

# "The Listeners"-Misinterpreted

JIM PAPPAS

Once upon a time, the editor of a metropolitan daily newspaper sent out three journalists to bring back a story. The first person he sent out was the editor of a small town weekly newspaper. Here is his story:

"Two of our local boys, Jeb Collins and Danny Stuart, report a queer occurrence over by the haunted Banner house. While they were coming from the barn dance which Clem Chowder gave last night at his farm an unknown rider, riding a sleek mare, passed them at a high rate of speed.

He did not seem to see them, but rode up to the door of the mansion and rapped twice. When no one answered, he shouted, "Tell them I came and no one answered; that I kept my word." He then rode away.

The boys, who heroically tried to capture the heavily-armed culprit, could not give any explanation, but your editor looked up several who remembered the history of the house.

The house belonged to the Widow Banner, whose husband met death at the hands of a person unknown.

The house . . . ."

The second person to go out on this queer scavenger hunt was Casey, a police reporter who had seen so much of the sordid and seamy side of life that he had forgotten how to smile. His story follows:

"Police early today investigated reports of a prowler who tried unsuccessfully to break into the old Banner mansion, 432 East Main street.

Witnesses report that they were passed by a rider on a black mare, travelling at a great rate of speed.

The mysterious rider turned into

the drive-way of the Banner mansion. According to witnesses, he tried twice to break into the front room of the house.

After failing to gain entrance, he angrily roared, "Tell them I came and no one answered; that I kept my word."

Lieutenant Holmes, homicide squad, who is investigating the crime, reports that no fingerprints have been found. He did find two well-preserved hoofprints and two of the best men of the force have been put on the trail.

Police report nothing stolen. They believe the prowler was a member of a gang who had planned to ransack the house.

The house . . . ."

Last to go out was the society editor of the paper. She is known as the "sob sister" of the paper. This is her story:

"Mr. and Mrs. Waven Banner, currently vacationing in Florida for the winter, were honored by the visit of Mrs. Jack Traveller, formerly of this city. Mrs. Traveller arrived here last night on her late model Black Mare.

She wore a white satin, princess model gown with a deep flounce of silver lace on the skirt, the sleeveless gown being studded with rhinestones and pearls. From her shoulders hung a court train of mousseline embroidered in pearls and rhinestones in a lily pattern outlined in silver threads. Over this long train hung the tulle veil which was arranged from a close-fitting cap of Burano lace.

Mrs. Traveller rapped twice on the door. When no one answered, she shouted to the maid, "Tell them I came

and no one answered.' Mrs. Traveller is weekending at the home of a friend, Mrs. Gowen Under."

After the editor had read the three stories, he smiled and reached for his type-

writer. Which story did the editor use for his paper? He didn't use any of the stories. He wrote an editorial on the old Banner mansion.

## Democracy Of Art

ARNOLD WAJENBERG

Many people today, both artists and laymen, believe that art is essentially aristocratic. Some artists admit readily that their work is not for the "masses." The "masses," on the other hand, often regard art as something strange and dull, reserved for eccentrics who live in an imaginative half-world of their own. Usually the artists who boast that their work is for the upper two percent will also add that "the common man" is incapable of appreciating "real art." This gives rise to the question of what "real art" is.

In this theme, I shall consider as art that which is beautiful. Apparently, this definition leaves much to be desired. First, beauty is a purely relative quality, for what is beautiful to one person is not necessarily beautiful to another. Yet the same thing is true of art. Many cultured persons condemn the work of Moussorgsky, and their condemnations usually include the statement that his compositions are not art. Yet other equally cultured people defend and enjoy his music; to them it is art. Another complaint which might be raised against my definition is that no mention is made of messages or great truths or ethical themes. It is true that many indeed most

great works of art contain at least one fundamental truth. Yet so do most scientific, philosophical and theological treatises. To the extent that art expresses truth, it becomes science, philosophy or theology, but there is undeniably a difference between these studies and art, however slight that difference might sometimes be. That fundamental characteristic which separates art from other academic pursuits is beauty.

This concept extends art beyond its traditional though ill-defined boundaries, for there are many kinds of beauty: sensuous, emotional, imaginative and intellectual. The enjoyment of cool sheets on a hot summer night, delight in the delicate scent of a violet, the pleasure of a tasteful meal—all of these are on a primitive, physical plane, the appreciation of art. Similarly, the joy one might find in reading a beautiful thought beautifully expressed in Aristotle's *Poetics* would also be the appreciation of art. In a sense, then, art is extremely exclusive, for everyone has a slightly different concept of it. However, everyone who enjoys a good meal or a walk in the sun has some concept of art. Therefore, we might well say that art is so exclusive it is democratic.