FILM AND TV MUSIC

THE RAINMAKER

SPRING 1957 VOLUME XVI NUMBER 3

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Cover: Burt Lancaster as Starbuck in THE RAINMAKER.

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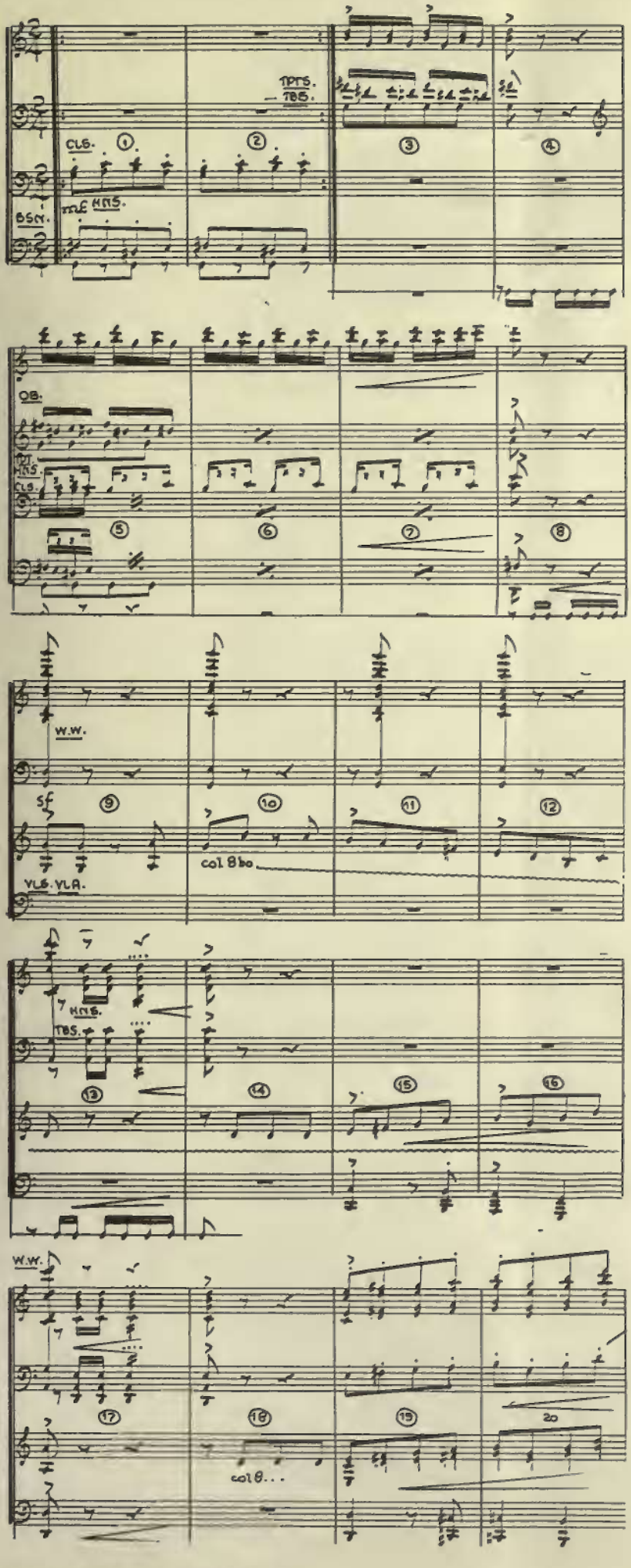


Notes on THE RAINMAKER

Alex North

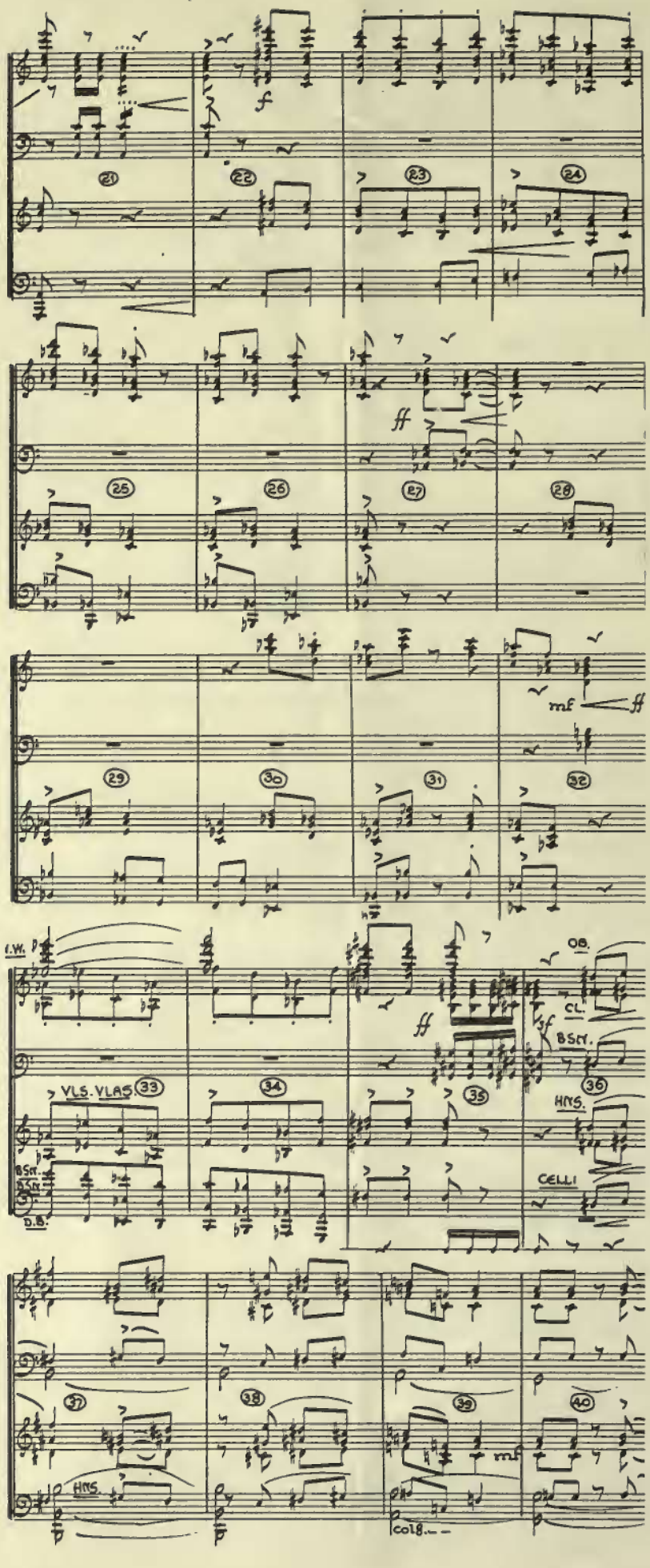
In composing the score for THE RAIN MAKER I was given an opportunity seldom af forded me in that the general story had grea warmth, simplicity and joy, with a genuine heart line. This was a pleasant change from scores have composed for films of a more serious nature with complex characters and plot.

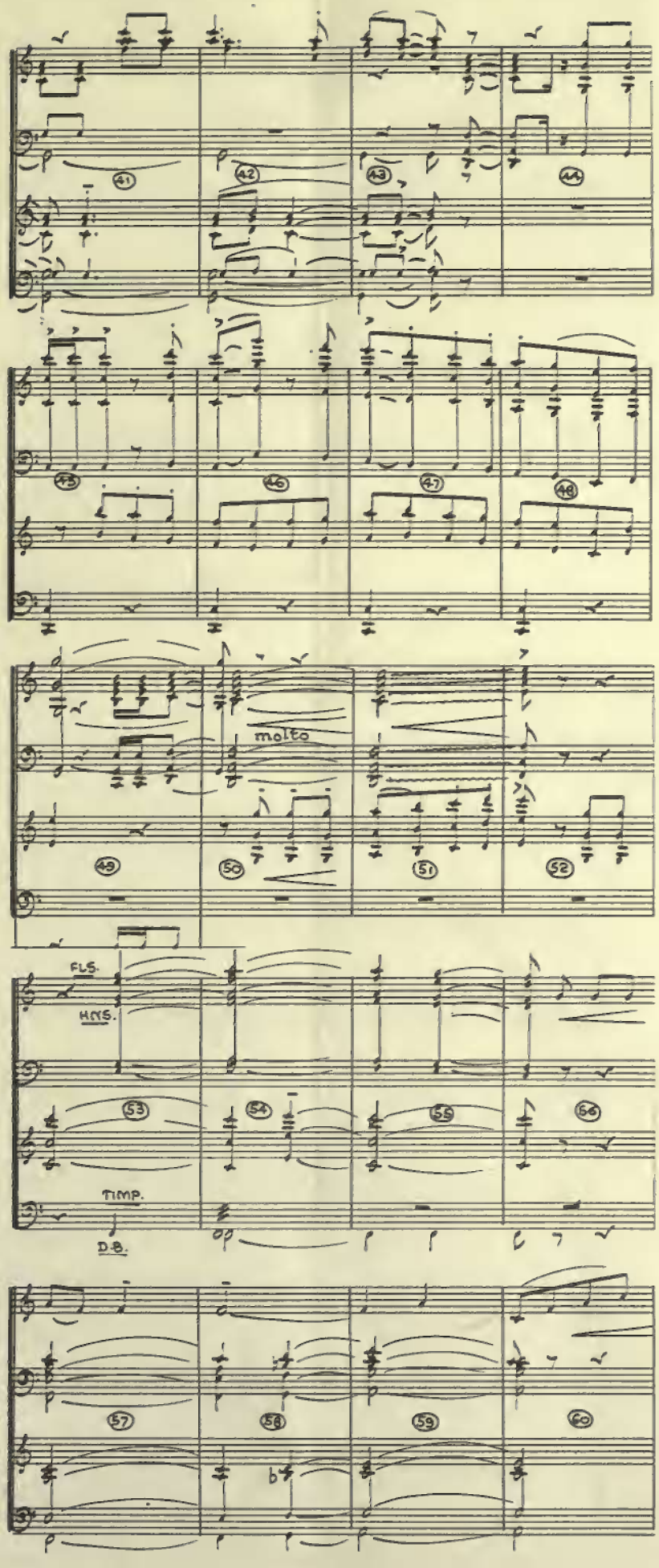
As I read the script it occurred to me that thi story would make a splendid vehicle for a musica and my approach to the over-all film score was t suggest and develop thematic ideas that could ap ply to a stage production. By this I mean that ther were many moments that could very easily hav been projected in song form. With this though in mind I attempted to underline certain scene with music that had the "feel" of unobtrusivel setting the moment for song. Perhaps this attemp is evident only to the composer, but I believe is essential to arrive at some sort of approach an direction before a note is put on paper.

