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Letters

One of the pleasures of going to the Opéra in Paris in the old days was reading — and re-reading — the synopses in "English" which they included in the program books for the convenience of British, American, and perhaps even Canadian visitors. What follows is, I swear, an exact copy of parts of the *Carmen* synopsis. This they printed, and many others like it, year in, year out:

"Carmen is a cigar-makeress from a tobago factory who loves with Don José of the mounting guard. Carmen takes a flower from her corsets and lances it to Don José (Duet: 'Talk me of my mother'). There is a noise inside the tobago factory and the revolting cigar-makeresses burst into the stage. Carmen is arrested and Don José is ordered to mounting guard her but Carmen subduces him and he lets her escape.

"ACT 2 The Tavern. Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, Zuniga, Morales. Carmen's aria ('The sistrums are tinkling'). Enter Escamillio, a balls-fighter. Enter two smuglers (Duet: 'We have in mind a business') but Carmen refuses to penetrate because Don José has liberated from prison. He just now arrives (Aria: 'Slop, here who comes!') but hear are the bugles singing his retreat. Don José will leave and draws his sword. Called by Carmen shrieks the two smuglers interfere with her but Don José is bound to dessert, he will follow into them (Final chorus: 'Open sky wandering life'). . . .

"ACT 4 A Place in Seville. Procession of balls-fighters, the roaring of the balls heard in the arena. Escamillio enters (Aria and chorus: 'Toreador, toreador. All hail the balls of a toreador'). Enter Don José (Aria: 'I do not threaten, I besooch you') but Carmen repels him wants to join with Escamillio now chaired by the crowd. Don José stabbs her (Aria: Oh rupture, rupture, you may arrest me, I did kill der') he sings. 'Oh my beautiful Carmen, my subductive Carmen. . . .'"

Max Harrison
London

Max Harrison is the noted critic, formerly of The Times, *who writes articles on both jazz and classical music for various British publications, as well as long and extremely funny letters to friends. He has just completed for the* Jazzletter *an essay on weird names, of which he is an avid collector. It will start in a forthcoming issue.*

Collier's Controversy

Part I

Last November, James Lincoln Collier caused an ideological fuss with an article in *The New Republic* called *The Faking of Jazz*. The title is a play on that of his well-received 1978 *The Making of Jazz* (Houghton Mifflin), which Grover Sales uses as a text book in his course on jazz history at San Francisco State University and calls "the best one-volume survey study of the subject." It has displaced Marshall Stearns' *The Story of Jazz* as the standard reference work.

Collier has a flare for firing up tempers, and there are those who dislike his *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius* (Oxford University Press). I liked the book for its intelligent analysis of Armstrong's music and evaluation of its significance. Collier is hardly the first man to acclaim Armstrong as a genius, but he made his points interestingly and well, and in passing presented certain iconoclastic notions that he expanded in his *New Republic* essay. His most important contention is that jazz was never a music almost completely despised by white audiences and the white musical establishment.

On the contrary, Collier argues that the music from the beginning had an enormous white following — that indeed it was to a great extent a music made by black musicians in front of white audiences. He points out that many of the places in which the music was played were barred to blacks. Blacks were not allowed on the very riverboats that, by wheezy legend, brought the music up the river from New Orleans.

What most irritated some of the people who read *The Faking of Jazz* was Collier's insistence that this falsified history of jazz was created by leftist writers in accordance with their own political preferences and prejudices, to advance their own social philosophies.

"The history of an art has rarely been so directly stood on its head as the history of jazz," Collier wrote. "The almost universally accepted story of that music (told by myself, too, until recently) is so far from the truth that one is left gasping. Even people who were there at the time are devoted believers in a tale which is not merely incorrect, but is contradicted at every point by perfectly obvious facts."

Collier says that "when the music began to spread out of New Orleans to the cities of the north and west, it was drawn not by black migrants to the big cities, as has universally been believed, but by white entrepeneurs as a novelty music for white audiences. Freddie Keppard on the Orpheum circuit, King Oliver at jitney dance halls in California and elsewhere, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in the Vernon Cafe in Chicago and Reisenweber's Lobster Palace in New York were all playing for segregated white audiences. By the 1920s the greatest figures in early jazz history were attracting large white audiences, and were beginning to grow, if not rich and famous, at least well-to-do and celebrated. The Fletcher Henderson orchestra was a fixture for years at the Roseland Ballroom; Duke Ellington had the house band at the Cotton Club; Fats Waller was featured at Connie's Inn — all segregated venues.

