

JEWS AND JAZZ.

By Joshua M. Brauer.

In Germany the playing of Jazz was recently banned on the grounds that it was the "Judaic abuse of music, and alien to the Nordic idea of music." It was damned as "vile stuff."

It is interesting to study the origin of Jazz, and before we praise or condemn this modern form of music, let us try to understand its structure.

In 1925 that gifted Jewish conductor, Serge Koussevitsky, introduced a form of modernistic music through the Boston Symphony Orchestra. There was a storm of protest. Koussevitsky stood his ground and said that the jazzy music he was playing was the classic music of to-morrow, and argued that Bach and Wagner were the jazz players of the past. A wild controversy raged—and is still raging.

Jazz was the music of the slums: the vulgar noise that corrupted taste and manners, an escape from the real and a substitute for good classics.

But the critics have accepted it to-day as "a method of playing music" if not an art.

Jazz has educated the public to rhythmic variety. It has made the world music conscious; it has made people appreciate the classics; it has helped people to face the realities of life.

But what has the Jew got to do with Jazz? Isn't it an American development of Afro-American thematic material. Doesn't it belong to the negro?

Jazz is a product of African tribal music, but it has been refined. It has been moulded to suit European taste. The good in Jazz has been cultivated; and in the hands of Jews such as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin and Jerome Kern it has acquired international recognition. But it has reached the symphonic realm, too, and that genius, Aaron Copland, has brought it to the high-brow and the intellectual.

Copland has explained that Jazz is not the melody nor even the single well-pro-nounced rhythm, but the interplay of rhythms around, above and under the melody. He has studied Jazz—and he has appreciated its possibilities. He has also imbued it with old Jewish airs which have greatly enriched it. Modern Jazz is more Jewish in character than negro. And it is absorbingly interesting to know the reason.

Deeper Implications of Jazz.

The sad and almost hysterical psychology of the oppressed race has always found expression in music. The sweet sadness in the cantor's song blends readily with jazz, and the minor mode of the typical "blues" as Isaac Goldberg so aptly puts it, is by no means a stranger to the Jewish ear. "The simple fact is that the Jew responds naturally to the deeper implications of Jazz, and that as a Jewish American he partakes of the impulse at both its Oriental and its Occidental end."

Al Jolson, whose father was a cantor, is known for his "mammy songs" just as Larry Adler is known for his delightful jazz on the harmonica. No art can flourish unless it finds a fertile soil. It is therefore not surprising that jazz lives because of the Jewishness it has acquired.

George Gershwin.

Progressive jazz does not necessarily flourish in the dance hall. George Gershwin has composed for the world of symphony. His Rhapsody in Blue, his brilliant Concerto in F and his Prelude have found a place in the realms of standard classical music. It is true that Irving Berlin finds a big place in the popular music world, but if one were to analyse some of his works, the influence of the classical school would soon reveal itself.

The story of George Gershwin is known to all. Irving Berlin is a household word, and ironic as it seems some of the "purified" bands in Berlin are still playing his immortal "Alexander's Rag Time Band."

Aaron Copland.

The name of Aaron Copland should be better known in South Africa. This genius was born in New York in 1900, and started his musical career in his thirteenth year. He first studied under Clarence Adler at the piano. He studied the first elements of harmony with Rubin Goldmark, and in 1921 went to Paris where for three years he was a student of Nadia Boulanger. In Paris he greatly enriched his musical background, and he returned to America, only to return to Europe as the recipient of a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship.

In his twenty-second year he composed *Cortège Macabre* which at once stamped him as a composer of repute. Later followed his "Music for the Theatre," a work of jazz sublimated into music and full of grandeur and nobility. His Concerto, written shortly afterwards, made the critics sit up and hail him as "the Maestro of Jazz."

The world is not poorer for jazz. What began as savage Afro-American folksong has become transformed into cosmopolitan culture. The symphonic works of Gershwin and Copland have changed the savage into the civilised.

New Patterns of Music.

Maybe Jazz music is on the wane. But it can be said that it is gradually transforming into new patterns of music which are growing richer and richer. It will be remembered that Dvorak put the Negro into symphony, and that jazz owes much to him. The world at large is still the same; slow to take to new things. Jazz was written by masters long before it made itself known amongst the intelligentsia. And that is often the case with great music.

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Zionist Youth Activities

CAPE ZIONIST YOUTH EXECUTIVE.

The Cultural Sub-Committee has arranged a Three Months' Postal Course in Zionism for individuals and every Zionist Youth Leader and every member who wishes to equip himself with the essential facts of Zionism should undertake this course of study. Full details and application forms can be obtained from the office.

Zionist Youth are reminded of the 15th Annual Cape Zionist Youth Conference which takes place on the 1st and 2nd April. Names of delegates of Societies must be in not later than the 14th inst., and resolutions by the 15th. This is essential as the Conference Booklet goes to press on this day. If accommodation is required by country delegates the Executive must be informed immediately so that it can arrange same.

CAPE TOWN HERZLIA.

The next meeting of the Society takes place on Sunday, March 19th, at 8.15 p.m. at Rosecourt, and will be addressed by Dr. I. M. Hurwitz.

Entertainments Committee. Several functions have been planned by this committee. On Sunday, March 12th, the Society is holding a picnic at Llandudno, to which everybody interested is invited. The party will leave Bakoven at 8.45 a.m. sharp. On Sunday, March 19th, a water-melon feast ending with a dance will be held and a small nominal charge will be made to defray expenses.

Tennis Section. Arrangements are nearly complete for the tournament which is being held shortly and those interested should send their names and addresses in immediately.

Bialik Circle. The Bialik Circle has been incorporated in the Oneg Shabbat which will commence shortly and which will be held under the joint auspices of the society and the local Board of Education. The functions will always be held at Rosecourt. An attractive programme is being prepared. Members will receive circulars in the near future.

Hebrew. A member of the society who recently came from Eretz Israel is eager to teach Hebrew to all interested. Mem-

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So blaming the Jew for Jazz is no crime. The works of Schubert and Beethoven were once shunned by the highbrows, and Wagner's early music was as noisy as early jazz.

Let us bear in mind that very often the "common music" of to-day becomes the classic of to-morrow. Modern music is richer for the growth of jazz, and jazz, richer for the works of Gershwin and Copland.

The Jewish trend in modern music is growing. There is a tendency for old Jewish tunes to become the hit songs of the day. Remember that popular tune, "Bei Mir Bist Du Shein"?