

# Music News and Events

## Ravinia Opens With Superb Performances

By Rutheda L. Pretzel

Ravinia burst into the musical world last week-end with a flare of brilliance which continues to burn with renewed light each evening. There is something about the opera house in the woods which makes every opera seem to be the climax of all that preceded it, and the season advances with a glittering succession of such climaxes. "William Tell" and "La Traviata," which were heard last Saturday and Sunday evenings, respectively, drew capacity crowds, which split the air with ovations for the stars, Gennaro Papi, the orchestra, and Louis C. Eckstein, Ravinia's founder, owner and manager.

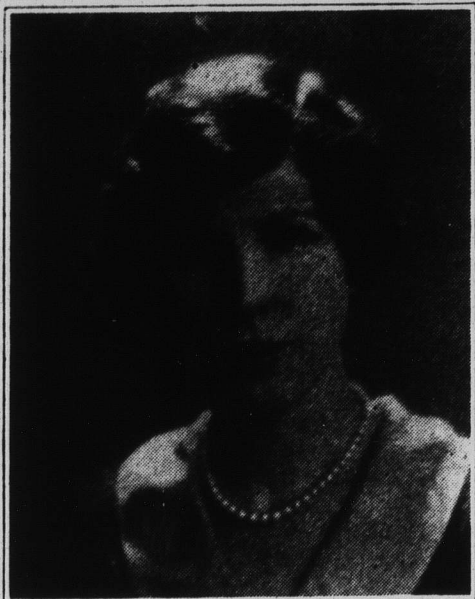
Rossini's opera, "William Tell," will be heard several times this season, once with Yvonne Gall in the soprano role, instead of Elisabeth Rethberg. The overture, beginning with a lovely passage for cello, is played skillfully under Papi's inspired and intelligent baton, and even the threadbare finale seems injected with new vigor. The settings for the opera are colorful and atmospheric. The first and second acts maintain a lively pace and hold the attention musically and dramatically. Martinelli is kept almost continuously in his upper register, which delights his admirers, and Danise has plenty of opportunity to show off the increasing beauty of his voice. Madame Rethberg has little to do except look stunning, her aria at the beginning of the second act being the only one left to her after the opera was cut. As usual, her voice is flawless and infinitely worth hearing. Margery Maxwell, as Tell's son, has more depth in her voice this year, a resonance she never had before, and now we can look forward to hearing her in some of the more famous coloratura roles.

There is a fine trio for tenor, baritone and bass in the second act, which was marvelously sung last week by Martinelli, Danise and the new bass, Gandolfi. After that, the opera is less sparkling, and gradually it loses caste. Rossini's music becomes like Verdi's at his worst, often being reminiscent of the flagrant oom-pahs of "Il Trovatore."

"La Traviata," which was heard on Sunday, and which will be scheduled for several performances this summer, seemed to be the real opener for the season, for the very spirit of Ravinia was felt in the music and the gaiety of the first act. Lucrezia Bori was the tantalizing, seductive enchantress, singing as if she had never been so happy, and moving about with that delicate, aristocratic charm so characteristic of her. Mario Chamlee, whose voice continues to grow in sheer beauty of tone, sang with fire and passion, and together he and Bori were supremely unforgettable.

Basiola sang his arias, particularly "In Provenze" with sensitive shading in tone and meaning, proving that he, too, has gained since last season. The entire performance was superb, and whet one's musical appetite for the artistic triumphs yet to come.

## Honored Again



Miss Susannah Armstrong, Glencoe composer, has been invited by the MacDowell colony to spend another summer at Peterboro, where she may have the quiet surroundings conducive to composing. Last year she was sent to the colony for the first time by the Evans-ton MacDowell society. During the winter she has been appearing before many clubs, presenting her songs, and instrumental compositions, which have been highly praised for their individuality. Miss Armstrong plans to leave for the colony the end of the month.

## American Opera Company Formed by Paris Group

The American Opera company in Paris, supported principally by a group of affluent Americans for the purpose of aiding promising young singers, conductors and vocalists, has been formed in the French capital, according to an announcement in the New York Times.

"It is reported that Arturo Toscanini has agreed to conduct Boito's 'Mefistofele,' and Deems Taylor's 'Peter Ibbetson' is also spoken of for production, as are other works rarely heard in Paris," says the Times. "These include 'L'Amico Fritz,' 'Dinorah,' 'Don Pasquale,' 'Resurrection,' 'Norma,' 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' and 'Andrea Chenier.' Four languages, English, French, German and Italian, will be employed.

"The Theatre des Champs Elysees, will house the productions, and the first performance, to be given in October, will be the French premiere of the Respighi opera, 'The Sunken Bell.'

"Gabriel Grovez, one of the conductors of the Paris Grand Opera, will be the chief conductor. He is already selecting the seventy-five players for the orchestra. Walter Straram, conductor of the weekly concert series, which he founded six years ago, is also cooperating. Gustav Cloez, also of the Paris Opera, will be an assistant conductor, and Maurice Faure of the Opera and Conservatoire, will have charge of the chorus.