"Louis Armstrong came to musical maturity at the black and tans — cabarets ostensibly black, but in fact designed to attract white audiences — in Chicago. By 1929 Armstrong, Waller, and other black entertainers were featured in a Broadway show called *Hot Chocolates*, and were on their way to becoming popular stars, with radio shows and movie appearances aimed primarily at white audiences. Indeed, even as early as 1923, the infant medium radio was offering a great deal of jazz: virtually all of the great names of the 1920s and 1930s broadcast regularly, sometimes every night for weeks at a stretch, for audiences that were primarily white. It is literally true that in many American cities of the 1920s there was more good jazz on radio than there is today . . . .

"Far from being despised and neglected in these early years, then, jazz was in vogue among Americans, to the point where it gave its name to an age."

Collier says that hundreds of articles on jazz appeared in the most popular American magazines, and in newspapers. "Much of this writing, certainly, was ill-informed, and lumped the jazz-inflected dance music of Paul Whiteman and others with the real thing. Still, when Duke Ellington sailed for England in June of 1933 to be, as is now everywhere believed, 'discovered' by English intellectuals, he was sent off by a full-page story in *Time* and a sailing party attended by press photographers and the cameras of Movietone News."

Collier quotes S. Frederick Starr, a Russian scholar and authority on New Orleans jazz as relating that "the Comintern decided in 1928 that American blacks would be treated as a colonized nation. Come the revolution, a 49th state would be carved out of the south for them. This 'hare-brained policy,' says Starr, was worked up by men 'who had been no closer to America than the Lenin Library.' But as a consequence, jazz thereafter had to be seen as the 'folk music' of these colonized people.

"To what extent the jazz writers were aware of the Comintern policy is impossible to know. Still, jazz had become politicized, and from then through the 1940s it was something of a pet of the left."

Collier wrote another essay that should have caused as much irritation as his *New Republic* piece but didn't, presumably because it appeared in the *Black Music Research Journal*, with a readership much more restricted than that of *The New Republic*. Titled *Face to Face: The White Biographer of Black Subjects*, it examined the difficulties of the white writer trying to gather information from a world that is to a greater or lesser degree closed to him, from people who may be suspicious of him, and applying to the material attitudes and assumptions inappropriate to it.

"For example," he says, "nearly all serious jazz writers, right from the beginnings of jazz criticism in the 1920s, took jazz to be an 'art,' and they therefore assumed that the musicians they were writing about thought about 'art' as they did. The Belgian Robert Goffin, who wrote an early book on jazz, referred specifically to the jazz musician's 'mission.' In analyzing Goffin's work a somewhat later American, Sidney Finkelstein, said that Goffin 'looked on jazz almost as if it were another kind of esthetic experiment such as took place in Paris in the 1920s, one with dada, surrealism and automatic writing.'"

Collier says that for the early jazz writers, including Otis Ferguson and Charles Edward Smith, "it was important to see jazz as a folk music, played by impoverished ghetto dwellers for their friends and neighbors, and ignored or despised by American society at large. It was impossible for them to accept the fact that most black entertainers were willing collaborators with a highly capitalistic entertainment industry for a large audience drawn from the hated bourgeoisie. These writers therefore distorted early jazz history almost out of recognition. John Hammond, an important early critic and sponsor of talent, could declare that 'the greatest of these artists die of privation and neglect.' Finkelstein could say that jazz was 'a people's music and it was ghetto music,' despite the fact that at the moment these critics were writing, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, and Count Basie were growing rich and famous playing the music, and dozens of others . . . were buying Cadillacs and furs from the proceeds of their music."

Collier expresses, in that essay, the hope that more good black writers, with academic research disciplines, will emerge to clarify jazz history.

"Given the immensity of the problems whites face when writing about blacks, it would seem obvious that they ought to leave it to blacks," he says. "And there can be no question that blacks ought to be encouraged to take on these jobs more frequently than they have done. Contrary to what many blacks believe, white editors would prefer to use black writers on black subjects, in the belief that they are more authoritative. We can hope, with the numbers of blacks now enrolled in jazz courses around the United States, that at least some of them will be drawn to scholarship in black music.

