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India: unidentified publication, "Jazz and the Ladies"

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MY darling Mama,

Please forgive me for not writing for two whole days, but, really, I haven't been a naughty girl. I only went to my first jazz concert (with Nunky darling) and it has taken me all this time to collect my wits. Please don't feel alarmed, it was a most decorous and respectable affair.

In The Awful Films

It was nothing like those scenes of jazz musicians (which so horrify people) in the awful Hollywood films—these were no uncouth, fat, oily music makers dripping with perspiration, sitting in a dense fog of cigarette smoke with glasses of some dreadful alcoholic concoction at their elbows.

The concert took place at an aristocratic club, and the jazz-men were quiet, likeable fellows wearing discreet clothes. Their leader was a Mr. Brubeck who looked like the ideal man in the grey flannel suit—only nicer. Nunky darling was introduced to him at a U.S.I.S. reception and says he is the most charming and cultured ivory-banger he has ever met. I fell for him at once.

The saxophonist looked like a shy first-year student, the bass player was almost cherubic while the drummer, the only one you would have thought oddly dressed, flailed his arms like a windmill without ever, ever, appearing common.

Mama darling, as an ex-vice-chairwoman of the S.P.C.A., you would have been delighted at the kindness which they showed to their instruments. Mr. Brubeck always smiled lovingly at the keyboard, he even cracked jokes with it, and during one spell when he seemed very, very, annoyed he shook his head in a most understanding manner.

The saxophone player pressed the brass keys with much tenderness, but it was the bass player who captured my little feminine heart. He even sang a lullaby as he plucked the strings and never once did he use the bow with ferocity. I am sorry to say that the drummer was rough, but, then, the instruments, especially the automatic cymbals, seemed to love it.

Wore My Pearls

You would have adored the audience in the ten rupee seats, there were so many diplomatic folk. And there were many club members sitting most properly. Alas, I saw few diamond necklaces, it must have been the hot weather—but I did as you have always advised; I wore my pearls (the cultured ones).

I must report the strange behaviour of three young men sitting near us, and this was commented upon the next morning by the Music Critic of The Times of India. One of them got his feet tied up in knots trying to keep time to the music, the other dislocated his neck, while the last one was carried out on a stretcher and the whisper went round that he had been stricken with the palsy.

Fire In The Bazaar

We are having very hot weather in Bombay, in fact so hot has it become that there was a great fire in a bazaar area near the Crawford Market. Nunky went to see it and came back in tears at the sufferings of the poor folk. He was so angry that he enquired very loudly if there was no other more humane way to get rid of the slums—and was overheard at the club by some corporator with whom he is now at loggerheads.

I have sent my whole month's pocket money to the relief fund, though the rest of the girls in my class are all going in for pictures of Lana Turner's daughter.

Please remember me to Grandmama.

Your loving daughter,

Mira.

P.S. I am sorry I haven't written much about the jazz music of Mr. Brubeck, but the din was so great that I couldn't hear a thing.