorial service for the late Jack Webb, who was a fan of cops and Dixieland. And one of the older white "traditional" jazz musicians has in his home a roomful of Nazi memorabilia.

Recently I met a fan of the older styles of jazz who, in a remarkable display of French Autumn Syndrome, made certain assumptions about me as a member of the bebop generation. "I suppose," he said, with a conspicuous chip on his shoulder, "you're one of those people who think white men can't play jazz." I became fascinated by the man and began to explore his attitudes.

His listening for the most part covered the period of the Austin High Gang until the early 1940s. He seemed to have little interest in the music of black musicians prior to that. Bebop and post-bebop records set his teeth on edge. He did not understand it, and said that he did not want to be challenged by music and did not want to think about it. He could not tolerate anything but the simplest harmony, and he disliked classical music as much as he did modern jazz. He wanted nothing ever to change. He craved yesterday's solutions for today's problems. He wanted only to be reassured by music. And his politics were of the right. He expressed admiration for two show business executives accused (and one convicted) of misappropriating funds, seeing the accumulation of money as the real purpose of life. He felt that it was proof of virtue. He accused the boppers and post-boppers of alienating the audience, seeing size of audience as the proof of music's worth. I disconcerted him by saying that by those lights, Elvis Presley, whom he loathed, would have to be considered a greater artist than Bix Beiderbecke, whom he admired; and a rich drug trafficker a finer human being than a dedicated doctor. And finally, on impish impulse, I said in jest what I later perceived to be the truth: "Well, in view of his uses of chromaticism, his emulation

Music is the best means we have of digesting time.

— W.H. Auden

of the French Impressionists and his rhythmic displacements, the true precursor of bebop is Bix Beiderbecke."

In contrast to this man, the modern jazz fan apparently enjoys challenge. He wants to encounter and cope with the unexpected, the surprising, the unpredictable, which modern jazz, by virtue of its richer harmonic and rhythmic and sometimes polytonal resources, can provide. The individual with that structure of personality is more likely, in accord with the principle of French Autumn Syndrome, to distrust authority, look toward the future, and seek solutions, possibly unorthodox solutions at that. By the very way his mind works, he is likely to be in the liberal political camp. When one encounters a Republican fan of modern jazz — and I have two close friends of that stripe — he will probably be a liberal Republican.

The modern jazz fan does not object to someone else's listening to traditional jazz. But the hard-core Dixieland fan, and some of the players too, want bebop and post-bebop music *silenced.* This is an archetypically conservative attitude. Consider the efforts made by Charlton Heston to silence Edward Asner. And it is in this that we see that an important element among conservatives is inherently anti-Democratic. They do not believe in the free exchange of ideas that is the very soul of the Anglo-American political tradition, the most enlightened form of political organization yet devised by man and now severely threatened by the extreme right from within and the extreme left from without. For curiously enough, the extreme left, as entrenched in the Soviet Union, is as hostile to open discussion as the extreme right in the United States — and, for the record, Canada. This repressionist form of conservatism is most virulent when it is married to Christian fundamentalism. And Christian fundamentalism is deeply hostile to the indisputable scientific evidence that we have so painfully accumulated about the origins of man. If you reject the fact that we have all evolved from common ancestors and argue that man was created one day by a God so self-involved that he would create beings to admire him, then you have opened the way to racism.