"It would be especially interesting to read a black scholar's writing about white musicians. And then, of course, the shoe will be on the other foot. Will they be able to admit that white musicians like Benny Goodman, Bix Beiderbecke, Jimmy Dorsey, Frankie Trumbauer, Stan Getz, and Bill Evans were formative influences on many blacks — Dorsey and Trumbauer on Lester Young, Goodman on Jimmy Hamilton and Edmond Hall, Evans on Herbie Hancock, Beiderbecke on Rex Stewart and countless other black trumpeters of the 1920s? Unhappily, too much of the writing on black music by blacks during the 1960s and 1970s was rendered almost useless to the serious reader by the anger blacks felt toward whites, and their insistence that jazz was black music which whites could neither understand nor play. In particularly, it became a credo that if you disliked avant-garde jazz, you were a racist. This led to serious distortions of jazz history, as in Mark Gridley's *Jazz Styles* (1978), an otherwise useful book in which Sun Ra is given more space than Armstrong, Morton, and Waller taken together.

"Furthermore, blacks should understand that they do not always understand the white mainstream culture any better than whites understand black culture. What this means, in sum, is that a writer on either side of the fence ought to begin by investigating where the two cultures meet. That might be something we could all try."

In response to Collier's *New Republic* piece, Leonard Feather wrote this letter to the editor:

"In his article *The Faking of Jazz*, James Lincoln Collier claimed that he had been duped into believing that Europeans patronized jazz while Americans downgraded it, and this concept was fostered by those damned leftist jazz critics. What magic revelation suddenly caused this 180 degree turnabout in his thinking?

"Having been on both scenes since Mr. Collier was a child, I can attest to the fallacy of both claims. So much greater was the demand for jazz in Europe, and such was the shortage of recordings, that John Hammond was commissioned to produce a series of sessions from 1933-35 specially for British release. In any event, what mattered was not the quantity of white U.S. listeners, but the quality of their appreciation. Like other European students, I always regarded jazz as an art form; to most Americans who went "slumming" at the Cotton Club, it was casual entertainment.

"Mr. Collier pretends that foreign writers were 'uninterested' in visiting the U.S. I had been writing for only eighteen months when I visited New York in 1935; I returned several times before settling there in 1939. Hugues Panassié spent almost half of 1938 in New York; Nesuhi and Ahmet Ertegun, Timmie Rosenkrantz, and several other aficionados visited or settled in the States during those years. Robert Goffin lived here for several years in the early 1940s.

"The list of writers in Collier's paragraph linking them with the left-wing press is laughable if not libelous. I knew these men well; Barry Ulanov, like me, was a staunch anticommunist and antifascist; George Simon was apolitical; Dave Dexter, who always struck me as a conservative both musically and politically, was an early champion of Stan Kenton, later a

George Wallace supporter and the most right-wing of all the major jazz figures in his day. To brand men like these as leftists is outrageous. As for my own politics, I never had illusion about the far left and at one time wrote for the *New Leader*, which even Mr. Collier can hardly brand as pro-leftist.

"By Collier's own admission, John Hammond tried to write about jazz for *The New Republic* but was rebuffed; because of such obstacles he accepted assignments from the *New Masses*, but most of his writing in the 1930s had to appear in British publications such as *Melody Maker*, *Gramophone*, and *Rhythm*. Hammond regarded the Communists as opportunists who blew hot and cold on the race issue.

"There was not a single regular print outlet for jazz in the U.S. when I began writing for *Melody Maker*, where jazz had been covered regularly since 1926. *Down Beat* in Chicago and *Jazz Hot* in Paris started within months of one another, in 1934-35, but the former at that times was devoted to popular dance bands and cheesecake photos, along with some jazz, while *Jazz Hot* from the start was a serious, all-jazz periodical.

"Racism, a factor neatly circumvented by Mr. Collier, was a central factor. It would not have helped his argument had he pointed out that for years *Down Beat* and *Metronome* seldom if ever put a black face on the cover; or that while Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald were honored in European magazines, *Down Beat* celebrated the election as number-one jazz singer of Helen O'Connell and then Dinah Shore. Holiday never in her life won a *Down Beat* or *Metronome* poll."

John Hammond, whom Collier charges with spreading the myth that Bessie Smith bled to death because she could not be admitted to a white hospital — which persists as surely as the legend that Jesse James was a good guy — said privately that he would not even dignify the Collier article by a reply.

And there you have the parameters of the fuss.

