

Words *and* Music

By ARTHUR PORGES

“YEAH, it’s a talent, all right,” Lane said gloomily. He emptied his fourth drink, and looked about in envious fascination. “But it’s not like fortune-telling. I can’t make a living out of it. I’ve never even been inside a plush joint like this one before. No

money in music nowadays; people don’t learn instruments—they just listen to hi-fi from the can.”

“You couldn’t get in here with a million.” Carson was complacent. “This room’s strictly for celebrities. Money or not, you gotta be known.

No one else heard the music, but it was a lovely overture.

The only trouble was—the curtain was about to go up!

Congressmen fly down from Washington; movie and TV stars drop by for drinks, and to be seen. The place is always crawling with V.I.P.'s"

The little man was wistful. "Yeah, the classiest crowd I've ever seen. Even the music's special: 'Pomp and Circumstance' from every other table."

"Fine, I see you're getting tuned up. Let's have that demonstration now, okay? I can't promise a thing, but I got friends here in New York. We might get you a good spot on TV. Eight, ten weeks on a high-priced quiz show could do a lot for your bank account."

"It's all right with me," Lane said, brightening a little. "Where should I start?"

"Try that gal over there, huh?"

"You gotta remember," Lane reminded him, "it's not definite like words. Just atmosphere, mostly. The person's character and general background. An idea what's on their mind—even a peek into the future now and then."

"That so?" Carson was impressed. "Sounds like quite a deal to me."

"Lemme explain first what it's like, so there won't be any misunderstandings. For instance, there was a guy I went to school with. His folks were set on making him a doctor. He was agreeable, but I didn't hear any medical music from

him—nothing like it. Used to hear other kinds, especially one set of themes. I didn't know my stuff then, so it took me quite a while to identify the music. Know what? It was that suite, 'The Planets,' by Holst."

Carson leaned forward, eyebrows raised. "'The Planets'? Greek to me; I'm a Welk fan myself. What's the point?"

LANE raised an admonitory finger and laid it along his big nose. "That kid wound up at Mt. Wilson, a first class astronomer. He found out something new about the planet Mercury. Forget what it was. If I'd known then what a talent I had, I could've predicted the whole thing."

"Say," Carson exclaimed in admiration, "that's pretty neat! You hear a piece about planets—hear it inside your head, right?—and the guy turns out to be an astronomer."

"Yeah, but I can't make a dime. All these years a music teacher, starving in three-four time," he added sourly.

"We'll change that pretty damn quick. You got a talent there. Go ahead, see what you can do with the woman. But I give you fair warning—I know her."

"This is on the level," Lane said, blearily resentful.

"I'm only kidding."

"Okay, then. Here goes."

He stared at the woman.

She twisted her creamy bare shoulders uneasily, and stopped smiling at her sleek companion.

"Well, what do you hear?" Carson demanded impatiently.

"Mendelssohn. Easy one: 'Wedding March.' Kinda jazzed up, though."

"Ha! Anything else?"

"Clicking sounds, and a whir."

"That's not music." There was naked suspicion in Carson's voice.

"It's never all music. Plain sounds, too. Remember, noise and melody are just vibrations. It's just a matter of how they're organized."

Carson reflected. "Clicking and whirring. What the devil—say-y-y!"

"Right, ain't I?" Lane demanded, morosely triumphant. "It always makes sense if you think it through."

"It does at that. Damn good sense! If I didn't know for a fact that she just hit New York—you sure you haven't met her before?"

"I told you this was straight! I don't know the dame from your grandmother. It's a talent, that's all."

"Don't get mad. It hasn't sunk in yet. See, that's Rita Howard, the movie star. Married seven times, some legal."

"Mendelssohn," Lane said with satisfaction. "What about the whirr, clackety-clack?"

"Simple, if you know Rita. She's nuts about roulette. Practically haunts Vegas. Never has a dime. Say, try her some more; she oughta be good for a whole concert."

With a shrug, the little man fixed his gaze again. He began to hum a scrap of melody. His voice was harsh but deadly accurate. "Tough one," he muttered. "Not a war-horse like Mendelssohn. But it'll come. Dum de dum dah. Aha! Tricky. Roussel: 'The Spider's Banquet.'"

"That's a song? Helluva title, if you ask me."

"Orchestral piece. Fits, doesn't it? Seven husbands, you said."

"I get it—she's like a spider! Rita's sucked plenty of men dry, all right. And the latest victim's pouring drinks into her right now. Well, at least no spider has her curves! You're all right, Lane—a genius!"

"I got a talent. But it don't buy any groceries."

"It will. That's a promise, Boy! This could be a big thing. Let's give it another whirl. Take that big, red-faced bird over there. What do you get from him?"

"**L**EMME listen . . . Sounds like a dog growling, that possible? Must be; it's coming through plain. A big dog. A mean one. Music, too. Another toughie. You sure pick 'em. Liszt? No, Berlioz. Not a

major work. Overture, I think. Wait, it's coming. Dum dah dee-dah. Know it well. Got it! 'Judges of the Secret Court.' Sure, that's a composition; don't look so surprised. Welk don't play this one."

Carson studied him in awe. "Well, I'm damned. A bull's eye. That guy's Senator Crawford, a big shot on the Judiciary Committee. They call him a watch dog; some say more of a mad dog. You're batting a thousand."

"He was easy," Lane said, without conceit. He picked up the empty glass and set it down again. His host took the hint, beckoning to a waiter.

"**T**WO more Martinis, very dry."

Lane was peering after the waiter. "He's mad at us and the world," the little man muttered. "Hate music blasting out of him like a ninety-piece orchestra. 'Vile Race of Courtiers' from 'Rigoletto.'"

"Hell with him," Carson grunted. "See that fellow over there, the little plump one with buck teeth, grinning like a happy shark?"

