

Keeping Time

Readings
in Jazz
History

Edited by
**Robert
Walser**

New York Oxford
Oxford University Press
1999

Contents

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogot  Buenos Aires Calcutta
Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul
Karachi Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai
Nairobi Paris S o Paulo Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw
and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright   1999 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Keeping time : readings in jazz history / edited by Robert Walser.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-19-50917-2 (cloth). — ISBN 0-19-509173-6 (paper)

1. Jazz—History and criticism. I. Walser, Robert.

ML5507.K4 1998

97-42484

781.65'09—dc21

CIP
MN

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xii

First Accounts I

1. Sidney Bechet's Musical Philosophy 3
2. "Whence Comes Jazz?" *Walter Kingsley* 5
3. The Location of "Jazz" *New Orleans Times-Picayune* 7
4. A "Serious" Musician Takes Jazz Seriously *Ernest Ansermet* 9
5. "A Negro Explains 'Jazz.'" *James Reese Europe* 12
6. "Jazzing Away Prejudice" *Chicago Defender* 15
7. The "Inventor of Jazz" *Jelly Roll Morton* 16

The Twenties 23

8. Jazzing Around the Globe *Burnet Hershey* 25
9. "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" *Annie Shaw Faulkner* 32
10. Jazz and African Music *Nicholas G. J. Ballantia-Taylor* 36
11. The Man Who Made a Lady out of Jazz (Paul Whiteman)
Hugh C. Ernst 39
12. "The Jazz Problem" *The Etude* 41
13. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" *Langston Hughes* 55
14. A Black Journalist Criticizes Jazz *Dave Peyton* 57
15. "The Caucasian Storms Harlem" *Rudolf Fisher* 60
16. The Appeal of Jazz Explained *R. W. S. Mendl* 65

The Thirties 71

17. What Is Swing? *Louis Armstrong* 73
18. Looking Back at "The Jazz Age" *Alain Locke* 77
19. Don Redman: Portrait of a Bandleader *Roi Ottley* 80
20. Defining "Hot Jazz" *Robert Goffin* 82
21. An Experience in Jazz History *John Hammond* 86
22. On the Road with Count Basie *Billie Holiday* 96
23. Jazz at Carnegie Hall *James Dugan and John Hammond* 101
24. Duke Ellington Explains Swing 106
25. Jazz and Gender During the War Years *Down Beat* 111

The Forties 121

26. "Red Music" *Josef  avoreckj* 123
27. "From Somewhere in France" *Charles Delaney* 129
28. Johnny Otis Remembers Lester Young 132
29. "A People's Music" *Sidney Finkelstein* 135

Printing (last digit). 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

Thus, after three or four sessions, I will evolve an entirely new composition. But it will not be written out, put on a score, until we have been playing it in public quite a while. And—this is important to remember—no good swing orchestra ever plays any composition, with the same effect, twice. So much depends upon psychological and physical conditions. That's why they have to be good musicians. They must play from intuition or instinct backed by a liberal musical education. If they have had a good academic schooling, so much the better. Most of my boys have gone through high school; many of them have had two or three years in college.

And it's a mistake to think of swing men as a dissolute bunch of fellows. True, the unfortunate finish of the justly famous Bix Beiderbecke, who died of pneumonia in his twenty-seventh year, has been charged up to burning the candle at both ends. After a concert or dance engagement he would gather with a few cronies and a few bottles of gin and jam or jive for riotous hours. From that tragedy has arisen the tradition that all swing musicians must be bottle nurses or marijuana smokers. Well, it doesn't work out that way.

Take the Ellington organization. There's no rule against drinking, "reefing," or smoking. But we work at least twelve hours each day. We can't do our work unless we are in good mental and physical condition.

Even more absurd, I think, is the charge that swing encourages sexual immorality. One critic, a scientist, bases such a warning on comparing swing tempo with the beat of the heart—seventy-two to the minute, in each case. Well, that makes it look bad for the United States Army, where the regulation marching cadence is one hundred and thirty-two beats to the minute. No; there's less of the lascivious in swing, by far, than in the seductively beautiful if more stately waltz. The Shag, the Big Apple, the Suzy Q all call for too much physical energy to leave a great deal more for romantic immoralities. Accept this, if you will, as the belief of a conductor who for many years, from his vantage ground, has seen pretty much all that is going on.