But the attitudes and statements of some black musicians and liberal white critics also open the way to racism. For although there have been any number of rationalizations to the effect that this is not so, the reasoning is irresistible: if there is something *inherently* different about a black musician's playing, then there may be other qualities about him that are inherently different. A cat's reflexes are superior to those of a man, but a cat does not have man's intelligence. If one argues that a black man has *inherently* superior skills at music, the white-supremacist has a go flag to argue that he has inherently inferior skills at, say, mathematics, medicine, physics, law. The doctrine is, to say the least, a mischievous one. It is, happily, at odds with the evidence of anthropology and other sciences. Some anthropologists, indeed, deny that there are different human "races". If we were as substantially different as racists insist, we could not crossbreed and produce fertile offspring. The issue of hybrids of the same genus, such as the mule, produced by breeding a horse with a donkey, are usually sterile. And the human species has shown a remarkable facility at producing fertile offspring no matter what the "racial" combinations, so much so that there is no one of European ancestry who isn't a bewildering mixture of forgotten peoples, Franks, Gauls and Romans, Picts, Scots, Angles, Saxons, Turks, Tartars, Slavs, all of us the products of innumerable invasions and rapes. Nor is the process decelerating: I need only look at my nieces and nephews, who have among them Aztec, Iroquois, and Chinese blood, to see that we are on our way to producing a world-wide people who will be, as George Bernard Shaw anticipated, coffee-colored. All intelligent Americans, black and white, recognize that American racism is economic in origin, but few recognize that it has an even more vicious foundation. *All* racism, all over the world, is sexist, rooted in the male view of women as chattels, property, mere objects, and it rests on one unstated assumption: we have a right to screw your women but you don't have a right to screw ours. (What the ladies may feel about it is always considered irrelevant.) True desegregation and "tolerance" can only come to pass where life itself begins: in the bedroom.

But in the meantime, racism is all too common in jazz, conspicuously in a statement by the late Ralph Gleason that it was possible to speculate that if no white jazz musician had ever existed the course of the music would be unchanged, a manifestly false doctrine that is widely accepted as a verity. The French composer and critic Andre Hodeir said to me once, flatly, that no white men had ever contributed anything to jazz. One of the musicians cited in the attempt to prove that all white players derive their styles from black models is Lester Young. This is acccomplished, however, by overlooking Lester Young's own statement that he was influenced by Frank Trumbauer. Trumbauer introduces a complication. He was only part white. He was also part Indian. And so one might say that the ignoring of Frank Trumbauer in orthodox jazz histories is a slight to the American Indian contribution to jazz.

Trumbauer — who gave up music to become a test pilot — was of course closely associated with Bix Beiderbecke. The virtual exile of both men from the history books increasingly looks like one of the major falsifications of jazz history. An English critic wrote of Beiderbecke that he made history but did not influence it. This is not so, although again it is an orthodox opinion. There are indeed direct links of Beiderbecke to bebop, and I confess that for many years I did not see them, partly no doubt because I had been exposed to the conventional jazz histories and had not begun to make my own inquiries.

First we must consider Beiderbecke's influence on Artie Shaw, one I would never have noticed had Shaw not pointed it out to me. Once you have become cognizant of it, of course, it is conspicuous. In their book, *Black Beauty, White Heat,* Frank

The function of music is to release us from the tyranny of conscious thought.
— Sir Thomas Beecham

Driggs and Harris Lewine wrote, "In addition to their Minton's experiments, (the beboppers) were listening to Artie Shaw because he was felt to be more conceptionally modern than (Benny) Goodman; to Bobby Hackett, whose full knowledge of chords was evident on his flowing legato solo on *Embraceable You*; to Benny Carter's solos, cool, flowing, and elegant on alto sax; and to pianist Teddy Wilson's dry, unsentimental way of laying out a solo with perfect placement of notes and harmonies."

Parenthetically, it should be noted that all four of these men had a rich knowledge of harmony — Shaw and Carter as arrangers; Wilson as a pianist; and Hackett because he was also a guitarist, with more than the usual horn player's knowledge of chords. And that of course was one of the important elements of bebop, the harmonic enrichment and extension it brought into jazz.

There are, then, two direct links of bebop back to Beiderbecke: Shaw and Hackett. As I have previously noted, I once asked Miles Davis if he had listened a lot to Bix, to which he replied that he hadn't but he had listened extensively to Bobby Hackett, who *had* listened to Bix. And of course Bobby had been deeply influenced by Bix.

But there are other links to Beiderbecke. Red Nichols was, as several musicans have noted, a diluted version of Beiderbecke.

