

# BULLETIN

*A*merican *G*uild of *M*usical *A*rtists, Inc.

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The " BULLETIN " of

# AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, INC.

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— HEAR YE : : : —

If you notice any special atmosphere of righteousness throughout the pages of this issue you'll understand that this has sort of gone to our heads.

# MUSICAL WEST

MUSIC and the DANCE

"WESTWARD THE COURSE OF MUSIC TAKES ITS WAY"

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MILDRED KNAPP SHIPMAN, Editor  
Los Angeles

## By The Way

The American Guild of Musical Artists, of which Lawrence Tibbett is president, is issuing a monthly "Bulletin" devoted to the interests of AGMA, as the Guild is popularly known. The name — "Bulletin" — is merely a time-server. Suggestions for a more pertinent title will, it is stated, be cordially received.

But whatever its name—present or future—the AGMA "Bulletin" is a live publication, containing a lot of solid and constructive thought, seasoned by considerable humor. Its primary purpose is to provide Guild members with a medium of communication and an outlet for the presentation of their views to the Guild membership, either personally or anonymously.

( This goes on for pages )

We always did think California was a lovely place.

THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL THEATRE CONGRESS - 1936

\_by\_



\_Ernest Schelling\_

THE Ninth International Theatre Congress which I attended as a representative of the American Guild of Musical Artists as well as in the official capacity of Government representative, opened on September 2nd at the Academie fur Wissenschaft under the chairmanship of Dr. Hans Pertner, Austrian Minister of Education, who welcomed the Delegates. After M. Henry Clerk had answered with phrases of appreciation of the welcome extended and had thanked the various nations for having sent delegates, the first meeting of the Congress began at the Hofburg under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hofrat Heterich of Austria.

The main business of the Congress was the delivery of reports by the Delegates, outlining the condition of Theatrical Art throughout Europe.

Despite the reverses which have been visited upon the Theater by the world crisis, the vitality of legitimate theatrical and musical art throughout Europe seems to have survived and to be on the way to further accomplishments in world culture.

The tremendous social and political changes of the past years have, of course, given rise to parallel changes in theatrical art. In France, for example, the new Minister of Education has added to the administration of the Opera and the Opera Comique an Advisory Board of young men in order to give adequate representation to new ideas. The Administrators of this Musical activity in Paris are Roussel, Ibert, Milhaud and Auric. The advent of the Front Populaire has become the inauguration of a new era in theatrical and musical enterprise in France. The old farce and adultery theme is no longer 'de mode'.

The Italian government seems to have gone ahead of all others in bringing the Theater to the people. Hundreds of theatre companies tour Italy from the Alps to the furthest corners of Calabria and Sicily, bringing the Theatrical Art to the people. Whole caravans of trucks towing trailers loaded with tents and scenery, and other trailers having living quarters for the actors are constantly touring the country and bringing the living theatre to even the smallest towns. Similar reports from other countries indicate a theatrical revolution in Europe and there is great optimism in regard to new achievement

and an eye to universal understanding; - in the words of Fermin Gemier, the great actor, founder of the Societe Universelle du Theatre, the Theatre is to become a great agent to consolidate peace all over the world through international presentation and understanding - "The young sister of the League of Nations."

Theatrical and Musical Art in Europe are supported, to a much greater extent than in this country, by government subsidy and the activities of long established Schools, Opera Houses, Conservatories and Schools of Stagecraft fostered by the government. In most countries, too, organizations of artists, such as the American Guild of Musical Artists, are things of long standing.

This government support does much to maintain a high standard of musical and theatrical activity in the provinces where entirely independent enterprises would find it hardly profitable to penetrate. Culture and talent, as a result, are by no means confined to the large cosmopolitan metropolises. Almost all European nations give special emphasis to the task of bring the theatre to the smallest villages, maintaining special transportation and transient facilities for theatrical and musical touring companies at the expense of the government.

The result of all this is, naturally, that popular interest in and support of Music and the Theatre is much more deeprooted and widespread than in America.

Discussion of critical activities in Europe was the occasion of much interest and amusement and of many serious and constructive suggestions. Delegates stressed the point that criticism should be objective and free from any taints of personal prejudice or malice. M. Blanchard said that in France critics are guides, counsellors and scouts for authors and composers. Mme. Pax, France, suggested that critics should be divided into two classes, the old and the young. Leon Blum has said: "Criticism the day after performance is not just. A critic should have time to reflect on what he has seen or heard. The present system of daily reporting and judging is wrong; a weekly article on current offerings would be better." In Germany a law forbids critics to give an immediate report on performances. It may be recalled that, a few years ago in New York, St. John Irvine attempted the system of delaying his criticisms until the second day after performance.

On the subject of copyright, national and international, a great many suggestions were offered and discussed. It was generally agreed that it would be for the benefit of art in all countries if copyright protection could be extended to things that have heretofore been deprived of it - stage sets, recordings, costumes, - and if some form of international protection could be assured.

One of the most important of the achievements of governmental support of music and the theatre in Europe is the help extended to artists who are distressed by economic conditions or by the approach of age or disability. Employment bureaus, hospitals and homes are maintained for the artist all over Europe and there are many forms of pension and retirement insurance sponsored by the Government.

