



## FOR CHILDREN

"Adventures in Music," a concert and instrument-demonstration of woodwinds, is this week-

end's event of the "Saturdays at 3" program at the Henry Street Playhouse, 466 Grand Street. Among the instruments to be discussed are the flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon. Patricia Hall conducts the ensemble, Robert F. Egan provides the narration. Admission is 10 cents for children, 60 cents for adults. None of the latter will be admitted unless accompanied by one or more of the former.

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## How Hi the Good Life Of Madison Avenue's Fi?

by Jean Shepherd

A tall willowy girl sits crosslegged with her back to a Paul McCobb Directional casual bench. Her treader pants are as taut as the windscreen lines of the Mercedes 300SL Super-sport which in many ways she herself resembles.

Note the high-chiselled functional cheekbones and the finely molded gently sloping forehead; built for slicing the air as clean as a well-honed Swedish blade. She has Grand Prix bearing and assurance as well as implied performance to match. Her expression is a kind of half-opened-mouth-brush-backed-casual-hair look beloved of the Bennington girl who has made the editorial staff of the best young fashion magazine. She thinks Harry Belafonte is authentic. Mabel Mercer is a great actress and does such wonderful things with Cole Porter. The Italian T shirt she wears is as black and real as the hair of Anna Magnani, the only film actress our girl cares to discuss. However, she saw "Marty" twice because it was about real people. Gazing out at us from behind her with exactly the same expression

Jean Shepherd conducts a nightly all-night (12.30-5 a. m.) radio show for WOR Mutual, writes for Audio magazine, and is the progenitor of a recently issued Abbott LP album, "Into the Unknown." He has written this article especially for The Village Voice, at the request of its editors, and from time to time will be contributing other pieces to the newspaper.

gleaming from its taut slide-rule dial is a low flat FM tuner (tuned to WQXR) with its matching amplifier. The picture is beautifully composed. Complete.

THE scene is not spun out of Karo Syrup but has appeared in countless issues of slick mags during the past year or so and will continue to do so for some time. Hi-fi has discovered youth and social symbol with a vengeance. To those who know the background and actual developmental history of hi-fi there is more than a small amount of irony in this fact. Hi-fi has become chic. It



is now an end in itself instead of being a mere means to an end. The ends now implied by the Madison Avenue ad-writers dealing in hi-fi are exactly the same as those who sell cosmetics, fashions, and California Cliff Houses. These ends can be roughly classified as youth, or recaptured youth, and social gains to be achieved by living in the much-sought-after contemporary way. The ends, at least as expressed in the ads appearing in mass media other than specialized hi-fi literature, seem to have very little to do with fine music well reproduced. Naturally, some mentioned is made of music in most of the copy, but only in a vague and disarming way, so as not to alarm the Ray Anthony contingent. Instead, a good part of all hi-fi advertising space is taken up with photos or drawings illustrating the good life as exemplified by our treader number. The cuts almost always show the equipment discreetly displayed in highly contemporary surroundings of unquestioned well-heeled success.

### One Real Danger

All of this is harmless in itself except for one very real danger. And that danger is one that has a lot of good people in the booming hi-fi industry worried. They are afraid that they are likely to go the way of the automobile business in that the stylist and copy writer will take over in an area that should be the primary concern of the engineer. Long

ago the sales people in Detroit learned that more cars can be sold by the lavish use of chrome and wrap-around windshields than can ever be moved by a fine torsion-bar suspension system, in spite of the fact that such a system would make the family hack far more pleasant to drive and infinitely safer. The design engineer who is concerned with the automobile as a lethal moving projectile, which it is, is definitely lower in the Detroit scale of values than the stylist who can come up with jazzy lamé upholstery.

The hi-fi engineers are rapidly going the same way. More and more capital is being invested in gimmicky dial, cabinet design, and ad copy, while less dough is being spent on actual circuit design. This is not true of many of the old-line concerns whose whole reputations have been based on actual quality, but even they are beginning to show the influence of Madison Avenue. They have to do so in order to compete with the less scrupulous operators who have usurped the label "hi-fi" without taking over

continued on page 7

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## theatre uptown

'GODOT'—A MASTERPIECE?

by Vance Bourjaily

Nonsense has been piled on nonsense about "Waiting for Godot" and will, I suppose, continue to be. Among the silliest of the many silly things said are the contentions that it is impenetrable, that it is a masterpiece, and that it is a bore. None of these, it seems to me, is true.

