Gene Lees
Jazzletter

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Letters

Your comments on Fred Hall's radio show and the Woodstock generation were particularly interesting. I do a two-hour weekly big-band show on area public radio, and the most positive reactions I get are from the Woodstock generation (roughly 28-42). Older listeners seem interested only in the recognized bands and the well-known nostalgia items. If I play Bob Chester, Jay McShann, or even a little known item by Artie Shaw, they turn off. However, younger listeners who don't know *Jersey Bounce* from *Sepia Panorama* tend to hear everything in a spirit of discovery.

This may be because of the paucity of musical ideas of the hard-rock years, but it may also be partly attributable to one of the little-recognized devices of the rock players. The rockers often embellished their recordings with snippets of non-rock music (baroque, Indian, mainstream pop, jazz) and the listeners were left with an almost subliminal receptivity to variety. I see the receptivity bearing fruit with the flowering of Woodstock maturity. I can program Duke Ellington, Sun Ra, Richard Himber, Bob Wills, Maynard Ferguson, Ralph Marterie and Billy Eckstine all in a row, and the Woodstock generation takes it in stride.

I enjoyed your insights on Guy Lombardo because, as the article mentions, I was taken to task about him. Jaki Byard made the same point to me: Lombardo retained his original style. Considered from that perspective, he had a great sound.

I also liked the Ellington essay, the first honest article I have read on him. When I was younger I had very little contact with working musicians, and I got most of my information on jazz personalities from print. Stanley Dance so assiduously avoided mentioning women in relationship to Ellington that I wondered if the Duke was either monastic or a bit strange.

Please keep the faith with *Jazzletter*. It is a valuable addition to the literature of jazz. The April 15 issue was superb.

Lloyd O. Anderson
Bismarck Junior College
Bismarck, North Dakota

I thought No. 9 the best yet.

Your opening, *Well Thanks John,* put me off at first. Sousa was known to his friends as Philip. He didn't know a damned thing about jazz, and didn't much like what he knew, but he knew a lot about swing, and it was that feeling of *lift* he got into his marches and out of his band (it ranged from about 65 to 85!) that distinguished him so importantly from other march composers and band leaders. The man who has understood this better than anyone else is Sir Vivien Dunn, as you can hear on his Sousa recordings with the Royal Marine Band.

One of the secrets of Sousa's success, as with Ellington, Basie and Stokowski, was that he knew what kind of musician he wanted, paid them well, and ended by having every band musician in the country wanting to play for him.

Keep up the good work!

Henry Pleasants, London, England

I'd like to congratulate you on your *Jazzletter*. My son has been forwarding it to me during my recent long stay in two hospitals, following a sonofabitch of a car crash.

I must say I enjoyed your Ellington piece the most. For many years I have remained discreetly quiet when his band was discussed, rather that get into a long and boring argument.

When I was a kid in St. Louis, I sneaked into a "rehearsal" to hear them all and see how it was done. It was in the basement of a house. There were no lights on, just a bunch of men in a dark cellar. One would start something, a melody line, and the next guy would figure out the next note down in the chord the best he could. I left early, as I wasn't learning a thing, and surely couldn't see anything.

But he did achieve a hell of a mood, when he had a good idea to work with. I bought *Echoes of the Jungle* some 55 years ago, and I still remember the sad haunting feel it had, with the Oo-wah hand-in-bell-and-out trumpets and the saxophone answers. No one will ever convince me that anyone wrote that down. I think it was a dark-cellar job, like *Mood Indigo,* another great sound that no one else seemed to be able to produce.

I followed Duke in the Riviera Lounge in Vegas in 1960. I got a little jazz band together, threw in ten strings and eight singers, and had a ball. Even got held over, although the bosses complained that my clientele "didn't gamble". Duke was very distant, just barely civil. I certainly didn't expect adulation, but he was a disappointment after the other people I had been around so long, Bill Basie, Nat Cole, Louis, Ella, the Mills Brothers, etc....

We all got drinking (without Duke) after Pearl Bailey arrived, and the bosses asked her to do a number with me at the piano and Duke's rhythm section. She chose *Bill Bailey,* which I knew backwards (at least sober) but which the other cats knew nothing of. Well, sir, it was a shambles. She kicked off a breakneck tempo, and away we went, me trying to hold it together, yell out chords, and Pearl struggling along in her grandest style. She finally leaned over to me and said, "This is the worst thing I have ever heard." I'm sure she was right.

Re the early bands:

In 1932 I joined Isham Jones and was with him till the band broke up. I was supposed to take over but my wife rebelled, and I called Woody, who jumped in.

We considered ourselves several cuts above the "sweet" bands you named. Jones stayed well away from novelty sounds; it took weeks to get him to play *Wagon Wheels* when it was sweeping the country.

We had some good jazz cats in the band, but a society-type drummer, who looked great but couldn't get anything going.

At somewhat different times, we had Jack Jenney, Woody Herman of course, Joe Bishop, George Thow, Red Ballard, Milt Yaner, and though I made a bunch of jazz charts, the old man never did get a tempo right. We used to go off and play jazz on our own. Jack Jenney and I were exactly the same age, to the minute, and we spent many nights playing till dawn in my apartment with a towel over the sounding board of the piano. We had string bass *and* tuba. Kissinger played the string and Bishop the tuba, and they were seldom together. Kissinger liked to put on white gloves and play; I need say no more.

They were great days. We bought bootleg at four bucks a gallon, and I made a chart every other day. The day in between was for copying, which I threw in gratis.

A quick Basie story you may not have heard. Sinatra set up an album with Bill and asked Billy May to go out there where they were working and rehearse the band, so they would be familiar

with the stuff when the date started. Frank called Billy and said, "How did it go?" Said Billy, "Well, not so good. I wasn't there very long. Seems the last time Bill called a rehearsal, three guys quit."

I used to live with Pee Wee Russell, if you ever do a thing on him. And when I was starting out in St. Louis, Red Mckenzie was very helpful to me. When he and Eddie Condon would come through, he'd always call me up.

Years later I was talking to Red outside the club he was working, the Famous Door or whatever, and I got the feeling that he wasn't doing too well. I asked him if he needed any money, and he kind of looked away. I reached into my pocket and gave him what I had — not a big deal, maybe sixty or seventy dollars.