Eddie Condon once said, "He thought he played like Bix, but the similarity stopped when he opened his case." Nonetheless, even according to so biased a source as Nat Hentoff, Nichols was an early influence on Roy Eldrige, who was a direct influence on Dizzy Gillespie. Among many racist remarks in Hentoff's writing, this statement from *The Jazz Life* stands out: "Years before, when Roy Eldridge first came to New York, he had been strongly influenced by Red Nichols. Lips Page heard him and said, 'Man, how come you play like an ofay trumpet player?' Lips took Eldridge to hear Louis Armstrong, and Eldridge's soul was saved." Note that that "Eldridge's soul was saved" is not a quotation from someone else but Hentoff's own statement. In any event, one rarely loses one's early influences completely, and if Eldridge had been listening to Nichols, the link between Beiderbecke and bop is further corroborated. Because of Beiderbecke's influence on Trumbauer and Trumbauer's on Lester Young — himself a harbinger of bebop, along with Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Christian — we can see another thread in the fabric of Beiderbecke's enormously underrated influence.

Beiderbecke, then, appears to be an influence in jazz perhaps secondary only to that of the towering figure of Louis Armstrong. But he was not the only white influence. Jack Teagarden pioneered an approach to trombone that made bebop on the instrument possible. There is no questioning this. Teagarden proved that the instrument could articulate almost with the facility of the trumpet and fine trombonists have had to live up to his standard ever since.

And of course virtually the entire school of modern pianists have debts to Bill Evans, whose own sources included Nat Cole, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Bud Powell, Scriabin, Debussy, Ravel, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Poulenc, and two men who are usually overlooked in analyses of his work: Sonny Clark (by Bill's own statement) and the forgotten Toronto pianist Bill Clifton, who committed suicide. Evans brought to the piano his enormously learned concept of harmony and fresh voicings and above all a personal approach to tone. Bill's playing was like jazz itself in that: it contained no original elements but the combination of known elements, as in a chemical compound, was something with qualities of its own. Now you hear echoes of his work everywhere, among pianists both black and white and of all nationalities — the superb young Japanese pianist Kai Akagi, for example; and Oscar Peterson himself in ballads. And yet in a book called *Listening to Jazz*, Jerry Coker, in listing what he considered to be the twelve greatest jazz soloists, included Herbie Hancock and omitted Bill Evans. (Bill was in good company. Sidney Bechet is also omitted.) And an Evans associate, Scott LaFaro, was a major influence on almost all modern bassists.

That the primary impetus in the evolution of jazz has been black might be disputed by only a few of the more restricted Dixieland buffs, but to argue that no white man ever contributed anything to the music requires the most delicate surgical excision from jazz history of several important figures, particularly Beiderbecke and Evans. It requires Hentoff's kind of selective reporting. And yet one has to understand it in terms of pressures of discrimination against black musicians. Black musicians could not penetrate the lucrative studio work of Los Angeles and New York. The American Federation of Musicians itself practiced discrimination by maintaining separate black and white locals in Chicago and other cities. And the scale paid black musicians was always less. The social conditions of America as a whole militated against integration. One of the reasons J.J. Johnson and the Danish trombonist Kai Winding broke up their group was the unending hassle of finding accomodations in the same hotels. Roy Eldridge, travelling with Artie Shaw, found a funny and sad solution to the problem: he would step up to the registration desk and say he was Mr. Eldridge's valet and be admitted without problem. When Benny Carter began scoring pictures in Hollywood, he had to write without screen credit under the names of white composers. And he was allowed to write for black vocalists, such as Lena Horne, when they made film appearances. (A wheel of history has turned. The name of a black composer is now on the writing of a number of white arrangers.) Nor was it all that long ago that Ella Fitzgerald and Herb Ellis were not allowed to appear together on television's *Bell Telephone Hour*. Whatever willingness black and white musicians had to work together, the structure of the society was organized against it, and if black musicians resented the memory of past injustices to an entire people, present injustices to the individual were an even more volatile fuel for anger. But this does not excuse ignorant statements such as that of the black writer Ortiz M. Walton, in the book *Music, Black White and Blue*, that Stan Getz was influenced by Coleman Hawkins! Nor the endlessly reiterated claim that the white man stole the black man's music, which doesn't even make sense unless you can entertain the ludicrous hypothesis that Leontyne Price, Andre Watts, Ulysses Kaye and any number of rising young black classical artists stole the white man's music. You cannot steal music. You can only learn it, usually through diligent labor.