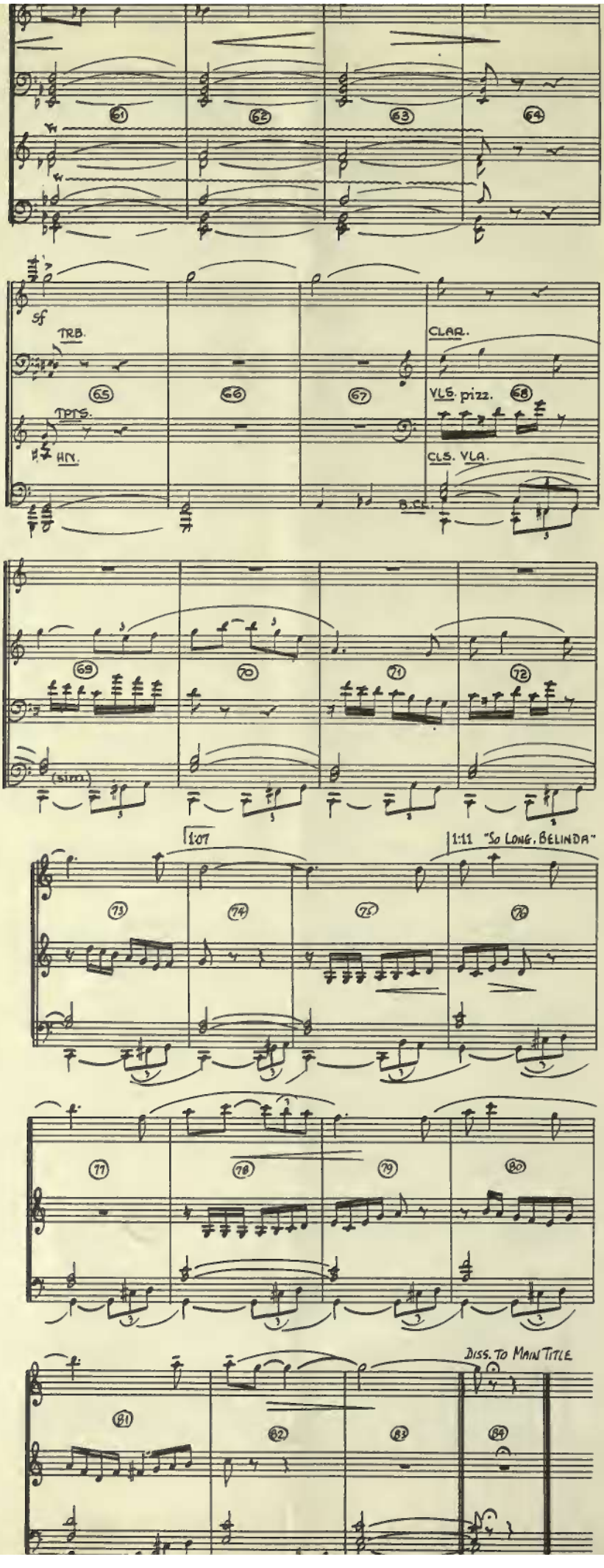
Because of the robustness of the characteriza tions, I tried to evolve music with a definitiv American flavor, without being hillbilly as such Also the texture of the instrumentation had to b transparent and not thick and overpowering, ex cept for rare moments of high emotional tensio

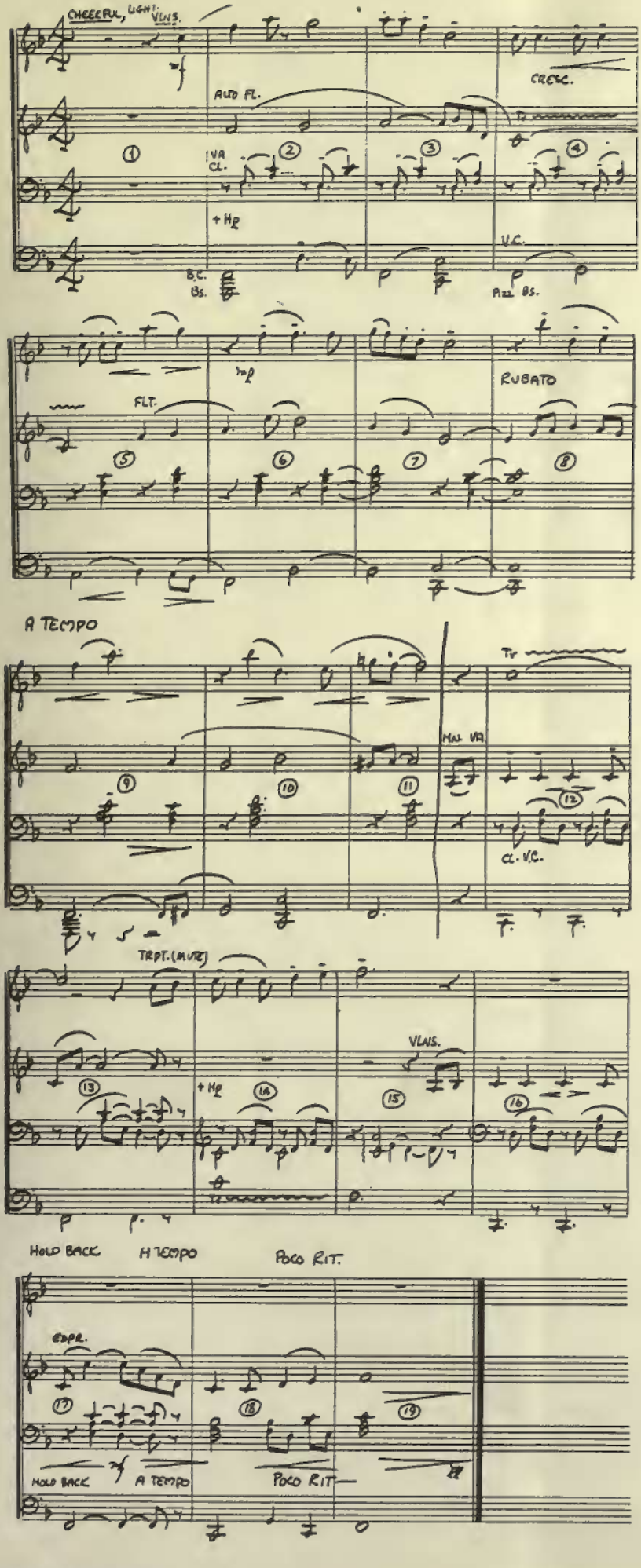
Since the story is straightforward and uncom plicated, I will not attempt to delve into the mys teries of analyzing the musical excerpts. (This ver often can lead to pomposity and pretentiousness.

Example 1 is the prologue, in which Starbuc (Burt Lancaster) attempts to sell his strange ware to simple townfolk. This was written as a musica prelude to the Main Title, which follows it.