A long time later, I was in a dark bar, and the bartender came over. He was really spooky, looking like the lead in a horror movie. And he kept mopping the bar throughout the following dialogue:

Bartender: You're Gordon Jenkins, aren't you?

Me: Yes.

Bartender: I have a message for you... (Long pause for mopping.) From Red.

Me: Red?

Bartender: Mackenzie.

Me: He's dead.

Bartender: (Long mopping.) Yeah. I was with him when he died, and he said, "Tell Gordon I meant to pay him back."

It really shook me. It took a few fast ones to get me back to reality.

Stay well.

Gordon Jenkins, Malibu, California

Gordon and his wife very nearly didn't survive that crash, a horrendous head-on collision in a tunnel.

If anyone feels like sending him a card—and it isn't the worst idea—his address is 30846 Broad Beach Road, Malibu, California, 92065.

The *Jazzletter* is an uplifting force to the spirits of all of us associated with the jazz profession. Onward to the second year. Warm regards,

Eric Kloss, Bridgewater, New York

On the occasion of your upcoming anniversary, I just want to say how much I look forward to receiving each issue. In fact, I wait for it daily by the mailbox.

My vote goes for status quo with regard to increasing the size or changing the makeup or allowing advertising into what has become the first truly erudite and realistic music magazine-newsletter-publication that I have encountered. Please stay small. Bigness, like power, corrupts. Your newsletter, a work of love, should remain for the lovers.

Jazz is the most fun you can have with your clothes on.

Herb Pomeroy (1930 —)

I am enclosing my resubscription and an additional subscription for Ian Freebairn-Smith.

Keep on keeping on, stay healthy, and best wishes for many more years of your welcome thoughts.

Jules Chaikin, Studio City, California

Although I get many publications, including the Opelika-Auburn *Daily News* ("Junior Jones, aged four, fell out of his tree house at 109 Maple Street last Saturday and is being treated for..."), it is the *Jazzletter* that I search my mail box for.

In fact you have created a whole new emotion which might best be described in the fashion of the blues, as follows:

Got my Jazzletter and man I'm feelin' low.
Read my Jazzletter and man I'm feelin' low,
'Cause now I'm back to waitin' like I was befo'.

You asked what I teach. I have just been marking papers, and the answer would appear to be: Not much.

Bob Richardson
Music Department
Auburn University

Do what you're doing forever. Don't smoke too many cigarettes.

Gil Evans, New York City

Further to your comments with respect to music business lawyers and accountants:

As a lawyer and a musician working in "the business" in both capacities, I try to keep a realistic perspective that is consonant with both the realities of the business (so often criticized by creative persons) and the dreams and aspirations of musicians but for whom "the business" would not exist.

This musician-and-lawyer perspective and the unique but ambivalent position that I enjoy are not unlike playing drums (drum kit) with a symphony orchestra or concert band (which I have done on occasion). You try to swing one way but you're swung the other. In any event, not all lawyers are to be derided. Indeed, some are even quite interesting.

I have enclosed a brief essay on *Why Lawyers Aren't Boring.* I hope that it will clarify the aforementioned comments, subject of course to further clarification pursuant to additional comments that may hereinafter be provided for and that shall subsist without prejudice and that shall be entirely conditional upon your response to same.

Succinctly yours,

Paul Spurgeon, Toronto

Paul is counsel to CAPAC, the Canadian equivalent to ASCAP. His essay consisted of three blank pages.

In re Hugo Friedhofer's, "Oh God, it's taking us all so long to die."

Hugo thought flies and ants and spiders were little persons. Norman Corwin has the same problem.

In the summer of 1941, he was living in a rented thatch-roofed cottage at Sneden's Landing. He was working on *26 by Corwin.* His house had been occupied the previous summer by Noel Coward, and another house, just visible through the trees, by Orson Welles. I wanted to see the Welles house and we walked down a grassy incline past a hexagonal pool full of lichen, moss, and slime, up a fieldstone walk under a trellis covered by bare, leafless vines (it must have been early summer). I asked Corwin what the vines were and he said, "In summer it's all roses." (It wasn't. In the summer it was all grapes.) We peered through French windows into a living room furnished with heavy Jacobean pieces. The house was uninhabited and belonged to a lady named Lydia Hyde and, to cut to the chase, I rented it from her for the summer at $150 a month.

I moved in and started work on an opera based on the Book of Esther. There were three half-hour operas in *26 by Corwin.* Deems Taylor did one, Leith Stevens another, and I did Esther. (After the broadcast I had a note from Deems suggesting we change the title to *Mordecai and Bess.*)

One night about 2 a.m., I stopped working and made myself a cup of cocoa. It had been raining steadily for hours. I looked out through the French windows. At the bottom of the trellised pathway, by the pool, I saw a light. I put on a hat, raincoat, and some boots and went out into the night. The noise of the Metropolitan Opera chorus of frogs in the pool was raucous. Rain

brings out the best in frogs. Not to mention Arthur Freed and Gene Kelly. Corwin was at the pool — it was his flashlight I had seen — with an assortment of pots and pans. He was catching the frogs and putting them under the pots and pans with a brick on top. The effect was of a section of frogs using bucket mutes. He had got mad at them for interfering with his work and swore he was going to kill them all in the morning.

The next day I saw him down there again. He took the pans off the frogs and they all jumped back into the pool. He hadn't the heart when it came down to it.

Lyn Murray, Malibu, California

Lyn: Well, I guess it's time we talked about Hugo.

The Hug

David Raksin called that morning, May 17, 1981, and said simply, "Hugo is gone," and my eyes misted, even though we had known he was going to die. He was eighty, he was arthritic, and as his daughter Karyl said later, "he was tired."

Dave asked me to handle the press. I called the New York *Times*. The editor of the Arts and Leisure section had never heard of Hugo Friedhofer, and so the *Times*, which takes a Brahmin pride in being an American historical record, ignored the fall of one of the most important orchestral composers the United States ever produced, even though all his music was designed to enhance the emotional content of movies, some of which did not deserve the dignity of his genius. It is unfortunate that he did not write symphonies, but he didn't, and that's that, and it is some compensation to remember that he was so uncertain of his talent that had he not been given the workaday assignments of movie scoring, he might never have written any music at all.

