

Mail Bag

We've been on tour so much we've fallen behind on the Jazzletters. So we have had the great adventure of reading some back issues. The three issues, *The Times and Henry Pleasants*, tie in beautifully with our recent reading.

We always take a book on the road. Iola and I had read Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus* when it was first published and recently decided to re-read it. Once again we were struck by the parallels with Schoenberg. I heard that Schoenberg demanded an apology from Mann when the book first came out; and, it is true that subsequent editions did carry a message denying that the book was based on the life of any real composer, living or dead, but was a fictional character.

A young German friend, Philip Foising, sent us a biography of Albert Einstein written by his father, Albrecht Foising, and recently translated into English (Viking Press). It covered roughly the same period of German history and culture as the Thomas Mann work. We are now on the last pages of Joan Peyser's *To Boulez and Beyond*, subtitled *Music in Europe Since the Rite of Spring* that also examines the music and culture of that era "and beyond." So your commentary on Henry Pleasants and the currents of 20th Century music all seem to come together. Certainly, following World War II, the choice every musician who wanted to be a composer had to face was: do I make the leap into serial music that is touted as the musical language of the future, or do I stay within the traditional harmonic system?

I often use a twelve-tone row in a composition, but never go into the follow-up where all twelve notes have to be repeated, and follow the rules laid down by Schoenberg and later Boulez. Usually I just write a theme, then if I happen to see that it seems to be going in the twelve-tone direction, I may tinker with it to make it conform. However, it is almost incidental that it turns out to be twelve-tone, because it has evolved naturally rather than as a result of calculation. For example, in *The Duke*, written in the early fifties, I used all twelve notes in the bass line chord progressions and wasn't even aware I had done so until a composition professor told me he liked the way I used the row in that piece. I denied having used the row. He pulled out the music and pointed it out to me.

I'm enclosing *I See, Satie*, that I wrote quite a few years

ago. It was my way of putting on some of my colleagues who were strict twelve-tone composers. There is a choral version of this piece that will eventually be published by Warner Bros., because the head of the choral-music department thought it should be in the libraries of universities and high schools. You will notice that in the last bars, it does kind of go into the oval shape of a pear. As you no doubt know, my teacher, Darius Milhaud, admired Satie and had few kind words to say about "the system" designed by Schoenberg and later espoused by Stravinsky. Milhaud chose the route of polytonality, though he admired the other composers.

I am also sending you an old tape I recently unearthed. My Miwok Indian friend is singing a gambling song. Just listen to the rhythmic intricacy of the single voice over his drum beat. He and I spent hours a day riding together while he sang songs like this. I said to him one time, "You sing the same thing over and over." He replied, "Sometimes I sing it for three days." I wanted you to hear how rhythmic this music is and how it could relate to jazz.

Iola and I always enjoy the *Jazzletters*. It's like having an opportunity to sit down with you for an evening's conversation.

— Dave Brubeck, Wilton, Connecticut

One of many jazz musicians with Indian lineage, Dave is almost certainly the only one who began as a cowboy and ranch hand. About forty years ago, we were discussing serial music. He said that aside from other factors, "it denies you the joy of a modulation."

The Times and Henry Pleasants

Part Five

As we shall see, a characteristic of our times is the predominance, even in groups traditionally selective, of the mass and the vulgar. Thus, in the intellectual life, which of its essence requires and presupposes qualification, one can note the progressive triumph of the pseudo-intellectual, unqualified, unqualifiable, and, by their very mental texture, disqualified. Similarly, in the surviving groups of the "nobility," male and female. On the other hand, it is not rare to find today amongst working men, who before might be taken as the best example of what we are calling "nobility," nobly

disciplined minds.

