Where Do They Go From Here?

Now that the steelband has become respectable, and its musical position grows, day by day, it is interesting to guess what direction it will take, and whether as music it can in any further.

There are persons who do not consider the sound of the steelband to be music. They prefer to think of it as a limited curiosity, something like a saw or a fiddle-covered wash.

SECTION of Starlift band on the march

Manaos Now Decreed A Free Port

RIO DE JANEIRO, April 8 (Reuter).—President Kubitschek has signed a decree making Manaos a free port.

Manaos, a city of some 320,000 inhabitants and capital of the State of Amazonas, is 1,000 miles by the Amazon River and is the only overseas inland port on the river.

Being a free zone means that imports of any kind can be brought in duty-free from any part of Brazil or foreign countries.

The decree is regarded as one of the most important economic steps ever taken by the Brazilian Government to encourage the development of the north of Brazil. It was signed by Celso Furtado, Minister for Economic Development, and the Minister for Finance.

Announcement of the signing of the decree coincided with a Magistrates' court ruling that a group of armed men who set fire to the offices of the Communist Party newspaper in Manaos last year should be released.

And, as ever, it is true that the steelband was not always there.

The combination of the instruments, when played by a competent orchestra, has a quality of sound which is more beautiful in harmonious combination and also contrast than any of the parts separately. Some of the steel instruments have a beauty of tone which is unique, and the whole family of steel-pans is capable of great expressiveness, and used with discretion and taste, can be a delight to listen to.

The question is whether this instrument, or family of instruments, will be used to its best advantage.

WITHIN LIMITS

Apart from that, musical history remains within limits, and indeed there is a tendency for musical advantage to be taken of steelband as a concert medium, that pleases the movement between the listener and the dancer.

The same argument, I suppose, really as the steelbands improve, their managers will want to take them to concert halls, and in such cases, when the first few bands were professional, we started this.

In certain vital notes, which seemed outside the circumference of the gong-playing of the steelband, it was slow, and that the traffic criticism levelled against your pan-player is not so much, because the use of the instrument, but its often erratic tuning.

It's a pity at the moment, and at the many festivals of steel-band music on the coast, the steelband seemed to have remained in its infancy as regards the possibilities of improvement in tuning. Perhaps it is because the instruments are made by amateurs, and the players are not sufficiently interested in the tuning, which is left to the individual player.

If there is a future for the steelband, however feebly it may be seen, in the sound of modern jazz, then it is surely the ultimate responsibility of the arranger to see that the instruments are tuned to each other.

Another point is whether the ultimate in the steelband is reached by the mere mechanical reproduction of the sound of other instruments, or whether it is to be something which is to be developed through instrumental qualities that are peculiar to the steelband. However feebly it may be seen, in the sound of modern jazz, then it is surely the ultimate responsibility of the arranger to see that the instruments are tuned to each other.

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The question of the future of the steelband is one which is exercising the minds of many musicians, and it is natural that the greatest hope should be placed in the arranger.

The notion that imitative fashion would be present, will seem like extinct bird-calls.

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