ELEVENTH SEASON

1945-1946

First Orchestra Concert

Wednesday Evening, at 8:30

November 21, 1945

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APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORCHESTRA will be received at any time and should be addressed to the Conductor, Wolf Rd., R. D. 1, Erie, Pa.

ELEVENTH SEASON — FIRST ORCHESTRA CONCERT
WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER, 21, 1945 at 8:30

Soloist: MARIO LANZA, Tenor

CHORALE PRELUDE, "WACHTET AUF, RUFT UNS DIE STIMME" BACH-ORMANDY

THREE DANCES from the Ballet, "COPPELIA" DELIBES
Mazorka Valse Czardas

SONGS with ORCHESTRA—
"TRE GIORNI SON CHE NINA" CIAMPI-MOTTI
"M'APPARI TUTT' AMOR" from "MARTHA" von FLOTOW
"LA DONNA E MOBILE" from "RIGOLETTO" VERDI

"PATRIE"—DRAMATIC OVERTURE, Op. 19 BIZET

Intermission

OVERTURE to "PHEDRE" MASSENET

CONCERT WALTZ NO. 1, in D Major, Op. 47 GLAZOUNOV

SONGS with ORCHESTRA—
"FOR YOU ALONE" GEEIH
"DRINK TO ME ONLY WITH THINE EYES" MELLISH

MATTINATA LEONCAVALLO

TWO HUNGARIAN DANCES—No. 5 and No. 6 BRAHMS

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

FOR ALL EVENING CONCERTS the doors of the Auditorium will close promptly at 8:30. No one will be admitted to the Auditorium during the playing of a number.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT REHEARSALS, which are held at Stone Vincent High School; for the full Orchestra, Tuesday evenings, 7:45 to 10, in the Auditorium; for the String Sections, Monday evenings, 7 to 8:30, in Room 224.

PRESERVE THIS PROGRAM. References to these Notes may be made in later programs. A LIMITED SUPPLY OF PROGRAMS OF PAST CONCERTS is available. Requests for copies should be addressed to the Secretary of the Society; Mrs. John R. Matafolk, Wolf Rd., R. D. 1, Erie Pa.
The Chorale Prelude "Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme" by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Chorale Preludes were a common form of organ music in Bach's time. They were composed as preludes to a chorale, a type of religious song that was popular in Lutheran churches. The Chorale Preludes often contained simplified versions of the chorale tune with added ornamentation and counterpoint.

The Chorale Prelude "Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme" is based on the chorale "Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme," which is one of the most famous chorales in Bach's time. The chorale is a call to wake up and pray, symbolizing the call to the light of salvation.

The Chorale Prelude itself is a short and concise composition, lasting only a few minutes. It is a good example of Bach's Prelude style, which is characterized by its succinct and concise form. The Chorale Preludes are often performed as an introduction to a larger work, or as a standalone piece.

The Chorale Prelude "Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme" is a beautiful piece of music that captures the spirit of the chorale and the Lutheran tradition. It is a wonderful example of Bach's ability to take a simple and familiar tune and turn it into something truly magnificent.
the CZARDAS, with its opening lassu of graceful, dignified evolution and its later wild and thrilling friska.

Of course, in the end it is discovered that SBINDA's rival is merely an automaton—albeit a most realistic one—"Coppelia." Frantz is forgiven, and all rejoices in the happy outcome.

DELIBES, in the field of the ballet, was unrivalled in his time. The success of "La Source" (1866), produced at the Paris Opera, for which he had written only a part of the score, led to his being entrusted with the completion of an entire ballet founded on the comedy "Coppélia" (1870). This resulted in a triumph for him. The grand mythological ballet "Sylvestre" (1876) established his superiority in dance music for the theatre.

Especially as a melodist, his music is forceful, charming, brilliant, as occasion demands, and always delightful and expressive.

