

" *Bulletin* "

AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, INC.

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DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

Reflections in fundamental economic theory lack the flavor of freshness and originality, but they are none the less to the point and apply equally to virtuosity as to the production of Vacuum Cleaners. Any productive activity survives as long as it satisfies a definite human need; otherwise it does not. Music, therefore, must stand on its own feet in this country and in this age as a legitimate enterprise supported by the healthy demand on the part of the public.

On this score, it seems to us, Music has nothing to fear, and the support that the public, even during these last few years of adversity, has continued to give it, is a sufficient indication of its vitality.

There are, however, factors that upset the proper and healthful functioning of Musical activity; the upset of the function of every legitimate activity of the social structure and that of the structure as a whole. Because of these factors a good part of the rightful sustenance of Music and of these other legitimate activities is diverted and Music, because of the peculiar organization of its nature - because Musicians, although they must needs be good business people in order to keep alive, are primarily and fundamentally artists - Music suffers some of the heaviest losses.

Seeing this, and realizing that Music was necessary to the life of the nation, knowing that it was an indispensable part of the life of a civilized people, other countries have come to its aid and made the regulation and support of Musical activity a part of the business of government.

This practice - the support of Opera Houses and Theatres, the setting up of conservatories and academies of Music, Painting and Literature, - grew naturally out of the earlier practice of personal patronage, when the support of the Arts was deemed the duty of the ruling houses as part of the affair of proper and enlightened government. But in America, which developed away from the influences of older times and customs, losing thus some of the benefits as it freed itself from some of the iniquities of European experience, the consideration of the Arts was for a long time neglected while the nation busied itself with shooting Indians, building canals and driving golden spikes into railroad ties. The results of this neglect manifested themselves, of course, in a laggard culture which persisted until recent date.

Of course, the new spur of culture, when it came, needed the subsidy of some outside power, and the support that had in the old world been supplied by Princes and governmental institutions was given here by wealthy individuals. With this help American culture made certain definite advances.

The time has come now, however, when this arrangement is no longer adequate. In the last few years the support of wealthy individuals has been steadily withdrawn or it has been found insufficient for modern purposes and Music has been thrown in dependence upon the support of the general public. Because, however, when music was individually supported it was also to a great extent individually enjoyed, the public is not completely ready to assume this burden. There is a great deal of education to be accomplished first. Cognizant of this situation, certain groups have been trying for many years to enlist the support of the Government in the cause of American Music by fostering legislation for the establishment of a Department of Fine Arts as an integral part of the United States Government.

The most recent attempt in this direction was the bill introduced by Representative Dr. William I Sirovitch in the 74th Congress, providing for the establishment of a Department of Arts and Sciences with a Secretary, a member of the Cabinet of the President.

In May of 1935 Lawrence Tibbett appeared before the Committee on Patents of the House of Representatives and spoke eloquently in support of this measure, and throughout that month the Committee heard the testimony of various individuals and organizations, literary, theatrical etc., urging the bill's passage. On June 6th a committee representing the interests of American Musical Artists, consisting of Rosa Ponselle, Richard Crooks, Frank LaForge, Ernest Schelling, Deems Taylor, Lawrence Tibbett and Leo Fischer made a trip to Washington to appear before the Committee. However, the session terminated and action on the bill was deferred.

Last month Dr. Sirovitch communicated with the Guild through its President, Mr. Tibbett, announcing that he intended to reintroduce his bill in the next session of Congress and soliciting our support.

No doubt many of the members of the Guild have definite ideas and suggestions to advance in connection with this matter. We earnestly request everyone to express themselves, either by letter or article, for publication in the Bulletin.

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NINTH INTERNATIONAL THEATER CONGRESS

Mr. Ernest Schelling, who attended the Ninth International Theater Congress, held in Vienna last summer, as official representative of the United States Government and as representative of the American Guild of Musical Artists, will return to New York shortly.

A detailed account of his experiences and impressions there will be found in our next issue.

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE FOR CHICAGO AND THE WEST COAST

At their last meeting, October 13th, the Board of Governors voted to hold an intensive drive for membership in Chicago and the West Coast.

Many of our members who are engaged for the San Francisco and Chicago Opera seasons will participate.