I got off the phone after that conversation with the *Times* and cursed and said, "We have to have our own publication. We cannot be forever at the mercy of amateurs promoted from the city desk."

I tried to explain my feelings to myself. I loved him like... a father? Hardly, Hugo was too childlike for that analogy. Like a brother? No. He was far my superior and senior not only in his knowledge of music but of many things.

Suddenly I understood something I had long felt, in an unformulated way: sex and love have nothing to do with each other. When men love other men, they append "like a brother" or "like a father" to the verb out of their fear of the Big Tabu. And in that moment of grief I knew that I simply loved Hugo Friedhofer. Not as a brother or as a father but as my friend. Just about the last thing he ever said to me, in one of our interminable telephone conversations, was something about "our friendship, which, incidentally, as time goes on, grows increasingly dear to me," following which, embarrassed by his admission of emotion, he changed the subject very swiftly.

In any case, were my inclination towards men, I doubt that Hugo would have been to my taste. He was not tall and slim, and he had a small chin that a thin goatee poorly concealed, a stooped posture ("composer's hump," he called it), and enlarged fingertips stained with nicotine. Men are poorly equipped to judge the looks of other men: they admire the likes of Tyrone Power whom women dismiss as "pretty". But women found Hugo terribly attractive. They say it was his mind that excited them.

And so there he was, my dear friend Hugo, standing there now in sudden memory, gone. This man I loved so much, not just for his talent, although certainly I revelled in his musical genius. I used to phone him whenever I wanted to know something (or had discovered something) about music because, as composer Paul Glass put it, "Hugo always knew." The depth of Paul's loss can be measured in a remark he made to me in a phone conversation from Switzerland that might sound arrogant but which I found touching and lonely and devastated: "Now that Hugo's gone, I may know more about orchestration than any man alive." Paul lost his teacher. So did I.

A footnote to that: Hugo told me he had studied with Paul Glass. Paul told me he had studied with Hugo.

In September, 1981, four months after Hugo died, I went to the Monterey Jazz Festival. Hotel rooms were scarce and so at the suggestion of Hugo's daughter, Karyl Friedhofer Tonge, I stayed with her daughter, Jennifer, whose husband, Jeff Pittaway, was then an Army helicopter pilot, at their home in Fort Ord. Jennifer, who was twenty-eight, had hardly known her grandfather. After Hugo married his second wife, Virginia, known as Ginda, pronounced Jinda, Karyl saw him only rarely — "which," she says, "I bitterly resent. I was cut off from him during his most creative years. I didn't really know him until I was in my late thirties. Because of his guilts, he was unable to understand that one can sustain more than one emotional relationship."

And yet Jennifer Pittaway treasured a photo of Hugo in short pants and a wide-brimmed hat, taken when he was two or three. Her own little boy was running around the house, wearing a towel as a cape. "What's his name?" I asked. "Kenny," Jennifer said. "No it's not!" Kenny shouted. "My name's Superman!" I was looking at the photo and then at Kenny and then at the photo again. The boy looked exactly like Hugo at the same age. There is evidence that abilities in athletics and music (which are not dissimilar) may be genetically transmitted, and if I were Jennifer I would begin Kenneth Pittaway's musical training now.

Jennifer had joined the Army to go to its language school to learn German, which she now speaks fluently. She could not afford to go to college to learn it. None of Hugo's descendants gets his royalties. Ginda, from whom he was estranged but never divorced, gets them. And their marriage was childless. Jennifer said that Hugo had called her a war-monger for joining the Army. I hastened to assure her that this was a manifestation of his dark sense of humor or of his willful Taurus (to say nothing of German) consistency: he hated the military.

It was a strange situation. I was explaining him to his own granddaughter.

Jeff was just back from a tiring flight mission and wanted to spend the evening at home with Kenny. So I took Jennifer as my "date" to the festival. As we were progressing in a crowd across the grass of the Monterey fairgrounds, Jennifer said she had always loved the Modern Jazz Quartet. By exquisite coincidence, John Lewis was walking two or three paces ahead of us, unbeknownst to her. I reached out and grasped John's elbow to halt him and I said, with the people flowing around us, "John, I would like you to meet Jennifer Pittaway. Jennifer is Hugo Friedhofer's granddaughter." And John beamed that gentle and shy smile of his through his beard and said, "How do you do. I am honored to meet you," and made a great and elegant fuss of her. Later, backstage, I introduced her to musicians who told her stories about her grandfather, and as we were driving back to Fort Ord she said, "But how do people like John Lewis know my grandfather's music?"

"Jennifer," I said, "everybody in music knows your grandfather's music. And it doesn't matter whether it's classical music or jazz. The name Friedhofer will open just about any door in the musical world for you."

Toward the end of his life, Hugo lived in a two-room apartment on Bronson Avenue in Hollywood. Ginda, who still retained their home on Woodrow Wilson Drive in Los Angeles, lived most of the time in Cuernavaca. Hugo's apartment building surrounds a central courtyard in which there is the usual small Hollywood swimming pool, its bottom painted blue. It is a three-story

structure, pleasant enough but slightly gone to seed, of the kind you encounter in Raymond Chandler novels. If you walk along that balcony, around the U shape of he building, you come to the apartment of Jeri Southern, fine pianist and one of the great singers and influences. Jeri was the last love of Hugo's life and, though he was twenty-five years or more her senior, she loved him more than any of us, and took care of him. Jeri remained incommunicado for a week after he died, sitting for long periods in her bedroom staring at the floor. Jeri is more musician than anybody knows. She orchestrated Hugo's last movie.

In those late years I was, aside from Jeri, with whom Hugo had breakfast every morning, one of the few persons who could pry him out of his apartment. "How come," he said to me once on the phone, "you can always lift me out of my depressions?" "Because," I said, in jest, "I am the only one you know who is a worse melancholiac than you are." I used to have lunch with him often but irregularly at Musso and Frank's on Hollywood Boulevard, that great old movie-business restaurant that is now an island of

Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time,
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime.
— William Blake

the past in a sea of porno movie houses, hookers, passing police cruisers, tee-shirt shops, and freaks. And when I wanted him to hear some piece of music, I would make a tape of it and drive very slowly and play it on my car stereo. Karyl thinks Hugo always felt guilty about being German because of World Wars I and II. His father, Paul Friedhofer, was a German-American cellist who studied in Germany, where he met Hugo's mother, a singer training at the Dresden Opera. Hugo Wilhelm Friedhofer was born in San Francisco May 3, 1901. He missed the earthquake because his mother, annoyed as she apparently was from time to time with his father, had gone home to Germany, taking her darling with her. Hugo's sister, Louise, is, as he was, a cellist.