Swing, of course, is only part of the story: the young man with the horn knows something of classical backgrounds, and owes much to them. My own efforts have gone beyond swing in such compositions as "Mood Indigo," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Sophisticated Lady," "Prelude to a Kiss," and others. I have been encouraged by the generous comments of Percy Grainger, Leopold Stokowski, and others famous in "legitimate" music. Unquestionably I have been greatly helped by studying Stravinski, Debussy, Respighi, and Gershwin.

In my private life I am seldom eccentric. I do order fifteen suits of clothes at a time and then stick to one of them. I hate to go to bed and hate to get up. I'm pretty sure to be late one hour for a scheduled rehearsal. But I haven't changed a mannerism, an ideal, or a friend since I left Washington in 1924. My home is in Harlem, and I expect it to remain there.

It all started in The Poodle Dog; but it all adds up to a lot of satisfaction at the sharing in the achievement of the Negro race. That's why my greatest hope is that I may live to complete the opera in my mind: the story of the Negro's beginning and his migrations, both physically and spiritually. Maybe I'll call it "Boola"—maybe something else; that won't matter. If I can manage to make it worthy of the subject, it'll be the Tops.

25

Jazz and Gender During the War Years

THE ABILITY OF WOMEN TO SUCCEED AS jazz musicians has been much discussed throughout the music's history, but there are special reasons for the prominence of such debates during the 1930s and '40s. The Depression and World War II brought women into the American work force in unprecedented numbers, creating tensions with prevailing notions of gender identities—how men and women were "supposed to" think and act. The ability to succeed in traditionally male domains seemed incompatible with accepted ideas about "femininity," a conflict that was not really redefined until the feminist accomplishments of the 1960s and 1970s. Magazines such as *Down Beat* exploited these issues to attract attention and boost circulation, but they could not have done so in a vacuum. Arguments about popular all-women big bands—the most famous of which was probably the multiracial International Sweethearts of Rhythm—reflected wider controversies concerning the proper social roles of women.¹

Criticisms of the orchestras varied, as did the defenses offered by the women themselves. Writers on both sides discussed the issue of how women and men might come to perform differently—whether through nature, nurture, or social restrictions. Depending on the writer's agenda, qualities such as intuition, cooperation, and personal attractiveness were made to seem advantageous or crippling. While many jazz critics championed racial equality, gender was different: prejudice and cruel disagreement seem to have been more acceptable for this social category. Despite important changes, these issues are still very much alive in the present; for example, only in 1997 did the Vienna Philharmonic begin to allow female orchestral musicians the opportunity to compete for membership.²

¹Even on the subject of female big bands, these debates were not confined to *Down Beat*, from which the items in this selection are drawn. See also, for example, Gypsy Cooper, "Can Women Swing?" *The Metronome*, September 1936, p. 30. Moreover, the debates continued in the same terms at least into the 1950s; see, for example, "Mrs. Cugat Can't See Gals as Tooters; Kills Glamor," *Down Beat*, May 4, 1951, p. 13. For more sympathetic treatments of the topic, see Nat Henstoff, "Cherchez Les Femmes," *Down Beat*, December 3, 1952, p. 5, and Barry Ulanov, "Is There a Place for Women in Jazz Strictly on a Merit Basis?" *Down Beat*, January 9, 1958, pp. 17, 50.

