

# An Overgrown Grove

**E**ver since the first Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* attained completion in four volumes (1890), through the appearance of the fifth edition in nine volumes (1954), it has been held in high esteem through the English-speaking world as the most accessible bridge between the landlocked music lover and the offshore sources of information he yearns to invade and conquer.

Now, however, all but 3 percent of that fifth edition (which subsequently appeared in a sturdily bound paperback version) has been banished. In its place is what is called *The New Grove Dictionary*, in 20 volumes and 18,000,000 words, created at considerable expense by Macmillan Publishers Ltd. of England (not to be confused with the Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. of this country). In effect, all those who have, over a 25-year lapse, been looking forward to a sixth edition in keeping with its predecessors, have been set aside in favor of the specialist rather than the general reader.

In place of the old Grove is a veritable forest of informational content, an assemblage of verbal and pictorial content that would grace any institutional library, musical or academic. Its intelligently planned lengthy articles are, in many instances, of a breadth and specificity that outdo any prior publication in English. Of excellent quality are the supporting work lists of composers and the bibliographies pertaining to their life accomplishments.

As an instance of fertility both in life and art, Volume I offers, beginning on page 776 and extending through page 877, a carefully compiled, condensed book on the Bachs. The first two facing pages set out, in well-designed abundance, a family tree of which Veit Bach, at the left, was the progenitor and

scholarly, rather than popular, importance. If you are interested in Gilles de Bins Binchois of the 15th century, you'll find a dozen pages on him. If, however, you are interested in the great, beloved Spanish composer Isaac Albeniz, you'll have to look somewhere else for embracing discussion. Volume I gives him less than two pages, including a picture. The history of notation gets nearly 100 pages, and the graphic material (totaling nearly 150 examples) is an education in itself. So too are the divisions dealing with instruments and instrument making, ethnomusicology, places and institutions, etc.

Inevitably, there have been oversights by those who carried out the grand plan of editor Stanley Sadie (a member of the music staff of the London *Times* and editor of the long-established *Musical Times* of England). Among the 22,500 articles, spread over the 20 volumes, I read with interest and stimulation a lengthy piece on Gustav Mahler's life and works by Paul Banks. Seeking further information on a man capable of so fine a survey, I looked at an appropriate

place in Volume II for his biography. Nothing there.

I also note, for example, a reference to the late Mischa Elman as an "American violinist of Russian birth." Was there a day in his 76 years when he was anything but a Russian violinist? Or did the mere fact of American citizenship change his bow arm, how he used it, and what came out of the



Sir George Grove (1820-1900) compiled the first "Grove's."

Johann Philipp, who died in 1846, was the 85th and last, at the right. Johann Sebastian, born in 1685, was the 24th. Not only his immense output but the relatively large literature of his famous sons are enumerated in startling totality at the proper chronological points.

Many weeks' perusal of the volumes manifests a similar, insistent thoroughness of treatment of composers of

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## MUSIC

instrument on which he performed?

In one range of the shorter material, responsibility cannot be challenged. That is the assignment of operatic biographical matter to Desmond Shawe-Taylor, who not long ago retired as music critic of the *Sunday Times* of London, and to Harold Rosenthal, editor of *Opera* magazine of the same city. Through the 20 volumes, almost every item, regardless of length or brevity, bears the name of the contributor (rather than merely initials, as in prior Grove usage). In the instance of the well-known Italian opera mezzo Fedora Barbieri, her biography of approximately 20 lines bears the names of both Shawe-Taylor and Rosenthal.

The prevailing emphasis on scholarship extends to the treatment of jazz, of which there is an extended discussion by Max Harrison (Volume 9) but no biography of Harrison in the earlier volume. Lest it be assumed that contributors are rigorously excluded from the Dictionary, I note that a 14-page essay on the 17th-century composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier by H. Wiley Hitchcock is illuminated by a biography of Hitchcock in Volume 8. There is in Volume 20 a list of contributors that identifies their place of residence but nothing more.