Song: "Three days have passed and Nina" Legrenzio Vincenzo Ciampi
Born at Piacenza, Italy, in 1719; date of death unknown.

A composer respected in his day, of whom the famous music historian, Dr. Charles Burney (1726-1814) says that "he had fire and ability" but no genius. In quality of composition and the harmonic and melodic resources, the compositions in many forms, the choruses, the overtures, are far from being equal to the masterpieces of his contemporary, Mozart. His operas, however, are often written with fine melody and are charmingly arranged.

Its lyrical is the simple, rather forlorn plea of a lonely lover—

Three day have passed and Nina,
Trumpets, and drums, and the peal of bells
Awaken my Ninetta, awaken my Ninetta,
So that she'll sleep no more.

Still lies upon her bed,
So that she'll sleep no more.

The orchestra is led by Felice Mottl (1856-1911), the eminent Austrian conductor.

Aria: "None so fair, and so rare," from the Opera "Martha"
Friedrich, Freiherr von Flotow
Born April 27, 1812; died at Darmstadt, Germany, January 24, 1883.

This opera, the "ever popular," relates the experiences of Lady Harriet Durham and her confidante, Nancy, who, for an adventure go disguised as servants to the Richmonds, to which Martha and Julia. When they are hired out to a wealthy farmer, Plunkett, and his foster-brother, Lionel, who pay them handsomely, the girls cannot evade their part of the bargain. Lionel, whose character is unknown, falls in love with Martha. This lady does not intend that her masquerade involve her in any amorous entanglements, so she and Julia make their nocturnal escape from their employers.

Sometime later Martha and Lionel meet at Court; she, disavowing that she has ever seen him, imputes that he is insane. But he is recognized by a ring he wears as the son of a bankrupt nobleman and is restored to his rightful position. By now, Martha has found that she truly loves Lionel and offers him her hand, but he in turn rejects her, thinking himself duped.

Subsequently, again disowning her disguise, Martha seeks him at the Richmond Fair. They meet; she beg his forgiveness for her cruelty, receives it, and they are betrothed.

This Aria occurs in Act III; Lionel sings of his apparently hopeless love for the departed maid—

None so rare, and so fair,
Money cannot buy eternal heart;
Maiden mild, and so pure;
Thy dear image fills my heart!

But alas! thou art gone,
Yet enraptured love is gone alone;
Life a shadow doth seem,
And my joy a fleeting dream.

Martha! I implore thee
Leave me not to lone despair;
Leave me heartless, I beseech thee,
Or return, my life to share,
Ah! come, my life to share
Ah! return!

Giuseppe Verdi

Aria: "Woman so changeable," from the Opera, "Rigoletto"
Born at Le Roncaglia, near Busseto, Italy, January 25, 1803; died at Santa Agata, near Busseto, Italy, October 16, 1875.

The Story was adapted from the sordid drama of Victor Hugo, "Le roi s'amuse—The King amuses himself!" It tells of the gay and ruthless Duke of Mantua and his wanton affairs; and of his jester and assistant in his crimes, hunchbacked Rigoletto, and the terrible curse inveighed against Rigoletto by the father—whom he had mocked—of one of the Duke's victims; and of how Rigoletto's own beautiful daughter, Gilda, whom he had tenderly shielded from the world, came to love the Duke, of whose infamy she could not know; and of Gilda's vow of vengeance despite Gilda's pleas that he pardon the Duke, whom she still loved; and of Gilda's placing herself in the way of an assassin hired by her father to murder the Duke, that she might save him; and of the crown-grieving when Rigoletto discovers, quite by chance, that the corpse delivered to him in a bag for disposition is not the Duke, but—Gilda! Then he knows the curse has been hideously, piteously fulfilled.

