

# Jazz Ordinaire and Swing Are Introduced on Jack Meakin Program With All Gravity of Formal Commentaries Upon Symphony Concert Numbers Or Arias From Grand Opera

Jack Meakin, Bughouse Rhythm maestro (with his wife, Ruth Chapel of NBC Music Library, and Commentator G. Archibald Presby.



Natalie Park, heard on Bughouse Rhythm program in role of languid Martha Murgatroy.

By JACK BURROUGHS

AMERICA is being initiated into the mysteries of Swing Appreciation. And America is getting a good deal of fun out of the process.

It is just possible that America is already duly appreciative of swing, blues numbers, jazz ordinaires and those rhythmic surprise packages known as jam sessions, but that, to prove into service an expression that should have been retired on pension twenty years ago, a dialer here nor there.

What is both "here and there" is the fact that dialers everywhere are deriving great enjoyment out of their musical "education" as embodied in the Bughouse Rhythm programs.

Bughouse Rhythm stands quite definitely in a class by itself. It is the only musical satire on the air lines. It is a tongue-in-cheek setting forth of the pseudo ambitions of "Doctor" John Brunker Meakin (Jack Meakin in his everyday clothes) to become a Big Shot in the world of modern music.

Though only a trifle more than one year old, this hilarious sample of purposeful goofiness has a coast-to-coast following not only among everyday dialers, but among musicians as well. It was recognition at the very start. Like the House Quints and members of rock families, it was born famous. Jack Meakin is one bawfoso who really has more fun than he can shake a stick at. Lateral minded persons who take everything at its face value, from gurgles to other players, probably would not suspect the NBC maestro of having the time of his life when he submits to the so-called mistreatment of Horace J. Floverseed, music critic of the Dandy Little Chamber Music Journal. Up to the time of this writing, Horace J. Floverseed has not yet had the temerity to appear in person to hurt his withering blinks of criticism at "Doctor" Meakin. But his weekly wallops reach their mark just the same. For G. Archibald Presby, travel columnist and commentator on the Bughouse Rhythm programs, never fails to bring a copy of the Dandy Little Chamber Music Journal to the studio with him, and that enterprising publication never fails to carry a string of uncomplimentary articles describing Meakin and his musical efforts. These articles are collected from an octet entry with great care by Horace J. Flover-

seed each week, are strung together like fireworks, and the fireworks explode in the face of Meakin the hopeful, Meakin the irrefragable.

It ain't even Maestro Meakin let it be known that he is greatly distressed by the attitude taken by Floverseed toward his efforts to become a sizeable frog in the musical pond. In vain does he build up his hopes from week to week—Floverseed's weekly comment is always the wettest of wet blankets, even when read aloud, by that dry comic, G. Archibald Presby.

Time was when "Doctor" Meakin finally imagined that he need only put his hands on a piano keyboard in order to get his feet on the road to fame and success. But that illusion has been effectively shattered by Floverseed's blinks like the following: "Before Doctor Meakin can hope to enter the company of real keyboard 'wrenchers' he should be forced to take a course in our repeat class for recalcitrant pupils."

When that particular broadside was delivered it almost went wide of its mark. The adjective "recalcitrant" almost proved a dud. For Doctor Meakin did not know what it meant. Deep down in his heart the much-abused doctor believes that some day, either wilfully or by accident, Floverseed will allow a complimentary adjective to creep into his music commentaries. Was this the day? There was a high spirited discussion between "Chamber music" numbers, which finally put "recalcitrant" where it belonged—in the definitely unfavorable class.

Never before, either on the air or off, has jam session favorites like "St. Louis Blues" been given the hallihey they receive in the introductory commentaries of that see of word founders, Doctor Meakin. But the illustrious Milton Cross' mellifluous G. Archibald sets forth in mellifluous tones how the eminent Doctor Meakin aims to stardom the world of radio listeners with the usual arrangements and set-ups, "always keeping within the bounds of tradition." He always seeks to convey, in that cavernous voice of his, that the conventions are sacred to the maestro doctor, who would no more dream of



# bughouse Rhythm

upsetting the applecart than he would dream of coming to work accompanied by a cow.

Doctor Meakin's art stands upon a lonely pinnacle. If we are to believe the oracular Mr. Presby, "The Meakin touch is the touch of the master. The Meakin baton is a magic wand. Like the acidulous, hypercritical Horace J. Floverseed, Presby does not mess around with ordinary adjectives. There are those who contend that his middle name is not Archibald, but "Hyperbole." Among his milder phrases are "exquisite pastel number" and "heroic symphonies." These generous introductions invariably pave the way for all that is swinging and jazziest in the Meakin repertoire.

WHAT is a maestro without at least one "discovery" of his credit? Just another maestro, and nothing more. Doctor Meakin has taken care to lift himself out of the mere maestro class by playing Columbus to Saunders and being proposed by an aspirant to Grand Opera stardom. Saunders King in his career broadcast, is the tenor of the Southern Harmony Four. But on the Bughouse Rhythm program this well known Negro singer is Meakin's whose name is destined to set the operatic world by the ears. He is introduced to the Bughouse Rhythm audience by the propensity of delivery and phrasology the human hymns and the unbridled dictionary effort and the "aria" invariably turns out to be a typical Bughouse Rhythm number.