Let me deal with the Leonard Feather letter first, and state my attitude toward Leonard and his work. I am preparing, slowly but surely, an essay on Leonard for the *Jazzletter*, because I consider him — year in and year out — the most important critic jazz has ever known. His *Encyclopedia of Jazz*, in several editions, is the most valuable single source of biographical information on jazz musicians and alone would assure his position in the music's history. No other man has chronicled the music so faithfully and for so long as Leonard Feather. And that is quite aside from his influence as a producer of jazz records. He is also a very good lyricist, an aspect of his work that is too little known.

More subjectively, let me say that when I became editor of *Down Beat*, you could almost hear the knives being slid from the scabbards. Two men whom I had admired from a distance for years went out of their way to be reassuring and kind to me: Leonard Feather and John S. Wilson. And I haven't forgotten it.

Now, as for discrimination at *Down Beat*. Leonard is absolutely correct. As late as 1960, I was told by the owner that I had to stop putting black faces on the cover, on the ground that they hurt sales. My reply was that with more than thirty — I think the exact figure was thirty-four — of thirty-seven of our readers' poll winners black, how could you hope to appeal to the public if you barred from the covers the very people the readers most admired? I threatened to quit and, when Charles Suber, the publisher, took the same stand, the order was tabled though never quite rescinded.

Most of *Down Beat*'s readership was white. They had voted overwhelmingly for black performers, indicating that either America or *Down Beat*'s readership had changed since Helen O'Connell won the reader's poll.

I don't think Collier "neatly circumvented" racism in his essay; he just didn't deal with it thoroughly in the space available and the context of the discussion. And I don't think he claimed jazz was universally recognized for what Leonard considers the right reason, namely as an art form. He does insist that it was not despised and neglected, but on the contrary was very popular, for whatever reason. And he points out that the "*Literary Digest*, a sort of middlebrow newsweekly, ran several serious pieces on jazz before 1920, a time when few Europeans had even heard the word, much less the music." Collier cites the work of R.D. Darrell, trained at the New England Conservatory, who began writing seriously about jazz in 1927, when he was struck by Ellington's recording of *Black and Tan Fantasy*.

As for whatever "magic revelation" caused Collier's change of heart, one can only muse that for anyone to cling to an old position in the light of new and contradicting information is dogmatism of the worst sort. However, that's the way it is, and George Romney's political career was destroyed when he said he had changed his mind on Viet Nam in the light of evidence. You're not allowed to do that, although Winston Churchill once got away with it. It was not through magic revelation that I came to a position close to Collier's. It was through the accumulation of information and conversations with older jazz musicians, and memory of conversations with others now dead, particularly Don Redman. The catalyst was an article I found in the November 23, 1923, issue of the Sioux City *Tribune* in which John Philip Sousa praised jazz and predicted an important future for it. It is doubtful that he had any clear idea what it was, but he certainly didn't condemn it. Then I began to ponder all the praise that Virgil Thomson had lavished on jazz, along with other encomiums to the music from people in the classical music world on both sides of the Atlantic, including critic Alfred Frankenstein. Finally, one of the readers (and I wish I knew who, so that I might express my appreciation) sent me a copy of the August 1924 issue of *The Etude*, a conservative publication whose readership consisted largely of music teachers. This caused me to write the piece I called *The Big Myth* in the Volume 4 Number 2 *Jazzletter*. To recapitulate, *The Etude* did a survey of prominent figures in the classical music world. While some derogated the music, a surprising number praised it, including Leopold Stokowski.

To be sure, some of the people, and certainly the magazine's editors, had fairly foggy ideas of what the music actually was. But some of them sounded as if they had a pretty good idea what it was. And any evaluation we make now must take into consideration that the term "jazz" undoubtedly had a much broader connotation then than it has had in the years since Louis Armstrong set its direction. We are applying our definition of the word to another age, which only renders the issue fuzzier.

Most significantly, *The Etude* did the survey because so many young people wanted their piano teachers to let them play this music — white young people. This confirms Collier's point about a large white constituency for the music, as far back as 1923. The reason so many music teachers were hostile to the music, as Robert Offergeld has pointed out, is that they didn't know how to teach it, and this was costing them work. It was *the very popularity of this emerging form* that threatened their incomes.