"Yeah. I'll work him for you." He gazed steadily at the man, who looked back at Lane, grinned wider and nodded.

"Doesn't know you," Carson sneered, "but that S.O.B. would shine up to Judas if he thought it might pay off some time! Since you're here, he assumes you're somebody im-

portant. What're you getting?"

"A cinch, this one. It's played to death. 'La Gazza Ladra.'"

"What in hell's that? Why can't they have the English names?"

"'Gazza Ladra.' Thieving magpie. Overture by Rossini."

"Thieving mag—good boy!" Carson chuckled delightedly. "Talk about a crook! Pearson had the Honorable J. Calvert Bangs tagged months ago. Oh, brother—and him howling smear and libel all over Washington!"

The little man sucked at his drink. He hiccupped. "Told you it works."

"One more, huh?" Carson said. "This is fun. Wednesday I'll get Jim Stein to meet us here. You got a great gimmick, man, and Stein's the one to do things with it."

"The TV producer?"

"That's him. Movies, too. Look, get the guy leaving! The chunky character in the dark suit. There, he's stopped by the door."

"Okay." Lane peered vacantly at the tense, stony-faced man. "Ha. Should know this one. I'm a little tight, and that slows me up. Rimsky-Korsakov... or Rachmaninov? Some Russian, that's for sure. Romantic School. Classical theme, too, weaving in and out. Whaddya know about that? Queer combination: classical and romantic. Mo-

zart? No, Haydn. Can't get 'em. Noises, too. Whistles. I hear whistles."

"Whistles?" Carson said. "What kind of character is this? A wolf?"

"Not that kind. Shrill, *thin* whistles, like something moving high and fast. Real high up; sounds like fifty, sixty thousand feet . . . Music again. Can't place 'em when I'm tight. He's gone, anyway. Who was he?"

"Damned if I know—just thought he looked interesting. Some executive, I bet; one of those hard faces. See if you can place that music."

"It'll come, but not now. After I sober up. Think of 'em easy tomorrow. Know the stuff well. Glazounov, maybe?"

"If you can't, you can't. I'll get a line on the man. Maybe by Wednesday you—"

"Sure, I never miss, only I'm tight. Spent twenty years studying music. Should have my own ensemble. Better—shoulda learned to be a butcher! Ever hear of a butcher going broke?"

"You've made your point. Well, be here Wednesday at three. Stein and I might come up with a proposition." They left.

ON Wednesday they shared a table with Stein.

Stein was a small, almost dwarfish man, redeemed from ugliness only by eyes which

were liquid brown and compassionate. He drank milk. "My stomach's giving me hell," he moaned.

"Too bad," Lane said politely, watching him with furtive awe. Stein's income was reputed to exceed half a million yearly.

"Isn't it? Took me thirty years to afford decent food, and now I can't eat it." He gulped morosely. "It's the strain. First World War II; then Korea; next Suez. Never any let-up. A man worries about his grandchildren. And no policy you can count on. We fight in Europe—we defend the U. S. only. Arm—stop arming. Make bigger bombs—junk 'em all. The whole world's crazy! Now Russia's screaming at England and France again. Kick out the American missile bases, or we might have to attack. They say thirty or forty Russian rockets could destroy England and we'd have a rough time hitting back from here." He glared at his glass. "And for a little splash milk, two dollars, the robbers!"

"Don't cry, Jimmy. You can afford it," Carson grinned. "And quit worrying. Not even the Commies would wipe out France and kill Brigitte Bardot!" He winked at Lane. "Well, I identified our mystery man from the other day. If you spotted the music, let's see how close they fit."

"You bet I got the music!"

And I was close, too, tight or not. Funny thing, both pieces were about islands. Ain't that something?"

"Islands? I don't see that. You must be off base this time, Lane."

"Like hell! I never miss. Rachmaninov: 'The Isle of the Dead.' That's the Russian one. Remember, I mentioned Rachmaninov. Not so easy, but I'm sure now. The classic was no push-over, either. Haydn: 'The Uninhabited Island.' Gloomy, almost threatening readings. But those whistles high up don't mean a thing to me."

Carson's face was suddenly gray and flaccid. "No," he said half to himself. "They

can't be that crazy. It's just more bluff!"

Stein looked at him in momentary wonder, and Lane thrust out his chin.

"Ain't I right?" he demanded belligerently. "'Isle of the Dead.' 'The Uninhabited Island.' And forty whistling things high up. It's gotta fit in somewhere. I'm never wrong on this stuff. Who was the guy, anyhow?"

"The Russian Ambassador to England," Carson said. "The one they just recalled." They looked at each other in horror while Stein, hardly listening, his thoughts on the worrisome headlines, quietly sipped his milk.

END

THE IDEA THAT GREW AND GREW

Back in 1910, Elmer A. Sperry, a doctor of engineering, decided to put a puzzling toy to work. The gyroscope had been invented centuries before by the Chinese, had fascinated many—scientists included—by its refusal to be anything but perpendicular, and its casual disregard of the magnetic north pole. Sperry started the Sperry Gyroscope Company with one employee and a dinky low-rental office, and one job—a gyro-compass for the U.S.S. *Delaware*. When that proved successful, ships everywhere ordered these compasses that disregarded the buffeting of storms.

Half a century of stabilizing everything from ships to spaceships has been anything but stabilizing for the Sperry outfit. It now has over 100,000 employees in nearly 100 plants throughout the world, has passed the billion-dollar-a-year mark, and shows no signs of slowing down.

What once was an item for Christmas stockings is an integral part of this missile, rocket and satellite age, perfectly obvious *after* Sperry put it to work, not before. Is there anything else as profitably lying around in nursery or rumpus room? Wouldn't surprise us a bit!