Leo Fischer will be on hand in both cities to organize proceedings

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

hereby informs all members that the first

AGMA FORUM

of the Season will be held at

551 Fifth Avenue, Room 414.

Tuesday, December 29th, 1936 at 2:30 P.M.

Subjects for discussion must be sent in to the Executive Secretary no later than December 25th in order to have them included in the agenda.

AGMA FORUM will be held on the last Tuesday of each month thereafter.

AGMA FORUM

At the October 13th meeting of the Board of Governors it was decided to set the first three discussion meetings for December 29th, January 26th and February 23rd.

The name AGMA FORUM was adopted for these meetings which will be held monthly - tentatively on the last Tuesdays of each month.

On the fourth page of this month's Bulletin is the announcement of the opener. Free audiences at broadcasts will be the subject and you will be the speaker. Who, as Mr. Gershwin would say, could ask for anything more?

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BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETINGS

The Board, at its meeting October 13th, passed a ruling providing for bi-monthly meetings on the first and the sixteenth of each month, from September to May inclusive.

This arrangement will prove much more workable than the old system of one meeting a month. The Board can dispose of routine business - applications, etc. - more expeditiously and keep abreast of current developments in matters of policy while at the same time cutting the duration of each meeting.

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"UNITED TO PRESERVE INDIVIDUALISM"

Catchwords are often extremely handy things, and Mischa Elman, in a recent confab over Guild affairs with Leo Fischer, coined one that, were we not a particularly respectable sheet - dignified and stately - we would characterize as a 'honey'.

"United to Preserve Individualism" it is, and it seems to catch the fundamental significance of the Guild pretty exactly.

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NAME STILL WANTED !!!!!

The membership seems to want to establish the point that they are musicians and not experts in nomenclature, for to the modest tumult we made last week they have been strangely silent.

Mr. Sheridan suggested GRACE NOTES and STAFF NOTES, and Mr. Tibbett thought the VOICE OF AGMA would do. We are, however, still open to suggestions.

If the situation becomes acute we may be forced to hold a prize contest, something like -- tear off the top of your piano, write on it your suggestion for a name together with a twenty word essay on "Why I love to pay my income tax". -- First prize: a cancelled two cent stamp, suitable for framing.

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RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The returns of the two questionnaires sent out after the Special Meeting on May 6th 1936 have been coming in spasmodically for the past several months. Many hopeful attempts were made to tabulate the results during the summer, but the next mornings mail inevitably disclosed two or three more belated entries and the tabulation continued in a sort of leisurely frenzy. We say nothing about all this because it was probably the result of our own optimistic naivete in not having set a deadline. Now, however, all having been ominously quiet for three weeks, the deadline has been emphatically declared and these particular questionnaires will remain as they are for the rest of their natural lives.

The results, figured in percentages, are as follows:

BENEFIT PERFORMANCES WITHOUT FEE

1. Have you ever participated in a benefit performance without receiving a fee?

YES 93% NO 7%

2. How often, approximately, do you participate in benefits without fee during a season?

SELDOM 7% OCCASIONALLY 70% OFTEN 10% CONSTANTLY 13%

3. How often are you asked to participate in a benefit - without fee - during a season?

THE MAJORITY OF MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO PARTICIPATE INNUMERABLE TIMES.

4. Would you favor a ruling by the Guild binding members to appear only in benefits approved by the Guild?

YES 76% NO 24%

5. Would you favor a ruling by the Guild making it obligatory for members to refer all inquiries regarding such performances to the Guild for permission?

YES 75% NO 25%

6. Under what circumstances should the Guild permit members to participate in benefits without a fee? (The Actors Equity ruling is that its members may appear in benefits without receiving fees only if ten percent of the gross receipts are donated to the Actor's Fund headed by Daniel Frohman).

WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS THE MEMBERS APPROVE A PLAN SIMILAR TO THAT USED BY EQUITY. (This is one of the points that cannot be answered satisfactorily in a questionnaire and which will require discussion by the membership in the AGMA FORUM.)

7. Would you favor the Guild sponsoring a Foundation providing homes for the aged and infirm members of our profession similar to the activities of the Actors Fund?

YES 100%

8. Have you any other suggestions for the use of monies derieved from this source, such as a future home for the Guild - etc.?

(ANSWER TO THIS WILL BE TAKEN UP BY THE AGMA FORUM)

9. Would you favor a ruling by the Guild prohibiting members from participating in benefits where other performers are paid?