²Scholarship addressing issues of gender and sexuality in jazz scarcely exists as yet, with a handful of important exceptions; see Hazel V. Carby's article on women's blues, later in this volume, as well as Krin Gabbard, "Signifyin(g) the Phallus: Mo' Better Blues and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet," *Cinema Journal* 32:1 (Fall 1992), pp. 43–62 (reprinted in Gabbard, *Representing Jazz* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 104–30), and David Ake, "Re-Masculating Jazz: Ornette Coleman, 'Lonely Woman,' and the New York Jazz Scene in the Late 1950s," *American Music* 16:1 (Spring 1998) pp. 147–66. For historical accounts of women in jazz, see Leslie Gourse, *Madame Jazz: Contemporary Women Instrumentalists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz, 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music* (n.p.: Wideview Books, 1982), and Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

“Why Women Musicians Are Inferior”

Why is it that outside of a few sepia females the woman musician was never born, capable of “sending” anyone farther than the nearest exit?³ It would seem that even though women are the weaker sex they would still be able to bring more out of a poor, defenseless horn than something that sounds like a cry for help. You can forgive them for lacking guts in their playing but even women should be able to play with feeling and expression and *they never do*.

Have you ever heard a woman saxophonist who didn't get a quavering tone with absolutely uncontrolled vibrato, or a woman brass player who even though she might have some power, still got a brassy, hard, unfinished quality of tone? Masculine strength is not necessary for brass; diminutive Roy Eldridge who towers little more than five feet on a bicycle has the greatest playing range of any trumpet player and looks as if a strong zephyr would blow him right back to New Orleans. Yet women don't seem to be able to develop a lip, which stymies their taking more than one chorus at a time. The mind may be willing but the flesh is weak!

There are several psychological reasons underlying the apparent futility of women in dance orchestras, especially applicable to wind instruments. In the first place, women are as a whole emotionally unstable, which prevents their being consistent performers on musical instruments.

Another point, though it may seem laughable, is the fact that gals are conscious of the facial contortions so necessary in “blowing it out” and limit their power for fear of appearing silly in the eyes of men. Milady's dimples take an awful beating when reaching for the high ones and dearie, was my face red on that last high note!

One reason which is quite important is the fact that until recently tradition has been against women's playing in dance orchestras. Co-education, too, is comparatively a new idea and though many may deny it, heredity is a prime factor in the development of any artisty and where men have had centuries of musical education behind them women have only within the last few years come into their own as musical entertainers.

If women as a whole were compelled to support themselves, there would doubtless be more capable musicians in the female ranks but where careers are unnecessary except for personal gratification there is little incentive to work for perfection. There was never a musician who didn't have to spend untold hours “woodshedding” his parts and women don't seem to have the time, ambition, or the patience to do this. It may be that they are lazy or it may be that with a few exceptions, all of the girl bands in the country are vaudeville bands where the standard of playing is considerably less than it is in dance bands.⁴

³Sepia is a brown color originally derived from ink; the term was used by both black and white writers. This author means to exempt a few black women (probably Bessie Smith and other singers) from his criticism.

⁴“Woodshedding” is rigorous musical practice.

In these show bands, the prime requisite is good looks after which comes playing ability and the art of being able to “hold” three or four other instruments. Witness a certain well known girls' band which features 10 or 12 accordionists. About half the girls actually don't play the instruments but further insult the average musician's intelligence by holding dummy accordions. The other half is made up of two or three who can actually play and a few more who perform the game of “push the button down” on plainly marked bass chords.

Then, the average girl band generally has only a small library, which stag-nates their natural ability, if any, and precludes any possibility of versatility.

Women are better performers on strings and piano, which are essentially sympathetic instruments more in keeping with their temperament. They do NOT shine on wind instruments, however, nor do they make good percussionists. If more girl drummers had cradle rocking experience before their musical endeavors they might come closer to getting on the beat.

Source: Unsigned article, “Why Women Musicians Are Inferior.” *Down Beat*, February 1938, p. 4.

IN THE SAME ISSUE, *DOWN BEAT* PRINTED THIS REPLY TO THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE, penned by the leader of one of the most successful white “all-girl” bands.

“Women Musicians Not Inferior Says Rito Rio”

May I submit a rebuttal to my opponent as to why women musicians are not inferior? I should first like permission from the reader to dwell upon points pertaining to the performance expected from a dance orchestra. The first very essential requirement necessary to obtain desired results is endurance. The members of my orchestra have ridden all day and night in a bus and played a five hour dance job, repeated the same the next day and have received compliments from the promoter on their fine performance. They have also rehearsed several hours together while playing five hours at night for many days in succession and haven't complained. How many times one of our fellow musicians has remarked, “Even men won't do that!”