— Juan Ortega y Gasset, 1930, *La Revolucion de las Masses*

Despite the fuss about Y2K, 2000 is not the first year of the twenty-first century but the last of the twentieth. Since Henry Pleasants was born May 12, 1910, and died January 4, 2000, he lived nearly ninety of that hundred years and, to look at it in a broader perspective, close to half the life of the United States. He was born six years after the death of Dvorak, nine after that of Verdi, eleven after that of Johann Strauss the younger, thirteen after that of Brahms, fourteen after that of Liszt, and seventy-three after the death of Beethoven. When Henry was born, Richard Strauss was thirty-six and had forty-nine years left to live. I can only assume that Henry knew any number of persons who knew Dvorak, Verdi, Brahms, and Liszt personally. I knew Duke Ellington and he studied, albeit informally, with Will Marion Cook, and Cook studied with Dvorak. For that matter, I knew Rudolf Friml, who studied with Dvorak, who knew Liszt, who studied with Salieri, who knew Mozart and was one of Beethoven's teachers. When I shook hands with him, I was only five handshakes from Mozart. Life is swift, and history even swifter.

Two hundred years is a short time, by any standard. If you think in terms of lifetimes, rather than generations, and accept the Biblical three-score-and-ten years as the norm (which it now is), it is even a shorter time. The seventeenth century ended less than three lifetimes ago. Beethoven was not only alive, he had not yet reached the peak of his powers, and he had twenty-seven more years to live. Haydn had nine more to go., and Mozart had been dead only nine years. For that matter, Bach had been dead only fifty years. Napoleon was alive and well.

The first steam locomotive railway was not built for another twenty-three years, and Robert Fulton's first experimental steamboat was tested on the Seine in 1803. Less than three lifetimes later, man had walked on the moon, and we are poised at the beginning of a revolution in communications whose future we cannot even hope to foresee. Interestingly, in 1800, the minority communities were demanding the restoration of their lost languages, Breton, Catalan, Welsh, and others. In 2000, they are again demanding it.

Henry's explanation of what happened to music in the nineteenth century is extraordinary. When Henry was born, Puccini was fifty-two, Debussy forty-eight, Schoenberg thirty-six, Ravel thirty-five, and Stravinsky and Bartok twenty-eight. Duke Ellington was eleven, Louis Armstrong eight, and Bix Beiderbecke seven. Buddy Bolden was thirty-three, Bunk Johnson thirty-one.

Henry thus lived a life that begin in the sundown of the Romantic era of music and passed through all the manners of "modernism" until almost the end of the twentieth century. He could even have known Richard Strauss personally. Depending how you date its origin of course, he also lived through the entire history of jazz.

These are some of the thoughts that came into my mind in the time — almost a year — I have been musing on the nature of the man, on my friendship with him, and his achievement. He was, in my estimate, the most important music critic the United States ever produced. The only critics to whom he can even be compared are the English Ernest Newman, whose life overlapped his; and the Czech Eduard Hanslick, who died six years before Henry was born. Henry in fact was to become the translator of Hanslick's work from the German. What makes Henry important is that he took the measure of the decadence of most of the twentieth century's music, and made the iconoclastic, indeed revolutionary, assertion — first in his 1955 book *The Agony of Modern Music* — that the only important music of the century was jazz, which infuriated the practitioners and champions of the "classical" avant-garde. He grew more convinced of this as time went on, expressing the view again in *Death of a Music?* and with unrestrained force in the last of what amounts to a trilogy, *Serious Music — and All That Jazz*, published in 1971. I had reservations about that book when he showed it to me in manuscript, and told him so; and I expressed my reservations about it again when I was called on to review it, which hurt him and for a time estranged us. That period is one of my life's sad little memories; recalling it, I sigh with silent relief that we got past it.

But re-reading that book three times this year, and parts of it several times more, I discovered that it is like the writing of Ernie Wilkins in which one finds ever more delight in the details. No one has ever thought with such penetrating power about the nature and depth of jazz as Henry Pleasants. A French friend once told me that the most vivid evocations of Paris in the 1920s were written by Ernest Hemingway, "because he noticed things we don't." Coming to jazz from the "classical" music world, Henry saw a lot of things we miss. Furthermore (and this I had forgotten) he read rightly the signs of its eventual decay, as it followed with remarkable fidelity the paths that led classical music to the impasse it had achieved by the year Henry was born, which was that of the premiere of *The Firebird* in Paris.

Since he was a pioneer, one is forced into amazement not at the errors in his perceptions, which are small, and few, but the accuracy of far the majority of them. He even warned of a danger that jazz, or certain elements, would venture into an "avant-garde" — he cites Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp, and

Ornette Coleman, and could have included Paul Bley and Cecil Taylor, who were already active — that would alienate most of the public that encountered it.