Claus Ogerman was coming to Los Angles from Munich and he wanted to meet Hugo. Composer after composer wanted to meet him, and since it was known that I knew him, they frequently solicited me to arrange an introduction. "I'm getting tired of being your social secretary," I told him. It was untrue of course. They delighted in what was in his head, and I delighted in opening the door for them to breach his reclusion. His phone no longer rang with job offers. Scores were being written by musicians not even skilled enough to be his students, and in those last years Hugo yearned for an assignment that never came. Anyway, Claus was arriving and Hugo was unfamiliar with his music; therefore I made a tape of Claus's *Three Symphonic Dances* and played it on the way to Musso and Frank's, driving slowly enough to get arrested.

Hugo gave a running analysis of its harmonic structure. But after a while he ceased listening and began to hear the music. Finally he said, "That kraut friend of yours has a melancholy streak."

"*That* kraut friend of mine?" I said. "What about this kraut friend of mine?" He responded with one of his worst puns, "Two's company, three's a kraut."

Someone once called Hugo "a real giant among film composers," to which he retorted, "No, I'm a fake giant among real pygmies." All the composers in Hollywood should have hated him for that remark, but instead they quoted it with relish, and they still do.

Dave Raksin said that Hugo suffered from "delusions of inadequacy" and that he "persisted in judging his work according to arcane criteria that would, if indiscriminately applied, sink just about everybody in sight." Dave once told Hugo that he had managed to sustain a dark view of nearly everything despite personal successes that might have tempted lesser men toward optimism. And, after he was dead, Dave said, "Sometimes it seemed that the only time life lived up to his expectations was when it disappointed him." But he loved, and terribly deeply, which is what I suppose I was trying to convey to Jennifer Pittaway. You just had to avoid reminding him of it.

Along with critic Page Cook, I was always fighting for Hugo's recognition, even though he was, as Raksin told him, "complicit in your own ignoring." Once I took him to Musso and Frank's to interview him for an article for the Los Angeles *Times* or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or something — Page and I wrote a lot of pieces about him. I am always careful, in interviews, to save my hot questions for the end, so that I don't come away with empty hands if the interviewee gets furious. And so at last I said to him, "How is it that with all those superb film scores behind you and the respect of colleagues around the world, you have all the emotional security of a twenty-two-year-old?"

"Oh, you son of a bitch!" he said. And then, sinking into a pensiveness, he said, "Well, there are among the composers in town some really fine craftsmen. If you want a certain thing done, you have only to tell them. They have done it before and they can do it again. And I have a very real respect for these men.

"But if you feel about music as I do, you are always working at the outer periphery of your abilities. And that makes you insecure.

"Look," he said as we were finishing our coffee, "I've got my personal estimate of what I know and what I don't know. But I am also acutely conscious of four or five hundred years of musical culture staring over my shoulder, and that makes for a genuine humility. As opposed of course to a false modesty."

He was the gentlest and shyest and, secretly, the most romantic of men, and he literally could not harm a fly. One morning Jeri Southern was killing ants with a sponge on the drainboard of her kitchen sink. Hugo watched in silence with a baleful expression and then said at last, "I hate the part where the Red Cross arrives." Jeri didn't get it for a moment, and then burst out laughing, and later, when he was gone, she suddenly remembered the incident and laughed for the first time in weeks.

Hugo had a steadfast integrity about music and everything else. I do not recall our ever talking about politics, but he recommended that I read the books of Carey McWilliams, which I did. This leads me to believe he was a California socialist, a unique breed with pioneer roots, of the Upton Sinclair stripe. He was German in the thorough discipline of his approach to his music,

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.
(Frederick Douglass, 1817-1895)

which was, however, in its airy clarity, rather closer to the French, I thought, than to the German. In personality he was more American than German and more Californian than anything. And he shared with Allyn Ferguson and Jerry Goldsmith a curious distinction: he was one of the very few American film composers actually born in California. Insofar as the politics of Hollywood were concerned, he was a canny observer and trenchant commentator. And I think every composer in the industry not-so-secretly wanted his approval.

Hugo loved words as much as he did music — maybe he thought they were the same thing — and could quote poetry and lyrics endlessly. He could as easily have been a writer as a composer and his letters are treasures. Indeed it is highly likely that you know some of his poems, for he wrote innumerable limericks, including the very famous one about nymphomaniacal Alice, and sent them on their way to become part of American

folklore, authorship unknown. His formal education ended at sixteen when he dropped out of school to become an office boy and study painting at night. But then his interest in music began to predominate and he studied cello assiduously and in a year was working as a musician. Thus he was a man of rounded cultivation.

His humor had a delicious salacious urbanity, and he was incredibly quick. Once I was having lunch with him, Dave Raksin, and Leonard Marcus, then editor of *High Fidelity*. Someone said something about the early 1940s. Hugo said, "I was learning my craft at that time."

"Studying with Robert?" I said — a very bad pun.

Instantly Hugo said, "Your craft is ebbing."

He used to refer to some contemporary composition as "cluster's last stand." Of a certain film composer, he said, "Very

The first time a kid came up to me and said, "I just love your music, my dad has all your albums," I wanted to knock her teeth down her throat.
— Joan Baez, pacifist

ed, but chromium plated." Of another composer, famed in the profession for having parlayed a small talent into a large career and a larger ego: "He's a legend in his own mind."

Mocking the tendency of movie studios to have lyrics added to improbable film melodies, Hugo said, "I always thought they should have put lyrics to my love theme for *Broken Arrow*. Something like:

"You led me from the straight and narrow
"But you broke my heart when you broke my arrow."

When Hugo was working on *Joan of Arc*, Dave Raksin, at the time scoring another picture, encountered him walking through a studio street, head down, lost in thought. Dave asked him how the music was coming.

"I'm just starting the barbecue," he said.

Paul Glass and Hugo once attended an exhibit of modern art at a gallery in Pasadena. The lady in charge made the mistake of asking Hugo what he thought of it.

