

MUSIC of the WEST

A MONTHLY REPORT TO THE NATION ON MUSIC AND MUSICIANS OF WESTERN AMERICA

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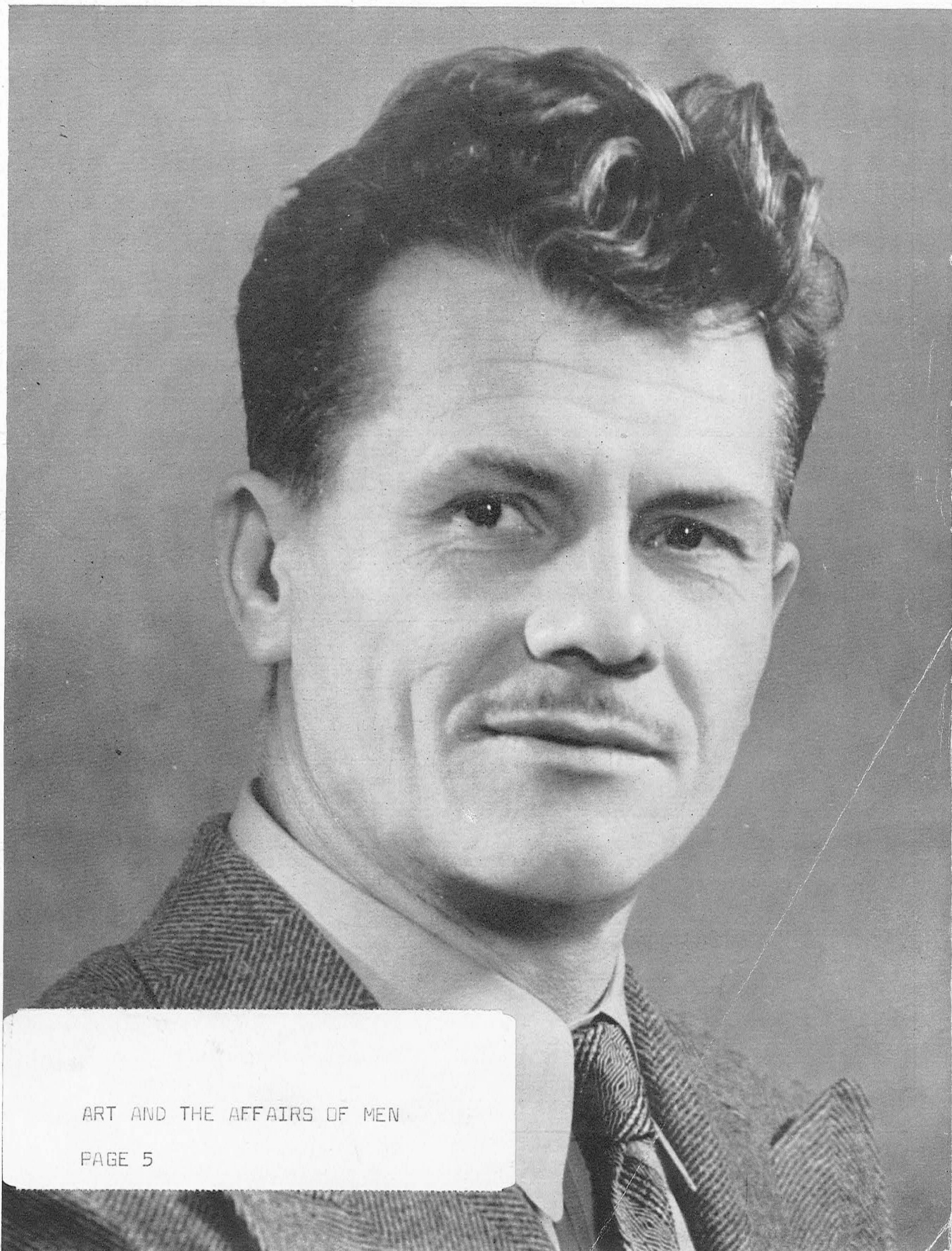
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ART AND THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

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ART AND THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

By HUBERT KLYNE HEADLEY



HUBERT KLYNE HEADLEY

Editor's Note: Hubert Klyne Headley, distinguished American composer-pianist, conductor, flew 20,000 miles last summer playing and conducting concerts of his works in Europe. The author, Mr. Headley, was impelled to write this article because of certain striking differences in ways of living in America and Europe which are affecting our philosophies, and the arts.