He tells us that after World War II, his reservations about the new music, particularly serialism, increased. He meant of course the destruction of any sense of tonal center. It is implicit in the very nature of jazz, with its emphasis on improvisation, that it is incapable of a strict serialism as dictated by Arnold Schoenberg and reasserted by Pierre Boulez. Henry wrote:

It gave me no pleasure. Nor did it seem to give pleasure to anyone else. Indeed, there seemed to be no pleasurable objective. Composers were concerned with progress, or at least with sustaining a façade of progress. This produced, curiously, a stifling uniformity. What was trumpeted as progress was, it seemed to me, an exclusive fashion, its immunity from plebeian emulation guaranteed by adherence to the dogma that pleasure, which all the great music of the past had given, was no longer admirable or even pertinent.

This trend in jazz was evident in jazz not long after the appearance of *The Agony of Modern Music* in 1955. After the harmonic and rhythmic innovations of the bebop players and their immediate and significant assimilators, there remained only extensions, refinements, and subtle further explorations of two men we did not, of course, foresee: John Coltrane and Bill Evans. (Genius is never foreseen; it cannot be.) After that, what Wyndham Lewis called “the demon of progress in modern art” would force some of the jazz musicians into the exploration of an arrogant opacity, leaving the others to turn their backs on the future, put a horizontal hand over the eyes to shield them from the blaze of light around the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, and explore the past in museum settings such as that now entrenched in the Jazz at Lincoln Center program and the ukases of Wynton Marsalis about “the tradition.”

History normally defies neat chronological division, but in this case the tidiness is striking. Jazz just after the end of the twentieth century is in almost the identical condition that classical music was just after the end of the nineteenth. It is polarized between a sterile neoclassicism, with on the one hand skilled conservatory-trained musicians knowing all the technical tricks and using them with growing facility and fading effect, and on the other hand a group lost in a kind of fuck-you obscurantism. Those on either side of the gorge are adamant in their convictions,

Henry was bothered, as I am, by the belief that art is immortal. I was brought to a sharp awareness of this the first

time, in the Louvre, I saw the Winged Victory with its missing arms and head; it brought me instantly to tears. Even stone is not eternal, and our frames of reference change. You may see a performance of *Oedipus Rex* and think you get it, but you don't. You do not have the emotional conditioning of the morality and taboos of that time, and so what was emotionally jolting to its original audience is only academically interesting to us. You may think you get it when Hamlet tells Ophelia to get her to a nunnery, and she drowns herself, but you don't, because you don't know the slang of the period. “Nunnery” was argot meaning “cat house,” and thus the man she loves has called her a whore. Lady, may I lie in your lap? He is *treating her* as one. The Shakespeare plays are fading, as Chaucer has already faded, and before that *Boewulf*. In James M. Cain's novel *Serenade* the protagonist makes love to the girl in a church; that was shocking stuff as recently as 1936. As Artie Shaw pointed out to me, we who grew up in a later time have no way of knowing how revolutionary Louis Armstrong seemed to those who were young when he arrived. You could say that too of the harmonic usages of Beethoven; we simply cannot *feel what* audiences of the time did in responding to them. We can only read about it and know it is so. Henry wrote::

The most ancient of this [European] music is hardly more than three hundred and fifty years old. Very little of what is still heard is as old as that, and even that little represents a tiny percentage of a vast output that was once as fully alive as American Popular music is today. Most of the standard repertoire is very much younger; and it, too, represents only a puny portion of the music of its own time. To believe that it will live forever is characteristic of the kind of historical perspective in which a mere century appears as eternity.

The life span of a musical masterpiece may encompass a number of generations; but music, being a reflection of society, is subject, like any other art, to social obsolescence.

He says that “with fifty years having elapsed since the composition of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, it is no longer unreasonable to speak of failure. Indeed, it is hardly reasonable not to do so.” That was 1971; *Erwartung* is now eighty years old, and it seems unlikely that it will turn up on any hit parades when it is a hundred.