Languid, leekadicalical Martha Murgatroy, a recent addition to the Bughouse Rhythm cast of characters, is played by Natalie Park. As chairman of the L. A. of the B. C. A. (Ladies' Auxiliaries of the Bughouse Rhythm Clubs of America) "Miss Murgatroy" is inspired to express, in extravagant terms, her enthusiasm for all that is highest and best in music as set forth on the bughouse Rhythm programs. Meakin's whose aim is to be a languor and boredom, punctuating her remarks with yawns that set her listeners' yawns in a tizzy.

The nucleus of Meakin's 12-piece orchestra is the "celebrated" symphonic version of the "Village" known as "The Village Cut-Up" and "the Chamber Music Society." This nucleus is made up of seven picked men, including saxophone, trumpet, drums and piano, like a chamber music group that has been selected from a symphony orchestra. This "chamber music" group frequently gets a chance to misinterpret chamber music in the best Meakin style.

"Doctor" Meakin's illusion of grandeur are not shared by Jack Meakin himself. In real life one of Meakin's most marked traits is modesty. When he went back East on his vacation several months ago, he was surprised to find that the musicians he wanted to take part in the Bughouse Rhythm broadcast.

OUTSTANDING swing men in New York, having followed with in vast numbers the Bughouse Rhythm of the equally bughouses' continuity, were happy to participate in the broadcasts from Radio City. Among the topflight swingers who took part on these programs when they were aired in the East were the famous trio of Bill Worthington, McDonough, guitar; Chauncey Merriam, drums; Jimmy Lytle, clarinet and the Bughouse and Frank Spivorelli, piano.

During another of the Bughouse Rhythm broadcasts, the famous trio from the Onyx Club put

on a "jam session." The members of the trio are Adrian Rollini, who plays the vibraphone, the musical fountain pen, and an instrument he invented, which he calls the "goudie"; Frank Victor, guitar and bull riddle and Teddy Brown, Negro guitarist.

Highly amused by G. Archibald Presby's burlesque of his make manner, Milton Cross, who had been enjoying the Bughouse Rhythm programs for a long time, announced, at his own request, the Meakin presentations from Radio City.

Ward Byron, former producer of Bughouse Rhythm, recently left NBC to join M. C. A., and the program has been taken over by Lee Strahorn, young NBC producer. Strahorn, whose satirical sense is highly developed, is intensifying this phase of the continuity, sharpening his foil, as it were, the better to pierce the bubble of pomposity.

JACK MEAKIN came very near becoming a doctor of medicine instead of a "doctor of rhythm." He was born in Salt Lake City and lived there until his graduation from high school, when



Jack Meakin, otherwise known as "Doctor" John Brunker Meakin.

he came to California to attend Stanford. His ambition lay along the line of his summer vacations. He found the banking business so interesting that he had returned to Stanford the following fall. He changed his course to one in economics.

After graduating from Stanford he went to work for a firm of investment bankers. In 1920 he joined NBC as staff pianist. This did not mark his radio debut, however, for he had already been heard as guest artist on several programs.

Meakin is the author of 35 popular songs, 10 piano solos, 10 ballads, 20

suites for ballet, four concert works for orchestra, three complete Bohemian Club shows, and 20 theme songs. He has nearly a thousand arrangements to his credit. His hobby is work, although he has been known to shoot a round of golf when sufficiently urged.

G. Archibald Presby, who out-comes Milton Cross when he takes the air as commentator on the Bughouse Rhythm programs, was christened George Archibald Presby, but it didn't take. He is, in fact, to his personal friends, and G. Archibald to America's dialers.

Archie is a native of Sherbrooke, Quebec. An apprenticeship in automotive electric and storage batteries preceded his entry into radio. In 1927 he joined the staff of a Canadian station. In 1929 he left to join the "amazing stars of KZL, Portland, and in 1930 went over to Portland's KGW, where he remained for five years. He joined NBC's staff in San Francisco the early part of this year. He is heard as announcer on several programs including the task of mouthing those precious syllables that fall to the lot of the commentator in Bughouse Rhythm.

When the dialers hear Presby's high-sounding phrases introducing one of the Meakin numbers, they have every right to expect something on a par with an 80-piece symphony orchestra's rendition of a composition by Tchaikovsky. Wagner or some other great master.

They have a perfect right to expect something of the sort, but being Bughouse Rhythm, they don't. They know the pompous introduction is merely paving the way for another rhythm number.

Despite all the kidding which goes into the Bughouse Rhythm script, Meakin and Presby go at the business of presenting these broadcasts in real earnest.

An analysis of Presby's introductions shows that, despite the flowery phrases and extravagant use of superlatives, genuine common sense is basically true. Meakin puts a great deal of thought and work into the orchestra-ment heard on these programs. The "me-caw" skill plus his "me-caw" enervation has gone into such work that it can be played by an orchestra which he wrote several years ago, and which has been arranged by Meakin himself to be played by an orchestra of from 15 to 45 pieces.

"Doctor" Meakin shares with many others the idea that the Harlem dance hall, the swing session and the popular night club not only provide America with its characteristic dance of the present, but also with the source of dance to be evolved for some time to come.

Among the favorite dance tunes offered the dialers by Meakin and his orchestra are "The Stag," "Poini," and "The Big Apple."

Meakin placed Bughouse Rhythm in the class of a Nation-wide movement last Summer, through the observance of a "National Bughouse Rhythm Week," which was brought to a close with a broadcast in which Martha Murgatroy was introduced to the Nation's dialers as chairman of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the National Bughouse Rhythm Club.