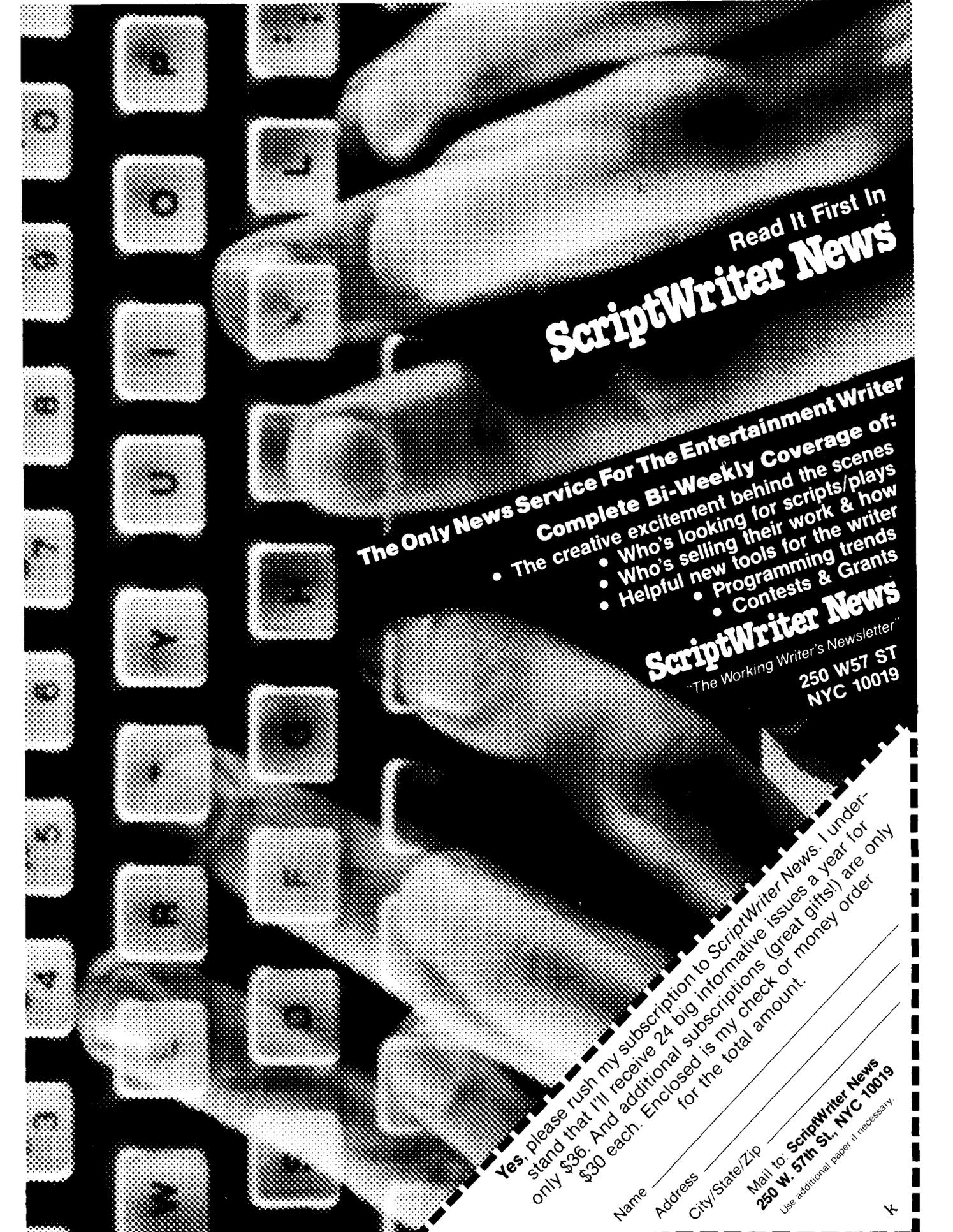
Reference to individual jazz per-

formers in the alphabetical sequence frequently include, as in the instances of Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman, notational illustration of typical improvisatory style. In the discussion of Goodman, however, I see no reference to the outstanding occasion of his public life, the Carnegie Hall concert of January 16, 1938.

In one brochure circulated by Macmillan on prior editions of Grove, the fifth edition is deprecated as "still essentially aimed at the amateur." The presumption that such interest has been ruled out of *The New Grove* would disqualify, among a world of others, Sir George Grove himself. He was by training a civil engineer, but by mature decision and heartfelt commitment, a music lover whose work enriched millions. Indeed, on page 754 of Volume 7, a pupil of Grove is quoted as saying: "He taught one to think of him as pre-eminently an *amateur*."