Although it is impossible to determine with any hope of accuracy which composers are the most attractive to concert audiences, a cold measure of public demand can be found by a simple analysis of the pages of the Schwann catalogue of

recorded music. Its listings are in very fine print, two columns to a page. It contains somewhat more than thirty pages devoted to Mozart, twenty-three-and-a-half to Bach, twenty-three to Beethoven, ten-and-a-half to Mendelssohn, seven-and-a-half to Ravel, seven to Debussy, four to Schoenberg, three-and-a-half to Mahler. The instrumental music of George Gershwin gets three-and-a-half. Even Samuel Barber gets half that of Schoenberg, a little over two pages, and Alan Hovhannes gets a page and a half.

Henry's work never ceased to disturb the academic critics, and for that matter some jazz critics. The British critic Max Harrison, whose writing is notable for the intransigence of his views, the acidity of his venom, and the blunt-instrument delicacy of his language, particularly hated him. When Grover Sales' book *Jazz: America's Classical Music* came out in 1984, Harrison wrote, "He is in effect taken over by a crackpot named Henry Pleasants Starting in 1960, this man concocted a series of books which, far from having 'kicked up a horrendous fuss in classical circles' as Sales imagines, were briefly the subject of ridicule there and have long since been forgotten. Pleasants' ignorant diatribes are hardly worth dealing with now" It is the kind of generality to which many critics are susceptible, lacking even rudimentary research to substantiate it. Did Harrison make a survey of musicians and critics before thus pontificating? Not bloody likely. So I decided to ask a few musicians (a) if they'd read *The Agony of Modern Music*, and (b) how they felt about it.

Claus Ogerman, who has left the popular music and jazz worlds to write his own beautiful and of course tonal "classical" music in Munich, told me on the telephone: "It's fantastic. Tremendous. I hadn't read it in twenty years, and after we talked maybe three weeks ago, I pulled it out and I finished it again. Every word holds up today. And it's amazing that I didn't know the world was so crazy in the early '50s, already — conspiracies between the press and modern composers. It's unbelievable what was going on."

Film composer Allyn Ferguson, whose credentials as a scholar, musician, composer, and teacher (at Stanford) are impeccable, said of *The Agony of Modern Music*, "I agreed with a lot of it, although I thought he went too far."

So did Henry. At the end of *The Agony of Modern Music*, he asserts that "jazz is modern music, and nothing else is." In *Serious Music*, he somewhat recants, saying that the statement depends on how you define jazz. Further: "I may confess now that in stating it thus dogmatically I was influenced by my delight in what I knew would be regarded as an outrageous formulation." He says that he was influenced by a recipe for scrapple encountered in cook-book in Philadelphia. It concluded, "This is scrapple, and nothing

else is!" He continued:

"But in applying the formula to jazz as modern music, I discovered that the opinion was more offensive than the manner of its expression. Even those who agreed, more or less secretly, with my assessment of the state of contemporary Serious Music found it horrendous. They might concur with the composer who said, privately, 'Pleasants is about seventy-five percent right, but we don't want *him* telling us.' [Now that Henry's gone, I can tell you that the composer was Marc Blitzstein.] But my suggesting that jazz might be a music worth taking seriously, that it might be better music than what the Serious composer was writing, was treason."

Allyn Ferguson said, "I thought that Arnold Schoenberg was a terribly bright man and a fine musician who, in his effort to change the system, opened the floodgates for every musical charlatan of the twentieth century who wanted to call himself a composer."

Another film composer, Patrick Williams, said, "I certainly remember the influence that book had on me." And Terry Teachout, a former musician and one of the few critics in America to write equally on jazz and classical music, said, "My thinking was already set in that direction before I ever read book, but it certainly reaffirmed it."

The late Hugo Friedhofer had great respect for Henry's thinking, and in fact became (I think through me, but I can't remember for sure) one of Henry's many correspondents. And I have received any number of letters, besides that of Dave Brubeck, concurring with Henry's basic perceptions, some having read his books, others saying that they certainly intended to now.

