

“In today’s jazz or swing or bop there seem to merge a quantity of influences, beginning with the rhythmic tradition of West African Negro music, and going on to such elements of the European musical heritage as were to be found in the New Orleans region during the last century and a half: a fund of Scotch-Irish-English folk tunes, melodies from Italy, Spain, and Central Europe, the simple harmony of Protestant hymns, the echoes of the French art music (chiefly opera) that dominated the city, and the ways of the German brass band. Into this mixture were blended also the dramatics of vaudeville and minstrel-show tunes, the moods and ejaculations of the revivalist camp meeting, and the sentiments of a subject people. An accidental result of the Civil War added an orchestral twist—the fact, namely, that the returning Confederate regimental bands pawned their instruments, making them available cheap to the emancipated Negro. Still a poor man, he could afford no regular instruction but developed his own expressive style of utterance, both vocal and instrumental.”

With regard to country music.

“The cultural concomitants of hill-billy music at any rate suffice to account for its hold and people who quite properly care nothing about its “true” form in an earlier society which was not theirs.... This dissemination of our hitherto rural music has not killed it off but given it a new life in the hands of fervent amateurs who may, for all we know, ultimately purify and fundamentally regenerate it. The fiddle song, banjo song, play-party song, and historical and political song are not dying out but are taken up by those gifted enough to entertain their friends, or else caught from village ancients on the musicologist’s record.... What matters is not the receptacle in which we keep our heritage but the desire we feel to take it out and enjoy it.”

Jacques Barzun, *Music in American Life*, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1956.