Toward the end of the opera, while the Duke is making love to another woman, Rigoletto brings Gilda to the scene, hoping this brazen display of unfaithfulness will cure her infatuation. Their presence unknown to him, the Duke himself is the one to sing of unfaithfulness—but of women:

Woman so changeable, slyed away like a feather,
None can tell whether he should believe her.
Seeming so amiable, always beguiling,
Tearful or smiling, still a deceiver!
Woman capricious, slyed away like a feather!
None can tell whether he should believe!
Should he believe? Ah! Should he believe?

Lo, how great misery with him abideth,
Whose confideth in all her graces:
But true felicity by him is wasted
Who ne'er hath tasted love's fond embraces!

Light-hearted woman, silyed away like feather
None can tell whether he should believe.
Should he believe? Ah! Should he believe?

DEDICATION

Throughout the United Nations these days, innumerable tributes are being paid to their returning fighting men and women, to those who will never more return, and to those who will, for a long time to come, the scars that attest their magnificent sacrifices to their Country. Every tribute to these colossal deeds in defense of peace—beyond any words to express. Their deeds and their sacrifices are the truest measure of their courage, of their constancy and of their high efficiency.

One of the finest and more popular groups of popular songs is "The War", the smaller band of heroes, of whom little has been heard; who, after their homelands had been trampled beneath the brute tread of the invader, through all the long months of humiliation and enslavement, kept aloft the weakly flickering flame of honor and grim resolve, and never for a moment lost faith, but ever once cried "Quit!".

They it was who worked ceaselessly—and always surreptitiously—to seek out and pass on information to friends abroad, and who brought information for the foe, to succor anyone deserving of the help they could give, to harass and terrify the enemy and thereby to hasten his defeat.

They it was who carried on under constant and imminent threat of discovery and swift death, who of necessity had to pursue their tasks not only unheralded and unsung, but almost utterly unknown.

Loyal to the core, stout of heart, with no uniform to proudly wear, nor any grateful decoration or token that they were just folk—who folk who gave, if need be, to the utmost limit of all they had and of all they could—whose watchword ever was—"My Country!"

So—to that immortal company of stealthy, tight-lipped heroes of the silent, devoutish days of war—The Underground—Salute!

For them we play "Patrie!—My Country!" This great and stirring music is singularly appropriate to this purpose. Bizet was an ardent patriot, and in composing "Patrie!"—as his biographer, Charles Pigot, puts it—"he wished to sing of our Country in mourning, yet living still and still dear to the hearts of her children, our Country mutilated and still bleeding, but to rise from the dust again in the future."

In place of "If you wish to sing of my Country in mourning —" read "these folk wished to serve their Countries in mourning, yet living still and still dear to the hearts of their children, their Countries mutilated and still bleeding, but to rise from the dust again in the future.

Then it is seen that all that inspired the creator: that brilliant "Patrie!" inspired also these indomitable souls to carry on in their unavowed consecration to their Countries.

THE OVERTURES—"Patrie!" and PHEDRE

In the early 1870's there were living in Paris three of the younger French composers of that time, all in their thirties, just beginning to taste of the fruits of suc-
listening to it the deep feeling that guided the hand of the artist; one forgets the idea and sees only the form, which, though it be admirable, should disappear, as in every work of art, before the vigorous and deeply expressive thought that issues from it.”

THE MUSIC. In form this overture is purely sectional, consisting of four principle subjects in contrasting moods, none of which undergo any real development, receiving few figures of accompaniment and instrumentation being the only treatment accorded them.

The first subject, martial in character, is made up of a main theme and some subsidiary material. The theme is forcefully introduced at once by full orchestra, Moderato, C Minor, 4 4 time, and is carried on in some measure, though several key changes. In the 17th and 18th measures comes a short episode (strings, answered by woodwinds), which repeats, and precedes the return of the main theme, now in C Major, and separated from the former by a new short phrase, which reappears in the original key and power. Five measures later the second subsidiary theme enters quietly, its melody at first in clarinets, bassoons, and cellos (with broken triplet figures in violins), a second phrase (cellos and violas) very soon appearing in the violins, while a passage follows this—a trombone fanfare (to violin tremolos and awesome detonations from the bass drum). The main theme returns, then the short first episode, then back to the main theme softly with its immediate crescendo.