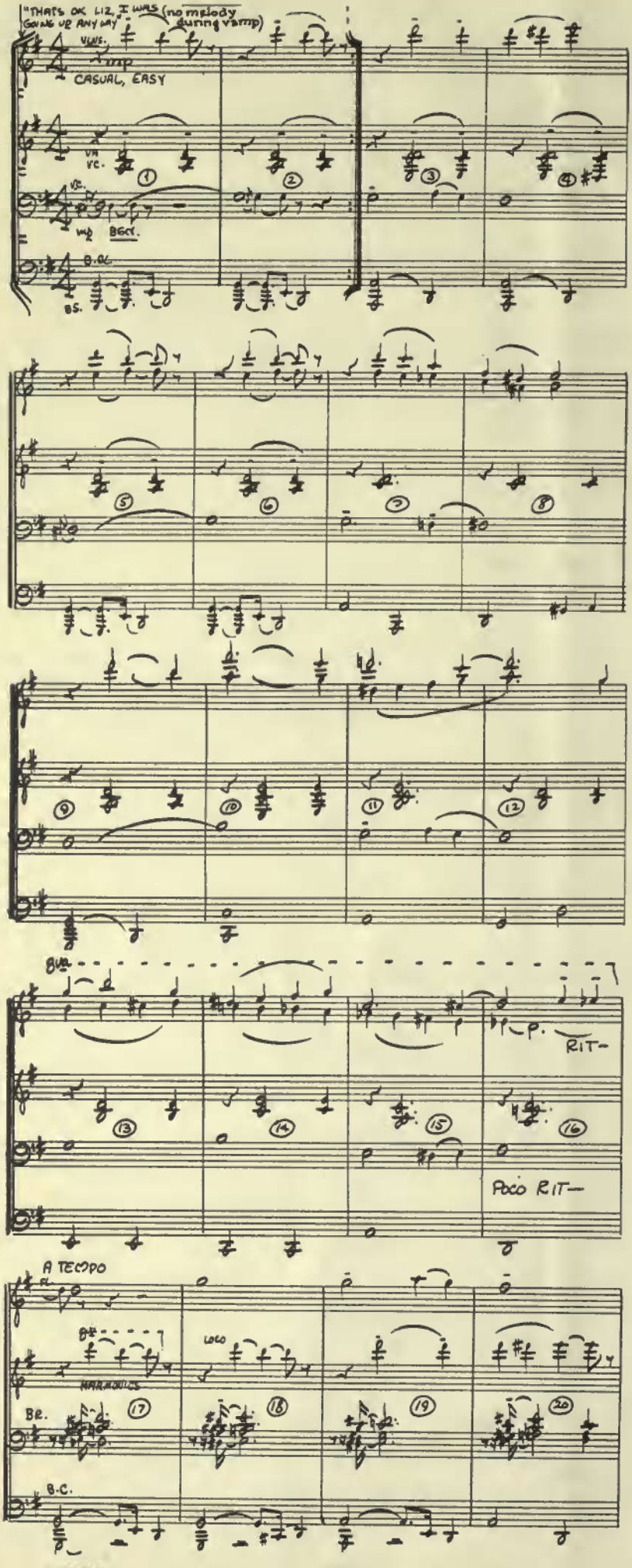




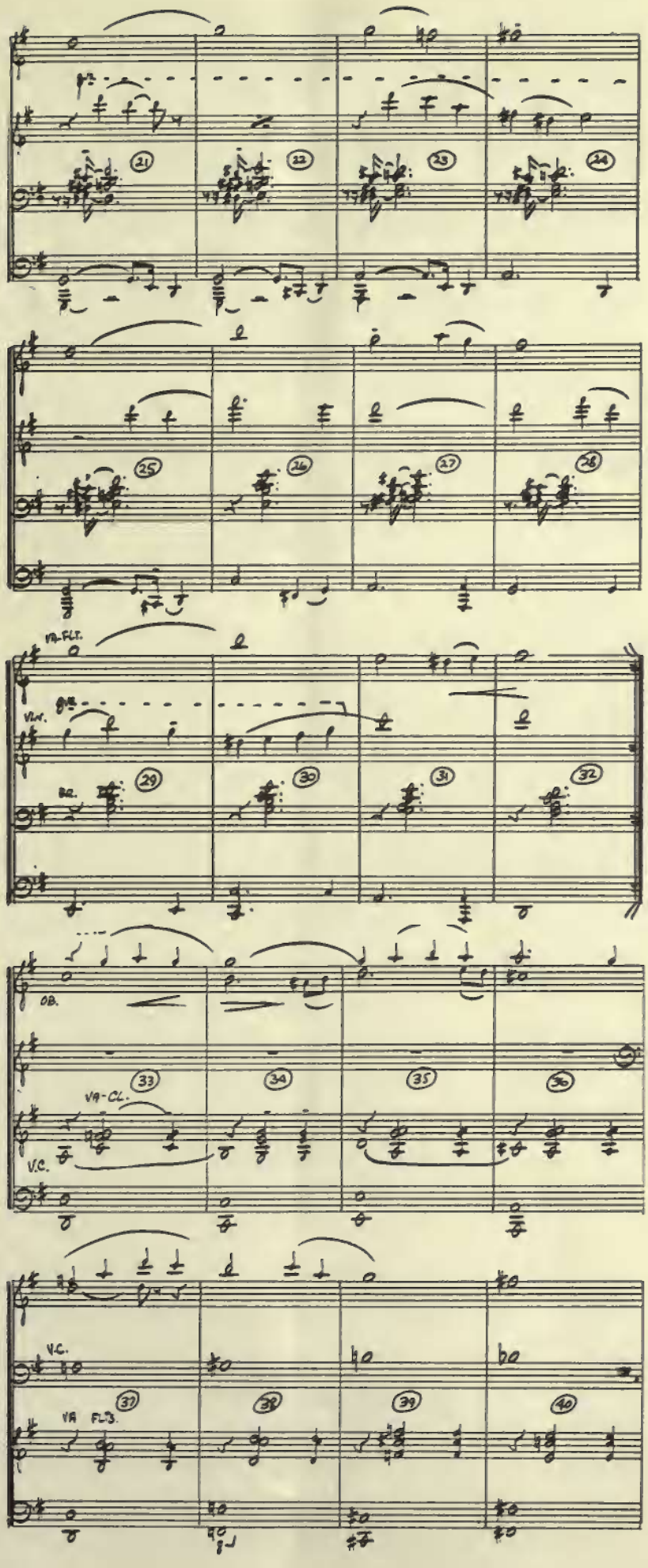


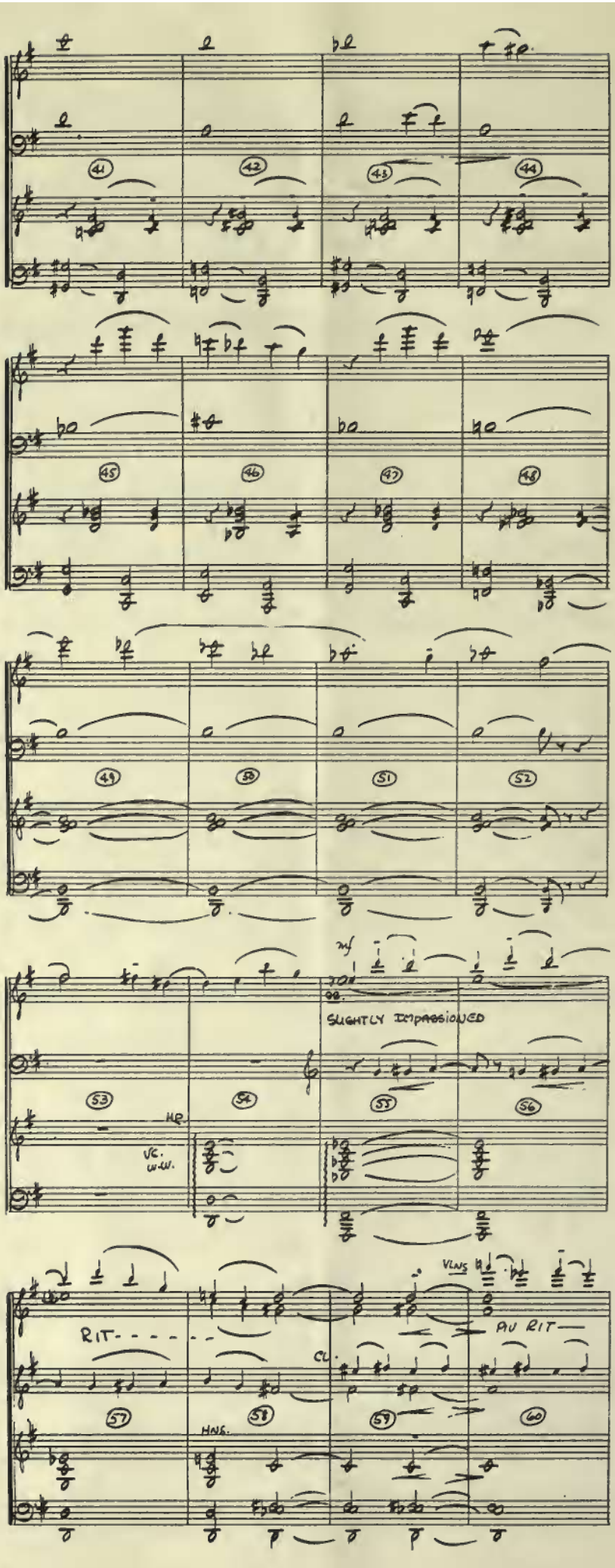
Example 2. The Curry Ranch. This sequence is an example of the musical comedy approach. The theme is used transitionally, and merely establishes a sense of well-being and cheer. In form it is extended wherever the situation demands it.

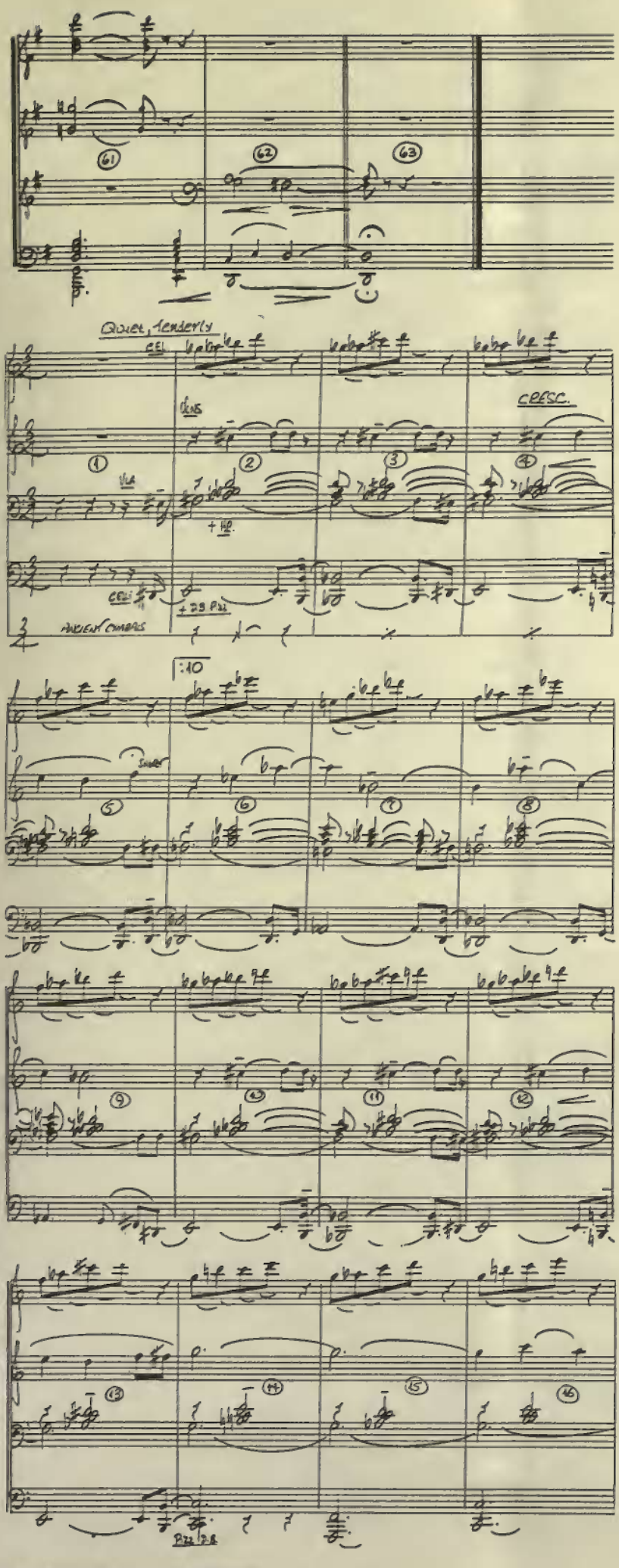
Example 3



Example 3. The Gentleman Caller. Here Liz-
zie (Katherine Hepburn) is shyly and awkwardly
courted by Deputy Sheriff File (Wendell Corey)

