

Choice of Music Reveals Your Character to Western Expert



The tramp on the road and the millionaire are alike in one respect—they'll pay for music that will unlock memory. So says Arthur S. Garbett, musical expert, now living in the West. Garbett's theories of why we like certain music give him an insight into the character of people that has proved invaluable in arranging broadcast programs and in stimulating record sales. The sketches surrounding the photo of Garbett illustrate some of his discoveries in the field of psychology as applied to music lovers.

By Helen Stewart

"TELL me the kind of music you like and I'll tell you something about yourself!" So says Arthur S. Garbett, musical genius of the West. Coming from a man whose knowledge of why human beings buy the music they do was worth thousands of dollars to the Victor Talking Machine Company 20 years ago, this makes us sit up and take notice.



Helen Stewart

Right now in America there are thousands of people, particularly those who grew up in the Middle West, who owe their early knowledge of opera to the phonograph and the Victor Books of Opera. Garbett wrote these. Today Garbett stands preeminent in the field of radio. He has been director of education for the Western division of NBC for the past ten years, but his uncanny ability to understand the inner workings of the mind goes back to the days when he worked with and knew intimately Caruso, Homer, Tetrassini, Geraldine Farrar, Schumann-Heink, Alma Gluck, Kreisler, Elman, Galli-Curci and other stars.

It was his job then to know what would pull a dollar out of a man's pocket for a piece of music, and he didn't learn the answer from reading books. He threw away outworn traditions and went about it his own way, visiting shops and watching people buy records. He listened to their conversations, questioned them, and what he learned helped make a fortune for the Victor company.

"It was then," he says, "I learned that music is not as some highbrows would have us believe, a pure 'aesthetic'—a thing of pure beauty. Music is at best of the earth—it is earthy! We care only for the music that in some way relates to our life experiences and awakens our memories of the past, or our hopes for the future."

HE LEARNED that if you are a woman 35 years old, respectably domesticated, with three children, you will buy music that reminds you of the moonlight and roses period of your life. You want music that makes you remember the sweetheart who breathed this tune to you 20 years ago—although you may not have seen him since.

"Each of us is a bundle of emotions," Garbett relates, "and there is no greater mistake than to think all of our emotions are worthy ones. This applies to women as well as to men. We are all driven by urges of which we cannot speak and to which we cannot give outlet and still live in a civilized world. Music acts as a safety valve for these emotions and helps us rise to great heights of self-sacrifice."

"Getting down to specific cases of how a choice may act as an index to character—I know that if you like the music of Beethoven, and you don't just pretend to, you are what I call a 'balanced type.' Your choice indicates to me a pretty high type of general intelligence. Beethoven runs the gamut of human emotions in music as Shakespeare does in literature. On the other hand, if you tell me you love 'My Old Kentucky Home,' that doesn't mean anything except that you are sure to be a native American. Americans idealize the idea of home more than Europeans. When this music of Stephen Foster's is played, every American is conjuring up his own picture of what 'home' means to him. That memory usually takes on a very rosy glamour. Music has the power to make us idealize our memories."

"During the World War," Garbett continues, "we learned that people were reminded of the Spanish-American War and consequently there was a revival of old tunes. A man was reminded of the romance he experienced at that time. Another peculiar thing is that a successful song need have no intrinsic merit, but must have the power to remind us in some way of our own lives. Take

Marches, Waltzes, Symphonies or Jazz — Every Type of Music Tags Its Listeners and Here's a Man Who Reads the Tags

for instance, 'Where Do We Go From Here?' It had no merit either as a poem or as a melody, but it was what the boys were singing. Suppose one of those boys who went down on a transport ship had been singing that song cheerfully as he left his home and that was his mother's last recollection of him. It is beyond the power of computation the association there would be for her in that song."

DO YOU happen to be one of those people in whom music arouses violent and sudden emotion? Then look out. That means there is some deep emotion you have been forced to conceal and music touches the hidden spring. Remember King David. Saul played for David, but Saul played once too often and David threw a javelin at him.

"It is really all very simple," explains Garbett. "You see you draw a circle and let that represent the Life of Man. Divide it into the periods thus: from the cradle to adolescence; from adolescence to maturity, and from maturity to the grave. Now a child in his day-dreaming thinks of how grand it is going to be when he is grown up. When we reach adolescence we feel we have all power and the world is our oyster. But at maturity life narrows. The dreams we had we know now will never come true. So we make up for the loss with music. We look backward, spending money for tunes that give to us again the dreams we dreamed. As we listen, we can see again the wealth we will never earn; the power we will never wield. In short, we transcend the shackles of life. The tramp on the road and the millionaire are alike willing

to pay money for music that unlocks memory!"

"I like gypsy music with castanets, and I also like Chopin's waltzes. I adore the 'Sextet from Lucia'—what does that mean about me?" I asked.

"There is a purely physical reason why some people choose the music they do," he answered. "You may be answering the call of a physical structure of the inner ear, as well as an emotional need. People who prefer marches, or gypsy music with a heavy time-beat, have a highly developed 'motor response.' The little organism in the inner ear which controls balance is dictating the musical choice. You may have a primitive strain and you should be a good dancer. On the other hand, if you hear a dreamy, sensuous waltz, and you are not moved to sway with the rhythm, that means either that your motor-response is not sensitive, or that you are just plain sophisticated. Primitive people give vent to this urge to sway."

"A taste for the delicacy of a Chopin waltz points to a rather well-developed musical sense as to rhythm. The 'Sextet from Lucia' and the overture from 'Tannhauser' appeal to people who get their musical enjoyment in a purely sensory way. These people will often be actually annoyed by march music."

"People who buy music because it pleases their ears, regardless of emotional response, will argue among themselves as to violin solos. No two people hear exactly alike, musically speaking, and if a man does not hear overtones, he won't care for violin solos. It used to be fun to watch people choosing between a Kreisler and an Elman rendition of Dvorak's 'Humoresque.' People with a

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As a wild mob battered down the door of the San Jose, California, jail, intent on hanging John M. Holmes and Thomas H. Thurmond, confessed killers of Brooke Hart, who was kidnaped and his body found some three weeks later floating in San Francisco Bay. A rare photograph this, shot just before the lynching took place.

THE IMMATURE HOUR by BUD LANDIS

BUD: All right, young man, just face the microphone and step lively, you're a little late. The early bird gets the worm.

AMATEUR: Yeah, but I ain't got no place to keep it.

BUD: Oh-oh! You're pretty smart.

A.: I know a couple of things—if I could only think of them.

BUD: Are you a local boy?

A.: Oh no, I live right here.

BUD: Um-humm. Let's see what your application says... So you're from Providence, are you?

A.: No, I'm from Providence, R. I.

BUD: Aw now listen, don't pull the old ones. Leave that to the professionals—where's your ethics?

A.: The finance company took it back.

BUD: I've always liked that one. But what are you going to sing?

A.: The wrist watch song: "Time On My Hands."

BUD: Yes, yes. But first let me ask—what is that going on right under your very nose?

A.: Why, I'm a Latin...

BUD: No, no—I say what is that quivering on your lips?

A.: I told you, I'm a latin my mustach grow.

BUD: Pardon me! Incidentally what is your nationality?

A.: I haven't any.

BUD: Come now, you must have been born some place.

A.: Sure, on a ship at sea.

BUD: Then you take your mother's nationality.

A.: Yes, but I was traveling with my aunt at the time.

Sound: Bong!