A second and important point is the feeling, tone, and phrasing which good musicians must obtain. This is a quality which girls alone are more likely to possess because of the aesthetic nature of their sex. I think our mutual public will agree that a warm vibrant tone is much more pleasing than the masculine sock so often emphasized by our men bands.

Rhythm in our modern swing generation is also of most important consideration, and I notice girls, because of their feminine tendency, cooperate to make a rhythm section a united unit dependent on each other, rather than the masculine tendency to lead on his own instrument.

As a last rebuke I feel I am rather taking advantage of my opponent in mentioning the fact that either beautiful music or swing music is much more pleasing with a delightful picture than with the trite male band in its uniform

tuxedo. Girls find a pleasing picture does not detract from good musicianship or from thoroughness and preciseness which help to comprise the attributes of good musicianship.

In a few paragraphs, I have only touched on a few points offered as reasons why Consolidated Radio Artists find it rather pleasurable to offer promoters their girl orchestras and why there is an increasing demand for girl orchestras.

Signing off with most sincere best wishes to our male competitors. Rito Rito and her All Girl Orchestra.

Source: Rito Rito, "Women Musicians Not Inferior Says—Rito Rito," *Down Beat*, February, 1938, p. 4.

THIS FURTHER ATTACK ON FEMALE MUSICIANS APPEARED THE FOLLOWING YEAR. The author offers some interesting arguments about how race and class affect gender. That is, he maintains that the social positions of male jazz musicians within racial and class hierarchies has held back women.

"The Gal Yippers Have No Place in Our Jazz Bands"

There are more swing bands assailing the public with more good jazz than the public can shake a leg at these days. Yet how strange that with this abundance of the right stuff, there is such a dearth of young lovelies who can chirp a tune without causing the boys behind them on the stand (and who knows how many billions sitting beside their radios) to wince as if their ears were being yanked by the roots.

Various unenlightening theories have been advanced. Some even disagree with the premise and crow gallantly that most of the dolls with these bands are yodeling terrific swing music.⁵ But most of the cats will agree that the really hep chirpies are in the inconspicuous minority. There are also the diehards who will admit the vocal shortcomings of their favorite sparrow, but will explain that she gives the band a little much-needed sex appeal, or that the leader is gone on her, or, pointing out her four foot eight height and big black eyes like saucers, will explain, "You gotta admit she's awful cute."

But nobody seems to have bothered to find out why none of these gals (with the few exceptions, of course) can sing a song that won't react like a monkey-wrench thrown into a smooth-working piece of machinery.

Today's swing music is a product of the environment of America's young musicians, who have recognized, or perhaps rather felt, in the negro's inherent musical expression, something which, when they hear it, gives them a definite satisfaction and a desire to attempt to imitate it, as we always try to imitate that which we recognize as the best.

Not many white musicians have been able to emulate exactly, or even closely, the musical expression of the American Negro. Those who come closest are those who have been under the influence of the negro's music for

⁵Not literal yodeling, of course, but this writer's hip slang for "singing."

the longest period of time. They are the men who comprised the New Orleans, Memphis, and Chicago schools. From these, although mostly from the better negro musicians themselves, comes our best swing music today.

America's girls have not had the opportunity to surround themselves with this environment. They've been tending to their knitting preparing themselves either for the kitchen or the career. Grant that those who have been preparing for the career of swing singer have tried to learn from those predecessors who were considered best. Who have they been? Sophie Tucker, Helen Morgan, Ruth Etting, and the rest of that group whose claim to fame lay in their ability to put over a song in a sufficiently novel fashion as to figuratively knock out their listeners. They were soloists and were not attempting to fit their efforts in with any particular idiom as are the gals singing with swing bands today.

The white man started to learn hot jazz by playing it for whatever he could make in the hovels in New Orleans' red light district at the turn of the century. And even up to the present time, while he still tries to learn it, his jazz classroom is the dimly-lighted gin joint in any city where the price he pays for playing the way he wants to play is a salary of maybe one meal a night or whatever the kitty can squeeze out at dawn when work is done.