One of Bill Evans early idols was Oscar Peterson. Later, in chord voicings and the approach to tone in ballads, you hear Bill's influence on Oscar. I was listening recently to two CDs of Gershwin music by Percy Faith. Robert Farnon always said that one of his influences was Percy Faith, in whose orchestra he played trumpet at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the late 1930s. In Percy's recording of Gershwin material, I hear passages that sound remarkably like Farnon, including the use of vibes as a color or reinforcing instrument, the use of woodwinds in fill passages, string voicings, and the like. And, since these Gershwin performances were recorded in the late 1950s, when every arranger in the world (it seems) had the Farnon recordings from England, I have to wonder whether I am hearing Percy's influence on Bob or Bob's influence on Percy.

Thus it is too as I read *Serious Music* — and *All that Jazz*. By the time Henry wrote it, he and I had been friends for several years. He had written of jazz and jazz musicians from Europe, and he knew few of them. I introduced him to

one after another of those he admired, probably in Jim and Andy's bar. We discussed music endlessly. It is a given that he was one of the early influences on my writings about music. Now, encountering the similarity of our perception, indeed the great closeness of our thought, I find myself wondering whether this is Henry's influence on me or my influence on Henry. There is perhaps a little of both.

For example, I have for years been muttering something to the effect that the worst thing to happen to jazz as an art form was its discovery that it *was* an art form. It became *aware of itself*. Henry said it better, and more fully, in *Serious Music*:

Music is not an art of the intellect, and its greatest practitioners, while intelligent, as a rule, have rarely been intellectuals. European music grew steadily more intellectual during the nineteenth century, to be sure — Wagner, especially, having been a kind of intellectual monster — but this may well be considered a symptom of its decline.

Intellect is, unfortunately, inseparable from self-consciousness. When a music becomes self-conscious it has lost its innocence. And when it has lost its innocence it has also lost one of its essential and affective attributes. Jazz, too, has lost its innocence in the past twenty years But the American Popular idiom, in which jazz, however defined, is only one of many styles, continues to be fed from innocent sources, and thus it continues, for the time being, at least, to survive as a living art.

Note the slightly ominous “for the time being, at least.” Low tremolo in the cellos, please. Thirty years have passed since Henry wrote that. Jazz has achieved ever higher levels of self-conscious, the process having reached an Everest of sorts in the piano-playing of Brad Mehldau, who, in the liner notes he writes for his CDs, quotes Goethe and Emerson and stuff, proclaims his own brilliance, says things like, “The constant comparison of this trio with the Bill Evans trio by critics has been a thorn in my side” (I’ll just bet it has) and tells you how to go about the rewarding task of listening to him. The result is a mannered and curiously bloodless kind of playing from a musician of enormous potential. But he never escapes from that self-looking-upon-the-self that is the essence and maybe the point of jazz, and maybe, in the larger sense, of all good art. On the contrary, he is always the self-looking-at-the-self. Interestingly, some critics buy it, perhaps because he gives those who couldn’t spell a B-flat chord something they can say to lend the impression that they could if they only wanted to.

Henry wrote:

But Schoenberg's gamble on an adventurous and brainy theory reckoned without the immutability of human musical instinct, ignoring the implications of the cadences of speech and the insistent pulse of the human body. And Stravinsky, looking for sustenance in a tidy neoclassicism spiced with fashionable dissonance, fell afoul of his own cleverness and has been floundering ever since, including a discreditable pass at serialism.

There may be a factor hidden even deeper than speech cadences and, I would add, the intervallic inflections of speech. The July 24, 2000, issue of *Newsweek* carried an article reporting that research indicates the brain may be set up in a way that is responsive to music and its “vocabulary.” At the University of Toronto, psychologist Sandra Trehub plays music for infants from six to nine months old. She says they become more alert when the tempo or pitch changes. Trehub is “trying to shed light on whether the human brain comes preloaded with music software the way a laptop comes preloaded with Windows. In one test, Trehub varies the pitch, tempo and melodic contour of music, and finds that babies can detect changes in all three. The infants recognize that a melody whose pitch or tempo has changed is the same melody, for instance, suggesting that they have a rudimentary knowledge of music's components.”