In view of the social structure and the angers it engendered, it is amazing that integration of bands began at all. But it did and, after the failure of the Fletcher Henderson band, Benny Goodman hired Henderson (and bought charts Henderson had written for his own band) and made a place for himself in history as the first white swing band — a claim Artie Shaw disputes, incidentally, on the grounds that the first white so-called swing band was Glenn

Music is, by its nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all — music expresses itself.
— Igor Stravinsky

Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra. Later Goodman also hired Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton, and Charlie Christian. Whatever hostility musicians harbor toward Goodman — and it is almost universal — he must be given credit for that much. Shaw hired Roy Eldridge, Hot Lips Page and Billie Holiday. Arranger Sy Oliver (who also worked for Shaw) and Charlie Shavers joined Tommy Dorsey. This to an extent seemed to add evidence to the idea of the white man stealing the black man's music. The bandleaders seemed to be hiring or leasing the black musician's "soul" because white musicians could not provide it.

But that argument began to crumble when black leaders, including Duke Ellington and Count Basie, started hiring white players. Louis Bellson gave tremendous lift to the Ellington band, and Buddy Rich did the same to Basie's. Basie has had several white drummers and at times the band has been about one-third white. And he has used a long line of white arrangers, including Neal Hefti, Chico O'Farrill (who is Cuban), and Sammy Nestico. Herb Ellis joined the Oscar Peterson trio, Jim Hall joined Sonny Rollins (which muted a certain condescension toward his "west coast" playing among jazz critics) and Bill Evans joined Miles Davis. And of course Miles has had a long relationship with Gil Evans, so close that Gil's son is named Miles. Dizzy Gillespie has shown indifference to color in musicians, using at one time Lalo Schifrin (who is Argentinian) on piano and as his arranger. Al Haig and Joe Albany were among Charlie Parker's favored sidemen. Cannonball Adderley hired Victor Feldman (who is English) on piano. To argue that Count Basie doesn't know what swings or that Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis are poor judges of jazz players would of course be risible.

And now another shift is occurring. Jazz, which began as the art of the blacks, became an American art, and is now becoming an

international art with the rise of any number of superb jazz players in or from other countries — the Danish bassist Nils Henning Orsted-Pedersen, the Jamaican pianist Monty Alexander, the Panamanian bassist Abraham Laboriel, the Belgian composer and arranger Francie Boland, the French violinists Stephane Grappelli (in his prime in his seventies) and Jean-Luc Ponty, the Austrian pianist Joe Zawinul, the Polish pianist Adam Makowicz, the Czech bassist George Mraz, the British multi-instrumentalist Victor Feldman, and many, many more. Duke Ellington thought that the late Ake Persson, of Sweden, was the finest lead trombonist he had ever encountered.

All of this is evidence that cultural exposure rather than congenital ability is the important factor in the proliferation of superior musicianship. In the early days of jazz, the best and sometimes the only way to hear the music was to frequent those haunts in black ghettos where the music was being made. And that opportunity was for the most part open only to blacks. By the same token, black children had little exposure to European classical music. But with the spread of electronic communications, the barriers are being erased and we have seen the blossoming of white — and foreign — jazz musicians and black classical performers. When I was sixteen or so, growing up in Canada, it was considered axiomatic that no one but Americans and for the most part black Americans could or ever would be able to play jazz, or at least play it well. And the kid with whom I was listening to those early Parker and Gillespie records had no idea (and neither did I) that he would himself become an internationally respected jazz trumpeter and composer. I refer of course to Kenny Wheeler. And I suspect that if you had told us that one day one of the finest big bands around (Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass) would be Canadian, we would both have given you a strange look. Thus deeply does prejudice reside.