If politics may be defined as being a science dealing with the affairs of men then it is believed most emphatically that art and "the affairs of men" are most closely and inextricably bound together.

The pace of life in America has always been the source of much amazement to Europeans. Transportation and communication in their present stage of development are making a profound change in ways of living and thinking. The slow-moving world of yesterday is gone, and now we think in terms of minutes instead of days. It is only a weekend trip from any point in California to London or Paris.

HOW MAY THIS INCREASED PACE OF LIVING EFFECT THE COMPOSER?

During the time of Dickens one could start a good book and spend five chapters in descriptions and slow reading, not being at all concerned, as there was little else to do that required speed. Life was slow. This age was so slow that wars had to be fought within narrow limits. Messages were sent by couriers, and at night it was polite to cease fighting so that one could get some relaxation and recreation from the taxing duties of war.

The desire for speed has had an interesting effect upon literature of a kind; namely, the short story, and also our popular cartoons (if one can call this a form of art). In such magazines as "Liberty", one may notice under the heading of an article or the title of a story: "Reading Time—1 minute 10 seconds." The radio teaches us that what you have to say must be said in thirty words, or sixty words, or two minutes; and, if you are really "long winded", you might take as much as four minutes. In fact, an interesting and very humorous cartoon recently explained better than words the fast pace and neurotic attitude that seems to have gripped America. It portrayed a man sliding in great clouds of dust up to the edge of a grave. He was sliding exactly as a baseball player trying to "beat the throw" to home plate. The caption beneath the cartoon read—"Whew! I just made it!"

This may be slightly exaggerated, but certainly those coming from Europe to America often remark upon our excessive speed and tendency to be in a hurry. Undoubtedly, there are some good things to be learned insofar as the art of music is concerned, and also in the field of literature, from our way of life, which is being effected by greater demands for speed in communication and transportation. For example, during the 19th Century such composers as Wagner and Mahler were quite frequently guilty of writing symphonic or operatic works that required from one to five hours for performance. Again, it was the case of having ample time in which to enjoy such musical masterpieces. Art always has been, and must necessarily be, the reflection of life as it is during the lifetime of the artist. This may immediately cause some disagreement, but after consideration it will not be difficult to see that an artist is the result spiritually and psychologically (or in any other way you wish to consider it) of his environment and heredity, which at once makes him a product and perhaps an exponent of his times. It would then follow quite logically that music today must take into

consideration the changing attitudes of those people being also automatically effected by our increased pace of living.

An illustration may serve to clarify what is meant. The forms of musical composition extended during the 19th Century might very well be used for compositions intended for production in the large concert halls before the usual type of audience expecting a concert to last from two to two-and-one-half hours. I refer specifically to such symphonic forms as the Sonata, which under the expert hand of Beethoven became a monumental medium of expression. Is it necessary, however, for the composer to think in such "panoramic" terms as he composes his SYMPHONY for radio, which, the producers tell him can only last fifteen minutes. The reasons they give are quite practical. First, the high cost of rehearsal time; secondly, the usually very crowded schedule of performances. These two conditions are prompted by very real situations.

Probably the most important cause effecting the change of composition for radio is the mechanical limitations of radio. For that reason our composer must write with more economy and greater clarity, perhaps employing some of the technique of Palestrina and Bach, if his works are to be "sound."

THE COMPOSER LOOKS AT POLITICS

So much for the American Way of Life and its effect upon art. The next question is—what is coming out of the war-torn countries of Europe? Paris stands today as evidence that a lightning bolt of Nazi power struck France and all of the other countries of Europe. All that has been written about the suffering and the sacrifices of these people is real and terrible, but as one brave Frenchwoman said, "After a while, one becomes calloused to danger, cold and hunger." She went on to say, "I don't feel that I was brave or courageous for looking for food and doing the daily tasks under the watchful and most efficient surveillance of the Germans. It was a case of not being able to do anything else. We lived day by day for news, over the radio, by word of mouth, passed along eagerly by our neighbors. I was arrested once, but released, and the day came when I watched two Germans shot down outside my window by our own French Underground. I found myself leaning out of the window screeching savagely, 'Kill them, Kill them!' Of course, the warning was given that for each German soldier killed in such a manner, terrible punishment would be given, and finally it was announced by the Nazis that if these indignities did not stop, they would cease their parades!"