I question the use of the word “understanding”, especially as applied to an infant. The process is sub-intellectual, and “response” would be a better word. The report continues: “The real surprise, though, comes when Trehub plays consonant (pleasant) and dissonant passages in an attempt to tease out whether our musical preferences are shaped by culture alone or wired into our brain from birth. Infants, she finds, smile when the air is filled with perfect fourths and perfect fifths But babies hate the ugly tritone, in which two notes are separated by six half steps, like C and F sharp, and sound so unresolved and unstable that in medieval times it was known as “the devil.”

Actually, it was called *diabolus in musica*, or *the devil in music*. And the use of the terms “consonant” and “dissonant” is a little shaky. Nonetheless, the observations are interesting. Trehub thinks this response amounts to a biologically based preference that “may explain the inclusion of perfect fifths and fourths in music across cultures and across centuries,” says Trehub. The article continued:

At a recent conference of the New York Academy of Sciences, Trehub and dozens of other scientists interspersed their PET scans and MRIs with snatches of Celine Dion and Stravinsky as they reported on the biological foundations of music. Besides the musical babies, several other lines of evidence suggest that the human brain is wired for music, and that some forms of intelligence are enhanced by music. Perhaps the most striking hint that the brain holds a special place in its gray matter for music is that people can typically remember scores of tunes, and recognize hundreds more. But we can recall only snatches of a few prose passages ("Four score and seven years ago..."). Also, music affects the mind in powerful ways: it not only incites passion, belligerence, serenity or fear, but does so even in people who do not know from experience, for instance, that a particular crescendo means the killer is about to pop out on the movie screen. All in all, says psychologist Isabelle Peretz of the University of Montreal, "the brain seems to be specialized for music."

The temporal lobes of the brain, just behind the ears, act as the music center. When neurosurgeons tickle these regions with a probe, patients have been known to hear tunes so vividly that they ask, "Why is there a phonograph in the operating room?"

The *Newsweek* report said: "The most controversial finding about the musical mind is that learning music can help children do better at math."

When a researcher at the recent conference in New York brought up these studies, he got an auditoriumful of laughs. Yet the link, reported in 1997 by Gordon Shaw of the University of California, Irvine, and Frances Rauscher at the University of Wisconsin, has held up. Last year Shaw compared three groups of second graders: 26 got piano instruction plus practice with a math video game, 29 received extra English lessons plus the math game and 28 got no special lessons. After four months the piano kids scored 15 percent to 41 percent higher on a test of ratios and fractions than the other kids. This year, Shaw reported that music can help bridge a socioeconomic gap. He compared second graders in inner-city Los Angeles to fourth and fifth graders in more affluent Orange County, Calif. After a year . . . the second graders who received twice-a-week piano training in school scored as well as the fourth graders, who did not; half of the second graders scored as well

as fifth graders.

But might music work its magic simply by making school more enjoyable, or because music lessons bring kids more one-on-one time with teachers? If that were so, then music should bring about improvements in many subjects. But it doesn't. Although kids who receive music training often improve somewhat across the board due to the "good mood" and attention effects, finds psychologist Martin Gardiner of Brown University, "they just shoot ahead in math. This can't be explained by social effects or attention alone. There is something specific about music and math." That something might be that music involves proportions, ratios, sequences — all of which underlie mathematical reasoning.

These researchers and the reporter writing about them might have cited Leibniz, who said about three hundred years ago that music was a way of counting without knowing we are counting. And no one apparently, during this conference, observed that *hearing* is a warning system that enhances survival, for it can *instantly* classify sounds and the direction they are coming from, whether running water, the hiss of a snake, the tones of a dog's voice whether threatening or happy, the roar of a lion, the cry of a baby and a mother's voice, which a baby can identify within days of birth, each of these noises producing an *instant* and appropriate reaction. Most of us can tell the denomination of a coin by the ring it makes hitting a sidewalk. I can identify a voice on a telephone, as I'm sure you can, within two or three words, and I can sometimes identify the caller just from the sound of a breath taken in before speaking. Those who own several cats can tell you which of them is giving voice, and whether the sound indicates that it's kitty's dinner time or a desire to go out. *This* is what hearing is for and what it does, and *this* is the foundation of music and the origin of speech itself. You respond emotionally to sound before you even "understand" it. Music isn't abstracted speech; speech is a specialized derivative of music, and that is why when musicians try to sever the connection, they risk complete failure to communicate. The *Newsweek* piece continued:

The brain seems to be a sponge for music and, like a sponge in water, is changed by it. The brain seems to be a sponge for music and, like a sponge in water, is changed by it. The brain's left and right hemispheres are connected by a big trunk line called the corpus callosum. When they compared the corpus callosum in 30 nonmusicians with the corpus callosum in 30 professional string and piano players, researchers

led by Dr. Gottfried Schlaug of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston found striking differences. The front part of this thick cable of neurons is larger in musicians, especially if they began their training before the age of 7. The front of the corpus callosum connects the two sides of the prefrontal cortex, the site of planning and foresight. It also connects the two sides of the premotor cortex, where actions are mapped out before they're executed. "These connections are critical for coordinating fast, bi-manual movements" such as those a pianist's hands execute in an allegro movement, says Schlaug. The neural highway connecting the right and left brain may explain something else, too. The right brain is linked to emotion, the left to cognition. The greatest musicians, of course, are not only masters of technique but also adept at infusing their playing with emotion. Perhaps this is why.

Whatever music does to the brain, scientists figured you would have to actually do music to get the effects. Well, maybe not. Researchers led by Dr. Alvaro Pascual-Leone of Beth Israel taught nonmusicians a simple five-finger piano exercise. The volunteers practiced in the lab two hours a day for five days. Not surprisingly, the amount of territory the brain devotes to moving the fingers expanded. But then the scientists had another group think only about practicing that is, the volunteers mentally rehearsed the five-finger sequence, also for two hours at a time. "This changed the cortical map just the way practicing physically did," says Pascual-Leone. "They make fewer mistakes when they played, just as few mistakes as people actually practicing for five days. Mental and physical practice improves performance more than physical practice alone, something we can now explain physiologically."

Pianists Artur Rubinstein and Vladimir Horowitz were legendary for hating to practice. Rubinstein simply disliked sitting in front of the piano for hours on end; Horowitz feared that the feel and feedback of pianos other than his beloved Steinway would hurt his concert performance. But both men engaged in extensive mental rehearsals. "Mental imagery may activate the same regions of the brain as actual practice, and produce the same changes in synapses," says Josef Rauschecker of Georgetown University. Advice to parents trying to get children to practice: keep this to yourself.

This research tends to verify a theory of the late Robert Offergeld. Bob believed that when one builds technique at a very early age, practice in later years is unnecessary. But

anyone who builds technique later in life has to work hard to maintain it. Glenn Gould told me he never practiced; he was an early virtuoso. "Never?" I said, incredulous.

"Well, rarely," he said. "I think a piece through. If I encounter some special digital problem, I may go to the keyboard to work it out, but otherwise, no, I never practice."

Neither did Harry James. His close friend Clark Terry, who considers him a remarkable trumpet player, said that when the James band was working only weekends in Los Vegas, Harry would put the horn down on Sunday night and never even pick it up until the next week, then sail instantly into one of his bravura trumpet showpieces.

Many opera singers rehearse in the mind. So do athletes. A high-jumper will repeatedly run every detail of a jump in his or her mind.

But to return to our central point, neurological research tends to reinforce the perception that there is something implicit, ingrained, natural in tonality, and the attempt to suspend it is the aberration.

And some jazz musicians too, having explored chromatic harmonic usage, began experiments in the abandonment of anything likely to orient the listener to what they were doing. "The pattern of rejection," Henry wrote, "has been repeated, almost needless to say, with the New Jazz of the 1960s — Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp, Charles Lloyd, etc."

Farther in the book, he notes that "both Lloyd and Shepp . . . in their uninhibited and picturesque exhibitionism, which extends to conspicuously outlandish attire, achieve a kind of inverse showmanship. They manage, in a bizarre fashion, to be entertaining."

Remember my description of the career of the painter Bill Ronald in an earlier issue? And let us not forget the flamboyance of Salvador Dali, although Dali differed in that he was an artist of true brilliance. Henry wrote:

The young avant-garde jazz musician, in his quest of self-expression, acknowledges neither harmonic nor melodic restraints. The man with a horn just blows, and when two or more players are gathered together, they may all blow at once. The drummer wants to liberate himself from the tedium of providing a steady pulse. He wants to play "melodically" and to try his hand at eccentric rhythms. And the bass player, whose Baroque-like *continuo* line had, in bop, shared both rhythm and harmonic responsibilities with pianist and drummer, is impatient with "playing time."