Another aspect of the jazz myth that I examined was the idea that the music was created by uneducated musicians out of instinct and pure inspiration. Too many important figures of the 1920s were well-schooled — sometimes, as in the case of Don Redman, conservatory-trained. Even Buddy Bolden was a high school graduate and a reading musician. And if you take a

close look at the one surviving photo of the Bolden band, taken about 1905, you will note that Jimmy Johnson's left hand on the neck of his bass is in the correct position used by symphony bassists, with the two middle fingers close together.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk, a classical composer and concert pianist, born in New Orleans in 1829, toast of three continents, associate during his Paris years of Chopin and Berlioz, student of the music of Cuba and Brazil, both of which countries he visited, was incorporating syncopations and other elements of New Orleans black music into his work by the mid-Nineteenth Century. Gottschalk was wildly popular, and the only reason he left the United States was that he got in a bind over a woman in San Francisco and had to clear out until the heat died down.

Gottschalk grew up one block from Basin Street and close to Congo Square where he heard the ring shouts of slaves. He was emulating what he heard in piano improvisations by the age of three, and later incorporated it into one of his most famous pieces, *Bamboula: Danse de Negre*, which caused a sensation when he played it in New York. He probably played this in Paris before he was fourteen years old. Bob Offergeld, who compiled the first extensive catalogue of his work for the New York *Times* and is now working on the first major biography of Gottschalk, calls him "the last of the great improvisers" in "classical" music.

In 1869, thirty years before Scott Joplin published *Maple Leaf Rag*, Gottschalk composed *Pasquinade Caprice*, which uses a syncopated left hand that could easily be mistaken for a Joplin rag. In view of Gottschalk's admiration for what we might call proto-jazz and the popularity of music he based on it, the case for an American condescension to the music becomes the more questionable, as dear as that theory is to European intellectuals pleased to believe Americans don't understand their own culture.

These are some of the factors contributing to my own arrival at conclusions in accord with the Collier essay.

In his reply to Leonard's letter, Collier said, "I did not intend to imply — and I think did not — that all of the writers mentioned were Communists, or were even aware of the Comintern's policies on jazz. My point is that they generally shared the view that jazz musicians were neglected, and that the American public was unfriendly toward jazz."

There's a point here that I think was missed by Leonard Feather and James Lincoln Collier alike. What is the one thing that all these men have in common, despite different views of music and different philosophies? What is it that they share with everyone who has loved this music and sought to understand it? It is an intense, passionate, uncompromising, unequivocal hatred of racism.

Interest in the music leads inevitably to an interest in the lives of those who created it, and this in turn to a horrified — and angry — awareness of what black Americans have suffered, and then to opposition to the inherent injustice of it. And it is on this issue that I consider every man on that list to be "leftist". It is worth remembering that in calling for the legalization of drugs, in order to control them, even William F. Buckley has taken a position that is considered to be "leftist".

What Collier objects to, and so do I, is a distortion of the history of the music proceeding from one's horror at the treatment of the people among whom it arose.

I had never met Jim Collier when the *New Republic* piece came out. Our contact had been limited to the slight exchange of cordial letters and two, I think, more or less brief telephone conversations. Then one day I got a third call from him. He said that he'd be coming to Los Angeles for a few days and would like to get together.

I looked forward to the meeting. I thought he might be a very interesting man to interview. I wanted to know exactly who he was — where, as they say nowadays, he was coming from.

(To be continued.)

Notice

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Music by Faith

In the mid-1970s, the CBS Records Group negotiated a reciprocal arrangement with the Russian Melodiya label, which gave the company access to that extensive and very important catalogue of Soviet classical recordings. What did the Russians ask for — and get — in return?

At the head of their shopping list were the albums of Percy Faith, he of the mood music with the pretty strings and woodwinds.

Percy died of cancer at the age of sixty-seven in March, 1976 — ten years ago this month.

He was an immensely successful musician, but that he was also an influential one was not widely recognized, and for that matter still isn't. Percy Faith was one of the first arrangers to bring to the orchestration and performance of popular music the skills, scope, and instrumentation of classical music. He did this before even Morton Gould. He was doing it as far back as the early 1930s. Over a period of thirty years, Percy recorded for Columbia a probable sixty-five albums, not to mention all the charts he wrote for singers, including Tony Bennett and Johnny Mathis. Even he wasn't sure how many he had made. "None of them," he said, "ever went into the red, despite the large orchestras I used." He did know the number of films he had scored: eleven. One of those scores, the one he wrote for a dreadful movie called *The Oscar*, proves beyond question something most of his albums did not: that, given the chance, Percy Faith was an elegant and highly lyrical composer.