Although the Germans hated the French, they were constantly courting their favor, using every means possible. The worst that has come to France via the hands of the Germans is the 'Black Market.' One cannot exist without it. Through the legal exchange, 117 francs are given for a dollar; Black Market gives you 250. Salaries for office girls are between 7,000 and 8,000 francs a month, and it costs about 1,200 francs a day to live. Consequently, BLACK MARKET!

Lots of money is being spent. Those who have some are dipping with large scoops, and it is going fast. The mirage of plenty of food, which appears upon the tables of those able to pay Black Market prices, is soon to disappear. All of France is hungry, but the countryside is productive; green fields, good crops soon to abound. Poor distribution is probably the cause of high prices and shortages. This at once brings up the question of Government. Why is not something done? To one who takes a quick and not scientific observation, two reasons for this situation come to view.

First, the Occupation, and second, the political mess France is in today. As to the Occupation, one French cynic said the other day, "France has been occupied twice, once by the Germans, and then the Americans." It is not merely the opinion idly expressed that the French are envious of Americans. Much has been written on this subject by many who are well informed. But, Americans coming into a country such as France, after long years of suffering and privation, would naturally create misunderstandings and envy because of their clothes, their seemingly financial independence, and most probably because of their cigarettes. This was made more extreme by the average G.I. with his ready cash and gay manner, who sometimes catches the attention of the girls. You say this is a small part of France—the common man is very numerous. In the upper economic and cultural strata of society

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will be found those who are capable of true evaluation, but they are not in the majority.

The second reason for some of France's problems lies within "that realm of the damned," in all countries known as "Politics." This word has grown to mean all that is "smelly" in America, and in France it is easily detected. On the one side are the political experts who are so clever they can't agree with one another, but spend their time fighting, bickering, and clogging up the machinery that they call a "Republican form of Government." On the other side is Communism—well organized, well-heeled financially, and with strong and efficient leadership. Communism has a plan; all who belong to the Party have a job to do. Most are happy and sincere. This is certainly no argument for Communism, but is intended only as an expose of things as they appear to one American who is not posing as an authority but is rather a naive by-stander watching a show . . . a very human struggle all mixed up with very human desires, like eating and security, and hope for the future, even at the cost of personal liberty.

On the other side of the argument the opinion has been strongly expressed in France that with all the immediate hope and help that Communism has to offer, the Frenchman likes his liberty too well to give it up. Furthermore, too many are making a great deal of money on the Black Market, which under Communism would disappear. Therefore, it is a belief that France as a Nation will never become entirely dominated by the Communist Party.

All of this is so much "chatter" in the face of the "Goddess of Destiny," but it is hoped there may be some Americans who will be stimulated enough to examine more closely "our own linen closet."

IS ART ABOVE POLITICS?

Great art cannot exist in a vacuum!

PROFESSOR PIZZICATO



Federation of Music Clubs Announce Auditions

By Mrs. Harmon J. Cavanaugh,
Publicity Chairman,
Southern Region

The National Federation of Music Clubs announces the 10th Biennial Student Musicians' Contests. These contests are conducted in States and Districts only. Winners in State contests proceed to District finals.

Each State winner receives an official certificate signed by the State President, the National President and National Contest Chairman and each district winner a certificate signed by the District President, the National President and the National Contest chairman. Prizes are optional with the States but California is giving a cash prize.

Preliminary competition will be held in Los Angeles March 15 at Barker Bros. Auditorium, 818 West Seventh Street, at 10 a.m. The winner to be known as the Winner of the Southern District.

The winner will then go to the District Contest, which will also be held in Los Angeles March 29 at Barker Bros. Auditorium at 2 p.m., and will compete with preliminary winners from California, Nevada and Arizona.

Competition is open to pianists, violinists, cellists, organists, vocalists, with events for the following classification: Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Soprano, Dramatic Soprano, Mezzo Soprano, Contralto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. Age bracket is 16 to 23. Competitors must have reached their 16th birthday but not passed their 23rd by April 15, 1947.

Application blanks, information, requirements, bulletins on repertoire may be obtained from Miss Naomi Reynolds, 349 Thurston Avenue, Los Angeles 24, California.

The State Auditions for the 17th Biennial Auditions for Young Artist Contests, sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs will be held in Los Angeles, March 15, at 2:00 p.m., Barker Bros. Auditorium, 818 West Seventh Street.

All applications, bulletins on repertoire and requirements must be filed with the Southern California chairman, Miss Naomi Reynolds, 349 Thurston Avenue, Los Angeles 24, California.

Three National Young Artist Winners will receive \$1000.00 each. The Young Artist Contests are restricted to voice, piano and violin.

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