"Awful," or some such, he said.

Taken aback but oblivious of danger, the woman pressed on: "Oh, Mr. Friedhofer, you think that only because you don't understand the meaning of the French term *avant garde*."

"Yes I do," Hugo said. "The translation is 'bullshit'."

When I learned that Dave Raksin was teaching a course on other than music at the University of Southern California, I said, "How come Dave teaches urban affairs?"

"Why not?" Hugo said. "He's had enough of them."

The objects of his jibes rarely resented them; indeed they were often the first to quote them.

There were a number of nicknames for Hugo. Alfred Newman's wife called him The Red Baron and had a plaque made bearing that motto. It sat on his piano until he died. Paul Glass has a friend who, after a long search, found a recording of Hugo's score for *The Young Lions*. The notes of course were in Japanese, one of the few major languages Paul does not speak. "I don't know what it says," Paul told his friend, "but I know the composer: Toshiro Friedhofer."

Earle Hagen called him Hug to his face and The Hug behind his back, and always after I heard that name — in Musso and Frank's, inevitably — I too called him Hug.

Hugo arrived in Hollywood in July, 1929, accompanied by his first wife, a pianist who never ceased to love him and and died only months after he did. She was the mother of Karyl and Ericka, who died at thirty-two of leukemia and whose loss Hugo never quite got over.

Sound was added to movies a few months before Hugo was hired to orchestrate the music for *Keep Your Sunny Side Up*. Thus he was the only composer whose career in film scoring embraced the entire history of the craft. And he had been writing music for movies even before that. Many silent films had full scores that travelled with them and were performed by pit orchestras which, Hugo said, sometimes numbered as many as sixty musicians.

Hugo went to work as a cellist in the orchestra of the Granada Theater in San Francisco when he was twenty-four. One of his friends was an organist named Breitenfeld — Paul Desmond's father. When scores would arrive at the Granada with parts or even entire segments missing, the conductor would assign Hugo to write substitute passages.

In Hollywood, Hugo went to work only as an orchestrator, not as a composer. "No one in those days," he said, "ever did a complete score by himself. I got a reputation for being good at anything in which machinery was involved — airplanes, motor boats, typewriters, ocean liners."

The studios recognized at least one other aspect of his protean intelligence: he spoke German. When Erich Wolfgang Korngold arrived in Hollywood, he spoke no English and so Hugo was assigned to work with him by Warner Bros. Hugo orchestrated for Korngold all those romantic Errol Flynn swashbucklers. The Korngold scores with Friedhofer orchestration include *Captain Blood, The Prince and the Pauper, Another Dawn, The Adventures of Robin Hood, Juarez, The Sea Wolf, Kings Row, The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex, Escape Me Never, Devotion, Of Human Bondage, The Constant Nymph,* and *Between Two Worlds*. When Max Steiner arrived from Austria, like Korngold unable at first to speak English, Hugo was assigned to him too. For Steiner he orchestrated *Green Light, The Life of Emil Zola, God's Country and the Woman, Gold Is Where You Find It, Jezebel, Four Daughters, Dawn Patrol, Dark Victory, The Old Maid, The Story of Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet, All This and Heaven Too, The Letter, Sergeant York, One Foot in Heaven, In This Our Life, Casablanca, Watch on the Rhine, Arsenic and Old Lace, Mildred Pierce, The Beast with Five Fingers*; and parts of *Gone with the Wind*. Indeed he ghost-wrote some of the *GWTW* score for Steiner. He always expressed great respect for Korngold and Steiner, but his attitudes toward the two were different. "In Korngold's case," he said, "it goes beyond respect. Not only did I learn a great deal from him, I loved the man." But when he was notified by an Israeli music society that they had planted a tree in his name, he said, "If they've planted one for Max Steiner, I want mine cut down."

Steiner and Korngold were among the many composers — Franz Waxman was another — for whom Hugo orchestrated. It was not until 1937, and then only through the intercession of his friend Alfred Newman at Goldwyn studios, that he was allowed to write a score of his own. It was for the Gary Cooper film *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. "I wrote the score," he said, "not to the picture itself but to my memory of Donn Byrne's wonderful novella, *Messer Marco Polo*." It is not the only known example of his scoring something other that the picture itself. A persistent legend holds that when he was stuck for an idea for a scene in the *The Best Years of Our Lives*, he went to a museum and wrote music for a painting. Hugo denied this. He said the painting gave him an *idea* for the music — which is splitting the hair pretty fine.

He was thirty-six when he worked on *Marco Polo*. Recently it turned up on late-night television, and since its score was one with which I was not familiar, I stayed up to watch it. All the Friedhofer characteristics were already in place: the restraint, the perfect orchestral balance, the beauty of line, the sensitivity, and something that is indefinably but recognizably him. *Marco Polo* should have been his breakthrough, but it wasn't. Warner Bros. kept him firmly in place as an orchestrator, and, excepting one minor film, he was not allowed to write another score during his eleven years there.

But in time, and at other studios, he was recognized. Although he continued to orchestrate for others (and Korngold would let no other man touch one of his scores), he went on to write the music for *The Lodger, Lifeboat, They Came to Blow Up America, Home in Indiana, A Wing and a Prayer, Brewster's Millions, The Bandit of Sherwood Forest, Getting Gertie's Garter, Gilda* (a collaboration with Martin Skiles), *So Dark the Night, Wild Harvest, Body and Soul, The Adventures of Casanova, Enchantment, Sealed Verdict, Bride of Vengeance, Captain Carey USA, Roseanna McCoy* (a collaboration with David Butolph), *Three Came Home, No Man of Her Own, Guilty of Treason, Broken Arrow, Edge of Doom, The Sound of Fury, Two Flats West, Ace in the Hole, Queen for a Day, Lydia Bailey, The Secret Sharer, The Oucasts of Poker Flat, Thunder in the East, The San Francisco Story, Rancho Notorious, The Marrying Kind, The Bride Came to Yellow Sky, Face to Face, Island in the Sky, Hondo, Vera Cruz, White Feather, Violent Saturday, Soldier of Fortune, Seven Cities of Gold, The Rains of Ranchipur, The Revolt of Mamie Stover, The Harder They Fall, The Sun Also Rises, The Barbarian and the Geisha, The Bravados* (with Alfred Newman), *In Love and War, This Earth is Mine, Woman Obsessed, The Blue Angel, Never So Few, Homicidal, Geronimo, The Secret Invasion, Von Richtofen and Brown,* and *Private Parts,* in approximately that order. He also wrote a considerable quantity of music for television, including (with Earle Hagen) the *I Spy* series.