After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.
— Aldous Huxley

Roy Eldridge once said he could tell by listening whether a player was black or white. Leonard Feather gave him a Blindfold Test on precisely this point. He flunked it. Cannonball Adderley made a similar statement and also flunked a Blindfold Test. Later, Nat Adderley claimed his brother could in fact tell whether a player was black or white with ninety percent accuracy. I can do better than that. I can with fair accuracy guess whether the player is Italian, Irish, or Jewish.

And the reason for this is obvious: every musician brings to jazz his own cultural conditioning. Bill Evans was Welsh and Russian. Should he have sounded Irish or Italian? Or black? It is axiomatic in all art, so fundamental that it is almost banal, that the artist should express and can only express his direct and personal perception and experience. Anything else is false.

Ralph Gleason once wrote in an article titled *Can the White Man Sing the Blues?* "Many people feel strongly on this point, taking the position that the blues is black man's music and whites diminish it at best or steal it at worst. In any case they have no moral right to use it."

By extension, that logic would hold that Andre Watts has no moral right to play Chopin — and that he isn't very good at it. And it would assume, seemingly, that being black gives you an automatic predilection and talent for the blues. Ben Webster said to me once in Jim and Andy's, "If I never have to play a blues again, it's all right with me," which remark rather unsettled me, since I love the blues. Joe Williams dislikes singing the blues, although he is very good at it. And Sarah Vaughan *won't* sing blues. "I'm not a blues singer," she says flatly. And her friend Leontyne Price *can't* sing blues, or for that matter does not even sing American popular music with a natural and fluent feeling, as her album with Andre Previn demonstrates: her early cultural exposure and subsequent training made her into an opera singer, and one of the great ones. Sarah Vaughan has similar native abilities, including one of the most remarkable natural voices of our time, but her experience led her in a different direction.

There is some slight evidence that the ability to make music, along with a talent for athletics, may be inherited, but that inheritance does not fall according to ethnic group. And anyway, the evidence in inconclusive. The weight of evidence is for the importance of cultural exposure.

Nonetheless the racial division in jazz, while growing weaker, is still there. One of the most powerful forces for its sustenance is, in my opinion, the French Autumn Syndrome of many white jazz critics of leftist persuasion. But their prejudice, I believe, is rooted not so much in politics as in puritanism.

(to be continued)

Whither Electronics?

One day in 1968, a slender young man named Walter Carlos came to my apartment in New York City to discuss the test pressing of his unreleased album, *Switched-on Bach.* Nobody much had ever heard of him, and I would not have known who he was but for the fact that the album had been produced by a friend, Rachel Elkind. But Walter Carlos was about to launch a revolution. That much was clear after I had heard a minute or so of the recording, and by the end of it I was prompted to comment, "I have a feeling that a hundred years from now, a kid is going to say,'Daddy, what was an orchestra?' and the reply will be, 'A primitive synthesizer that took a hundred men to play.'"

Fifteen years have passed since then and a good many revolutions have come (and some gone). Walter himself — a deeply intelligent, shy, gentle and notably feminine soul — would become the first of four persons I know to go through a sex change. This created at minimum a grammatical problem, which I have resolved by referring to Walter in the past as "he" and Wendy in the present as "she".

At that time, few people but specialists, one of whom was Walter (who had degrees in both physics and music), knew what synthesizers were or could do, and Walter in subsequent days gave me a crash course on the nature and potential of these instruments. The instruments themselves have of course become vastly more sophisticated since then, but the principle remains the same.

When four different instruments play the A below middle C, they produce a basic tone, the fundamental, of 440 vibrations a second. The factor that makes it possible to tell whether the sound comes from a piano, a flute, a guitar, or cello is the overtone structure. Aside from the overtones of the harmonic series, there are other subtler vibrations that determine the timbre of the instrument, and indeed the tone quality of different players of the same instrument.

Since time immemorial, we have made music in the same way: by causing something to vibrate and send sound waves into the air. But with the coming of synthesizers, there was a radical change. Nothing vibrates in a synthesizer. A tone is generated electronically. The sound is produced by loudspeakers, not the instrument itself.