The best songs of the late 1930s and '40s were superior to the orchestrations applied to them. The writing, particularly accompaniment for vocals, was often awkward if not downright primitive, with strange instrumental balances and clumsy voice-leading. The good writing was found in the big bands, jazz and otherwise, but it was limited to trumpets, trombones, saxes and rhythm section. When Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, and Gene Krupa added string sections to their bands, the effect was often unsatisfactory. The strings were too few to balance the brass, and the other instrumental colors — those mixed from classical woodwinds and horns — were not even in the palette. The effect was simply that of a dance band with added strings, a format that Paul Weston would develop to glorious effect in a series of albums for Capitol in the 1950s and '60s.

The influence of Percy Faith comes into American music through another figure, Bob Farnon. Farnon has influenced any number of arrangers and composers. And Bob says Percy was one of the influences on him. Bob played trumpet in an orchestra Faith led at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the late 1930s. "I learned a lot from Percy," Bob says. "I admired him very much. I admired his taste. He especially taught me what to leave out." Both of them studied composition with Louis Waizman. But their writing is not especially similar, as you can hear immediately on comparing

the charts they wrote on *How Are Things in Glocca Mora.* Sometimes you can hear the common source, as in a trick of using vibes with flutes. Percy wrote a stunning chart on *Younger than Springtime* that particularly reveals their relationship. For an intro, he establishes a melody consisting of (in G) F-sharp, G, E, F-sharp, in eighth notes, which he assigns to the flutes. In the first eight bars of the tune, which is played by solo violin, the motif is used as a counterline. The counterline is developed chromatically, in a way Farnon might do. A variant of it is used even in the release. The connective figures are, again like so many of Farnon's, in half-steps. At the end of the tune, he introduces a glorious variant on his own variant, now played by the piano. Then, reprising the front strain in high strings, Percy assigns his countertheme to the low strings, throwing it for a coda to oboe. It unifies the whole. It is beautifully intelligent writing, logical and consistent throughout.

Percy Faith was born April 7, 1908 — in Toronto, like Farnon and Gil Evans. He was trained at the Toronto Conservatory under a strict system of discipline. "I was ready," he told me, "to jump two or three years ahead of what I was doing. But I was told by my harmony teacher, 'You must learn the basics. You must learn Bach, all the preludes and fugues, on the piano, then orchestrate them for string quartet, for brass quartet. Learn Beethoven. Learn that foundation, and then when it's become a part of you, forget it and go on.'"

Percy began working professionally as a pianist in movie theaters and dance bands. He first conducted for radio in 1931.

Jazz critics, wallflowers all, rarely dance.
— Whitney Balliett

In 1934, Canada established the CBC, and Percy went to work for it almost immediately, as writer and conductor on a series of programs called *Music by Faith.* From the very beginning, he was using strings and the "classical" woodwinds, as opposed to a sax section.

"The strings were always quite busy in anything I wrote," he said. "But the trumpets would have many, many bars' rest, and I gather that Bobby (Farnon) did a lot of listening.

"I had added six girls to the orchestra. I wanted certain sounds. The budget wouldn't allow for extra percussion and woodwinds, and I found I could get six girls for five dollars each per show. They did nothing but vocalise at first, in conjunction with three or four flutes plus a vibraphone and celesta. We got a great sound. People thought it was an organ or some kind of electronic instrument.

"Once this clicked, the CBC suggested 'Since you've got them, why don't we hear something with lyrics?' So I turned the girls over to Bobby, and I said, 'Let's do one number a week.' But since we were so avant-garde, I said, 'I don't want any ballads. Let's do nothing but out-of-left-field tunes like *Where Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?* So Bobby started writing these vocal arrangements for me, and they were fantastic. With the band and six girls, it really swung."

A legend still lingers in Toronto music circles that Farnon would, during rehearsals, play trumpet with one hand while writing vocal arrangements on a chair with his other hand, which, both Bob and Percy confirmed, proved highly disconcerting to Percy and everyone else.

In 1940, a CBC executive ordered the budget for *Music by Faith* cut, despite its success. It was one of the few Canadian productions to be carried regularly to the larger audience of an American network. Percy, who all his life had a crusty streak, was angered.

And by an accident of timing, NBC was at that time auditioning conductors to replace Joe Pasternak, conductor of the *Carnation Contented Hour.* ("Won't you wait till the cows come home?") Pasternak had died and Percy, now thirty-one, auditioned in Chicago, was hired for the summer, confirmed as permanent music director of the show in September, and gave up his position as, in his own bitter words, "the token Jew of the CBC".