The second subject, in the nature of a folksong, is now heard, “somewhat lively”, F Major, its melody in clarinets, bassoons and violas (broken staccato accompaniment in low strings). This is repeated by flutes and first violins, the other strings weaving a fluid counterpoint against it. It soon gives way to a new fanfare, then returns in full orchestra as a stately march, leading to a great and abrupt climax, and a long pause.

The third subject of mood the third subject is now presented, Andante Molto, A Minor, by violas and cellos (to staccato chords in brass instruments and basses pizzicati)—a most poignant lament but of great nobility of feeling, born of deep experience, and capable of conveying one of the most emotional of human passions—“the love of the child for the wounded father”. This is taken up next by violins, then by all the strings except basses while the rest of the orchestra elaborates the accompaniment. At length it subordinates into the theme, and now the whole orchestra, while the first theme is repeated, given first to English horn, clarinet and viola, (broken chords in second violins, divided), then also to flutes and harp (first violins joining seconds in the accompaniment). The last four measures are flowing, whence woodwinds and strings extend it to a serene and peaceful conclusion.

Now, to a dark rumbling of cellos and basses the original martial theme of the first subject is heard, as though from a great distance (woodwinds); then soon counterpoint its first episode in woodwinds against the “somewhat lively” folk-like second subject in strings, the latter now in keeping with the more measured mood of the main theme. The fanfare boldly interrupts, and itself gives way to the preceding subject, here in Eflat. The thought of La Città, C Major (strings, harp and low brasses) perceptibly broken in upon by resolute, military-like woodwinds and horns, on all of which is erected a grand climax—“the life of the people”, as it were, bringing in this time of the theme. Of course, France “living still and still dear to the hearts of her children”, at last, the fourth subject, that was hoped for and now triumphant, is proclaimed boldly and defiantly—a brief, but confident vision of the France that is “to rise from the dust as the future”.

Overture to Racine’s Tragedy, “Phèdre” Jules Frederic Emile Massenet

Born at Montauban, near St. Étienne (Lot), France, May 12, 1842; died in Paris, April 13, 1912.

THIS OVERTURE was conceived as a prelude to the drama whose title it bears, written in 1877 by Jean Baptiste Racine (1639-1699), one of France’s greatest dramatists. It is famous for its moral, human and poetic quality. It is founded, upon a tale from the mythology of ancient Greece.

The Legend of Phaedra, daughter of King Minos of Crete. Like most such tales of antiquity, its interest lies throughout the ages it has taken on several versions—all substantially the same, but differing slightly from each other, the variations therefore causing the story’s structure, the motives and the circumstances that go to the shaping of its events.

Opening of this tale—the one adopted by Racine—has it that no less a personage than Theseus, king of Athens, was held responsible for contriving the fateful passion that lead this lovely Cretan princess to her self-destruction.

Theseus, the great Athenian hero, and his first wife, Hippolyte (Antiope), were
blessed with a strong, handsome and most noble son, Hippolytus, who bestowed his singularly pure and ardent devotion upon Diana, Goddess of the Moon and of the Chase. But most unfortunately for Hippolytus, Venus herself fell in love with him, and, successful in her design, she utterly disregarded her daughter, who, for revenge of the wrong he had sustained, undertook to drive the poor Woodtongue away by summoning up a most sorid way.