And in a synthesizer you can alter the overtones to suit yourself. In theory a synthesizer can be made to mimic the sound of any instrument. To some extent, organs have done this for a couple of centuries — they have flute stops and string stops and so forth,

and so do the electronic organs that presaged the synthesizers.

When Walter recorded *Switched-on Bach* at the Columbia-Princeton Music Center during the course of 1964 and '65, the instrument used was comparatively primitive. Developed by Robert Moog — who incidentally pronounces it Moag, as in Mogen David; the name is Dutch — it could play only one note at a time. It could not play chords or counterlines. If two keys were depressed simultaneously, the lower note would not sound. The instrument had another quirk. It tended to retune itself to true rather than tempered pitch, which meant that the player was constantly tuning it to that synthetic pitch to which exposure has accustomed us. *Switched-on Bach* was recorded by patient overdubbing, one line at a time. Since then polyphonic synthesizers have come onto the line, and at least one I have seen — the McLeyvier, developed by Toronto composer David McLey — can produce sixteen simultaneous tones.

Walter Carlos was by no means the first person to make electronic music. An instrument called the Onde Martineau was in use in France by the late 1930s. The theramin — an instrument whose tones are produced by the placement of the player's hands in the air above it — was used in the score of the 1945 movie *Spellbound.* The 1956 film *Forbidden Planet* had an all-electronic score consisting of sundry bleeps, bloops, roars, rumbles, whistles, and creaking-gate sounds. And various "serious" composers, the best-known of whom probably is Morton Sobotnick, were producing tape-recorded compositions of whooshes, windy glissandi, tinkles, taps, toots, and what sounded like struck pie-pans. It is a matter of semantics whether such works, no matter how interesting they may be as sound, should be called music at all. Morton Sobotnick has a perfect right to say that it is music and I have a perfect right to say that it isn't, leaving us with a Mexican standoff.

What Walter Carlos did was to bring the synthesizer out of the laboratory and apply it to the making of conventional music. The album was a success beyond Walter's or Rachel's wildest expectations, and among Walter's other achievements was that of putting Bach in the pop-music charts. Undoubtedly more people have heard Bach's music through that album than heard it in his whole lifetime. Walter was thus an apostate to two camps: traditionalists who thought classical music should not be made on electronic instruments; and electronic purists who thought that this was not what you were "supposed" to do with such instruments. It was too late for either objection, and after Walter, the deluge. You soon heard synthesizers in television commercials, and of course they inundated the rock field. Synthesizers are so common in rock that a new word has come into the language, as you have no doubt noticed. Young players are no longer called pianists. They are called keyboardists. And indeed if you ask one of these younger musicians what instrument he plays, he's liable to answer simply, "Keys." The Fender-Rhodes electric piano has become common in jazz — too common, in my opinion. It is an interesting and attractive instrument that serves well to produce jazz lines, but there's something odd about its overtone structure, and chords played on a Rhodes tend to be murky. Indeed, I question whether it should be called a piano at all: it is its own instrument. But it is in such widespread use that another new and to me amusing term has come into use. The piano is now referred to as "acoustic piano". And keyboard players today are expected to be familiar with the Arp string synthesizer, the Prophet, and so many others that conversations between these musicians often are centered on the various models of the various instruments and the uses thereof.

The proliferation of these instruments has caused concern to the American Federation of Musicians, but other than urging members to eschew them, there is not much the union can do about them. Any attempt to boycott the instruments would undoubtedly result in a lawsuit that the union could only lose, on any one of several legal grounds. To record producers and for that matter to many composers, the question is quite clear: why hire twenty-eight string players when and if one synthesizer player can give you the same effect?

The answer, until now, was also clear: because a synthesizer could *not* give you the same effect. The sound was always a compromise. Synthesized sound, while it has its own validity, was not all that convincing in the emulation of other instruments. It retained an electronic coldness and lacked that sensitivity of phrasing and attack musicians get from "real" instruments. And the sound still had a vaguely nasal quality, reminiscent of electric organs. But that is changing. Recently I was given a demo tape of ten songs in Italian. I was astounded that so large a string section (my guess was about twenty-eight) should have been used for a mere demo. I heard the tape at first only on a Walkman. I played it in New York for Bob Golden, whose history includes a period as Stan Kenton's last guitarist. Bob insisted we were hearing a synthesizer, but was unable to change my mind until we heard the tape on large speakers. It contains remarkably good "string" sound, produced in Italy I know not how, and for a while I had fun playing it for musicians and recording engineers, who were as amazed by it as I was.