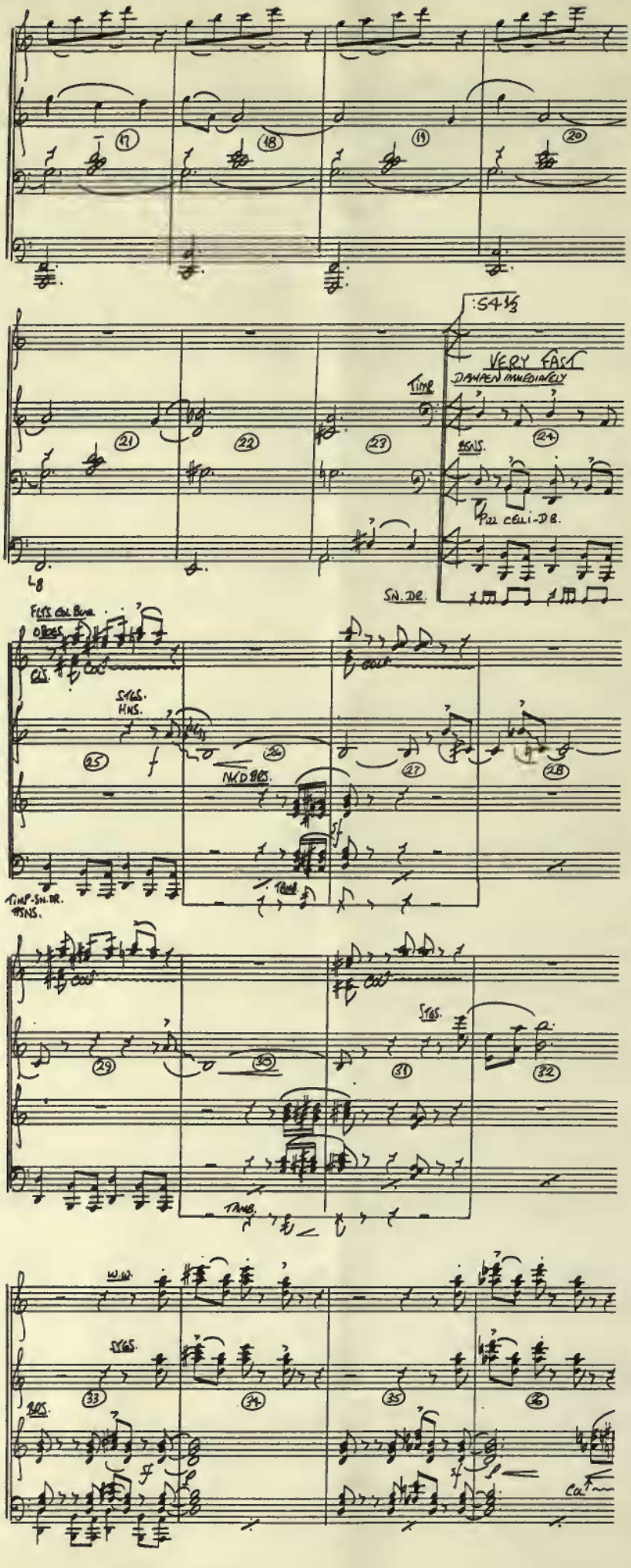


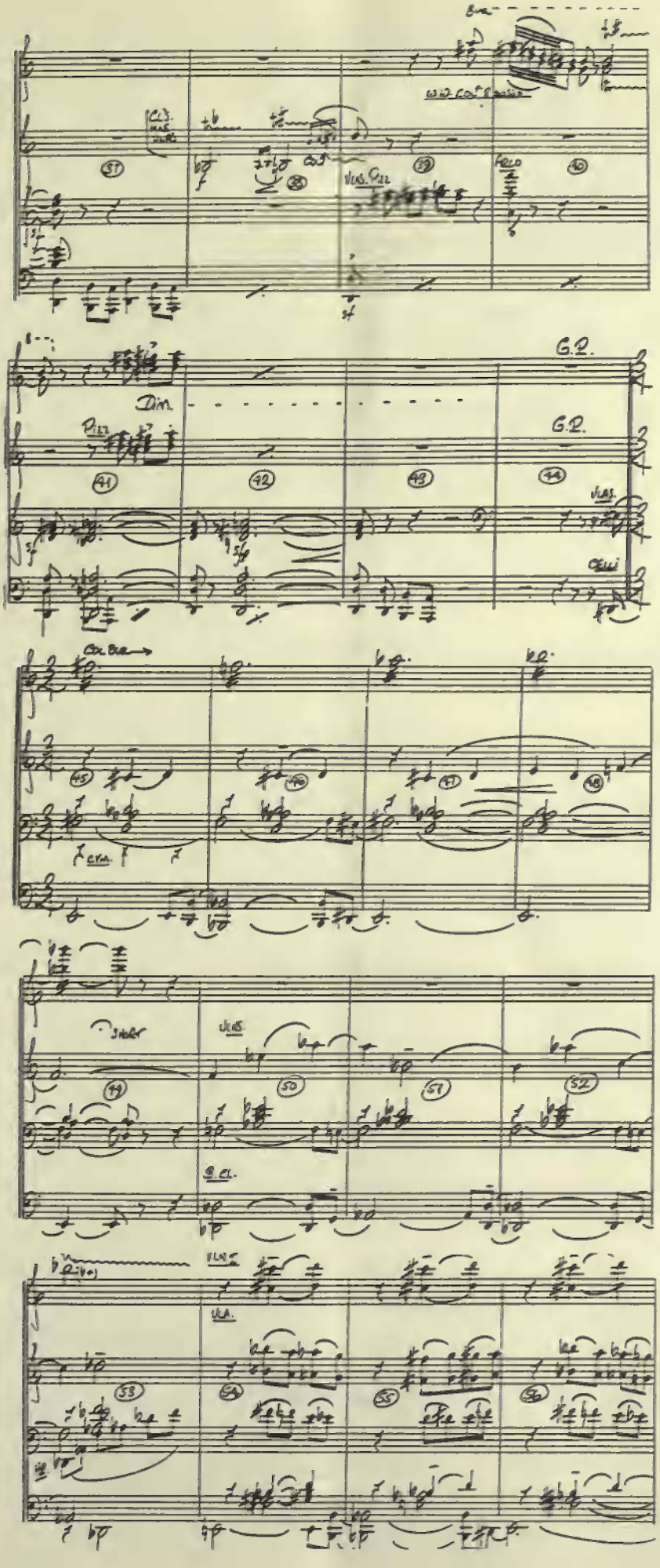


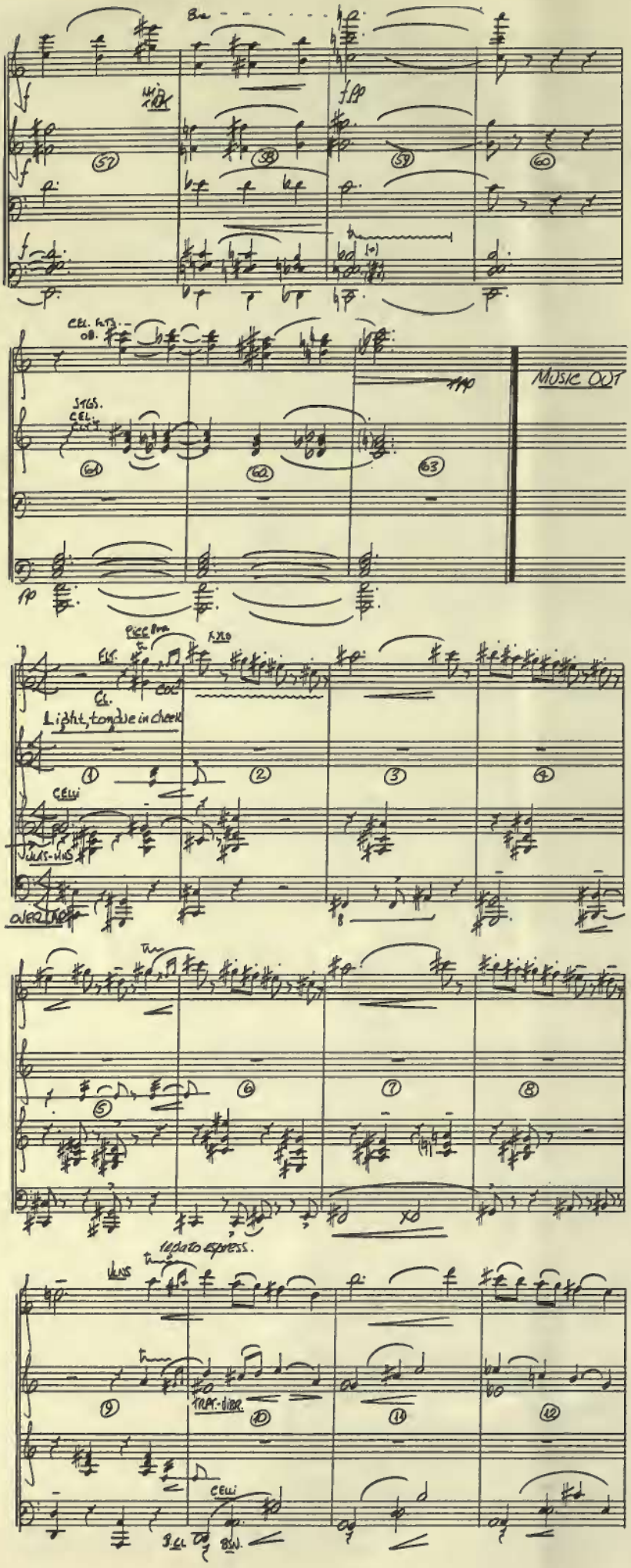


Example 4

Example 4, Golden Fleece, contains that ele ment of fantasy which is reflected in the perso of Starbuck, the rainmaker, which permitted m to deviate from the diatonic writing to the chroma tic. This is the scene in which Starbuck gives Lizzi the name "Melisande". This music continues unde the scene in which he relates the story of Quee Melisande, wife of Hamlet who sailed across th ocean and brought back the Golden Fleece. Frag ments of this slow waltz theme are used in othe instances, interwoven with music that applies to different situation but retains elements of the ro mantic world into which Lizzie has been trans ported.

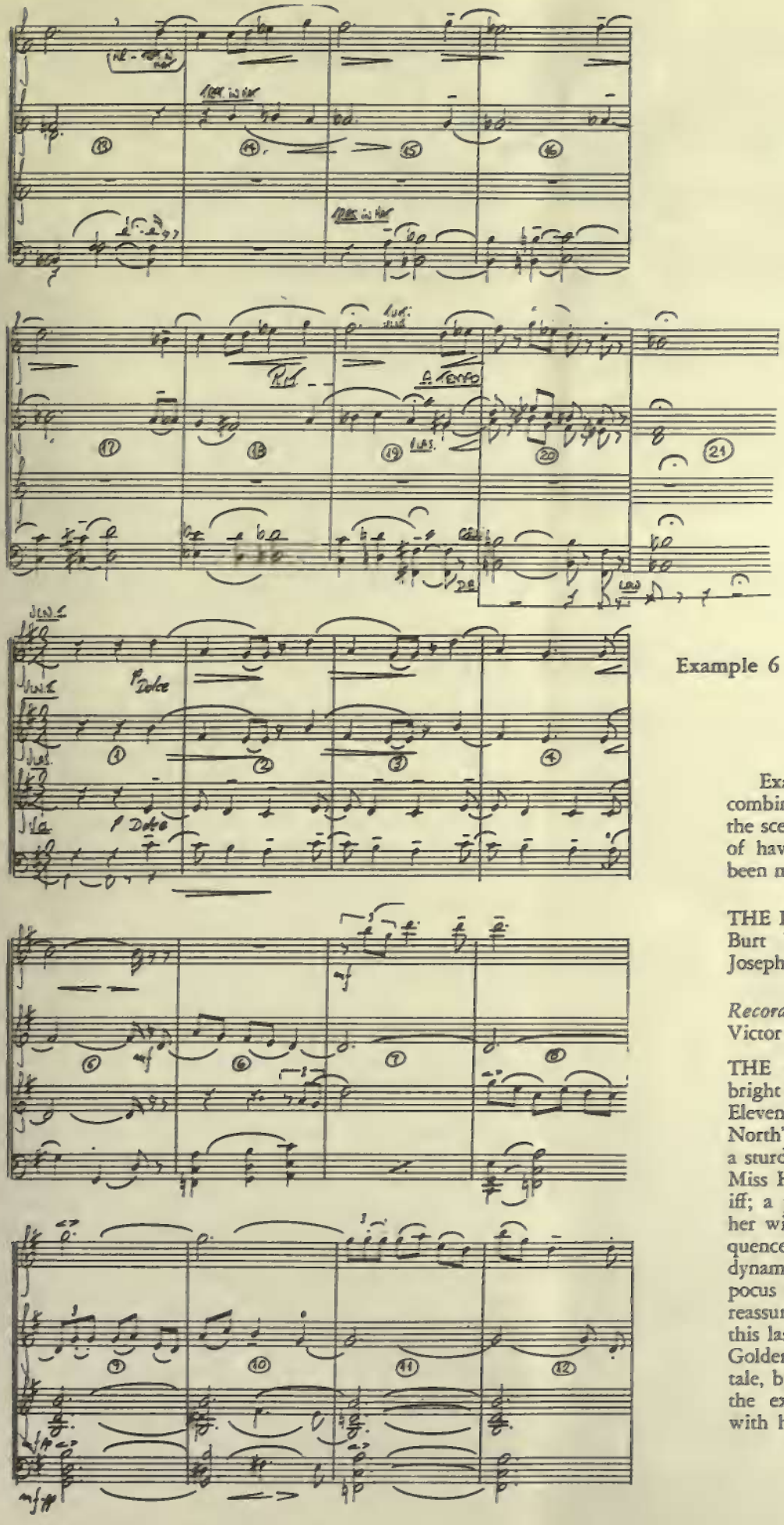






Example 5

Example 5. Young Lovers. This light musi is established early in the film for the young lover Jim and Snookie, and is repeated with variatio in moments involving these two.