It has occasional obscurities of language, but they are rare. In the first act, for example, there are no more than three references

[Because of the unusual interest aroused around town by "Waiting for Godot," we are printing this week a comment on the play by Vance Bourjaily, regular contributor of Theatre Uptown, who was not able to catch "Godot" at the time it opened. His piece was written without foreknowledge of the advertisement that appears on page 12.—Ed.]

"knock." "dudeen." "Kapp and Peterson"—which you might find puzzling, and one can make satisfactory enough guesses, pornographic in both instances, at the first and third. Except for these, every word is a familiar one. It is not Samuel Beckett's language which requires explanation, though I would be adding to the silliness if I maintained that his ideas and his dramatic logic are as easily accessible. They are not easy; they are not impenetrable either, and I shall be back to them before long.

### Interesting, Not Great

As to whether the play is masterpiece or bore, it is, in my judgment, neither, though it has elements of both. In so far as it is a play of serious ideas, with range enough so that they form a complete point of view, "Waiting for Godot" resembles a mas-

Continued on page 15

## How Hi the Good Life?

Continued from page 6

any of the responsibilities entailed in the use of such a term.

Almost anything capable of playing a record or tuning in a radio station today is called "hi-fi" by the copy writers. The term now has practically no meaning. Good equipment certainly is available to those who know how to select it, and at reasonable prices, but the problem for the one who desires genuine hi-fi on a limited budget is how to tell the real from the phony. Even price is no criterion, since several manufacturers are now bringing out stuff which sells up in the high brackets but which as high-fidelity equipment is laughable. In fact, price is the last criterion that should be used in judging hi-fi, since there are several companies that turn out very low-cost material that actually rates technically with the most expensive. About the only advice that can be called valid for the pros-

## SOUNDINGS

High Fidelity, as Jean Shepherd points out elsewhere on these pages, is a term to which the copy boys are giving the treatment. The pitch is not what it is, but rather what can it do for you as an acquisitive symbol. As a pre-Madison Avenue owner of a rig, I can bluntly say that my social station has not been advanced. And I can also say that in terms of pure enjoyment, my hi-fi components represent the best investment I've made in the past decade.

In the war years we greatly accelerated the practical application of the findings of pure science. It was inevitable that the gadgets of war would ultimately find their way into the consumer market. From a relative handful of elec-

tronic buffs who used to peruse the mail-order catalogs or make Saturday safaris to Cortlandt Street, the fascination with what you can do with sound-production has now spread to embrace a mass audience.

The wealth of great music and of other sounds lately preserved on records and tape are token of a development as dramatic as the one which has occurred in the reproduction techniques for great works of art—techniques that have ushered in what André Malraux refers to as the era of "the museum without walls," and is considered by him to be as important as any single event in the total history of art. No less fantastic is the advent of the era of "concert halls without box offices."

For those who are not "pros" or especially in the know, The Voice will try from time to time to keep au courant with developments in hi-fi and other sound-reproducing equipment. We plan to publish interpretive articles as well as to report on those components, package deals, and sales which we feel will fit into any budget. We plan to list dealers whom you can approach for expert opinion and honest value. Feel free to write for any information or advice. This is your section.

—Alan Bodian

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CH 3-1382



pective buy is to follow the hi-fi dope in such publications as Audio, High Fidelity, and perhaps the Saturday Review, and don't

be afraid to ask questions over the counter of a genuine radio-supply house rather than the cash register of the appliance-and-TV department of a discount shop. A radio-supply house can be found by looking in the Yellow Pages. Even this system of buying is far from infallible, but at least it raises the chances of the average buyer to get a good high-fidelity system at a decent price.

Above all, keep a good sharp beady eye on the girl in the foreground. She's a shifty one.

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