

## NEW FORMS FOR OLD NOISES

**T**O designate as "jazz" the syncopated music of today is to make an inaccurate though popular use of that term. Jazz, as I understand it, describes only the first stage in the development of

modern syncopated music, when its outstanding feature was improvisation. Improvised noises of the sliding trombones, cowbells, the train effects, shouting of negroes and all varieties of spontaneous exclamation,—these embellishments, superimposed on the basic dancing tune, combined to create the early “true” jazz.

Then came the “blues,” the second phase, contributing all kinds of figuration and rhythmic complication. Gradually the impromptu spirit was suppressed, and improvisation finally eliminated.

Today popular syncopated music has one fixed form which is the fox trot, a slow march with rhythmic complication.

The signal characteristic of the popular syncopated orchestra is that no instrument plays harmony; each instrument is melodic, playing its own counterpoint to the basic dancing tune. The strings, reduced in the early jazz stages to so unimportant a part, are, I believe, gradually regaining their place as important melodic voices, a development in accord with the tendency of this type of music to seek out subtler effects. For the creation of a subtle polyphonic ensemble on the basis of the dancing tune the old batteries of brass and percussion are not in themselves adequate.

Jazz is essentially an applied music. It is its nature to be built on a “given” melody, this melody to receive peculiar treatment. The foundation—the dancing tune—is of lesser importance than the ornamental features, the figuration, rhythmic play and orchestral coloring. I do not see how any particular form or new type of musical composition can grow out of jazz.

*By Hugo Riesenfeld*

## FOR AN AMERICAN GESTURE

THE supreme function of the creative artist is to seek new forms of expression and to place them in new and beautiful settings; it is the quality that marks all progress in art and differentiates the seer from the imitator. There is, however, great danger in a search for new impressions without an adequate foundation of technique and knowledge of what has been done up to the present. The older generation, having that knowledge, do not