

No new works by older Italian composers are scheduled. Malipiero has just completed his musical tragedy *Ecuba* (after Euripides). Casella is constantly working at (or thinking about) his *Coriolano*. Pizzetti has finished the first act of his new opera with a modern setting, *L'Oro*. Alfano is working on a revision of *L'Ombra di Don Giovanni*, which he says will have to be thought of as an entirely new opera.

Even though its relation to modern music may not be apparent, it will not be out of place for me to speak of continued activity in the field of musical studies. At Siena, in September, an enormously successful "week" was dedicated to Antonio Vivaldi, when completely unknown compositions were given. This "week" will be repeated during 1940, when the whole series of concerts will be devoted to the four Scarlattis – Alessandro, Domenico, Giuseppe, and Pietro. There has also been intensified publishing of older Italian music. The complete works of Palestrina are appearing in a remarkable edition under the editorship of Monsignor Raffaele Casimiri. Similar editions of P. Nenna, Gesualdo, Marenzio, and other secular polyphonists of the sixteenth century have been announced under the auspices of the Italian Institute of Musical History, a recent addition to the Ministry of National Education.

Having jumped back into the past, I can remark on other interesting performances to take place in Florence in May. They include Rossini's *Semiramide* (which has not been staged in Italy from time immemorial, and which the majority of us have probably never seen at all), Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunow* in the original version, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The last will be the first performance of the great English composer's opera in Italy, and for many reasons I consider the event worthy of particular mention.

Guido M. Gatti

FROM SPIRITUALS TO SWING

“FROM Spirituals to Swing” is the name given to an enterprise which after two concerts (December 1938, December 1939) promises to become the institution for the presentation of American Folk Music to New Yorkers. The second annual affair – should one call it a festival? – took place Christmas Eve in a packed Carnegie Hall, under the aegis of the Theatre Arts Committee. The reaction of the audience left no doubt as to its success.

Style ranged from the most primitive kind of folk manifestations to the blatantly circumspect devices of metropolitan swing. All participants, with the exception of Goodman and two of his men, were Negroes. It was fun to see, in the flesh, blues singers, whose records one had been hearing for years; to watch, for instance, a typical male blues singer vocalize while accompanying himself on the guitar. This kind of bard is well represented in recordings, but opportunities to hear direct performances of such music are rare in the North. Leadbelly we know, but he is a very personal artist. The three well-publicized Boogie-Woogie pianists, Ammons, Lewis and Johnson, performed together and separately. Boogie-Woogie as a pianistic style by itself is poor entertainment; at its worst it is a virtuoso trick, at its best, accompaniment music of considerable charm. The same passages which, played alone, are devoid of any but a rhythmical interest that grows progressively fainter as one listens, acquire new significance when a melody appears to relieve the reiterated pattern of unchanging I, IV and V chords.

Benny Goodman's Sextet, in whose performance rhythmical precision and technical mastery reach a new high, drew the greatest applause of the evening. But probably the one really astonishing number of the entire program was a strange little piece for harmonica called *The Fox Hunt* by "Sonny" Terry. His instrument provided the horns while his falsetto voice made fox-calls and hound-bayings. This miniature of tortured reed-sounds and human-animal cries was sinister and unforgettable.

We need more opportunities to hear music of this sort. There are magnificent folk-artists in our country. Let John Hammond find Blind Blake, Rube Lacy, Dobby Bragg, Peetie Wheatstraw, Iva Smith, Elzadie Robinson, Blind Percy and his Blind Band, Cow Cow Davenport and Blind Lemon Jefferson (if they have not died of starvation!), and ship them here for another concert next December, or preferably sooner.

Paul Bowles

CLEVELAND'S FIRST-TIMES

THE Cleveland Orchestra's conductor, Dr. Artur Rodzinski, is eager to perform new works, and although this ambition frequently clashes with the conservative resistance of well-cushioned subscribers, he has managed to strike an average close to one first-time in Cleveland for each