That has been the heritage of jazz. That has been the background forced upon musicians with wills and souls of their own who wanted to learn and express this new art. So is it any wonder that, excluded (as of course she should have been) from this environment which is the only one which could have given the white girl the insight into what went into making good jazz music, she should be so barren of any appreciation of the finer points of playing jazz on an instrument, let alone trying to interpret it into vocal sounds?

These girls aren't singing jazz. Vocal jazz was originally sounded in the form of the blues, which was (and still is) a purely emotionally-inspired uncultured outpouring of words and vocal sounds expressing a mood.⁶ That's the way Bessie Smith sang, and the way Billie Holiday, Jack Teagarden, and a half dozen more are singing today.

Today's girl singers, poor kids, are the victims of a heritage of classic yodeling. Which is all right in its own back yard, the opera and the light classic. But when they try to produce a vocal job in the jazz idiom with that environmental equipment, they're trying to crossbreed the world's classic vocal background with the emotional blues shouting of the southern Negro, and if that doesn't give us a hell of a hybrid, I'll eat my record collection.

No sir. You can take all your female yowlers these days and feed them to the jitterbugs, one by one. Bunny Berigan summed up the entire idea when, auditioning a particularly sad lot of bags recently, he was heard to comment, "I guess this kind of music just wasn't meant to be sung—anyway by a gal." He's right.

Source: Ted Toll, "The Gal Yippers Have No Place in Our Jazz Bands," *Down Beat*, October 15, 1939, p. 16.

⁶By calling such singing "uncultured," the author evokes "authenticity" but trivializes the musical skills involved—obviously, not everyone who feels deeply sings well. Such backhanded compliments often served to dismiss the musical intelligence and craft of black and female musicians.

THIS LETTER BY BANDLEADER AND SAXOPHONE PLAYER PEGGY GILBERT IS ACTUALLY a reply to the February 1938 article, "Why Women Musicians are Inferior," but it works well as a rebuttal to Ted Toll's later article because it addresses similar arguments about environment and education. The title was tacked on by a *Down Beat* editor; it doesn't fit Gilbert's letter and she was outraged by it.

"How Can You Blow a Horn With a Brassiere?"

Dear Father Superior:

You get up, make a lot of unintelligible noise, and expect the people to shout, "Bravo!" or echo in reverential tones a deep "Amen." You are like a small boy pulling his sister's pigtails when you think she hasn't a chance to fight back. You are the little boy who yells "Sissy!" from the window on the second floor.

If Gene Krupa were a woman, how long do you suppose he would be an ace drummer in Benny Goodman's band? In evening gown, he might still be sensational even hampered by brassiere straps, girdle, skirt, and high heels—but Mrs. G. K. or Miss Anybody couldn't make a one night stand with bags under her eyes. She could be good, but no matter how good, the public, especially the men, would not tolerate an unattractive, second-hand stage prop. And that's one of the superficial reasons women are inferior to men as musicians (*if they are*): their inability to make a career of music because, for women, as a profession it can last at best only a few years.

Ha! We admit it, you say. You're absolutely right, but your line is as old as time. You think you have put women on the pan. You have. But it has been done for ages, Father Superior—ever since Eve—and far better than you could ever do it. Your weak, illogical, ineffectual argument is hardly resented. It's your attitude we resent, because it expresses the attitude of all professional men musicians toward all professional women musicians. A woman has to be a thousand times more talented, has to have a thousand times more initiative even to be recognized as the peer of the least successful man. Why? Because of that age-old prejudice against women, that time-worn idea that women are the weaker sex, that women are innately inferior to men.