He was in his way a revolutionary film composer. Because the scores to silent films were almost continuous, the early producers of talking pictures, who had not yet grasped the differences between the two media, expected the new scores to be like them. Hugo was perhaps the first to argue for less music. "The trick in film scoring," as Henry Mancini says, "is knowing when to cool it." Hugo, in *Marco Polo,* already knew.

There is another way in which he was revolutionary; he was the first to write distinctively American scores. The significance of his *Best Years of Our Lives* score is generally considered to be that it was the first with a recognizably American quality. Prior to that time, film scores in Hollywood had a European flavor, no doubt

Challengers in our society are very few. The whole of our environment lies, but few challenge.
— A.S. Neill

because so many of the composers were born and trained in Europe. The early film moguls imported them wholesale, as they imported directors and actors and costume designers. But I beg to differ with that theory in that Hugo imparted his American quality to scores well before *Best Years,* including *Marco Polo.*

Is it proper for a film about an Italian in China to sound American? Verdi wrote *Aida,* which is set in Egypt, and Puccini wrote *Madame Butterfly,* which is about an American in Japan, in their own Italianate styles. Hugo had every right, as they did, to approach his subject matter in his own style. Nonetheless, there is a remarkable bit of writing during a segment in which, by montage, we watch Marco Polo progressing from Italy to China through all the countries in between. It lasts probably less than a minute, but during that minute Hugo goes through all the national styles of the countries traversed — and still sounds like Hugo.

He was amazing at this. In *Boy on a Dolphin* he writes in a Greek style and sounds like himself. In *Vera Cruz,* he writes in a Mexican style (of which he was enamored; he loved Mexico) and sounds like himself. In *The Young Lions,* since it concerns a German officer (Marlon Brando) and two American soldiers (Montgomery Clift and Dean Martin), he wrote in both American and German styles, and sounds like himself. In any of his films it is fascinating to observe how much the music adds to the power of the story, and how unobtrusively (unless you're watching for it) it achieves its effect. And how distinctive the style is! Someone — Sommerset Maugham, I think — said, "The greatest style is no style at all." Hugo never strove for style; he simply had it.

One of the factors, Dave Raksin said once, "is his conception of melody and harmony, which maintains the traditional idea of what is lyrical and conjunct.

"The problem with most melodic writing, outside the obvious banalities of contemporary pop music, which is at the level of finger painting, is that in the effort to avoid what has been done, composers too often avoid what should be done. Hugo manages to be lyrical without being sentimental. His music has dignity to it.

"He is a sophisticated and thoroughly-schooled musician fully conversant with Twentieth Century music who also happens to know that the tonal system is far from dead."

Which brings us to one of Hugo's worst puns. The music he wrote for one scene in *The Companion* was in three keys. "This was inspired," Hugo said, "by the parrot in the scene. It's Polly-tonality." He used to make these outrageous jokes even in the music itself. Many years ago he was assigned to score a picture about the French revolution. There is an old and angry maxim among film composers — everybody in Hollywood has two a[redacted] of expertise: his own and music. The producer on this picture was a self-important jackass of the old school. Striding the room during the music conference, he said, "Friedhofer, this is a film about the French Revolution, so I think there should be lots of French horns in the music."

Hugo found this so hilariously stupid that he did in fact use "lots of" French horns in the score. And as he neared the end of the picture, he put a capper on his joke. In the last scene, when the escaping lovers espy the cliffs of Dover, he reprised the melody with solo English horn.

The Hug used to say that listening to a film score without the movie was like trying to ride half a horse. He said that if a film score had the weight and richness of texture of the Brahms Fourth Symphony — he particularly loved Bach and Brahms — it would overwhelm the scene and damage the picture. But his own scores tended to undermine his theory. Such of them as *The Best Years of Our Lives* are beautifully detailed. It is regrettable that everything he wrote exists in short segments, although there is always a continuity and form about his scores. I would like to see Paul Glass structure some of them into suites for public performance, being confident that Paul would have been Hugo's own choi[redacted] to do so. Hugo is one of the few film composers ever to get an occasional approving nod from the classical establishment. His work is particularly admired in Germany. Donald Bishop Jr. wrote some years ago, "Friedhofer's classicism is one of the finest esthetic achievements in contemporary music, in and out of films."

I turned up one day at that little apartment on Bronson Avenue, to go with him to lunch. In it were an upright black Steinway, a small black Wurlitzer electric piano, four swivel chairs, a big round coffee table on which reposed his typewriter and stacks of the correspondence he was always in the process of answering, a tape recorder, and shelves of records and books. Everything was functional and there was not one chair you could honestly call comfortable. He owned not one copy of the albums of his film scores.

On the wall above a work table, on which was piled his score paper, was a display of plaques commemorating those of his scores nominated for Academy Awards — *The Young Lions, An Affair to Remember, Between Heaven and Hell, Above and Beyond, Boy on a Dolphin, The Woman in the Window, Joan of Arc, The Bishop's Wife.* One year he lost out because several of his scores were competitive to each other. Where, I asked, was the statue for *The Best Years of Our Lives*? "In storage somewhere," he grumped. "Let's go to lunch." He always maintained that an

Academy nomination was more honor that the award, since only the music division voted on it, while the award itself derived from the votes of actors, producers, directors and others who might or might not know what music is all about. And anyway, he had resigned from the Motion Picture Academy, which he despised, many years before.

"I have seen," Hugo said to me once,"two authentic geniuses in this industry, Orson Welles and Marlon Brando. And this town, not knowing what to do with genius, destroys it."

