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MUSIC *of the* WEST

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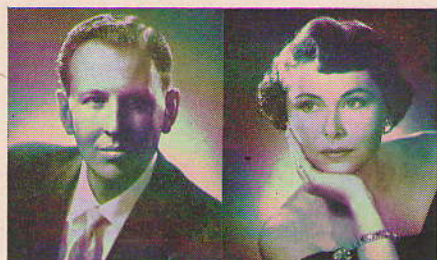
General Director
PENINSULA
ARTISTS & OPERA
COMPANY

MAY—1959

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MUSIC AND THE ARTS

News of the Artists



JoAnn Crossman, pianist, and Donald Stenberg, baritone, presented a concert for the Pacific Musical Society on March 26 in San Francisco; on March 14, the artists performed for the Young Peoples' Music Theatre Series in Sacramento. Miss Crossman has been chosen by the Music Critics Circle to appear with the San Francisco Symphony this summer under Arthur Fiedler.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Leading roles in Verdi's comic masterpiece, *Falstaff*, presented by the University of Southern California Opera Theatre on April 18, 25, and 26 in Bovard Auditorium, SC, were assigned to four outstanding young singers. Dr. Walter Ducloux, head of the SC opera department, selected bass-baritone Carl Schultz for the role of the portly, jovial rogue Falstaff. Baritone French Tickner portrayed Mr. Ford, while Persian-born Erena Chillingarian sang the clever Mrs. Ford. Tenor Milton Briggs was Fenton, the young lover.

The Verdi opera was the second production in the SC Opera Theatre's five-year Verdi cycle, and was sung in an English adaptation of Dr. Ducloux, who also conducted and directed.

Peninsula Artists and Opera

More than 16 members of the Company participated in the first Annual "Encores and Prevues" Concert which was sponsored by the Peninsula Artists & Opera Association on April 25 for the benefit of their Scholarship Fund. The artists, all of whom are well-known in the Bay Area and on the West Coast, included sopranos Josephine Barbano, Yvonne Cadwallader, Nancy Linden, Margaret Norcross, Elsa Strombotne, and Edith Zitelli; tenor Ante Soljanich; contralto Ingeborg France; baritones John di Francesco and Eugene Lawrence; pianists Howard Albertsen, Warren Ball, Raymond Foote and LeRoy Miller; harpist Marjorie Trammel; violinist Elizabeth Kincade and flutist Susan Miller. "Encores and Prevues" was produced by Eugene Lawrence, General Director of the Company.



Harold Kay (left) president of the Peninsula Artists and Opera Association, congratulates pianist Mortimer Markoff and soprano Elsa Strombotne and her accompanist, LeRoy Miller, following their concert in Palo Alto in March which was sponsored by the Association.

FROM LEO PODOLSKY'S DATE BOOK

The activities of Dr. Leo Podolsky include an invitation to be the adjudicator for the National Music Festival in Montreal, and an appearance at the opening session of the Catholic Music Educators Convention at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago. He will return for his last seasonal visit to the Los Angeles area early in May. The first recital of the Podolsky Junior Master Class will be held on May 17 at the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music. The students appearing on this program have been chosen by audition from the studios of teacher members of the Podolsky Master Classes for Teachers, from various sections of Southern California.

With June Davison and Ardella Schaub, Dr. Podolsky will start June 1st on a schedule of thirteen piano workshops throughout the United States, beginning in Dallas, Texas, and including Hammond, La., Asheville, N.C., Burlington, Iowa, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Albuquerque, Belmont, Calif., Los Angeles, Chicago, Richmond, Va., New York City, and ending with the final session on famous Mackinac Island, Michigan.

Additional events are being planned for the summer schedule, starting with a reception in Dallas, honoring Dr. and Mrs. Irl Allison and the "Trio," sponsored by the Dallas branch of the N.G.P.T. of which Dr. Allison is the founder; and a reception in Chicago by the Chicago Branch of the Federation of Music Clubs. The "Trio" will introduce the new "Guild Repertoire Books," recently published by Summy-Birchard. It promises to be a busy and fascinating summer of work.

Peter Hewitt

American Artists series presented Peter Hewitt, brilliant young Los Angeles pianist, in concert in Wilshire-Ebell Theatre, March 16.

In a program which included demanding selections from the works of such composers as Schubert, Copland, Beethoven, Ravel and Liszt, Mr. Hewitt proved himself to be, technically and interpretively, one of our most promising young concert artists. The reviews of the critics in the leading Los Angeles newspapers and the applause of approval from an appreciative audience were excellent testimony to this fact.—A.T.E.

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Composers Forum

The Composers Forum opened its new series March 10 with a group of players from Los Angeles. This was an unusual procedure as was the inclusion of a work of Igor Stravinsky with some of the younger California Composers, especially when Eudice Shapiro plays the violin part in Stravinsky's *Duo Concertante*. Miss Shapiro is, according to some of our best critics, one of the finest violinists in the country, and with Ingolf Dahl at the piano she gave a performance that brought cheers and stamping from an audience that I would normally consider as being most, conservative and timid.

Among the new works on the program was a set of four pieces for clarinet, violin, and piano by William O. Smith, and a sonata for clarinet and piano by Richard Swift. Both of these compositions were based on the 12 tone system. I enjoyed the one by Smith particularly because he retained a grace and humor which is lacking in many of our moderns. Dahl's piano quartet, played at the end of the program, was magnificent in its brilliance and eloquence. It made one justly proud, in listening to this fine program, of what our young composers are contributing to the American musical life.