"It is rumored that Madame Ganna Walska, who bought the Theatre des Champs Elysees three years ago, and

who did much for music in Paris during the past six years, is lending her financial aid to the new venture. According to Samson Robert Diamond of New York, who is general director, the American Opera company will give American young singers in Europe the opportunity of practical operatic work under the guidance of well known conductors and singers. These student singers will be selected purely on merit.

"The company will not be an experimental student organization exclusively, for each performance will include a guest composer or a composer-conductor and a guest artist, preferably American."

## Lecture Course on Opera Begins Monday, June 29

R. Carleton Smith will give a series of six lectures on outstanding operas to be heard at Ravinia this season, beginning on Monday, June 29, at the home of Mrs. J. Williams Macy, 966 Private road. The lecture will begin at 11 o'clock and last for 45 minutes.

Mr. Smith gave a preliminary lecture last Friday morning at Mrs. Macy's home, to introduce the course. Other lectures will be given in north shore homes. Mr. Smith was formerly music critic of the Washington Post, and is now at the University of Chicago. Information regarding the course may be secured from Mrs. Macy, and other patronesses, Mesdames Donald Frank McPherson, James L. Houghteling, William B. Hale, Sidney F. Bartlett, George Stanley Parker, Roland Whitman, Dwight Orcutt, Theodore E. Moritz and Miss Isabelle Cline.

During the course, Mr. Smith will seek to develop the philosophy of art as being a great expression of emotions. He will trace art trends and compare musical trends with those of other arts. He illustrates his points with phonograph recordings, or plays themes on the piano.

Last week Mr. Smith acquainted the group with the story and music of "William Tell," saying that history cannot verify the existence of William Tell. Legends about him have arisen in Danish, Icelandic and English literature. Schiller, who wrote the drama of the same name, seized upon the legend as a good subject to show the conflict between private ideals, and encroachment on family and individual life. Rossini used his drama for an opera, and this was the last opera he ever wrote. He laid down his pen, and during the thirty years remaining of his life never wrote another opera.

"Music expresses more intimately and purely the life of man's soul than does any other art," said Mr. Smith during the course of his lecture, "and the arts are merely tools for the greatest art of all—the art of living. True art, like life, must be for itself, and not for a spectacle."

The Austrian government has just created an Austrian academy, which will have 48 members, 24 of which will be foreigners, as in the Institute de France, Paris.

Claire Dux, who recently returned from a concert tour in California, was made doctor of music by the University of California.

## Gall, Chamlee, in "Marouf" on Friday Evening

"Marouf," one of the light opera favorites at Ravinia, will be heard this week Friday evening, June 26, with Mario Chamlee, Yvonne Gall, Julia Claussen, Leon Rothier, Vittorio Trevisan, Marek Windheim, Louis D'Angelo, George Cehanovsky and others. They make this French Arabian nights story a beguiling mosaic of civilized foolery. Ruth Page and Blake Scott will appear in the oriental dances, and Louis Hasselmann will conduct.

On Saturday evening, June 27, Puccini's "Manon Lescaut" brings first week of Ravinia to a close. Lucrezia Bori, who was heard on Tuesday night in Massenet's version of "Manon", will take the title role, and this time Giovanni Martinelli will be heard as the Chevalier des Grieux. Ina Bourskaya has the famous role of the music master, Desire Defrere is again the brother, Lescaut, Louis D'Angelo and other stars complete the cast. Gennaro Papi conducts.

On Sunday afternoon, Daniel Saidenberg, first cellist of the Chicago Symphony orchestra, will be the soloist. In the evening Rossini's opera of buffoonery, "The Barber of Seville," will be sung by Florence Macbeth, Mario Chamlee, Mario Basiola, Virgilio Lazzari, Vittorio Trevisan, and with Gennaro Papi at the baton.

On Monday evening, June 29, "William Tell" will have its second performance of the season, with the same cast as was heard the opening night, Elisabeth Rethberg, Giovanni Martinelli, Giuseppe Danise, and Virgilio Lazzari. Ruth Page, Blake Scott and the ballet participate, and Gennaro Papi conducts.

The schedule for the entire week beginning Monday, June 29, appears in another section of this issue.

## Plan Radio Audition to Secure Five New Singers

A unique all-Chicago audition to secure five new singers from Chicago-land area, the first of an annual series inaugurated by J. L. Kraft, is announced by Mrs. Edmund H. Tyler, chairman, 2626 N. Fairfield avenue.

Applicants may apply at once to Mrs. Tyler for the radio audition. Blanks will be mailed, and must be returned by July 6.

The Chicago audition is the first ever held in the United States, with songs presented exclusively in English. Any singer in the Chicago area over the age of eighteen, who has had at least two years of vocal instruction, is eligible to enter the contest.

## Thomas Made Conductor of N. Y. Opera Comique

Rudolph Thomas, former conductor of the Royal Opera company in Hanover, Germany, is the new conductor of the New York Opera Comique for next season, according to the New York Times. He came to this country in 1926 to head the orchestra and opera department of the Cincinnati Conservatory.