Purists who cavil about electronic music on the ground that it is not "real" have a problem of logic to contend with. For the sound coming from a digital recording isn't "real" either. In digital recording, a computer "analyzes" the sounds of an orchestra, breaks it down into a code, and stores the code. When the time comes to make the master recording, the sound is reconstructed from the *information* contained in the computer, just as photos of far off planets are reconstructed from computer data sent by a space craft. Digital recording, then, provides irrefutable proof that a true orchestral sound can be synthesized, providing that the computer has been given totally correct information. So far, the only means we have to program a computer that accurately is to play a real orchestra at it. Programming techniques will undoubtedly grow more sophisticated.

Meantime, David McLey's McLeyvier could conceivably render obsolete the laborious pencil-and-paper way in which music is composed. It has a screen on which the notes appear as you are playing them. In theory, a symphony can be composed and orchestrated on the McLeyvier, and the music stored in a memory bank. When the "writing" is completed, the equipment gives you a "hard" copy — a score exquisitely neat and accurate, better by far than a copyist can deliver. And of course there would be fewer copying mistakes, because you actually hear the music as you are "typing" or replaying it. The McLeyvier therefore is the first truly effective musical typewriter.

If its technology could be married to that of other synthesizers and digital recording — and I have infinite faith in man's ability to accomplish anything, including his own destruction — a composer might some day be able to produce a full symphony or a big-band jazz recording all by himself. This is closer to happening than is generally realized. When Roger Kellaway wrote a symphonic piece to be played by himself, Shelly Manne, Chuck Domanico and the New American Orchestra, he made a full-scale taped mock-up of the work on a Prophet synthesizer. It was interesting enough to be released as an album in its own right. And Roger, a bit of a purist in his past reservations about electronic sound, is growing more and more fascinated by it. Meantime, just outside Toronto, the resistance of another purist has crumbled. When Oscar Peterson is home from the road, he will as often as not be found in his basement recording studio, experimenting with his synthesizers.

To grasp the scope of what is about to happen, one must consider these developments in the context of what is already happening in the recording field. The era of the phonograph record — whose technology has been improved but not changed since it was pioneered by Thomas Edison — is ending. Very shortly, Polygram will begin marketing its four-and-a-half-inch disc in North America. This record, which is "read" by a laser in a machine manufactured by Sony, is already on the market in Japan. Its significance will not be lost on anyone who has ever had to move a large record collection or build shelves for its storage. Since a needle does not touch the surface, the record will not wear, and since the information is electronically coded, it cannot be scratched. Further, I am told that the sound it produces is outstandingly superior and there is no surface noise. The attempt of the record industry to foist quadraphonic sound on us came to a timely and justified end, and the videodisc appears to be faltering. But it will be surprising if the compact disc does not quickly eliminate the LP. "Vinyl is on its way out," as one record executive put it.

But even the compact disc may have a short life-span. Paul Spurgeon, counsel to CAPAC — the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada, the Canadian equivalent of ASCAP — wrote recently in *The Canadian Composer,* a magazine distributed to the profession, "What potentially exists is a computer having the capacity to translate, adapt, perform, and reproduce musical works in a global library or a global music/record store that could be given the capacity to allow millions of persons throughout the world access to millions of musical works, anywhere and at any time. Canadians already have the technology to utilize computers in (this) way..."

Later, Paul elaborated on the subject for me. What lies in the forseeable future is a central data bank which contains all the music of the world in computer code. Digital recording to an extent has already done this, but the means to distribute the music electronically has not yet been put into place. When it is, an individual wanting to purchase a recording of a given piece would simply dial into the system and tape-record the music in his home. (Teenagers are already playing hell with rock record sales by taping tunes off the radio or from copies owned by friends. And indeed, some record stores, to the chagrin of the record industry, will allow you to tape an album for a small fee rather than buy it.)