Music on the Peninsula

De Saisset Gallery

On March 1, Ann and Sven Reher appeared in a special program called "Music of Paris" which, if it had been better prepared, might have proved more interesting and enjoyable. The hardest thing for all in attendance was the fact that this "musical travelogue" lasted well over an hour without even a stop, so-to-speak, for a quick "snack." Mr. Reher's viola playing was pleasing enough in the light selections he played. Mrs. Reher's piano work was adequate but often too loud.

The program would have fared better if Mrs. Reher, of whom it is admitted in the brochure that she has never studied singing, had not sung. While basically there is a voice, her production is inadequate and her diction unintelligible in any language she attempted. Both artists constantly referring to notes broke the continuity such a program demands and made the audience extremely restless.

San Jose Music and Art Series

On March 9, one of the great personalities of our country and the world, Marian Anderson, came to San Jose's Civic Auditorium and was greeted by a standing ovation from the capacity audience.

Miss Anderson is still a great artist, but I regret to say that on this occasion her voice was not on a level with the artistry she exhibited. Singing concerts every other day, as Miss Anderson had done prior to San Jose, is a drain on the stamina of any young singer and more so on those not so young. Her voice sounded tired and at times she seemed to be at a loss for breath. These, I believe, were the contributing factors to her straying from the pitch so often in her Schubert Group and the aria from *Samson and Delilah*.

Yet, in an encore at intermission *Comin' Thru the Rye*, she sang like the Anderson of old and all her technical troubles seemed to vanish. In the two final groups of English songs and Spirituals, the artist seemed more at ease and her second and final encore, Schubert's *Ave Maria*, was done to the point that tears ran unashamedly* in the audience.

Vienna Choir Boys

On February 19, the Notre Dame Series presented the Vienna Choir Boys before a capacity audience. The program opened with works by Buxtehude, Palestrina, da Croce, Lechner, Herbeck and Mozart. As an encore one of the young boys sang Schubert's *Ave Maria* in a nice clear but slightly tired voice. Part two was a musical play, *The Silly Girls*, adapted from a play by Moliere by Ilka Peters with music by Johann Strauss arranged by Helmuth Froschauer. It proved to be very entertaining. The program closed with selections by Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn and others. Gerhard Lang proved a most competent accompanist and director.

Santa Cruz Symphony Orchestra

The Santa Cruz Symphony Orchestra presented its second concert of the Season on March 17 under the direction of Detlev Anders. Mr. Anders is an excellent conductor in his own right which in itself is an accomplishment. It is hard for one to judge a conductor who appears with a long established and experienced major symphony. The real test of a conductor comes when he has to build his orchestra from the ground up, mould them in the art of playing as one, and then prepare them for a program. This is an accomplishment of Mr. Anders.

The program opened with Haydn's "London" Symphony. The orchestral tone, notably the strings, was really beautiful as was the rendition of the composition, thanks to Anders highly musical and intelligent conception of the score. Soloist of the evening was Marian Sill Philp, pianist, in the *Symphonic Variations* of Cesar Franck. While Miss Philp plays well, her having to read from the score detracted much from her playing, interpretively speaking. Anders and the Orchestra gave her fine support throughout.

After the intermission, the orchestra presented shorter works by Meyerbeer, Borodin, Gliere, Gould and Delius and finished the program with the Suite from the opera *Carmen* by Bizet in which the conductor guided his orchestra through the various sections with a great variety of contrast and it proved to be one of the highlights of the evening.

Santa Cruz has every reason to be proud of their orchestra and its distinguished conductor for together they have accomplished in a year what other groups have taken years to do.—E.L.

Santa Clara Philharmonic

One of the world's greatest musicians brought the audience to its feet after a monumental performance of the Tchaikovsky violin concerto with the Santa Clara Philharmonic on March 6. Erica Morini's Bay Area appearances are, unhappily, infrequent of late. Violinists of her stature do not show up every year. The possessor of a truly uncanny technique, Miss Morini penetrates to the core of the music, unerringly grasps the composer's thesis and the composition unfolds as though being created on the spot. Her bowing is resolute, the left hand extremely dexterous, her tone silken and the rhythm perfection itself. The whole piece was scaled in gigantic proportions. Musical Director Edward Azhderian and the ensemble gave a satisfactory account of the orchestral part of the difficult score.

Peninsula Artists

The final concert in the Peninsula Artists series on March 20 introduced to local audiences mezzo-soprano Elsa Strombotne in a joint program with Mortimer Markoff, well-known Palo Alto pianist. The policy of presenting new artists with those already established is beneficial for all concerned.

Mme. Strombotne is a vocalist with the range, Wagnerian power and freshness we have come to expect from Scandinavian singers. The size of her voice, free from vibrato, suggests a career in opera and oratorio but as a recitalist she proved to be a sensitive interpreter, at home in many styles. The soprano's pitch is not always flawless and she needs to curb an urge to take all top tones fortissimo. Her English diction can be improved upon. LeRoy Miller contributed sound accompaniments.

Mr. Markoff's gifts are most impressive in the romantic and modern categories. His pianism combines a superior intellectual grasp with masterly dynamics and great warmth. The four Scarlatti sonatas lacked a definite articulation though the lovely Cantabile in B flat major was impeccably phrased. The seldom-heard Beethoven Phantasy Op. 77 was given an engrossing interpretation. Bartok's rhythmic and harmonically splendid Allegro Barbaro was a high point. The pianist showed a genuine affinity for the music, the momentum never flagging and a controlled excitement at the climaxes. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Debussy's *Girl With the Flaxen Hair* had a variety of tonal color with a crystalline grace. In Liszt's *Legende*, St. Francis trod the waves with awesome virtuosity. Mr. Markoff's strong and agile left hand served him well and brought this astonishing display-piece to a pitch of drama. The De Falla and Schubert encores exhibited further facets of the pianist's musicality.—Walton Ball.

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