I had been requested by the Secretary of State to make a report on the activities in behalf of Music Appreciation in the United States and so there was no opportunity for me to officially approach the problems of reciprocity of art and artists among the nations of the world. I did, however make many contacts unofficially and did my best to further the interests of the American Musician.

It is a fine thing that interest in the general standards of artistic enterprise throughout the world prompt those in official positions to recognize and support gatherings such as this Theatre Congress where artists and people who are in touch with professional problems can meet and exchange ideas for the betterment of the profession and professionals. I have no doubt that this Congress has done much to promote international good will and a better understanding among artists and I am very glad to have taken part in it.

. . . \_\_\_\_\_ . . .

You might have expected to find us down here mumbling under our breath, but we cant resist the temptation to refer to our part of the affair. Early in July the Guild received a request from the United States Department of the Interior to propose one or more of our members for appointment as Official Representative of the United States Government at the Ninth International Theatre Congress to be held in Vienna from September 2nd to 9th. It was ascertained that Mr. Schelling would be in Vienna at that time and, at the Guild's solicitation he accepted the Government's invitation to act as its emmisary.

What we're trying to say is this - at the time the invitation was extended to us we were barely three months in existance and it is indicative of the good will and respect we had already established in Washington that we should have been singled out to take part in such an important matter. (- Ed.)

THE FEDERAL MUSIC PROJECT OF THE WPA

by

*Queenena Mario*

Queenena Mario

It is more than three years now since the activities of the Federal Music Project have begun in New York and during the course of its existence many changes have developed in the policies and purposes of the organization.

When it was first inaugurated its primary and immediate purpose was to provide employment in their proper field for destitute orchestral musicians and it was conceived purely as a temporary relief measure. As it became stabilized, however, and as its activities broadened, attempts were made to fix a positive and constructive artistic value upon the presentations which it sponsored. To this end, prominent Artists in the New York area have lent their support in the capacity of guest conductor and as soloists and teachers with the various orchestral and chamber music units and in the schools which have been set up in the city. Boards of examination consisting of established musicians and composers were organized to consider new scores for performance by the project orchestras and to pass on the eligibility of artists who aspired to appear as soloists.

Of late even further advancements have been made in this direction and, using the players on relief as a nucleus, special presentations of a very high caliber have been arranged, such as the series of Bach concerts now in progress at the New School for Social Research. Admission is charged to these concerts and, through the support given by the distinguished artists not on relief rolls who appear at them, they have taken on the character of regular musical productions on an equal footing with independent enterprises in the city.

Now, with the probability that the Federal Music Project will continue to operate on a permanent basis and with the considerable rise in their standard of presentation, these activities must be considered in the light of what effect they will have on the well being of the musical profession as a whole. And while at first a certain amount of uncertainty and experimentation was understandable, now a definite policy on the part of Government sponsored music activity must be formed and announced. With the Sirovitch Bill, calling for the establishment of a National Department of Fine Arts, scheduled to come up before the next session of Congress, musicians will have to decide just what is the place of government activity in the musical field.

Whether such a condition would be entirely desirable or not, it is very improbable that Music will come entirely under Government control at any very imminent date. So that, unfortunately or otherwise, Governmental musical activities will have to exist alongside other independent musical activity and, in this situation, it is extremely important that there is no competition between the two. Care must be taken that the Government acts only for the good of American Music and not to its detriment.

Government sponsorship in the form of testing places for new talent and in providing tuition and an opportunity for gaining experience for the young artist could, if properly administered, be of untold benefit to Music in this country. The first thing that is necessary of course, is the removal of the implication of charity or relief that is attached to the Government supported enterprises and to the students artists and teachers who are connected with them. Government support should be through a regularly established department and not an emergency measure. No artist can develop and no permanent good can result from activity which lacks the psychology of independence and artistic integrity. The status of any permanent Music Project must be established definitely as an apprenticeship ground where students can gain experience by performing before audiences and, in order to preserve the standards of the larger musical field outside, admission must be charged at any concerts that are open to the public.

It has always, in the past, been the misfortune of younger artists that convention required them to charge regular admission prices even at their first concerts when they were comparatively unknown and when they were still, strictly, in the course of their training. It is not right to compel beginners to compete on an equal basis with established artists whom they cannot, at the time, hope to rival artistically. Nor is it fair to the public to expect them to pay regular admission rates for entertainment by musicians who have not yet established themselves.

A system of government supported Musical activity could remedy this situation while at the same time correcting others that exist in this country such as the lack of artistic entertainment in the rural sections of the country that are to regular productions unprofitable. Musicians, during the time that they are completing their development as students, and while they earned by their performance enough to defray for the Government the expenses of their tuition, they could benefit through performance with a full musical ensemble, orchestral or chorus, and acquire, under the guidance of teachers, the experience that is so difficult to acquire independently today.

The question of payment could be satisfactorily solved by paying all students who appeared at a concert to which admission was charged, a certain fixed flat rate and diverting any possible remainder from the gate receipts to the support of the whole enterprise. It is not improbable that in this way a self supporting system of musical education might be instituted in this country which would relieve the student of the burden of struggling through the first few years of recognition and provide entertainment of a necessary kind to communities that cannot afford regular independent Musical activity.

It is at any rate a problem that demands consideration in view of the potential legislation that is in existence and the vast machinery that is even now waiting to be diverted to some lastingly useful and constructive purpose.