

The Era Of Sock

No. II.

BY TEMPO

If you can't respond to the wail of the saxaphone; if the boom of the drum doesn't fill you with a desire to shuffle; if you can listen to the rythmic plunk of a banjo and yet sit still; if a moaning trombone doesn't urge you to cast off your dignity and join the swaying mob in an hysterical fox-trot; if you don't feel giddy when a muted trumpet laughs in a minor key; if your feet won't move when a jazz band rips off "Blue Grass Blues," you're—well—you're just *passé*, that's all! You don't belong! You're hopelessly dense and don't understand that sock, like Balloon tires and Mah Jongg and shingled hair, is the latest thing.

Such is the verdict of the Solons of Sock who guide the destinies of popular music. From their lofty seats they frown down upon the youthful devotees of jazz and prophesy the fate of syncopation. Their knowledge is transcendent. they are the Patron Saints of every American college; they are the campus musicians, and their power is infinite. With a single melody they can sway a host of undergraduates; with one syncopated refrain they can compel a Sophomore to dance himself unconscious. And if you have no feeling for their measured harmonies they will look askance at you, for you do not belong in their chaotic world of sock. Only the gifted many, who can writhe and shake and stamp their feet in time with a savage melody, are natives of that crazy land of jazz wherein these campus kings of rythm reign supreme.

Here where the tranquil Jordan flows H. Warren Allen and his colleagues worship at the shrine of Sock. Four years ago Allen bid his fellow townsmen goodbye and set forth from Washington, Ind., upon a Quixotic adventure. With a violin and a saxaphone as his weapons he was resolved to conquer the world of music. But the violin proved a poor instrument of attack so he discarded it for the saxaphone, with which he has enslaved the students of Indiana University.

Allen is the Rudy Wiedoeft of the campus. The sounds issuing from his saxaphone vary from the deepest, bull-frogian croak to that shrieking *tremulo* which so frequently rises above the strains of Carmichael's Orchestra to frighten dancers out of their

senses. By blowing until his neck bulges out like an over-inflated tire and by passing his fingers rapidly over a row of queer-looking keys, Allen can make his saxophone bellow raucously or sing with such enchanting mellowness that his auditors fall fast asleep. He has played his way around half the world. In Japan, the tremors caused by his saxaphonic syncopations were exceeded only by a terrific earthquake; in Shanghai, coolies shuffled to his sock-time melodies; while in Hong Kong he played such infectuous jazz that the high dignitaries of that metropolis removed their ecclesiastical robes and joined in an Oriental fox-trot. And then he returned to the campus, where, recently, a great disaster befell him. He was victimized by William Moenkhaus.

Moenkhaus is a pianist of rare ability. His renditions of movements from Beethoven, Brahms, Tschaikowsky, or Chopin are masterful. And his musical talent is not confined to the piano alone. As a cellist he can play either jazz or opera with equal facility. But one day, a few months ago, Moenkhaus was overwhelmed by a desire to amass a fortune. This passion for wealth came upon him during a period of temporary insolvency and so, unable to resist it, he evolved a scheme whereby he could enrich himself. It was a heartless yet practical scheme and so certain was Moenkhaus of its reliability that, even before it materialized, he pictured himself as a Titan of Finance. Then began the task of obtaining sufficient funds to promote his enterprise. Perceiving H. Warren Allen as a person of affluence and innocence, Moenkhaus quite deliberately set upon him, took unfair advantage of the former's convivial humour and, after calling all of his powers of persuasion into play, possessed himself of Allen's monetary holdings.

It was in this way that *The Fish-Line Taxi Company* sprang into existence. The business flourished, despite Moenkhaus' attempts to apply rules of harmony to the problems of rapid-transit. Even Allen's eagerness to drive the taxis at topmost speed, as the result of which passengers frequently arrived at their destinations in a state of complete nervous exhaustion, did not affect the prosperity of the concern. But then a sudden turn of fate changed the aspect of the entire situation. The local officers of the law descended upon the proprietors of the establishment and informed them that they would be expected to purchase a License For The Operation of Vehicles For Hire. Although Moenkhaus and Allen could not forgive this affront, they were at the same time reluctant to engage the police officials in any altercation. So, out of the sheer kindness of their hearts, they retired from the business and *The Fish-Line Taxi Company* was dissolved. Rather than

offend the dignity of the law they sacrificed their fondest ambitions.

But Allen and Moenkhaus, as jazz artists, have their contemporaries. Harry Williams also has aroused the sleeping Orient with rhythmic refrains. Williams is a drummer and xylophonist, and accompanied Allen on a voyage across the Pacific with Walter Stiner's Orchestra. He thwacks a variety of percussion instruments with remarkable dexterity, yet his more recent popularity has accrued from his accomplished performances on the xylophone. With a small, wooden hammer in each hand, Williams can strike the oblong bars of the xylophone in such an ambidexterous manner that that peculiar instrument gives forth the most dance-compelling sounds imaginable. On a recent tour with the Indiana University Glee Club, however, he suffered an embarrassing experience. While dancing up and down behind the xylophone and punishing the instrument with a deluge of blows, his foot slipped and what he had intended for a chromatic run resolved itself into an outburst of discordant notes. But this *faux pas* did not endanger Williams' reputation as a musician. He is, unquestionably, one of the campus kings of jazz.

Arthur Baker is another member of the musical constituency of the campus. He is a cornetist of many years' experience and for the past few months has been an integral part of Carmichael's Orchestra. Since sock was invented for the trumpet, Baker, therefore, is the greatest of all campus exponents of this newest style of jazz. He employs all known methods of musical hocus-pocus, and by a series of extraordinary manipulations can cause his trumpet to laugh or cry, as the occasion may demand. Unfortunately, though, Baker has fallen into a state of inertia from which he has been unable to arouse himself. In fact, this sluggish condition has become so acute that, to the amazement of his friends, he can play and snore at the same time! However, only the most capable of musicians could accomplish such a feat. Consequently, Baker's fame is assured.

Of course, there are other campus musicians who share equal powers with these masters of syncopation. Edwin Smith, Jack Hatfield, William Fox, Warren Carr, James Collier, Ralph Probst and others are, all of them, Solons of Sock. They lay down the laws of dance music and administer to the needs of a jazz-mad world. The strategems they contrive—the rhythmic tricks, the wierd modulations, the haunting melodies—exhilarate their youthful patrons. The enthusiasm they display enlivens all who watch them at their work—for jazz is jollity.