So you actually think that because men have had centuries of musical education behind them that the present masculine generation has inherited that knowledge, that talent? That's not worthy of you, Father. We expect better arguments than that. Knowledge is not hereditary, and whether or not talent is present in the chromosomes is still a matter of conjecture. But even if it were, wouldn't a daughter, being a child also of a talented musician, be just as likely to inherit that characteristic—as a son? If we were ladies, of course, we should ignore that thrust and tactfully help you to forget that you rambled a bit out of your sphere. Now, if you had said environment, perhaps we should have agreed. It's a man's world, admittedly. You would be right without having to prove yourself right. You think what millions of men musicians think—and it may be

you are justified. But at least establish a true premise from which to argue (or gripe).

But after all, that's not the issue, is it? Or isn't it? It seems that you, like all the rest, have judged musicians according to sex rather than ability. You have generalized no end to prove your point, always adding in your liberal way "with few exceptions." "Women Musicians Are Inferior"—that's your point, isn't it? You were a bit vague even about that, but the editor kindly clarified the subject in the headline. And why are women musicians inferior (*if they are*)? Since you are not particularly enlightening as to the reasons such a broad statement might be true, we'll hand you a few tips—if you give us an audience and don't rush for the exit because a woman is speaking. We'll use a low, well-modulated voice, and powder our nose and comb our hair.

And then, too, as we have inferred, women are never hired because of their ability as musicians, but as an attraction for the very reason that they are women, and men like to look at attractive women. Consequently, the manager is continually reminding the girls not to take the music so seriously, but to relax, to smile. How can you smile with a horn in your mouth? How can you relax when a girdle is throttling you and the left brassiere strap holds your arm in a vise? If we quaver a little on the high notes, it's because we are asked to do a Houdini—and if we hit an occasional blue note, it's because we play with *too much* feeling, and mascara gets in our eyes. On the other hand, men's orchestras are usually hired because of their ability as musicians. Their good looks, their presentability other than neatness rarely will enter the question. Even the best girl bands in the country have to have an S. A. artist fronting them to captivate the audience while the musicians in the band indulge themselves in that orgy of facial contortions which seems so important to you, Father Superior.⁷

Men have always refused to work with girls, thus not giving them the opportunity to prove their equality. This is especially true of wind instrument players, obviously one of the foci of your attack, Father. Girl violinists and stringed instrument players have had breaks. Descending to the personal for a moment, I wish to add that I have a few girls in my band who could hold first chairs in the best men's bands if given the privilege. But what men's orchestra would consent to such an experiment? A great many men musicians have highly complimented my band saying it was as good or better than their organizations, but if the question of actually giving us an opportunity to establish our equality arose, we should immediately be relegated to an inferior plane and given the form answer A: "It's not being done."

You say that women musicians are inferior because of lack of practice. If that's true, it's because there is no future in music for girl musicians for the reasons previously mentioned. Woodshedding would be fun if we could see there was anything to be gained by it—other than per-

⁷S. A. probably means "sex appeal."

sonal gratification. However, even you should agree as an "artist" that that is an admirable motive in itself. Oddly enough, Father, they take just as much pride as men in their work, and they woodshed as much as men and perhaps more, because of the obstacle of prejudice to be overcome and because of the harsh criticism fired at them from all sides such as that in your article. As for the point you noted that women are not compelled to support themselves, we urge you with apologetic banality to go West, young man. Evidently, you haven't gone farther in that direction than Chicago. Now, in California, it's different. The women support the men—as well as themselves. Step around a little more, Father, and have a looksee. There are several Misses Prima, Eldridge, Musso, and Trumbauer in circulation—and if you are a fair-minded gentleman, be gallant and respond to their "cries for help."⁸

Very humbly yours,

Peggy Gilbert

Source: Peggy Gilbert, "How Can You Blow a Horn With a Brassiere?," *Down Beat*, April 1938, pp. 3, 17.

THE LAST OF THE ARTICLES PRESENTED HERE INGENIOUSLY TURNS THE TABLES. In some ways, it anticipates the persecuted tone adopted by male contributors to the 1980s "backlash" against feminism.⁹

"Here's the Lowdown on 'Two Kinds of Women' "

There are two kinds of women, those who don't like jazz music and admit they don't, and those who don't like jazz music but say they do. The latter always have ulterior motives. They are either shining up to a man who likes his music hot, or else they're married to a hot musician and hate to admit to their friends that they have married a musical "failure." Any normal healthy woman can listen to music with you, dig your reaction before you are sure of it yourself, and beat you to your own comment on it; don't get mad at me too soon, because after you marry her you'll find out she had a way of finding out in advance what you would like to have her like.