This is musical anarchy, and it has been denounced as anarchy by any number of older jazz musicians, including bop musicians . . .

True. But when it worked, the effect could be magnificent, as in the trio recordings of Bill Evans with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian. There are entire passages in their recordings wherein *no one* is playing time, and yet the pulse is always *there*, because *they* know where it is. Their security is almost awesome. But few jazz musicians reach, or ever have reached, such heights of brilliance. Most of the time these experiments remind me of a bad tenor player who used to drive Dizzy Gillespie up the wall when he would impose himself on the Minton's sessions. Dizzy called him Demon, and said, "He was the original freedom player. Freedom from rhythm, freedom from melody, and freedom from harmony." And, indirectly, that tells you what Dizzy thought of the "freedom" players.

Some months after Henry died, I came across a comment by a critic named Calvin Wilson. Of pianists Matthew Shipp and Andrew Hill, he said, "Frequently their music has been unencumbered by chord changes, but so passionate are their compositions and performances that questions of accessibility are more or less moot." Had Henry been alive, I'd have sent that to him. He wrote in *Serious Music*:

Recourse to shock and gimmickry, to silly eccentricity and pompous vulgarity, is the last resort of any art that has lost its capacity to make itself attractive to a paying public by more decorous means — any art, in short, that begins to sense its own impending obsolescence. The condition of jazz is not dissimilar to that of Serious music, the distinction being that the Serious-music audience, having reconciled itself to aural assault as a tariff on Beethoven and Brahms, is rather beyond shock. For shock, following an initial reaction of indignation or excitement, is easily absorbed.

Kousevitsky said that the ear of man was like the back of a mule. Beaten long enough, it could get used to anything. Henry continued, repeatedly drawing parallels to the twentieth-century history of "classical" music:

Jazz critics are as bewildered as anybody else by what is going on in jazz today, and they do not, as a rule, like what they hear. But a considerable portion of the blame must fall upon them. In their innocent eagerness to see jazz established as an art form, they encouraged musicians in the cultivation of high-falutin attitudes and highbrow posturing, applauding their divorce from the mass audience and censuring as apostasy every commercial deviation and every "concession" to popular taste

Prisoners of their own commitment and momentum, they could challenge a detail here or there, but they could not acknowledge fundamental error Nothing succeeds like scandal in this esthetically decadent age; and it would sometimes seem that only scandal succeeds. A unanimous sounding of the alarm, a coordinated denunciation, might just conceivably have had a salutary effect, both in Serious music and in jazz. But there will never be unanimity among critics, even assuming a near unanimity of opinion. Some will always seek to distinguish themselves as heralds of progress, and a majority will prefer cautious equivocation to candor. And so there has been just enough denunciation to kindle the essential controversy but not enough to be decisive — or to lend effective support to the numerous musicians who have preferred candor to equivocation.

The young musicians of the avant-garde have known perfectly well that controversy is their only dependable stock-in-trade; and they have sensed instinctively, if they did not determine it wittingly, that jazz had reached a stage — arrived at by Serious Music fifty years ago — where anything goes; that critical timidity had contributed to a state of affairs where nothing was any longer demonstrably bad

All of this had been bothering me before Henry ever wrote the book. He says:

Beethoven, probably, was the first to disclose a unique physiognomy; and from his time on, there was an ever-increasing emphasis on idiosyncratic originality.

The result was not one common style but many styles. Each composer had to develop his own stock-in-trade, his own readily identifiable manner, and particularly his own harmonic manner, with a consequent acceleration of the raid on the not inexhaustible resources of chromatic harmony. Anything he did that reminded the listener of what anybody else had done was promptly chalked up against him as 'reminiscent' or 'imitative'"

We know now that the structural resources available within the traditional frame of reference of European music could not forever yield an infinity of individual styles; nor could composers long support the requirement of continuous and unblemished originality.

Due to a medical emergency, this piece will be completed in the January issue.