

*Launcelot Allen Pyke, II*  
*Jazz, 1920 to 1927:*  
*an analytical study*

2 Vols. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms (UM order no. 62-4988), 1962. (115p., pos. film \$2.75; State University of Iowa diss.)

*Frank J. Gillis*

This doctoral dissertation, filled with a miscellany of errors of fact and judgment, points out the need for academic advisers qualified to direct scholarly papers dealing with jazz. It is unfortunate that as colleges and universities become increasingly aware of the interest and importance being attached to jazz, few faculty seem to be available for guiding those researching and writing on this vital aspect of American culture. Whereas much of the carelessness is the fault of the author, his advisers apparently lacked knowledge of the musical and esthetic values of jazz, and of the available reference works. Whether this condition can be attributed to the failure of music departments to recognize the validity of jazz as a significant musical phenomenon, and fit for scholarly enquiry, or to a shortage of qualified teachers, it is a rather sad situation that should soon be rectified.

Pyke's work, a study based upon ten transcribed jazz tunes recorded during what might be called the classical period of New Orleans improvised ensemble jazz, is divided into two parts. Volume I, comprising the text, deals with the background and musical characteristics of jazz, and Volume II contains a transcription of the ten tunes with the melodic instruments notated in score. Before one gets too far into the text, several serious errors turn up. First, it should have been brought out in the title that the study is restricted to Negro jazz. Second, one of the recorded versions transcribed and analyzed, Bunk Johnson's Original Superior Band playing "Down by the River", was recorded in 1942, not 1922, as stated, and thus should not have been considered in the study. Third, in his treatment of "a representative selection of New Orleans jazz" the author fails to include even one of at least a dozen significant recordings made by Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers in 1926-27, a group that many jazz critics, writers, and enthusiasts would quickly name as one of the two outstanding jazz units—the other being King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, represented in the dissertation by four selections—playing in the New Orleans ensemble style.

The entire work—the sections on the historical background of jazz and on musical analysis, the bibliography and the transcriptions themselves—is carelessly done and contains many errors. Some are simply

due to negligence. It is unforgivable for anyone writing on jazz to notate the blues scale with a flatted sixth instead of a flatted seventh, and this incorrectly from a source (p. 78). Some are undoubtedly typographical, and some are due to mistakes of fact. They are too numerous to bring out in any great detail here. Furthermore, many of the ideas presented are not clearly stated and show the author to be without complete command of his subject. Finally, a good deal of the important literature in the field has been neglected. A study in which King Oliver and his recordings play such a major role should have utilized, or at least cited, *King Joe Oliver*, by Walter C. Allen and Brian A. L. Rust (Belleville, N.J., 1955), the definitive work on the man, his life, and recordings.

I find it hard to believe that this dissertation could have been accepted as a piece of scholarly research and writing. Its basic idea—the transcription and analysis of tunes taken from a certain style period of jazz—is good. Such an undertaking, however, requires a broad knowledge of the music, historically, esthetically, and theoretically, and a fine hand to develop it. Pyke was weak in the majority of these requirements. Yet, with more care, and with proper guidance, he could have done much better.

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*Joseph Emilio Rotondi*  
*Literary and musical aspects*  
*of Roman opera, 1600-1650*

Ann Arbor: University Microfilms (UM order no. 59-2265), 1959. (287p., University of Pennsylvania diss.)

*Barbara Russano Hanning*

Any study and reevaluation in English of early opera deserves the interest of musicologists, but one which promises a "unique approach" through a consideration of literary as well as musical aspects is especially welcome. For it was particularly in this formative period of both Florentine and Roman opera that the librettist played an important role in determining the ultimate shape of the work. Whether the text was written by a humanist poet, "to make a simple test of what the music of our age could do" (Rinuccini in the dedication of his *Euridice*, 1600), or by the composer himself who chose from among those literary forms and conventions available to him, it cannot have failed to influence the musical setting. One is therefore pleased to