But his pioneer work had already been done in Toronto. "As a matter of fact," he said, "as late as 1955 I recorded some arrangements that were, practically note-for-note, arrangements I did in Toronto in the '30s.

"But it's all changing now. Jerry Goldsmith said that the art of film scoring is gone — scoring in the style of Max Steiner, Alfred Newman, or his own. And he's right. It's an electronic world now, and I've been studying the Moog, the Arp, the Fender-Rhodes piano. I use them in my recordings sometimes.

"When you walk into the record studio, the sound stage, you don't see any big string sections, any ninety piece orchestras for the main titles. You'll see three or four keyboard men, the finest in the country, all sitting around with synthesizers and electric pianos and the E-3 Yamaha organ, which can practically simulate any orchestra sound, and that's your score." One can only wonder what Percy would think if he were alive to see the equipment available now; and to note that early in 1985 his brilliant friend Jerry Goldsmith had a score thrown out of a movie to be replaced by electronics. But Percy certainly saw what was coming.

"With thirty-two track equipment, one man or a group of four or five men can come up with some fabulous sounds. And so you're into a new study. It is a pity, but that's the way it is today, and you either go along with it or be dropped."

Percy adapted to changing fashions in music with apparently effortless facility. For one thing, he understood rhythm sections. And he had a knack for picking the right musicians to play his music, with a leaning toward jazz players. When he toured Japan, the pianist in the orchestra was Alan Broadbent. The emphasis in his writing was usually on strings and woodwinds, but he wrote extremely well for brass and his brass sections could swing.

"I do three albums a year," he told me in 1974. "There is a rock influence in the things I've done in the last few years. I've just had to. You cannot sell Gershwin, you cannot sell Rodgers — they've had it. The Establishment won't buy it, and the young people aren't interested, so you've got to give it to them their way."

His prognosis for movie music was equally gloomy. During the time of the great movie studios, there was a key figure in the production chain, the music director. Himself a musician, he functioned as intermediary, arbitrator, and translator between the producer and director and the composer. By the mid-1970s, with the gradual breakdown of the studio system, this figure had vanished and the composer was forced to deal directly with producers and directors, who usually have little or no understanding of the dramatic function of music in film.

"That's what's going on now," Percy said. "And so I haven't done a film score in three years. I'd just as soon do my recordings, do a few concerts, play some golf and fish, rather than get involved with directors and producers who really don't know anything about music and will admit it to you but will stand over your shoulder while you're writing. That's a terrible amount of pressure to be under."

Percy's son, Peter Faith, was a widely respected agent for film composers.

"Peter is involved with a film right now where they've done three scores, by three very well-known writers," Percy said.

"One of them was Dave Grusin, who is a great, great talent. Dave was brought in after they threw out the first score.

"The producer was practically standing over his shoulder all the time, wanting Dave to play the score on the piano as he was writing it. So at the recording session, on the scoring stage, when they were in rehearsal, Dave called the producer out to stand beside him in front of the orchestra, and said, 'I want you to listen to this, because I don't want to waste any time.'

"Dave played four bars and stopped and turned to the producer and asked, 'What do you think of it so far?' This is in front of the orchestra! So the producer is a little stunned, because he isn't in an office with Dave, where he could clobber him, he's in front of thirty or forty men. He asked, 'Well, isn't there more?' and Dave said, 'Sure.'

"So Dave said, 'Okay, boys, bar five.' And then he went on and played bars five, six, seven and eight, and stopped again, and said, 'What do you think of it so far?' And the producer turned around and walked out, figuring that he was being had."

I have no idea how many people heard that story from Percy and Peter Faith. Certainly I told it to a few musicians. It took on the proportions of minor legend, until finally, running into Dave Grusin one day, I asked him if this classic tale of a composer's sarcasm were true. Dave confirmed that it was, but said he wasn't really being sarcastic. Sensing the situation, he simply wanted to save time.

Dave's score too was thrown out of the film. "Now they're working on another one," Percy said. "I'd hate to depend on that form of composition for my bread and butter."

But that is precisely the misfortune of Faith's career. He was not adept at the machinations of Hollywood. He was too testy and blunt for the Byzantine politics of the industry. So he was never given the film assignments his talent deserved and thus never received his due as a composer. The films he did get were

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Tenors get women by the score.
— James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1922

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minor and are by now forgotten, such things as *The Love Goddesses, I'd Rather Be Rich*, and *The Third Day*. As far as I know, none of them was ever recorded, with a single exception: *The Oscar*.