But tape itself may disappear in time. Engineers talk about an electronic flake the size of a fingernail that will store the music of a whole album.

One factor militating against such a world-wide electronic distribution system is the incapacity of present-day telephone lines to carry the full frequency of sound necessary to good musical reproduction. This will change when the telephone system is fully converted to fiber-optics. And anyone who thinks that day is far away should take note of the fact that the entire Canadian province of Saskatchewan has already been "wired" for fiber-optical transmission. When fiber-optical lines finally replace the actual wires leading into homes, Saskatchewan will have the capability of plugging into a data system as foreseen by Paul Spurgeon.

Will orchestras cease to exist? It seems highly unlikely. Perhaps there will not be as many of them, but the live musical experience contains an element of excitement that reproduced music does not offer. When you are watching a favorite opera, you do not know whether the soprano is going to make that high note perfectly. In a recorded performance, you know so in advance: a seriously flawed performance would not be released. And in jazz, the suspense of a live performance is further heightened by the fact that to a large extent the musician is inventing the music on the spot. In this sense, it has sometimes seemed to me that jazz shouldn't be recorded at all: it should be heard live. But then, it could not have come into existence without recording, and indeed in another sense should be considered the perfect recorded music, since its emphasis is on the performance rather than the writing. In any event, a vast electronic distribution network is unlikely to eliminate live music and may indeed increase its audience. Synthesizer technology may reduce employment to some extent for some musicians. Still, it should be remembered that there are more symphony orchestras today, and perhaps better ones, than ever before in history. Recordings have enormously expanded the taste for good music (and bad music) of all kinds and the music lover of today has infinitely more of it available to him than anyone in the Nineteenth Century. It is an interesting thought that many of us have heard Debussy's *La mer* countless more times than Debussy ever did.

Some people are alarmed by these electronic developments. I am not. For one thing this electronic distribution system promises to kill off the ogres who did their level best to destroy music, namely the record companies. They will cease to exist. Such a system, musicians who wanted their music heard would simply record it and make it available through advertising, and anyone anywhere would be able to dial into the system and, after paying a fee, take it off a direct line. The whole clogged complex of record distribution would be eliminated. The system in fact promises to clear away all the road blocks standing between the artist and his potential audience.

Nor am I bothered by hearing Bach and other composers played on electronic instruments, whether by Wendy Carlos or Tomita or whomever. After all, the *Goldberg Variations* were not written for the piano, which was not developed until almost the end of Bach's life. Yet Glenn Gould's two recordings of it, one released just before his death last fall, are among the definitive versions. (Incidentally, Glenn was one of the early champions of *Switched-on Bach.* Glenn loved the new technology.) And a modern symphony orchestra does not play baroque music on baroque instruments — indeed, one has no idea what that music was designed to sound like until one hears it performed on instruments of the period.

I am reminded of something Walter Carlos said all those years ago at my apartment. "When I first became interested in technology, I thought it would be possible to make perfect music by logical means with a machine. But I have come to see that it will always be a musician in communication with an instrument. All the sensitivity and feeling come from a human being, and always will."

Brief Encounter

Quite a few years ago, Oscar Peterson played a gig in London. Waiting for a taxi outside the Savoy Hotel, he was surprised by the view of Charles Laughton emerging from the hotel in all his regal girth and splendor. Laughton took up a post nearby, obviously also waiting for a cab. Unable to resist, Oscar said the sort of thing we all say in such conditions. Apologizing for the intrusion on privacy, he said he wanted to take this opportunity to express his admiration for the actor's work and thank him for the pleasure he had given.

Laughton accepted the homage gracefully, probably blinking those awakened-owl eyes, then said, "And what do you do, young man?"

"I'm a jazz pianist," Oscar said.

"A *jazz* pianist," the great man said with interest. Pause. "Do you have any pot?"