Of course, no man ever dares say anything against women. If he does, everyone thinks he is letting out on the whole sex a gripe he has against one of them. The man who says the modern girl is "immoral" is the man towards whom no modern girl has shown any immoral tendencies. When a man says women are faithless, he is saying that one woman is being faithful to someone other than himself. So I'm not saying anything against

women. . . . But I *am* giving my theory on what's throttling our music, and, since the apple does not fall far from the tree, the theory is simple: Women control the public taste, and women do not like jazz!

First, let's see how women control the public taste. Come along with the argument, save your decision until the whistle blows, and if you are a woman we are serving free transfers from here on out. How does the public at large get to hear most of its music? In movies, over the radio, and at dances.

Movies are made for women, with enough put in for men so they won't refuse to take their women to see them. Start keeping count on the movies that are made up of things that interest women, and bore men—mother love dramas, poor shop girl getting millionaire, girl choosing between two men, life and hard times of a pure hearted harlot, business girl forced to choose between love and a career, girl becoming stage success, girl reforming man, love triumphant. Love, gush, slush, country girl's idea of New York swank, of women (and the men who think only of love), and for women—that's the movies. How long since you've seen a bang up good outdoor picture? How long since you've seen a picture about a hard working man doing an interesting job of overcoming some of his problems? How long since you have seen a picture for men? You've grown used to the movies for women—but do any of them mean anything to you? Take a look at a handful of movie magazines. Do you see any advertisements for fishing tackle, pipes, guns, or any of the other commercial products that interest men alone?

Now switch on the radio. You'll concede the daytime programs, from about 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. That leaves about five hours of evening programs for the average man. You listen to them, and you tell me—do you like the advertisements or does the woman like them? Does that smooth sincere announcer sell you, or is his voice working on the women? Of course, they give you a few minutes of good masculine stuff like Fred Allen's burlesques, but just add it up, buddy.

And the same holds for dances. Musicians know they'll go over if they play to the women, and will get a lot of enthusiasm but no jobs if they play for the men. The women decide where they want to go to dance, so you play for them, so you play the music they like.

If you've come this far, draw a total. If movies, radios, and dances cater to women, then the public hears the kind of music women want to hear. If the public never hears jazz it can't ever know what it's about. And we're all against anything we don't understand. So if women won't let jazz be played commercially, jazz will never have an audience.

Do women want jazz to be played commercially, do women like hot music? The answer is, why the hell should they? The stuff comes from march music, doesn't it? It doesn't speak sweetly of love, and relax you like a warm bath. I never heard of women getting excited about a good march. Good jazz is hard masculine music with a whip to it. Women like violins, and jazz deals with drums and trumpets. No fault of women that America is producing no violin music. It is not the fault of women (and of feminine men) that they like only what the classicists call lyric music, while the only music being produced happens to be epic music. But take hot music out of their hands, or they'll starve it to death.