Example 6

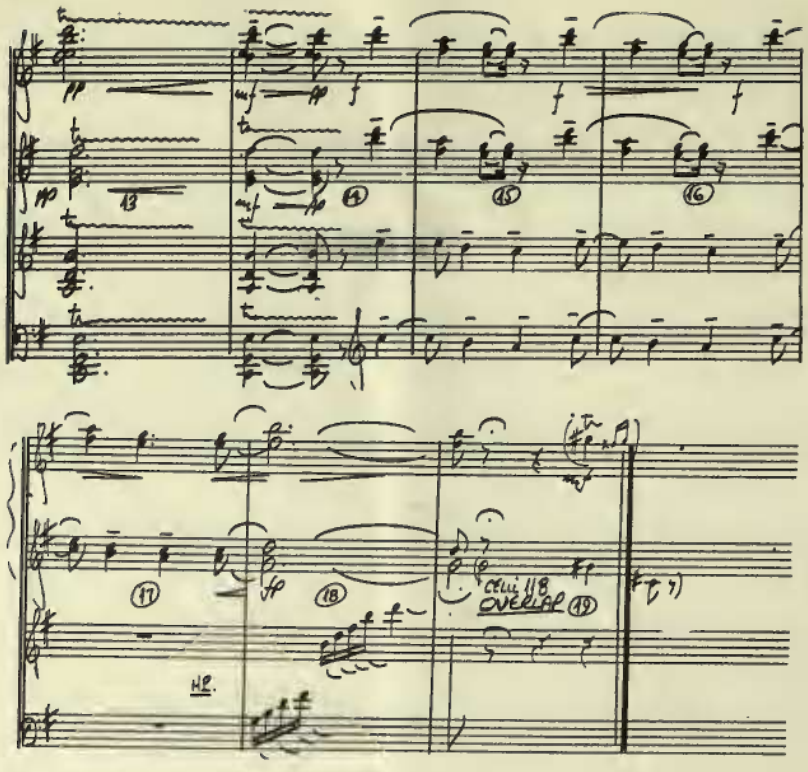
Example 6. I'm Pretty. Written for a small combination of muted strings, this is played under the scene in which Starbuck accomplishes the task of having Lizzie say "I'm pretty", after she has been made to believe she is just "plain".

THE RAINMAKER . . . Hal Wallis; Paramount. Burt Lancaster, Katherine Hepburn. Director, Joseph Anthony. Music, Alex North.

Record: The Rainmaker; Sound track album, RCA Victor LPM - 1434.

THE RAINMAKER, something original and bright in romantic comedy, has a score it deserves. Eleven sequences from the soundtrack show Alex North's feeling for the picture's differing needs: a sturdy, ballad-like approach for the ranchers and Miss Hepburn's reluctant wooer, the deputy sheriff; a pert little tune for the teen-age vamp and her willing victim. In contrast are the tender sequences where the unglamorous Lizzie and the dynamic Starbuck — a leader for all his hocus-pocus and his dreams — exchange self-doubts and reassurance. There are several lovely passages in this last mood, notably Starbuck's version of "The Golden Fleece", musically a shimmering wonder tale, broken into with little bursts of pleasure by the exuberant story-teller. Mr. North conducts with his usual restraint and taste.

Example 6



CURRENT SCORES

HEAVEN KNOWS, MR. ALLISON

Of many men who have put their energies into film scores, Georges Auric is surely among the most knowing. He has musical craft and character of real stature, as well as that other rare and perceptive knack — a canny sense of what will work — that only experience gives. These assets all make their effect in the score for HEAVEN KNOWS, MR. ALLISON, for the most part of a freshly turned and inventive job.

Music in this film is as conspicuous by its absence as by its use, for Auric has written with a discerning hand, in purpose as well as style avoiding clichés to which film music — like any music — is prone.

This is evident from the opening titles, where the composer eschews lush, full orchestral sounds and other worn ideas of title scoring to build tension by less usual means. Against background shots of a lonely raft on a desolate sea, a musical phrase enters only to accompany each title for the time it flashes on the screen. Silence fills in until the next credit, when a new phrase follows. The effect is arresting, commanding attention and forming expectations that lead directly into the picture.

Deborah Kerr and Robert Mitchum

Music rarely underscores the terse dialogue that fills much of the film; there is no need for it. Both the leading roles are tightly written, and dramatic tensions between the characters arise naturally from their talk and actions. Arbitrary reinforcement by underscoring is avoided, though sound effects have their special moments, as when the Japanese approach the cave hideout of the two Americans.

What is more unusual, Auric rarely underscores those tight scenes when Robert Mitchum is in threatening situations. These spots are usually a composer's field day, where music manages either to predict what is about to come or strengthens it as it happens. Auric chooses neither idea and lets the action — tautly directed — make its own points.

Music does function several ways in the film. For one, it enhances the occasional panoramic, scenic shots of the tropical island where the story unfolds. It is also used, though not too much, to heighten action, as in the chase with the turtle or in the elated scene when Allison and the Sister first discover that the Japanese have left the island.

Music is used in another and most interesting way that has roots in the operas of Wagner. Rather than underscore dialogue itself, Auric waits until after a dramatic moment to depict with score the unresolved feelings of his characters. This is strikingly done in two sequences. One occurs when Allison returns from the Japanese camp with food after hiding in a storeroom all night to avoid detection. Sister Angela, alone and frightened in the clammy cave hideout, is worried, and

upon Mitchum's return the score intimates render feelings between the two which are not spoken or brought to the surface.

Somewhat later a drunken Allison, alone with the Sister after the Japanese have deserted the island, tells her of his affection and suggests to her not to take her final vows. The scoring intensifies well, in its brief life, the turbid feelings of both people as they struggle with conflicting emotions and loyalties. Shortly before this, in a similar situation, John Huston slips in one of his few bits of symbolism, showing waves washing endlessly in and out from the shore, much as Mitchum's hopes do. Auric has matched his music to this with a deft bit of synchronization, the moods changing with the inward and outward wash of the tide.

A touch of Gallic humor is also in this score. Allison, a tough Marine, is not exactly a music lover, but he does have a bent for "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" — a tune of the war years — and sings it during the film. The song finds its way into the underscoring, too, not in a swollen version with heavenly violins, but with subtle variations, integrated in the texture and always in the mood of the moment. This is more than a musician's private joke, for the tune grows to make its dramatic points as a real part of the score.

David M. Epstein

HEAVEN KNOWS, MR. ALLISON . . . 20th Century Fox. Deborah Kerr, Robert Mitchum. Director, John Huston. Music, Georges Auric. Conductor, Lambert Williamson.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

The film on Albert Schweitzer is a sincere tribute in a low key to a great man of considerable but unspectacular accomplishment. It is a slow moving pictorial review of his life, leaning heavily on pictures of the places where he lived it, rather than on pictures of him doing anything in those places. (There are a few exceptions — notably Schweitzer playing a Bach Prelude on the organ he rebuilt in his father's church in his home town.) The film makes some attempt to explore Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy with a few brief and superficial statements in the narration. The treatment of the subject is reverent, but essentially undramatic even for a documentary. If this was intentional, why select so dynamic a medium as the cinema for such a quiet tribute?

With such handicaps as these, it is small wonder that Alex Wilder's background score fails to register. Conceived largely in a pastoral style — and this in both the bucolic and the religious connotations — it lends little of warmth, energy or excitement to the proceedings. Much of the time it is so far under the narration as to be inaudible. And there are moments when the camera wanders slowly over the Alsatian or African countryside, while the music remains too soft to enhance the picture.

Scriptwise, pictorially and musically, this film reminds us that there is a limit to understatement.

David S. Rattner

ALBERT SCHWEITZER . . . Louis de Rochemont Associates. Produced and directed by Jerome Hill. Photographed by Erica Anderson. Narrated by Fredric March and Burgess Meredith. Music, Alec Wilder. Conductor, Leon Barzin.

ANASTASIA

Probably the musical score for ANASTASIA will set some sort of a record for spareness and understatement. Alfred Newman's original background music consumes only twenty-seven minutes and thirty-six seconds, and most of it, as far as could be ascertained from its often low decibel content, stems directly from the title song, which appears for the first time under the main title. The song, a lush, melancholy melody, is too well known by now, chiefly through records by Pat Boone and others, to need further comment.

Mr. Newman's music pursues a few dramatic situations and underlines them in various moods; otherwise the music is purely functional. Impressive Russian Easter music opens the film. Gypsy songs are heard not only in the visual cafe scenes, but also as a thin thread in the background of the cellar scene where Anna is first inspected by her exploiters. An occasional crescendo as a door opens serves to remind us that we are in night club premises. These gypsy airs and other Russian melodies similarly employed have been arranged by Michel Michelet. Dance music by Arensky, Tchaikovsky, Johann Strauss and others occurs at appropriate spots; it has usually been arranged by Urban Thielmann. Credit for the score's main orchestration goes to Edward B. Powell. Out of this combination of talents, a score emerges that is lean, unobtrusive and perhaps all the better for both qualities. No great emotional underpinning was needed for a story of such palpable make-believe. All credit to Mr. Newman for not over-playing his hand.

Quaintance Eaton

ANASTASIA . . . 20th Century Fox. Ingrid Bergman, Yul Brynner, Helen Hayes. Director, Anatole Litvak. Music, Alfred Newman. Orchestration, Edward B. Powell. Russian music arranged by Michel Michelet.

Records: Pat Boone, Dot; George Cates, Coral; Roger Williams, Kapp; Leroy Holmes, MGM; Jones Boys, Liberty; Guy Lombardo, Capitol; Score Album, Alfred Newman, Decca.

Ingrid Bergman and Yul Brynner

LABOR PAINS

Roger Edens

The heterogenesis of FUNNY FACE is quite a saga in itself. Full of hair-raising suspense, and completely Horatio Alger, it would give you a lot of laughs and a few lumps in your throat. But it is also much too long, and probably too personal, to be included in this discussion of the musical aspects of the picture.

I think you should know, however, that, from the conception to the eventual delivery at the Music Hall, it has taken almost two years. Of course this includes considerable delay when we encountered difficulties in casting, but even so, when I contemplate it in retrospect, it is an astonishing period of gestation. Even elephants don't need that much time!

But now that it is finally in release the many months we lived with it and sweated over it have become a part of the past. It is now time for the exhibition and appraisal of the infant. Fortunately, the advance appraisal has been highly complimentary. No cigars have been passed, but being typical fathers, we are very, very proud — and enormously grateful.

I am especially gratful for the recognition and the praise that has been accorded the musical treatment of the picture. Not only because it is a phase of production that is quite close to me, but because I feel so strongly that, no matter how exciting the performances — or how dazzling the decor, a successful musical picture must importantly reflect the success of its musical treatment.

The laurel for the success of the music in FUNNY FACE goes, unequivocally, to Adolph Deutsch, its musical director, and the brilliant staff of musicians he enlisted to assist him — Conrad Salinger, Alexander Courage, Van Cleave and Skip Martin. Their great enthusiasm for the project, their musicianship and subtle showmanship, have resulted in what I consider to be an outstanding and unique contribution to the picture.