YES 96 % NO 4 %

10. Would you favor the imposition of penalties on members appearing in benefits NOT approved by the Guild?

YES 72 % NO 28 %

AUDIENCES AT BROADCASTS

1. Have you ever broadcast?

YES 100 %

2. Did you or have you participated in a regular series of sponsored broadcasts?

YES 50 % NO 50 %

3. Approximately what percentage of your broadcasts have been with - without - studio audiences?

THE MAJORITY OF BROADCASTS HAVE BEEN WITH AUDIENCES ESPECIALLY WITH ARTISTS WHO HAVE BUILT UP A GOOD DRAWING REPUTATION.

4. What is your personal reaction to an audience when broadcasting?

FAVORABLE 14 % UNFAVORABLE 76 % INDIFFERENT 10 %

5. Do you prefer an audience at broadcasts?

YES 14 % NO 83 %

6. Would you be in favor of receiving additional compensation whenever an audience is present at your broadcasts?

YES 100 %

7. What is your reaction to a paying studio audience?

FAVORABLE 27 % UNFAVORABLE 73 %

8. Please discuss the proposal that the Guild make an attempt to secure for its members an extra fee whenever members take part in a broadcast of a concert or opera performance given before a paying audience (Metropolitan Opera, Philharmonic Symphony, etc.)

FAVORABLE 79 % UNCERTAIN OPINION 21 %

9. It is the opinion of many members that broadcasts before studio audiences are detrimental to the reputation of the artist because radio studios are built primarily for broadcast purposes, the technique of which differs from recital technique, and the artist whose performance is keyed for the broadcast is not presented to the actual audience present in his best light. Do you agree?

YES 86 % NO 14 %

These returns show, as you see, decided and sharp convictions on the part of the membership in regard to the questions with which the questionnaires are concerned. The problem seems now to be one of taking the proper action to adjust these conditions to the satisfaction of the membership.

But before the Guild can commit itself to any definite policy on these two important matters, there will have to be a great deal more discussion on the part of the membership and a careful examination of these problems from every possible angle. The questionnaires, while they give a fairly accurate indication of the general tenor of feeling, are not satisfactory as a basis for action. The entire membership did not participate in filling them out - the percentages quoted are percentages based on the number of returns received. While it is very probable that these figures are pretty well the figures on the full membership, they cannot be relied upon entirely, and in any case it is essential that we know just what we want to do before we take any steps.

Then too, questions such as these which bear on complicated problems cannot be answered "yes" and "no" without qualification. For instance: questions four and five in the questionnaire on benefits seemed somewhat confusing to some members - "Would you favor a ruling by the Guild binding members to appear only in benefit performances approved by the Guild?" and "Would you favor a ruling by the Guild making it obligatory for members to refer all inquiries regarding such appearances to the Guild for permission?" Some members qualified their affirmative answers to these questions by remarking that there were some benefits in which members might wish to participate and that the members wishes should be considered in all such cases.

Of course every member must feel certain that the Guild can have only one purpose in anything it undertakes to do and that is to benefit the membership and the profession in every way. The purpose of regulation of benefit performances is solely to relieve the individual member of the trouble of refusing to appear in cases where it would be embarrassing for him, as an individual, to do so and to protect the profession from certain types of benefit solicitations which have the characteristics of "racketeering". Naturally, with such a policy, the mere indication on the part of the member that he wishes to appear in any particular benefit performance would be enough to engage the Guild's approval.

For these reasons, and because new developments, especially in the broadcast situation, are appearing every day, it has been decided to use the first of the AGMA FORUMS for discussion of these two questions in an attempt to ascertain the exact disposition of the membership in regard to them.

The first meeting of the AGMA FORUM, on December 29th, and as many more as are necessary will be devoted to the extremely important and timely question of Non Paying Audiences at radio broadcasts and particularly the broadcasts of such free performances from large Concert Halls and Auditoriums. We ask you to give this question your attention in the intervening time and we will welcome any expression of your views in this connection that you may care to make before then. -- However, you are invited to propose any other subject for discussion, which is of vital interest to the Guild and the profession.

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Remember the "Bulletin" and its unlimited appetite for material and send in your letter or article for publication. We also invite your comments on the two issues which so far have appeared - we welcome bouquets, but will accept brickbats too.