Theseus' second wife was Phædra. Venus inspired her in her mad infatuation for Hippolytus, her stepson. He, naturally, rejected her advances, as he had those of Venus. Thereupon Phaedra, stung to bitter resentiment and anger under the lash of her unworthy love, vilely slandered him to his father. Outraged, holding Hippolytus in horror and contempt—and, of course, ignorant of the truth—Theseus called upon Poseidon, king of the sea, to avenge the wrong he thought had been done. So while Hippolytus was driving his chariot along the shore, Poseidon caused a huge wave to surge up from the sea, out of which a most hideous monster. Despite all his strength and skill the youth could not keep his terrified steeds in hand. In the frightful mèe’ee that followed the chariot was wrecked and Hippolytus killed. Despairing and overwhelmed with remorse at the catastrophe she had brought to pass, Phædra strangled herself—and Venus thereby dispensed with the object of her mad jealousy.

Massenet inscribed upon this score a motto,—two lines that are spoken by the despondent Phædra herself soon after the awakening of her love for Hippolytus:

“Ce n’est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachées,
C’est Venus tout entière a sa proie attacheée.”

“Not merely passion’s hidden in my breast away,
’Tis Venus all herself doth take me for her prey.”

Hapless princess! Full well she realized her pitiable plight—that she was but the base instrument of pursues, the victim and slave of an evil one. But, oh! how viciously malicious but divinely inspired, which she was therefore wreaked upon her only possible victim. The passion that follows (clarinet) is Phædra herself. This is carried on in a duet for oboes—Phædra seeking solace and advice of Oenone, a nymph who had been the lover of Hippolytus. The music is slow and impassioned, expressive of all the various moods of this woman, next inititatively take up the theme, only to be abruptly interrupted by the music of Venus’ curse, but this time uttered with a fearful determination—Venus cold and implacable, the tortured Phædra pleading fruitlessly—and swept along on the tide of her aversion.

Next is heard the theme of Hippolytus, strong and active, in cellos and basses (Allegro appassionato, 2/2 time). A momentary pause, broken by a single note from a horn—the glance, perhaps, that touched off the devastating flame in Phædra’s heart. And then the motif is repeated by strings in unison, the effect being overpowering. — One who knows and greatly admires this overture has described this passage as “inefably lovely”: it is impossible to qualify or add to this description: it is sufficient.

Hippolytus returns, now driving along by the shore. Presently—so suddenly as to take the youth entirely unwarne—walks up from the sea and out of it with a guttural, threatening leer, wallows thelothsome serpent (basses, cellos and bassoons; then in turn also violas, woodwinds, violins, brasses). In the water that ensues be can be seen the snorting and necking of the terrified horses (high woodwinds), the deriso gloatis of the monster (brasses). With this the musical representations of the drama’s chief elements are completed; but, to interest the conventional overture form in this work (a modified sonata form), the main themes are reviewed: Hippolytus — the love music. Then comes a long and brilliant coda derived from the theme of Hippolytus. And at the very close, Venus, blameless and exultant at the workings of her grim revenge — Phædra’s last, anguished protestations — and all is over.

Twenty-six years after the composition of this overture Massenet wrote (1900) incidental music; to accompany the whole drama, including interludes to be played between the acts.

The Overture is scored for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 piccobini, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, tympani and strings.

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**Concert Waltz No. 1. in D major, Op. 47.**

**Alexandre Glazounov**

Born at St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), Russia, August 10, 1865; now lives in Russia

Glazounov is one of the most interesting and significant of the Russian composers of the last generation. Being independently wealthy, so that he escaped the necessity of making a living by developing his fine natural gifts and made most excellent use of his opportunities. Zemski devoted to an artistic purpose such as Glazounov has always displayed, together with an impressive list of excellent compositions, are causes for high commendation, especially in a man who has lived so long.

This Waltz is nothing but a concert piece, an expression of beauty to be enjoyed for its own sake alone. It was composed at Peterhof near St. Petersburg in 1883, and is dedicated to a lady named Miss Seel.

