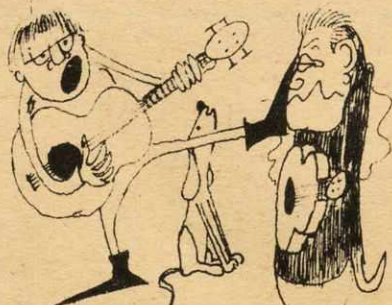


MUSIC RANT 1: DOUGLAS BARBOUR

CULTURE Down Among The Zombies



Ortega Y. Gasset in his book *The Revolt of the Masses*, was one of the first thinkers of our time to react to the problem of a partially literate and enfranchised mass public. He pointed out that this mass was destroying all the old artistic and cultural values of Civilization. Yet they erected no new values of any worth; rather they called for what is known as popular culture, in which the values are akin to the taste of pabulum as compared to Filet Mignon. Ortega blamed the mass for the decline in culture. He firmly believed that it had caused the loss of all cultivated values in his world; and the picture of society he painted forty years ago is as bleak today, perhaps even more so.



But there was a flaw in his reasoning, as C. Wright Mills points out in *The Power Elite*: Ortega allows the mass more power than it really has. The initiative that Ortega believes the mass to have is denied them by the very fact that they are a mass rather than a public. A public can take initiative, can have power by virtue of the fact that it is composed of responsible and intelligent citizens. A mass cannot, because it is an amorphous entity composed of ciphers unable to react as individuals, who are moved, as a mass, by those in control - the leaders in the political, industrial and military establishment. All of whom have something to sell, be it themselves, their ideas, or their products, to the widest possible market. It is for this reason that they wish to have power over the mass, and want a mass rather than a society of responsible individuals. They want power, not necessarily as a dictator wants it, merely to promote their own security and economic interest. Thus they turn to the mass media, not for communications, but for propaganda.

Influence over the mass can best be gained through these media, especially if they are disengaged from reality. Thus popular culture becomes a fact. It is not art, but entertainment. It is not designed to stimulate thought; it is aimed at dulling the mind, at bringing about a state of euphoria, but all on false premises. Satisfaction of a sort is provided, but it is the pseudo-satisfaction of masturbation. Art, which appeals to a select group (not always the same group); the point is that no work of art can be universal in appeal, is of no use to those in power because it cannot be used to sell anything. It reach the masses for someone or someone else. And the mass is to be kept as it is, id uncomplaining.



So it appears that Ortega analysed the results correctly; the vast inertia of the masses crushing any hint of individuality in a person, the conformity of thought and belief, the dull, deadening effect of the mass media upon the individual intellect, the cancer (Mailer's phrase) of all modern popular 'art'. But he did not see that these exist not so much by the will of the mass as through the will of the few who control communications in the society, and through the necessary acquiescence of the mass to these few.

But now we can see the two-fold reasoning behind the actions of the purveyors of mass culture, the men in power. On the one hand, as they want docility in the mass, they wish to dull the minds of the mass to everything except the clichés of belief in whatever they sell. So

they inflict pseudo-art upon the people. They are the originators of the defecation that is mass culture. Also it is the only way to reach the widest possible market. 'Offend no one'. Obviously such works will never awaken anyone either. For art does both. The mass media can do neither by their very nature. So because they desire power, the leaders of society are forced, by the very nature of the beast they deal with, to create within it that void of intellect which is symbolised by practically everything 'cultural' it appreciates.

THE AUTHOR: Douglas Barbour hangs around the English Department. He also rants about novels, little literary magazines, F.R. Leavis and free love.

This does not mean that I believe no art has been created in this century. I do, and I believe that the greatest of this art will be of lasting value to humanity if it survives to ever grow up to awareness of the lack of art in life. There is a minority that knows this. The problem is whether or not, in the future, as a whole generation is brought under the daily influence of the mass media, this minority, which has always been of extreme importance to humanity, will continue to exist. That there are still some individuals who care about and appreciate real art is obvious. The situation outlined above is an 'ideal' one which has not yet come into existence. Up until a few years ago it appeared very near at hand in North America. Such things as the Negro Revolt argue that perhaps the situation is not as bad as Ortega feared. On the other hand, the existence and powerful influence of the Southern reaction to the Revolt, of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, of Herbert Hoover and Barry Goldwater, of the John Birch Society and all other far-right extremist groups in both Canada and the United States, of censorship as it still exists on both sides of the border, and of much more, especially perhaps the ever-current Television 'Season', does not indicate that there is much to be hoped for in the future. Society moves ever closer to the ideal portrayed above, not ever further away.



Part of the problem this situation represents lies in the creation of a literate mass society. By literate here I do not mean 'able to read and write'. I do mean, 'able to think cogently about the problems of living'. What is in fact true of the vast majority of people in this mass is that they are illiterate in a new and terrifying sense. They cannot carry out an inner dialogue with themselves concerning new or old rational ideas. They are unable to conceptualize, especially in the artistic and ethical spheres. Often they are less able to think than many of their 'illiterate' ancestors.

Especially, they are unable to think about their own lives, or about the relationship that would exist in a properly democratic society between their personal problems of existence and the whole great structure of their society. Because they are unable to see this possible relationship they are unable to do anything about it, which leaves the men in power right where they want to be: in control. And culture remains where it has been for most of this century also: in a coffin.



The CBC announced in Halifax that the brilliant Canadian pianist, Margaret Ann Ireland, will perform a recital of Germanic composers for the CBC Invitational Concert, November 29.

The first in the 1964-65 season, this concert will be held at Halifax's Neptune Theatre at 2:30 p.m. and the public is cordially invited to attend. They may obtain tickets, free of charge, at the reception desk of the CBC building, 70 Bell Road.

In making the announcement, the CBA/CBH program director, John MacEwan added, "We are very pleased about this and feel it a privilege to present this internationally-known artist for the first time publicly in this city. She has done broadcasts from here before, but has never presented a public recital".

The recital will be recorded for broadcast on CBC Radio's "Music In The Evening", Thursday, December 3, at 6:35 p.m. A pianist who has won international acclaim, Margaret Ann Ireland has performed in London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Stockholm. She recently completed her sixth European Concert Tour.

During two tours of the Soviet Union in 1960 and 1962, Miss Ireland played in 13 major Soviet cities. In January, 1963, her New

Bryce Morrison is writing his Master's thesis on D.H. Lawrence. His other activities include being English and playing the piano.

Moscow the Soviet pianist Emil Gilels pronounced her "an outstanding musician".

She tours extensively in Canada where she made her debut with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the age of sixteen. She has appeared with many orchestras in Canada, Western Europe and the USSR, and leading European radio and television networks have presented her recitals. She has also appeared many times on CBC Radio and Television.

Margaret Ann Ireland received her early training at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and has studied with eminent pianists in New York, Paris, Salzburg and Vienna.

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