

ARTS & LETTERS

cialized swing in the '30s; the bebop played by Charlie "Bird" Parker in the 1940s gave way to the more digestible "cool" sound in the 1950s; John Coltrane's avant-garde saxophone work of the 1960s was followed by popular jazz-rock fusion. If the cycle stays true to form, a new creative outburst is now due.

Giddins sees "an astonishing array of talent" in jazz today. But, so far, no leader with the stature of an Armstrong or Coltrane has emerged to lead a breakthrough. Even so, many of today's jazzmen are virtuosos, applying the avant-garde musical vocabulary to jazz and blues classics.

Unfortunately, none of these young players—saxophonist David Murray, pianist Hilton Ruiz, trumpeter Woody Shaw—get much of a hearing outside of Manhattan. There, a galaxy of nightclubs nourishes a lively jazz scene. But few promoters or major American record companies seek out jazz musicians, only a handful of radio stations play their music, and few of the college campuses that hosted performances by the Modern Jazz Quartet or Gerry Mulligan during the 1950s exhibit much interest in such music today.

Ironically, outside of their Manhattan oasis, American jazz musicians find some of their most enthusiastic audiences overseas. The world's leading jazz magazine, *Swing Journal*, is published in Japan, and many top American jazz players are forced to record for tiny companies in Germany, Denmark, and Italy.

An exception to the general neglect is the 22-year-old trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, who recently won Grammy awards for his jazz and classical recordings. But Giddins is not optimistic about any jazzman's prospects for lasting public recognition. He recalls how one noted critic complained about the absence of prominent composers at a 1965 White House arts festival, even though a featured performer at the festival was Duke Ellington. To the critic, as to many Americans, the jazzman was invisible.

Shakespeare's Heyday

"William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation" by Lawrence W. Levine, in *The American Historical Review* (Feb. 1984), 400 A St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

A young Frenchman attending a performance of one of Shakespeare's plays in a San Francisco theater in 1851 was astonished when the audience periodically burst into "shrill whistles and savage yells."

Such crowd reactions were not uncommon in 19th-century America, writes Levine, a historian at the University of California, Berkeley. Shakespeare was very much a part of popular culture. In Philadelphia during the 1810–11 theater season, the curtains rose on 88 performances, 22 of them Shakespearean plays. In New York City, 10 different versions of *Hamlet* were staged during the 1857–58 season. By the turn of the century, however, Shakespeare's very popularity would cost him his audience.

Theater audiences during most of the 19th century were "social

ARTS & LETTERS

microcosms" of the United States, Levine says. The gentry occupied the boxes, in the "pit" were middle-class patrons, and the gallery was the preserve of the common people. Shakespeare's plays served as the centerpiece of programs that included minstrel shows, acrobats, and other entertainments; and the shows traveled far and wide. Makeshift stages in Western outposts such as Red Dog, Rattlesnake, and Hangtown drew some of the best Shakespearean actors that the East, and even Europe, had to offer. Just about everyone was familiar with Shakespeare, Levine notes. Countless intentional parodies, such as *Julius Sneezer*, attest to that.

Shakespeare was popular for a number of reasons. His plays wore well in a society that valued oratory, and they lent themselves to melodrama. Shakespeare also seemed to be in tune with American moral sensibilities. The words, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves," could just as well be those of Thomas Jefferson as of Cassius in *Julius Caesar*.

Yet, after the mid-19th century, "polite" culture gradually claimed Shakespeare for its own. Among the reasons: The masses of newly arriving immigrants demanded more entertainment that did not have to be heard to be enjoyed—boxing, burlesque, baseball. But Levine sees growing class divisions as the chief cause. Middle-class theatergoers lost their enthusiasm for popular showplaces, such as one in Philadelphia where the clientele was given to pelting the performers with rotten fruit and the management felt obliged to warn that "officers are appointed who will rigidly enforce decorum." So the well-to-do segregated themselves from their uncouth countrymen. And separate audiences, Levine notes, gave rise to separate cultures.

Picasso's Last Paintings

"The Catch in the Late Picasso" by John Richardson, in *The New York Review of Books* (July 19, 1984), P.O. Box 940, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

During the last decade of his life, Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) fell from favor among art critics, and his works from that period are still not well regarded. But Picasso's friend and biographer, John Richardson, contends that they represent "a phenomenal finale to a phenomenal career."

In 1961, Picasso moved to a villa in southern France shortly after his marriage to Jacqueline Roque, the patient, protective (and much younger) woman whose presence henceforth dominated his life and work. After the move, the artist rarely left his immediate neighborhood, but he continued working vigorously until his death, guarded all the while by his wife. As in the past, the transformation in Picasso's life was mirrored in his work. Many of the paintings and prints of this period depict "baleful nudes flaunting their sexual parts." If some of these nudes and lovers often look like wrestlers, it is because Picasso "got hooked on *Catch*," the French version of staged television wrestling. *Catch* also contributed to "the general air of burlesque violence" in the late works.