Such being the case, why dub 20 volumes, including but a minor fraction of anything possibly known to him, as *The New Grove*? Perhaps to give a cachet of identity to a product for which institutions are now required to pay \$1,900 (plus \$25 for shipping). Individuals may utilize an installment plan on payment of \$190 per month for 10 months, with two volumes delivered for each settlement. ■





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Walter Terry

## An Alonso Gala

**A**licia Alonso is a member of a rare species—prima ballerina *assoluta*—one of only three or four that are on view today. It was my honor to be her guest at the Seventh International Ballet Festival held under her auspices, and those of the Cuban government, in Havana last fall.

Miss Alonso, just turned 59, found a new Albrecht for her *Giselle* in the USSR's Vladimir Vasiliev, very probably Russia's finest male dancer.

Alonso has danced the title role in *Giselle* for 37 years, and the list of her distinguished partners includes England's Anton Dolin, who first taught her the ballet in his own staging of the classic for the American Ballet Theatre. Today, despite the obvious gap in her own age and that of the teenage *Giselle*, Alonso, in this Havana performance, accomplished what only a handful of great dancers and actresses have done, and that is to reveal the inner radiance and emotional urgencies of youth through the clear perspective of maturity and the ecstasy of remembrance. Dolin, now 76, was present to watch her performance with Vasiliev. His rapturous verdict? "Sheer magic."

I doubt that it occurred to any one in the cheering audience to say of Alonso, "Not bad for a Cuban Communist." For although she is that, to her public she is so much more. In her person, talents, and indomitable spirit Miss Alonso embodies the transcendent quality of the arts over the narrow and transient arena of politics. To her, these International Ballet Festivals are a celebration of the "oneness" of the family of dance.

In recent years, petulant politicians have not stood in the way of Alonso's appearances in the U.S.—previously

she was barred for almost 15 years—nor of Americans participating in the International Ballet Festivals in Havana. Now, at the 1980 festival held late last year, it was exciting to see the One World of Dance back together again so joyfully.

Dancers and choreographers, musicians and critics, dance photographers and ballet documentarians came from the United States and the Soviet

ing day. Ichino could speak only English; Jhones, only Spanish. But they could both speak through the language of ballet, through the easy eloquence of movement. Since their versions of the old Marius Petipa classic varied in several places—it would have been perilous if she had leapt into his arms only to discover too late that he was elsewhere on stage!—they had to reconcile their differences. This they did easily with a gesture here, a bit of pantomime there, many tactile touches on arms, chests, thighs, shoulders, plus a great deal of the mysterious (to the outsider) sign-language whereby dancers can literally dance whole ballets with their hands and fingers.

Occasionally, of course, the spirit of international exchange through dance is stifled by socialist bureaucracy and fears of defections. Soviet ballet, for example, despite the considerable talents of the Bolshoi's Grigorovich, is patently 50 years behind the times because the country's young choreographers are not permitted to work and study extensively outside the Soviet bloc. Even Cuba, despite Alonso's remarkable example of artistic freedom and courage,

has not allowed its most gifted choreographers, among them Alberto Mendez, to work, observe, and learn in the richly creative atmosphere of North America.

But such considerations only slightly marred this artistically stirring and warmly human Seventh International Ballet Festival. Throughout, the indefatigable Alonso devoted herself, as she has done since the beginning of her illustrious career, to the care and well-being of her extended family—the dancers of the world. ■



Alonso with Vasiliev in *Giselle*.

Union, from socialist Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Denmark, from Venezuela, Mexico, Great Britain, and indeed from around the world.

The Americans, Eleanor D'Antuono, veteran ballerina of the ABT, and Paul Russell, the foremost black classical dancer of today, performed with Cuban partners to thunderous applause from the audience. When the California-born Yoko Ichino and the Cuban Fernando Jhones "knocked 'em dead," to put it in show-biz terms, with *Le Corsaire*, it was delightful to recall their fast-paced rehearsal of the preced-