At first it wasn't called FUNNY FACE at all. The property we had acquired from the author, Leonard Gershe, was an unproduced stage play titled "Wedding Day". Because the subject matter was so completely modern and, because we wanted to give it a unique freshness in the musical treatment, we thought only in terms of an original score — with songs and musical sequences carefully integrated into the script.

One day Gershe was reading the scene he had just written for Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire in the photographic dark-room, to Stanley Donen, the director, and me. In the scene, Fred, the photographer, is trying to convince Audrey that she could become a successful fashion model for his magazine. As he talks he is developing the negative of a picture he has just shot of her. When she sees the print she is horrified and exclaims: "Oh, no! You could never make a model of that. I think my face is perfectly funny". Fred tells her that what she considers funny he considers unusual — even lovely. Donen and I exchanged a quick look and, at the same time he shouted "What a great song cue!", I shouted "Gershwin"!

We immediately stopped everything and dug out the songs from the George and Ira Gershwin score for the Broadway musical of 1927 "Funny Face". You can imagine our delight and surprise when we found that, not only did the title song fit into our darkroom scene as if it had been written for it, but "How Long Has This Been Going On?" was completely right for the song Audrey sings alone in the book-shop to express her reaction to the kiss Fred has just given her. We found that "Let's Kiss and Make Up" could alleviate a lot of the dialogue in the scene where Audrey and Fred quarrel, and "He Loves and She Loves" was quite ideal for the enchanting love-scene by the little Gothic chapel in the forest of Chantilly, when Fred realizes he has fallen in love with Audrey. And probably the most delightful surprise was to discover that the lyrics of " 'S Wonderful", when sung by the lovers at the finish of the picture, would provide a charmingly sentimental summary of our entire story:

"You've made my life so glamorous,
You can't blame me for feeling amorous . . ."

Not only did the lyrics fit our story so beautifully, but the music itself was as fresh in its melody and as modern in its structure as if it had just been written expressly for the picture. It is certainly a wonderful tribute to George Gershwin that the vast majority of his music actually belongs to no one specific period of songwriting. I feel that you will concur with this when you hear his songs in the picture.

The Gershwin songs comprised the major portion of the score. We did have to create three other musical sequences that we needed in the picture: (1) "Think Pink" to introduce Kay Thompson as the fashion editor in the beginning of the picture; (2) "Bonjour, Paris!" for the three principals when they descend upon Paris; and (3) "On How To Be Lovely", for the lesson in glamor Kay gives Audrey. There was nothing in the original score that could encompass all the action that we had to achieve in each individual scene and, actually, these scenes demanded 'special material' rather than songs.

Because of the length of our shooting schedule (we were to shoot the New York sequences, interiors, at the Paramount Studios in Hollywood, then fly the entire company to France to shoot all the Paris sequences), and, because our time with Audrey Hepburn was very limited, we were compelled to rehearse and record every musical sequence in the picture in a period of five weeks before the start of shooting. Considering that we had fourteen separate musical spots, each with rather an elaborate vocal and/or orchestral development, five weeks to rehearse *and* record was a frightening thing to contemplate.

We set up a rigid schedule for rehearsals that kept all of us on a run from morning to night. Audrey, Fred and Kay would report to my office, separately or together, for song rehearsal; next they went to Stanley Donen on the set where he would stage the song and plot it out for the camera; then they reported to the rehearsal halls

to work on the dances. Fred usually does his own choreography, but we also had engaged Eugene Loring to create the choreography for the rest of the numbers.

This sounds a bit like an assembly-line technique. It was! And, because everybody concerned — the principals, the creators, and the musical staff — felt a rapport among themselves and with the project, and made a sort of game of following the schedule, we were easily able to meet the recording dates on time.

We had allowed a week for the recording, and it, too, had to have a fairly rigid schedule. It was decided to record the "Bonjour" sequence first. It was quite long, utilized the largest orchestra, and was done by the three principals. This last factor was the reason we recorded this number first.

Kay and Fred were old hands at recording, but Audrey had never been before that frightening monster the microphone. We felt that, by starting her off in a number in which she worked with Kay and Fred, she wouldn't feel quite the panic that usually comes with one's first encounter with this formidable object. We followed "Bonjour" with "On How To Be Lovely" which Audrey sings with Kay, and then " 'S Wonderful" which she does with Fred. Actually Audrey never betrayed any undue nervousness at all — at least no more than is normally encountered at a recording session, but certainly, by the time we had got to the song she does alone, "How Long Has This Been Going On?", she was quite an old hand at it — completely relaxed, and eager to get it on the sound-track. Her performance of the song, vocally and visually, is enchanting.

The entire week of recording was a great thrill for all of us. It is always very exciting to hear a song or routine you have been rehearsing for weeks come to life in the orchestra, for the first time. Probably because it is the first positive example of the picture beginning to take shape; also because it seems to be the sublimation of all the creative talent that has been poured into it during the rehearsal and planning period. Whatever it is — each new recording session is a time of great enthusiasm, and gratified realization — with much back-patting and extravagant praise.

Some of the more outstanding back-patting must go to: Van Cleave, for his vividly colorful orchestration of "Bonjour, Paris!"; Alexander Courage, for the brilliant music he created for the bull-fight dance Fred does in "Let's Kiss and Make Up"; Conrad Salinger for the exquisite, misty mood he achieved in the pas de deux Fred and Audrey do to "He Loves and She Loves"; and Skip Martin for the knocked-out jazz with which he backed up the electricity of Kay and Fred in the show-stopping "Clap Yo' Hands".

Deutsch himself did the witty orchestrations for "Think Pink" and "On How to be Lovely", but, as musical director for the entire picture, he deserves so much more credit. His calm command of the orchestra, his efficient control of the recording itself, were certainly of the greatest importance in finishing the week of pre-recordings on schedule. He is undoubtedly one of the outstanding musical talents in Hollywood.

Audrey Hepburn

Of course, the best chance for real expression of this talent didn't come until we had finished shooting the picture, and it was ready for the under-scoring. With its gaiety, its sentimental charm, and its colorful locales, FUNNY FACE offered quite an unusual opportunity for invention in its under-scoring. It also, purely time-wise, demanded more music than most musical pictures. There are fifty minutes of pre-recorded music, and sixty minutes of 'book'. Of these sixty minutes we felt that almost fifty minutes needed under-scoring. There were several scenes of considerable length; there were many shorter ones. The timing, cueing, writing and orchestrating required six weeks.

Deutsch's use of incidental music in one sequence, the photographic montage, was of particular interest to me. It is quite an outstanding sequence in the picture, and one that we had taken infinite pains with in preparation. It is the sequence where Fred photographs Audrey in her lovely new frocks, in various quarters of Paris. Using a Svengali technique he creates pseudo-dramatic situations to get her in the proper mood for each photograph. When he finally achieves his mood, he snaps the picture, the film 'freezes' at this moment and we see the actual still photograph of what he has taken. Then we see the various processes that are used in preparing the still for the fashion magazine.

It is a ten-minute sequence — complicated and tedious to handle musically. Each 'vignette' had to have a different approach in its treatment, and this necessitated recording each section separately. The 'freeze' device in each 'vignette' also had to be recorded separately, because the split-second timing of the action required the use of a click-track, and also because it had to be monitored through a reverberation chamber to achieve the glacial quality of the freeze itself. By an amusing interweaving of the two themes he had picked for Fred and Audrey ("Funny Face" and " 'S Wonderful"), played against the music he had selected for the basic mood of each episode, Deutsch has not only enhanced the underlying plot-value of the sequence, but has come up with a stunning and original piece of music.

Although he still had the assistance of Courage and Van Cleave, it was Deutsch who co-ordinated all the under-scoring and gave it the unity it has in the picture.

I can only say again — if FUNNY FACE should emerge as a successful musical picture, a handsome part of the credit for that success must go to its musical contribution.

Viva FUNNY FACE!
Viva Adolph Deutsch! !

FUNNY FACE . . . Paramount. Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire, Kay Thompson. Producer, Roger Edens. Director, Stanley Donen. Music and lyrics, George and Ira Gershwin. Music adapted and conducted by Adolph Deutsch. Orchestral arrangements, Conrad Salinger, Van Cleave, Alexander Courage, Skip Martin. Additional music and lyrics, Roger Edens and Leonard Gershe. Choreography, Eugene Loring, Fred Astaire. Songs staged by Stanley Donen.

Record: Funny Face; sound track album, Verve MG V-15001.

Six Gershwin tunes, three new songs by Roger Edens and Leonard Gershe and a couple of exciting instrumental interludes get top treatment in FUNNY FACE, as this sound track recording proves. Considering the people involved in the musical part of the production, this is scarcely surprising. But here the overall effect of casualness, finish and chic gaiety reaches a new level. Audrey Hepburn, singing with her breathy, little girl voice, is in piquant contrast to the high style of Kay Thompson and Fred Astaire, especially when the star trio is united in Bon Jour, Paris", a vivid American-in-Paris exploration number.

THE WORLD OF JAZZ

Script Notes for a TV Program for OMNIBUS

Leonard Bernstein

We are going to try to investigate jazz — only this time as music. Rather than following the usual historical approach — "Up the River from New Orleans," et cetera — we are going to investigate the musical "innards" of jazz, to find out once and for all what it is that sets jazz apart from all other music.

Jazz is a very big word; it covers a multitude of varieties, all the way from the earliest blues, (Leadbelly, "Good Mornin' Blues") to Dixieland bands, ("King Oliver Plays the Blues") to swing bands, (Benny Goodman, "1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert") to boogie-woogie, (Meade Lux Lewis, "Boogie-Woogie") to crazy bop, ("The Immortal Charlie Parker") to cool jazz, (Lee Konitz, "Lee Konitz with Warne Marsh") to mambo, (Perez Prado, "Mambo #5") and all the rest. It is all jazz, and I love it all.

I love it for its:

A. Natural expression of my times and my country.

B. Frank, open, uninhibited expression. Even these days, at its coolest, or most restrained, it is still a personal, basic emotional communication.

C. Humour. Entertainment in the truest sense. It really *plays* with notes. We speak of "playing" Brahms — a term properly applied to tennis. But jazz is real play.

D. Original kind of emotional expression. Never wholly sad or happy. Even the blues has a robustness and hard-boiled quality that never lets it become sticky-sentimental, no matter how self-pitying the words are. (One stanza blues by blues-singer, tough delivery. Bessie Smith, "Empty Bed Blues".) And the gayest, wildest jazz always seems to have some pain in it. Listen to this jolly trumpet, and see what I mean. (Hot jazz by trumpet with rhythm section. Louis Armstrong, "Ole Miss".) That is what intrigues me about jazz: it is unique, a form of expression all its own.