We were discussing his score for *One-Eyed Jacks,* the one film Brando ever directed and for which Brando was raked across beds of broken glass by studio executives and their lackey press agents and — in supine obedience to the moguls — by the newspapers. Brando was made to look the self-indulgent *infant terrible* for his meticulous shooting of the picture, when in fact he was seeking that evasive goal of perfect craftsmanship. But the picture has now taken on a sort of cult status. Mort Sahl has seen it twenty times or more; I've seen it about ten times, partly for the *pas de deux* acting of Brando and Karl Malden, partly for the performances Brando elicited from Ben Johnson and Slim Pickens, partly for the cinematography, and partly for Hugo's splendid score. How heartbreaking that main lyrical theme renders the morning scene on the beach, when Brando tells the girl he has been lying to her and has shamed her. Hugo used a distantly lonely solo trumpet in front of strings, one of his favorite devices. He loved jazz and jazz musicians, and that trumpet solo is by Pete Candoli.

> Life is more than minor thirteenth chords, but not much.
>
> (Roger Kellaway, 1939 —)

"I had ten weeks to work on that score," Hugo told me, "longer than I've had on any other picture.

"Brando had cut the film to about four and a half hours, and then it had been cut further to about two hours and fifteen minutes, at which point it was turned over to me for scoring.

"When I saw it at that length, it was without doubt the goddamnedest differentest western I have ever seen, and I loved it. They sneak-previewed it somewhere in the hinterlands on a Friday night with the kids and the popcorn and all that, and it bombed. They tried this and that and the other and cut it again, and it went out in a very much bowdlerized form. In fact they even butchered the music. Whole sequences I had designed for one scene were shoved in somewhere else. So the score is best heard in the UA record album, which I had the opportunity to edit. That is the real score of *One-Eyed Jacks,* minus about 45 minutes of music.

"By the way, in Brando's cut, the girl dies in the end. The studio didn't like that."

One-Eyed Jacks, in which Hugo's genius is fused to Brando's, is a broken masterpiece. And as for the UA album of that score, *if* you can find a copy of it, it sells for $150. Or at least it did five years ago.

The cavalier treatment of film scores — the actual paper scores — by movie studios is notorious. The studios claim that they own the scores, as one owns a suit ordered from a tailor — which in fact is precisely the analogy their lawyers used during a law suit filed against them by the film composers, a suit the composers for all substantial purposes lost. And when studios have become pressed for storage space, they have often consigned these national treasures to the incinerator or the dumpster.

The score for *The Best Years of Our Lives,* so highly acclaimed even in academic music circles, was lost for thirty-two years. Attempts by Elmer Bernstein and Dave Raksin, among others, to get Hugo to reconstruct it, failed. "My mind is not where it was when I wrote that," he said. But then it was learned that someone who had worked on the picture had kept a set of acetate recordings of the score, and working from them, Australian composer Anthony Bremner reconstructed and orchestrated the music. A Chicago producer named John Steven Lasher recorded it with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. And he commissioned a fairly elaborate booklet to accompany the record, which was issued in 1979 to commemorate Hugo's fiftieth year in Hollywood.

Composer Louis Applebaum wrote an excellent technical analysis of the score. And a lot of us wrote tributes for it: Royal S. Brown, one of the few classical music critics to recognize the worth of motion picture scores, George Duning, John Green, Bronislau Kaper, Lyn Murray, Dave Raksin, Lalo Schifrin, and David Shire. I thought Henry Mancini said it best, in two lines: "Hugo is the silent conscience of the film composer. An affirmative nod from the man is worth more than all of the trinkets bestowed by the film industry." And when it was done and packaged, we sent the whole thing to Hugo. And he never said one word to me about it. Not a word.

A few months after that, when Jack Elliott and Allyn Ferguson had assembled what they called The Orchestra — a virtuosic organization of more than eighty-five of the finest studio, symphony, and jazz musicians in Los Angeles — I suggested that they perform *Best Years* in concert. Hugo at first refused to attend, as he had previously refused to attend a retrospective of his movies. But Jeri Southern prevailed and we went.

The orchestra gave a shimmering performance, all its members knowing he was there. Most of them had worked for him at one time or another and revered him. Part way through the first section, Hugo said to me in that sepulchral voice of his, "The tempo's a little fast."

"Oh shut up," I said.

And when it was over, the audience cheered as at a football game, and Hugo had to stand up and take a bow. It was, as far as I know, only the second time in his life he had heard his music played in public and received the applause he deserved. And I think it was the last time he heard his music played anywhere.

Claus met him at last. I took Hugo to lunch with him and Allyn Ferguson and actor Michael Parks. Parks can be rather reticent, but I induced him that day to do his eerie reproductions of various famous voices. "It's amazing," Hugo said. "He doesn't sound like an imitation but like a Xerox copy." Claus and Hugo felt an immediate rapport, although I haven't the slightest idea what they talked about: their conversation was in German. "How good is his German?" I asked Claus later. "You would never know he is an American," Claus said.

I had come into a habit, whenever Hugo and I went anywhere, of hovering over him, in a surreptitious way. His step had become faltering and slow, and I was always afraid he would fall. He used a beautiful cane of dark wood that Jeri had given him, which he treasured. Once he left it in my car and he was frantic until he reached me and found that it was safe. As we left Musso and Frank's that day and were crossing a street, I reflexively and involuntarily took his arm. He gave me a withering stare, and I never made that mistake again. But my hands were always ready to catch him if he stumbled. The tragedy was that his body was failing and his mind was not.

He had a spot on his lung which turned out to be malignant and he underwent chemotherapy. He smoked far too much, all his life. He used to say that he needed the cigarette in his left hand to balance the pencil in his right. And then, as I had feared he would, he fell, and broke his hip. He was taken to the hospital for surgery. Ginda came up from Mexico and began making arrangements to put him in a home. Karyl and I both believe that Hugo decided to die. Pneumonia set in and he lost the power of speech, this most articulate of men.

Jeri sat by his bedside all one afternoon. He looked at her and silently formed the words, "I love you."

After Jeri had gone home, exhausted, a nurse entered the room to make him comfortable. He opened his eyes. Miraculously, the power of speech came back to him and he got off a last line that, days later, set off gales of consoling laughter, because it was so typical of him. He said, "You know, this really sucks." And he died.

When a great tree falls, it makes quite a crash. Without the help of the New York *Times* or the *Hollywood Reporter* (which printed about four lines on his death), the news travelled by mysterious means all over the world. Paul Glass called Roger Kellaway from Switzerland, desperate to know whether Hugo's scores were safe and where they were, saying they would be invaluable to music students for generations to come.