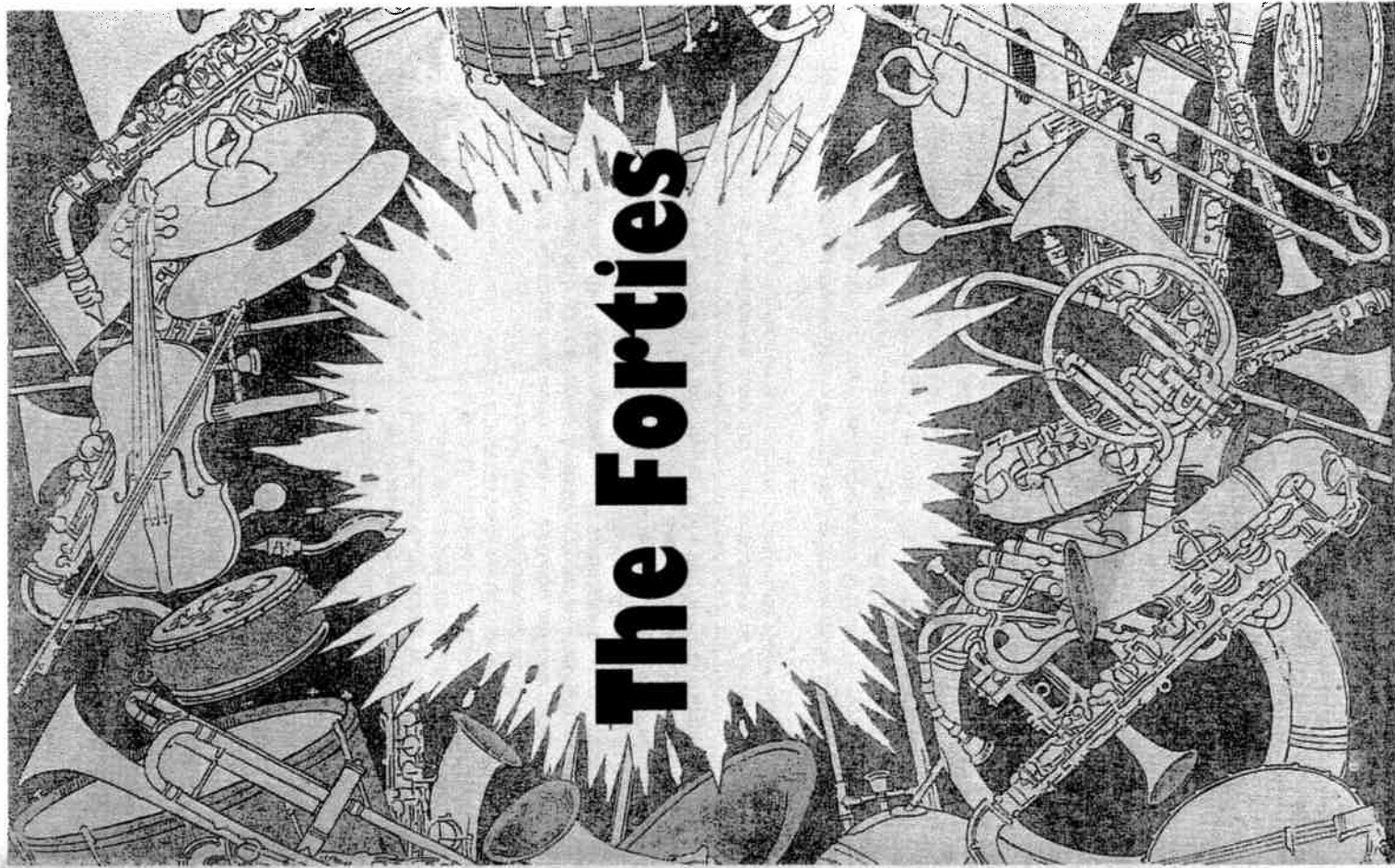
⁸These are references to the respected male jazz musicians Louis Prima, Roy Eldridge, Vido Musso, and Frankie Trumbauer.

⁹See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), and Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1991). "Sending" your audience meant moving them, drawing an enthusiastic response.

You have heard women say they would like jazz if it wasn't so blary, noisy, rough. If the women are pretty enough that sounds like a good objection. Yet when you think it over—what interest can anyone have in music who worries about such superficialities? If the women who control our music don't care how good it is, but insist that it be genteel, sentimental, soothing, and caressing (and accompanied by words like "how'd you get so divine, you soul stirring angel from heaven"), then the men who are beginning to like their hot music straight had better give up.

The way out is not to try to teach women to like jazz. They never will. The only thing to do is to demand proportionate representation for men. Since men are the only ones who produce any music (or, forgetting Bessie, ever have produced any), it doesn't seem to be an exorbitant demand.¹⁰

Source: Marvin Freedman, "Here's the Lowdown on 'Two Kinds of Women,'" *Down Beat*, February 1, 1941, p. 9.



The Forties

¹⁰A reference to blues singer Bessie Smith.