But I find I have to defend jazz to those who say:

A. It is low-class. But all music has low-class origins, since it comes from folk music, which is necessarily earthy. There has always been a certain shadow of indignity around music, and the players of music. As a child, I had to fight my family to be a musician, as did so many others. I don't blame my parents particularly for having balked at my jazz efforts. As I recall, I started out playing jazz by ear at the age of ten, banging out the tune with one finger of my right hand while playing any old notes with my left. Then, as my hands got bigger, I was playing the tune in octaves, which made it louder still. But by the age of twelve, I had begun to discover little wrong chords for my left hand . . . As I say, I don't blame my parents if this is what they had to listen to. By the time I was fourteen, I had formed a little band with a group of friends; this was the final indignity for my parents.

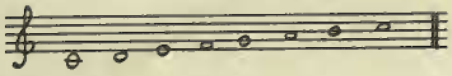
B. Players of music seem to lack the dignity of creators of music: the composing art is hallowed, whereas the players are only performers, pagliacci, mountebanks. This is especially true of jazz, which is almost completely a player's art, depending on improvisation rather than on composition.

C. Jazz is loud. But so are Sousa marches, and we don't hear complaints about them. And so is Brahms' "First Symphony". Enough of that.

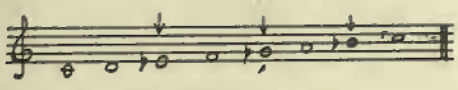
D. But the main argument against jazz has been that it is not art. I think it is an art, and a very special one. But before we can argue about whether it is or not, we must know WHAT it is; and so I propose to share with you some of the things I know and love about jazz. Let's start by taking that blues we heard before and find out what it's made of: (Blues played by small combo. Bessie Smith, "Empty Bed Blues".)

Now what are the elements that make it jazz?

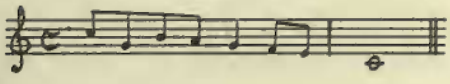
First of all there is the element of melody. All music is based on scales — major, minor, and so on. But there is a special one for jazz (which is a variant of the regular major scale you all practised as kids.



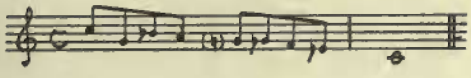
In jazz this scale gets modified three times; lowered 3rd, 5th, and 7th:



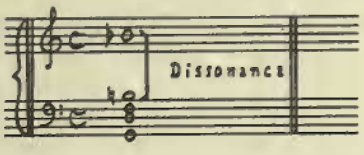
So instead of:



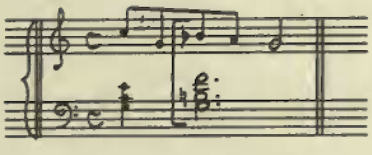
we get:



But this scale is used only melodically; in the harmony underneath we still use our old unflatted notes, and that causes a dissonance between the tune and the chords.

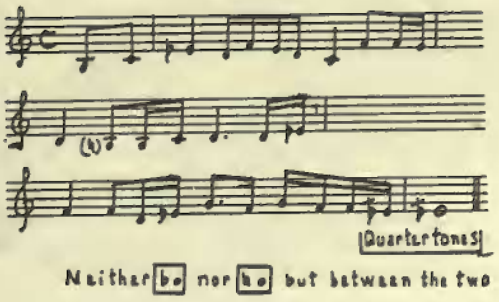


But this very dissonance has a true jazz sound. (Jazz lick.)



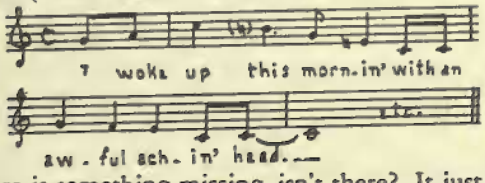
Jazz pianists are always using that dissonance, and there is a reason for it. They are searching for a note that isn't there at all, but lies somewhere between two notes; it is called a quarter tone. This comes straight from Africa, which is the cradle of jazz, and where quarter tones are everyday stuff. We can produce them on wind instruments or stringed instruments or with the voice, but on the piano we have to approximate them by playing together two adjacent notes — the two notes on either side of the quarter tone:

It's somewhere in the crack between these two notes. Let's see if I can sing you a quarter tone. Here is an African tune I once heard in Tunis; the last note of it is a quarter tone:



Sounds terribly out of tune; but it is a real note in another musical language. In jazz it is right at home. (Jazz lick with quarter tone.)

Now, just to show how important these so-called "blue notes" are to jazz, let's hear that same blues played without them, just using the plain white notes of the scale. (Blues stanza, clarinet and rhythm.)



There is something missing, isn't there? It just isn't jazz.

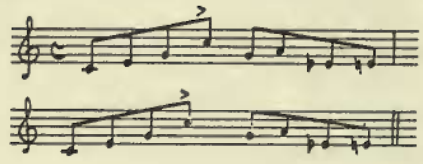
But even more important than melody in jazz is the element of rhythm. Two aspects: the beat. This is what you hear when the drummer's foot is beating the bass drum, or when the bass-player is plucking his bass, or even when the pianist is kicking the pedal with his foot. All this is elementary; there are two or four of these beats to a bar, never changing in tempo, or in metre, from beginning to end of a piece. This is the heartbeat of jazz.

But more involved — and more interesting — is the rhythm going on over the beat. These rhythmic figures depend on something called syncopation — a word you have often heard, but maybe were never quite sure of. The best way to describe it would be as a heartbeat that goes along steadily, and at a moment of shock misses a beat. It is that much of a physical reaction.

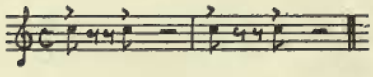
Technically, syncopation means the removal of an accent where you expect one, or the placing of an accent where you least expect one. In either case, there is the element of surprise and shock. The mind and body respond to this shock, either by compensating for the missing accent or by reacting to the unexpected one.

Now where do we expect accents? Always on the first beat of a bar, on the downbeat. If there are two beats in a bar, 1 is strong, 2 is weak. Exactly as in marching: left, right, left, right. Even if there are four beats in a bar, it is still like marching; although we all have two legs, the sergeant still counts out in four: HUP, two, three, four. There is always a natural accent on ONE. Take it away, and there is simple syncopation: 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, or do the reverse: put an accent on the weak beats — 2 and 4 — and you will again have syncopation. 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4.

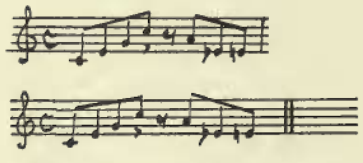
Now that we know the basic fact of syncopation, we can understand its subtler aspects. Between one beat and another lie shorter and even weaker beats; and when these get accents the shock is even greater . . . since the weaker the beat you accent, the greater the surprise. Let's take eight fast beats in a bar, and put a big accent on the weakest one, which is the fourth. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8. As you see, we get a pure rhumba rhythm:



If we play only the accented fourth beat (plus the downbeat) we get a Charleston:



The strongest syncopation of all is obtained by doing both things at once: accent a weak beat, and minimize the strong. Example: in any group of four beats, the first is the strongest; so in a group of eight beats, the first and fifth would get the accents. Therefore, we will remove the fifth beat entirely, and put a wallop on the weak fourth; and we get: 1 2 3 4 - 6 7 8, 1 2 3 4 - 6 7 8.



It begins to sound like Congo drums, doesn't it? Without syncopation, blues sound "square".

Well, that takes care of two very important elements: melody and rhythm. But jazz would not be jazz without its special tonal colours — the actual sound values you hear. The colours are various, but they mostly stem from the quality of the Negro singing voice. For instance, when Louis Armstrong plays his trumpet, he is only doing another version of his own voice. Listen to an Armstrong record and compare the trumpet solo with the vocal: ("I Can't Give You Anything But Love".) You can't miss the fact that they're by the same fellow — and what a fellow!

But the Negro voice has engendered other imitations. The saxophone is in itself a kind of imitation — breathy, a little hoarse, with a vibrato, or tremor. There are all the different growls and rasps we get by putting mutes on the horns. There is a Harmon mute on a trumpet: (Glenn Miller, "Adios"). And a wah-wah mute: (Clyde McCoy, "Sugar Blues"). And a plunger mute on the trombone: (Tricky Sam, "New Black and Tan Fantasy").

There are many other colours deriving from Afro-Cuban sources, bongo drums, . . . maracas . . . the cowbell: (Pete Rugulo, "Jingle Bells Mambo"). Then there are the colours that have an Oriental flavour, the vibraphone and the plucked bass: (Red Norvo, "Trio"). These are influences that come to us from Indian and Arab sources via Africa. So the special jazz colourations are very important too.

But we have still not exhausted our search for jazz elements. There is one more, which may surprise some of you who think jazz is not an art. I refer to form. Did you know the blues is a classical form, just as classical as the sonata form? Most people use the word blues to mean any song that is "blue" or torchy or low-down or breast-beating — like "Stormy Weather", for example. But "Stormy Weather" is not a blues, and neither is "Moanin' Low", nor "The Man I Love" nor even "The Birth of the Blues". They are all popular songs.

The blues is basically a strict poetic form transferred to music. It is based on a rhymed couplet, with the first line repeated. For example, Billie Holliday sings:

"My man don't love me, treats me awful mean.
Oh, he's the lowest man I've ever seen."

But when she sings it, she repeats the first line, so it goes:

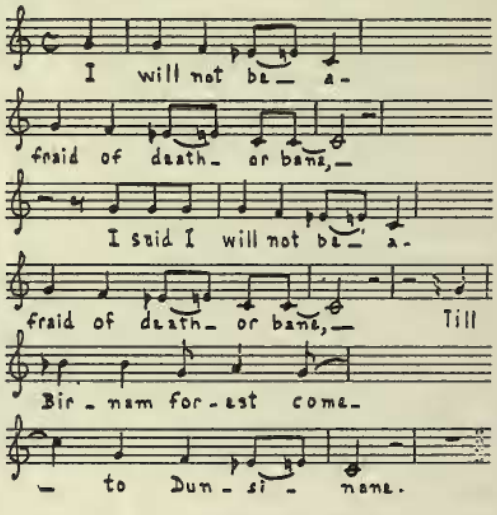
"My man don't love me, treats me awful mean.
I said, my man don't love me, treats me awful mean.
Oh, he's the lowest man that I've ever seen." ("Fine and Mellow.")

That is one stanza of blues. A full blues is nothing more than a succession of such stanzas for as long as the singer wishes.

Did you notice that the blues couplet is in, of all things, iambic pentameter? This is about as classic as one can get. It means that you can take any rhymed couplet in iambic pentameter — from Shakespeare, for example — and make a perfect "Macbeth" blues:

"I will not be afraid of death or bane
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane."

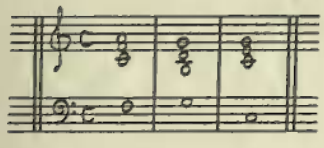
It makes a lovely blues:



Now if you've noticed, each of the three lines gets four bars apiece — making in all a twelve-bar stanza. But the voice itself sings only about half of each four-bar line, and the rest is filled up by an instrument. This filling-up is called a "break". And here we have the origin of the instrument imitating the voice, the very soil in which jazz grows. Louis Armstrong improvising

the breaks in a blues sung by Bessie Smith is the essential sound of jazz, from which all instrumental improvisation has since developed. (Bessie Smith and Armstrong, "Reckless Blues", using harmonium.)