I became agitated about the scores when Dave Raksin told Ginda he was planning a memorial service for Hugo and she said, "But who'd come?" Whether his full scores still existed in dusty studio archives I did not know, but I knew the whereabouts of his meticulous six-stave "sketches", so complete that Gene DiNovi once said, "When you orchestrate for Hugo —" and Gene proudly did at one time "—you are a glorified copyist." These were still in the apartment on Bronson Avenue. Everyone kept saying that something would have to be done about them. And at last it dawned on me that I would have to do it.

I felt a kind of shock, when I entered that familiar silent apartment, knowing he would never be there again. Then I went to work. I knew where all his scores — each of them bound in hard-cover, the film titles imprinted with gold leaf — were stored, and I hauled them out in great armfuls and heaped them on a flat-bed cart I had brought. In six minutes and three trips, I stripped that place of his scores, rushing along the U of the balcony and dumping them in a huge pile in the middle of Jeri Southern's living-room carpet. I left Jeri's key to his apartment on her coffee table, went home, called Roger Kellaway and told him to tell Paul Glass the "sketches" were safe. A few days later Karyl, who is a map librarian at Stanford University, took them home with her and they are now in a vault. Lawyers say they are worthless. Try telling that to a musician.

We held the memorial service in a small sunny chapel in Westwood. Dave Raksin conducted a chamber orchestra, made up of musicians who loved Hugo, in a recital of Bach and Brahms.

Elmer Bernstein and Leonard Rosenman and Dave and I made little speeches and the service was not remotely sad. Indeed the conversation before and after it was full of laughter. Jeri didn't come, which I thought appropriate: somebody had to uphold Hugo's tradition of not attending affairs in his honor.

No life of course is long enough, but Hugo's was, as lives go, fairly long, and it was brilliant, and he left us with a thousand funny stories and a mountain of music whose worth has yet to be fully evaluated.

"Lucky as we were to have had him among us," Dave said that day, "we must not risk offending Hugo by overdoing our praise — which he is even now trying to wriggle out of, somewhere in time...

"Peace be yours at last, dear friend. Sleep well."

Fingers Seven

Fingers Wombat Live at the Semihemidemiquaver was released six weeks after it was recorded, in both mono and rechannelled-for-stereo versions. *Jive* magazine called it "the most unusual album since *Miles' Behind.*"

Fingers was in fact overwhelmed by the reviews, which the Duchess collected in an ostrich-skin covered scrapbook. He was particularly pleased by one in *Occasional Keyboardist,* which said that he combined "the tone of Thelonious Monk, the harmonic sophistication of Floyd Cramer, the inventive imagination of Eddie Duchin, and the touch of Maurice Rocco."

Out There, the quarterly of avant-garde jazz and contemporary occultism, said, "The convoluted bipolar imploding subtlety of his music, its ineffable dynamism, its exponentially recurring inward-outward tangential involvement will be found, when divided by pi, to conform to the proportions of the Great Pyramid at Giza. There is nothing sanpaku about Fingers Wombat, who through his exploration of the higher harmonics of etheric energy has freed the astral body of jazz to travel to other planes."

The Ohio Apiarist said Fingers had a "stinging attack varied by a honeyed approach to ballads", while *The International Mercenary* praised his "deadly accuracy and rapid fire and long trajectories of sound culminating in devastating rhythmic explosions." Dr. Lancelot Carver, writing in the amusement section of *The American Journal of Unnecessary Surgery,* admired his "sure slashing technique, the pulsing crimson flow of his thought, and his ability to stitch together the most improbable ideas." A review in *Yank,* the journal of American dentistry, called the album, "transcendental."

Rough Riders, the official voice of the Teddy Roosevelt Fan Club, said in an editorial, "A poor boy from Skye, Wisconsin, who had to hitch-hike to Potsdam, New York, to find a piano on which to practice, Wombat illustrates the triumph of the American dream. His career proves that the poor don't need help. Those who have the grit and guts and other virtues that have made America what it is today will get there on their own. The rest don't deserve to."

My Friends, the official voice of the Franklin Roosevelt Fan Club, said, "A poor boy from Skye, Wisconsin, who had to hitch-hike to Potsdam, New York, to find a piano on which to practice, Wombat illustrates the faltering of the American dream. His career did not begin to blossom until in Europe he was subsidized by a *Prix de Rome,* which permitted the flowering of a talent that, in the underfunded American educational system, might have withered on the vine."

Struggle, the official voice of the Nikolai Lenin Fan Club, said that Fingers illustrated, "the hypocrisy of the American dream. His music is a searing outcry, the heartfelt protest of the downtrodden masses against the running dogs of gangster capitalism."

The reviews were not unanimous, however. *Mississippi Mudder* called the album "bullshit". And the jazz critic of the Climax, New Mexico, *Star-Chronicle-Enquirer-Exposition-Tribune-Journal-Post-Telegram-Globe,* said that Fingers was an appendix on the intestine of jazz".

Fingers was at first troubled by the few negative reviews, but Park Benchley reassured him that the great artist can always expect to be misunderstood, and the reviews on the whole reflected what Benchley had said in the album's liner notes, namely that Fingers was the greatest pianist of the last two hundred years.

In any event, Fingers had little time to brood on reviews, since he had to fulfill engagements generated by the album's success. Turning in his rented Solovox, he left on a tour of North America:

June 2 and 3: Palm Room of the Tropicana Hotel in Fairbanks, Alaska. June 4, 5 and 6: Club Montmartre in Wauchula, Florida. June 7: Club Aristocrat in Kapuskasing, Ontario. June 8: Club Copacabana in Fairbanks, Alaska. June 9 and 10: Minton's in Waycross, Georgia. June 11: Club Waikiki in Fairbanks, Alaska. June 12: La Cucaracha in Merida, Yucatan. June 13: Le Park Avenue in L'abord-a-Plouffe, Quebec. June 14 and 15: Tahiti Lounge in Fairbanks, Alaska. June 16 and 17: Neptune's Net in Malibu, California. June 18 and 19: Cafe Chic in St. John's, Newfoundland. June 20: Palm Room of the Tropicana Motel in Kodiak, Alaska.

The tour concluded with four months in the Persian Room high atop the beautiful Hotel Leonard in downtown St. Catharines, Ontario, with its breath-taking view of the Old Canal. Fingers was happy about this. It gave him time to get his laundry done.