It opens with an INTRODUCTION, allegro, 3-4 time, sixteen measures long. Then comes the TEMPO di VALSE proper, strings pizzicati and horns accompanying the main theme, introduced by violas and clarinets in unison, which is stated in full, then repeated by violins and woodwinds. To another pizzicato string accompaniment the woods bring the second theme. The first returns, now in canon form between strings and woodwinds. After a repetition of the Introduction, a third theme appears (solo flute, bowed string accompaniment) the melody of which is also adapted as that of a popular song of several years ago, entitled “Romance”. This repeats the theme in violins. Again the strings provide a pizzicato accompaniment for a fourth theme, given to clarinets in dialogue. This is followed by a coda fashioned from these elements, with some brilliant development in the very effective Codas.

**Songs with Orchestra — “For you alone”**

**Henry E. Geehl**

**Take thou this rose, this little tender rose,**

The rarest flow’r in all God’s garden fair; And let it be whilst yet its crimson glows

An emblem of the love I proudly, proudly bear.

**Take thou this heart, the heart that loves thee well,**

And let it beat whilst yet from mom to day,

**Take thou my heart, for Oh! thy dear eyes tell,**

God fashioned it for you, for you alone.

**“Drink to me only with thine Eyes”**

**P. J. O'Reilly**

**Col. R. Mellish**

**1777-1847**

The words of this beloved classic of English song are by the great Elizabethan dramatist, Ben Jonson (1573-1637)—

Drink to me only with thine eyes, And I will pledge with mine: I sent thee late a rosy wreath, But it was no more than giv’n it hope that there

And I’ll not ask for wine; But thou hast given me cause not to breathe

The blind girl’s from the soul doth rise But thou hast given me

Doth seek a drink divine; It could not wither be

But might I of Jove’s nectar sip Since it when it grows and smells, I swear

I would not change for thine. Not of itself—but thee.

The song was first sung by its composer at "The Noblemen’s and Gentlemen’s Catch Club" of London, which was formed in 1761. - - for the encouragement of the composition and performance of canons, catches and glees.” Among its members have been many of the great figures of their time, including some professional musicians, all its members being admitted only by ballot and for the purpose of exchange and willingness to take their parts in its activities and promote its objects. King George IV was elected to membership in 1786 when Prince of Wales and King William IV in 1789. The organization has been in existence for many years, and is believed to be still carrying on in behalf of these traditional forms of English song.

The Catch was originally—and when the Catch Club was founded—simply a round for three or more voices, unaccompanied, written out lineally as one continuous melody and not in score as simultaneous voices. The “catch” was for the singers, as they made the round of the Catch Club at the pre-fixe note or instant. The words of the early catches were simple, but genuine in sentiment. In the course of time, however, a new element crept in by which words were
chosen so as to make possible, by mispronunciation or by the interweaving of words and phrases given to different voices, most comic or grotesque effects. Catch singing became an art in itself, eventually accompanied by gestures and required a high degree of skill.

If one voice begins a melody, then after a few beats another voice enters precisely imitating this melody note for note and generally interval for interval, either at the same or a different pitch—the second voice, as it were, “running after” the leading one, in their turns and always in this manner, more voices may be added—and the canon is designated as a two-, three-, four-, etc. part or vocal canon, according to the number of voices taking part. A canon must strictly follow this formula, or else, no doubt, it ceases to be a canon. Canons are, therefore, the purest form of the musical device known as, and which actually is, melodic imitation.

A Glee is an unaccompanied, harmonized part-songs for three or more voices, usually male, whose subject matter and feeling may be of any kind and complexion—tender, gay, sad or jovial. The glee originated in England, and in the period from 1760-1830, reached its highest development. The greatest writer of this kind of “glee” was Samuel Wesley (1740-1816). The “glee” should indicate the purely descriptive of such works, for it is simply the corrupted descendant of the ancient Anglo-Saxon word “glige” = music.

**MATTINATA — MORNING SONG**

**Ruggiero Leoncavallo**

Born in Naples, Italy, March 8, 1858; died at Montecatini, near Florence, Italy, August 8, 1919.