Did you notice the instrument that was accompanying the soloists? It is a harmonium — that wheezy little excuse for an organ which we all associate with hymn tunes. It's especially appropriate to the blues, since the chords in the blues must always be the same three chords we all know from hymn tunes.



This harmony must always remain in a strict classical pattern, pure and simple. Try to vary it, and the blues quality flies out the window.

Well, there you have it: melody, rhythm, colour, form, harmony. In each department there are special features that make *jazz*, instead of just music. Let's now put them all together, and hear a full-blown, all-out, happy blues. Oh, did you know that blues could be happy? Just listen. (Pete Rugolo, "King Porter Stomp".)

By this time I've probably given you the impression that jazz is all blues; not at all. I've only used the blues to investigate jazz because it embodies the various elements of jazz in so clear and pure a way. But the rest of jazz is concerned with applying these elements we have just been talking about to something called the popular song. This, too, is a form, and has certain strict patterns.

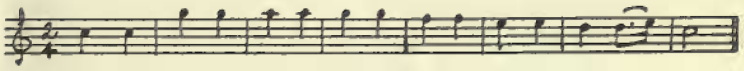
Popular songs are in either two-part or three-part form; by far the most numerous are in the three-part. You all know the form, of course, from hearing it so much. It is baby-simple. Anyone can write one.

All you need is the first eight bars, really. This is called in the trade the "front strain" — and then the song is practically written, because the whole thing is only thirty-two bars long. And once you have the first eight bars, you simply repeat them, making sixteen bars already. And the last eight bars are again going to be the same. That leaves only the third group of eight bars to be written. This called the "release" or the "bridge", and it doesn't matter if it's very good or not, since most people don't remember it too well anyway. The main thing is that front strain, the first eight bars.

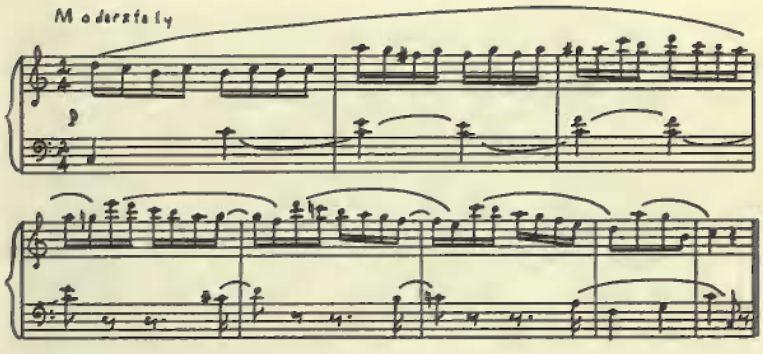
Take "Sweet Sue", for instance. There's as simple and obvious a tune as has ever been written, and a perfect example of the pattern I have just described. Thirty-two bars, and a classic forever. Easy, isn't it? (Guy Lombardo, "A Night at the Roosevelt".) But "Sweet Sue" is still not jazz. A popular song doesn't become jazz until it is improvised on — and there you have the real core of all jazz: improvisation. Remember that I said that jazz was a player's art rather than a composer's; well, this is the key to the whole problem.

It is the player who, by improvising, makes jazz. He uses the popular song as a kind of dummy to hang his notes on. He dresses it up in his own way, and it comes out original jazz. So the pop tune, in acquiring a new dress, changes its personality completely — like many people who behave one way in blue jeans and a wholly different way in dinner dress. Some of you may object to this dressing up: you may say, "Let me hear the melody, and not all this embroidery." But until you accept this principle of improvisation, you will never accept or understand jazz itself.

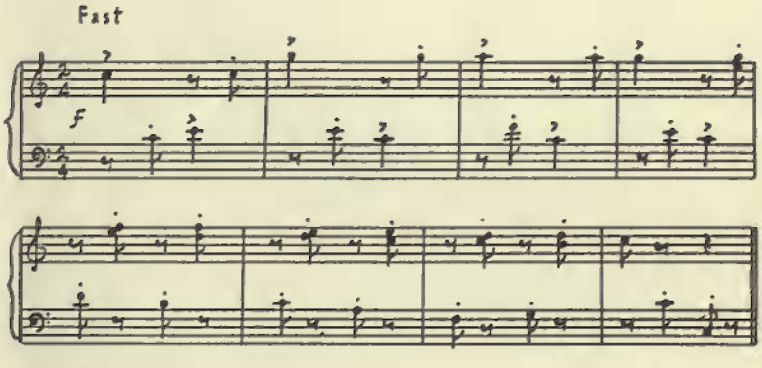
What does improvising mean? It means that you take a tune, keep it in mind with its harmony and all, and then, as they used to say, just "go to town." You go to town by adding ornaments and figurations, or by making real old-fashioned variations just as Mozart and Beethoven did. Let me tell you a little about how Mozart did it, and then yau may understand better how Art Tatum does it. Mozart took a well known nursery rhyme, which he knew as "Ah, Vous Dirai-je Maman?" and which we know as a way of singing the alphabet, or as "Mama See the Tiny Ducks".



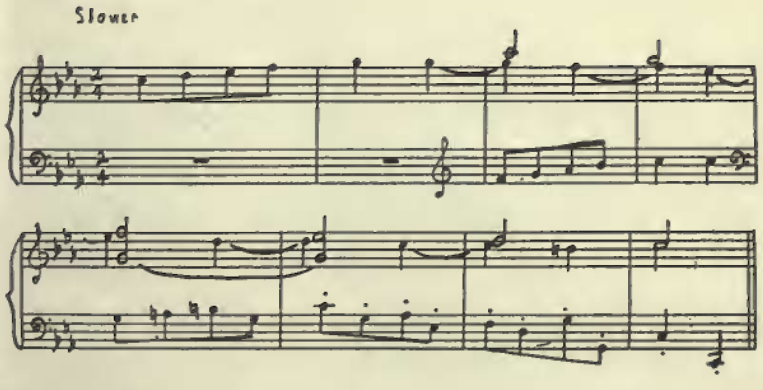
Then he makes a series of variations. One begins:



Another:



Then another:



They are all different pieces, yet they are all in one way or another that same tune. The jazz musician does exactly the same thing. There are infinite possible versions of "Sweet Sue", for example.

Now we come to the most exciting part of jazz, for me, at any rate: simultaneous improvisation. This happens when two or more musicians improvise on the same tune at the same time. Neither one knows what the other one is going to do, but they listen to each other, and pick up phrases from each other, and sort of talk together. What ties them together is really the chords — the harmony — of "Sweet Sue". When they play together it creates a kind of accidental counterpoint, which is the germ of what we call the "jam session".

This business of improvising together gave rise to a style called Dixieland, which is currently having a big revival. One of the most exhilarating sounds in all music is that of a Dixieland band blaring out its final chorus, all stops out, with *everyone* improvising together. Here is a Dixieland version of "Sweet Sue". (Bix Beiderbecke, "The Bix Beiderbecke Story", Vol. 3.)

But jazz is not all improvisation — not by a long shot. Much of it gets written down, and it is then called an arrangement. The great days of arrangements were the Thirties, when big startling swing arrangements were the order of the day, showing off the virtuosity of the great bands like Casa Loma, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, the Dorseys. Jass is hard to write down; there is no way of notating exactly those quarter-tones we talked about, nor the various smears and growls and subtle intonations. Even the rhythms can only be approximated in notation, so that much of the jazz quality is left to the instincts of the player who is reading the music. Still, it works, because those instincts are so deep and genuine. Let's listen to a good, solid swing arrangement of a chorus of "Sweet-Sue", as we might have heard it back in 1938: (Benny Goodman, "This Is Benny Goodman and His Quarter.")

Now remember: in 1938 we were all dancing; and that brings up the most important point of all. Nobody seems to dance to jazz very much any more, except for mambo-lovers — and they are limited to those who are athletic enough to do it. Can you do it? I can't. What has happened to dancing? We used to have a new dance practically every month: the Lindy Hop, the Shag, the Peabody, the Big Apple, Boogie, Susie-Q. Now we have only dances you have to take lessons to do. All over the country dance-band leaders are reporting a falling-off of weekly dance dates to almost nothing.

What does this mean? Simply that the main function of jazz has changed to pure listening. This had to happen. For one thing, the great development of the recording industry has taught us to listen in a way we never did before. But even more important: with the advent of swing and boogie-woogie and bop our interest has shifted to the music itself and the virtuosity of its performance; that is, we are interested in what notes are being played, how well, how fast, and with what originality. You can't listen to bop intelligently and dance too, murmuring sweet nothings into your partner's ear. You have to listen as hard as you can to hear what's happening.

So in a way, jazz — through its arrangements — has begun to be a kind of chamber music — an advanced sophisticated art for listening, now full of influence of Bartok and Stravinsky, and very, very serious. Let's listen for a moment to a modern, cool, or what-have-you arrangement: (Dave Brubeck, "Sometimes I'm Happy".) Whether you call that weird piece cool or crazy or whatever, the fact is that it is bordering on serious concert music. The arrangement begins to be a composition. Take away the beat, and you might not even know it's jazz at all. Why is it jazz at all? Because it is played by jazzmen on jazz instruments; because it has its roots in the soil of jazz, not of Bach.

I think the key word to all this is the word cool. It means what it implies: jazz used to advertise itself as hot; now the heat is off. The jazz player has become a highly serious person. He may even be an intellectual. He tends to wear Ivy League clothes, have a crew-cut, or wear horn-rimmed glasses. He may have studied music at a conservatory or a university. Our jazz man plays more quietly, with greater concentration on music values, tone-quality, technique. He knows Bartok and Stravinsky, and borrows from them. He tends to avoid big, flashy endings; the music just stops when it is over.

As he has become cool, so have his listeners. They don't dance; they listen respectfully, as if to chamber music, and applaud politely at the end. At Birdland, for example, which is perhaps the jazz centre of the world, there is an audience sitting in the so-called bleachers, who do not necessarily have a drink in their hands, and who do not beat out the rhythm and carry on as we did when I was a boy. It is all rather cool, and a bit mental, considering that jazz is essentially an emotional experience.

Where does this lead us in our investigation? There are those who conclude from all this that here, in the new jazz, is the real beginning of serious American music. That at least the American composer has his own expression. Can this be? Is it possible that all the symphonic works of Aaron Copland and Roy Harris and William Schuman — and myself, for that matter — are nothing but stylized imitations of a European symphonic tradition? Sometimes, I must say, I think so. At any rate, we can be sure of one thing: that the line between serious music and jazz grows less and less clear. We have serious composers writing in the jazz idiom, and we have jazz musicians becoming serious composers. Perhaps we've stumbled on a theory.

But theory or no theory, I recently found myself writing a concert piece for jazz bands. It seemed to me a perfectly natural thing to be writing; I guess you would call it a "long-hair" composer's statement of what he feels about jazz. It is called "Prelude, Fugue and Riffs". It is in three short continuous sections: a prelude for the brass, a fugue for the five saxes, and then riffs for everybody. In one way or another, it uses all the jazz elements we have discussed, but doesn't try any particular daring experiments. I hope you will feel in it some of the special beauty of jazz that I felt when I wrote it; and I hope that our investigation of jazz today will help you understand a little more clearly why I think of it as a serious piece of American music.

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