A turgid soap opera of a movie about a ruthless actor who aspires to win the Academy Award, the film is memorable (if you discount all its embarrassing moments) only for Percy's music. The album derived from it, issued on Columbia like all Percy's albums, reveals him as a wonderful melodist. Not all arrangers can write melody — Nelson Riddle had no talent for it whatever. But Percy could. There is a great variety of styles in the score, from a Latin piece featuring a solo alto to a jazz waltz that swings nicely. Who's the drummer? Shelly? Who's the bass player? Ray Brown? The way Percy uses trombones for rhythmic pops in this tune is particularly deft. (The titles of the tracks don't mean anything, since they simply refer to scenes in the film.)

The love theme of the film is one of the most glorious melodies I have ever heard, and I am surprised that jazz musicians have not picked up on it. It was given lyrics by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans and called *Maybe September*, but as far as I know, it has been recorded only once, by Tony Bennett. Tony's version of it was in his *Movie Song* album. Percy didn't write the exquisite chart; Larry Wilcox did, and the conductor was Johnny Mandel. The track was borrowed from Tony's album and included in the Columbia album of the film score. It is one of Tony's finest performances. No doubt the melody inspired him. A rangey tune with big leaps, it isn't easy to sing, which may be why so many singers have ignored it.

It has an unexpected construction. The body of it is in A B A B1 form. As it comes to the resolution, it suddenly takes off into a totally new melody, sixteen bars long. "I just felt the need for it there," Percy said, without any further justification.

The instrumental version of the tune is scored for strings, oboes, and flutes, with vibes adding touches of color. What is most arresting is the linear writing. Although the track is harmonically interesting, it is even more enchanting for the movement of the bass and inner lines, in which those years of immersion in Bach become evident. The attention to detail is part of what makes this track so lovely, right down to articulation markings for the strings.

According to the format of his recordings for Columbia Records, Percy arranged the current hits of the day, and therefore his albums constitute a documentation of the decline of great melodic writing in America, in Tin Pan Alley and in film scoring. Broadway material simply disappears from his repertoire as the theater ceased to produce hits, and then film writing starts to follow it down the tube.

Percy came about as close as anyone in music ever did to being able to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. But he was not at his best when he was handed trash like Maurice Jarre's *Lara's Theme* from *Dr. Zhivago*. Percy could not, for all his professionalism, get creative juices flowing fully for crap like *Song Sung Blue* or Francis Lai's *Love Story*, and in a song such as *Windy* he could descend into the deepest corn. A lot of what Percy did was garbage — high-class garbage, to be sure, but garbage nonetheless. I'm sure a lot of it turns up still on the Beautiful Music stations. Percy apparently approached a lot of this material cynically, giving it the treatment it deserved, putting his public on and perhaps also the brass of Columbia Records who didn't know the difference. There is no other explaining it. His taste was too unerring for him not to be aware of the worthlessness of the worst material and his own treatment of it. *The Oscar* proves that. You could detect his respect for a tune, or lack of it, in the first two bars. Given superior material such as Jerry Goldsmith's *Love Theme* from *The Sand Pebbles* or Johnny Mandel's *A Time for Love* or Richard Rodgers' *Younger than Springtime*, Percy's writing was gorgeous, and very moving. He could extract the beauty of a tune to the point of making you want to cry. And always there was that lovely linear writing, the heritage of Bach.

There is something sad about the career of Percy Faith, for all the success of it. It was full of frustration. He was frustrated at the CBC because of limitations imposed on him, and then the cutting of his budget. He never ceased to be Canadian, but he never ceased to be annoyed about it either. Like Bob Farnon, he said he couldn't go home again, except for occasional appearances with symphony orchestras. "When you've lived in a mansion," he said, referring to the recording budgets and large orchestras he had in the United States compared with what one could expect in Canada, "you can't go back to living in a two-room flat."

He never got the chance to fulfill his true potential as a composer, which, professionally, was the saddest thing of all. In his personal life, the saddest thing was the loss of his son. Peter Faith, charming and well liked, suffered a heart attack at thirty-seven and died two years ahead of his father.

I have about twenty of Percy's albums. They repose, coincidentally, on the shelf next to those of Bob Farnon, whose name follows his in the alphabetical sequence. I have long since taped the best tracks and forgotten the rest.

In a way, Percy was lucky to die when he did. Were he alive, he'd be unemployed.