The dawn robed in white now is smiling,
And day will appear with the sun,
Already the roses beguiling,
Are turning their heads one by one.

Mysteriously, life now enthralling,
Has wakened the world from its sleep,
But you do not wake, nor hear its calling,
In vain do I stand here and weep.

Ah, this white robe, dawn’s greatest treasure,
Weave it and wake, and sing this new theme over,
Where are you, but there is my pleasure,
Where are you, but there I belong! Words by the Composer

**TWO HUNGARIAN DANCES**

**Johannes Brahms**

Two Hungarian Dances, which were about sixteen the eccentric Hungarian violinist, Eduard Remenyi, arrived in Hamburg, a political refugee following the ill-fated revolt of his people, under Kossuth, against Austrian rule. Brahms was already attaining recognition, chiefly as a pianist, and it was not long until he was presented to the great virtuoso. Remenyi was deeply impressed with his playing, with the result that he came to engage the youthful musician more and more frequently as accompanist. In 1883 they made a long concert tour together through North Germany. From this association Brahms gathered the most outstanding of, as well as the profoundest admiration for, Hungarian music, and in many of his compositions its influence is very strongly evident.

The Hungarian Dances, all written originally as piano duets, and largely as a diversion, brought Brahms his first and for a time his greatest success as a composer. In them he made free use of folk-tunes and of popular songs and dances of Magyar composers, blending in his own harmonization of these Hungarian idioms. With the publication of the first two of the four books of these dances, Brahms was accused of plagiarism, but after due explanations the public came to realize that the dances were, as Brahms himself represented on the title page, simply “Arranged by Johannes Brahms.” There are numerous orchestral settings of many of them, the present ones having been made by Albert Parlow.

MARIO LANZA was born on New York’s East Side, January 31, 1921. His father, an Italian from Naples, had been a six-day bicycle race rider, and a champ too! Mario will proudly tell you—that he enlisted in the U. S. Army for service in World War I, fought in six major battles in France, and had come home bedecked with medals—but unable to walk, permanently disabled! He and his wife were married. To eke out the meager pension which was her husband’s sole income, she went to work as a seamstress.

When Mario was six they moved to Philadelphia where his grandparents lived and where, they all hoped, his life would be easier. Their neighborhood. It bred some gangsters, true—but it also nourished the artists. The Gianninis were next-door neighbors—and the singer. Dusolina, became a fast friend of Mario’s mother.

Dusolina, Mario was acknowledged “Boss” of the South Philadelphia High School, playing half- and full-back on the football team. Leaving there, he went to Lincoln Preparatory School from which he graduated. During the next two summers he played semipro football and did some work for the WPA. Until the prospect of going to one of the rougher forms of athletics:

And he was famous at the South Philadelphia Boys Weight Lifting Club: he could lift 200 pounds.

One supreme secret he kept closely guarded from his pals—his growing passion for music. At home he listened to opera records by the hour. His favorite was Caruso’s “Vesti la giubba” from “Pagliacci,” which had first thrilled him as a boy of ten. That’s the way he’d like to sing,” he often thought to himself. With this, he learned to sing from Caruso by listening to his recordings. His sympathetic parents scribbled and saved to give him money so he could attend opera performances; to go as a standee was all he could afford.

But he went anyway. Early in 1922, when he was 21, through a mutual friend he met the singer and voice teacher, Irene Williams, with whom—the family now being able to afford it—some instruction was arranged. But Miss Williams very quickly perceived that, instead of simply being an outstandingly fine young boy, he needed very little routine vocal training. She started at once to build a repertoire, to coach him in the great Italian operatic roles. During a lesson, at Miss Williams’ request and unknown to Mario, a compositor of the Philadelphia Forum, who was the director of the Forum, his opera career. He pressed her to leave the studio determined to help this obviously gifted youth get a start.

Mario often worked for his grandfather, who had a wholesale grocery store and trucking business. Late on a certain Wednesday afternoon he had hauled a piano to the Academy of Music where famed Serge Koussevitzky was to lead his Boston Symphony Orchestra that night. About eighty-thirty Mario stopped at Wanamaker’s to take in the free concert then going on in the Court, as he often did for those regular Wednesdays. As he worked there, his mind was on the concert, and he was rushed up. Knowing his habit, she had taken this chance on finding him, and—luckily—she found him.

Between them, and Mr. Huff had resolved that this very evening would be a propitious time to put their protege within hearing distance of Koussevitzky and had conspired to bring it about. Miss Williams rushed Mario home to clean up, and then to the Academy, where Huff was already there to meet him. Miss Williams suggested to Koussevitzky and Goldovsky. He worked hard. Every day he had instruction with Dr. Koussevitzky himself, who kept telling Mario, “You will never be a singer unless you learn to solfege.” Solfege is a form of vocal exercise in which either a single vowel or a definite syllable is sounded through the range of the voice, then repeated.

On August 7, when Noel Straus, critic of the New York Times, travelled to Tanglewood to see the English presentation of Nicolai’s “Merry Wives of Windsor,” he reported a dress rehearsal. As the 21-year-old Mario Lanza, an extremely talented, if as yet not completely routined singer, whose superb natural voice has few equals among tenors of the day in quality, warmth and power.
The news was out... When he returned to New York, Lana was invited to sing an audition for the famous artist and concert manager, Arthur Judson, President of Columbia Concerts, one of whose chief interests is in discovering young talents of only the highest promise, developing and launching them upon their deserved careers.

Four days later Mario was inducted into the Army, but Mr. Judson assured him that immediately upon his return to civilian life a contract would be awaiting him.

After basic training at Miami Beach, Lana was assigned to duty as an M.P. at the Martha Advanced Army Flying Base, in Pecos County, Texas. He had been there a few months when "On the Beam" came along. Maj. Frederick Brisson (husband of Rosalind Russell), who was touring with the show, had heard about the "singing M.P." He asked to hear Lana, but the singer refused—the sand and dust of the country were in his throat and he didn't feel equal to an audition. Instead, he played for Brisson a recording he had made of "B'luve me le stelle" from "Poets." On the strength of that recording, he was accepted. Orders came from Washington to release him for Sepcial Service. Two days later he was on the train to Arizona, where he picked up the troupe.

He sang with "On the Beam" for about two months. During that time Moss Hart heard him. When Hart was casting "Winged Victory," he remembered Lana and brought him to New York for rehearsals in September, 1948.

In the "Winged Victory" cast was Bert Hicks, who had a sister—slender, pretty and dark-haired. She was doing her bit at the Douglas Aircraft plant in Santa Monica on the staff of job instructors and trainers—the only woman entrusted with so important a function in all that critical war industry. Bert introduced Mario to Betty. This one meeting, then a later one with "Vesti la giubba" playing a part, and their fates were sealed. The "lucky aria" had worked again! Betty is now Mrs. Lana.

After about a year with "Winged Victory," Lana requested reassignment to active duty in his service—the Ground Force of the Army Air Corps. This was granted, and he returned to active duty, so that of his three years in the Army, nearly two were with units in the field. Soon after V-J Day he was honorably discharged and returned to New York. The Columbia Concerts contract, promised by Arthur Judson, was waiting. It had been signed. Furthermore, another is signed with the nation's leading maker of records, RCA-Victor, under which he becomes exclusively a Red Seal artist in his first 44-year history that this great company has signed to a contract. He's a young, virtually unknown singer without professional experience in concert, opera or radio.

He is now diligently preparing for his first concert tour—coaching with Robert Weede, the Metropolitan Opera baritone, building his repertoire of operatic roles with Maury R. Ronato Bellini, English songs with Polly Rubens—and with his devoted friend and personal representative, Michael De Pace, ever at hand.

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