



## American Society of Music Arrangers

ASMA – "The Society of Individuals"

By HERSCHEL B. GILBERT, *President 1949-50*



**T**HIS January 13, 1950, the American Society of Music Arrangers became twelve years old. As any other social organization dedicated to the betterment of a given group of individuals, it has an interesting history and a "secret past" all its own.

The arranger, who is used to working as an individual rather than as part of a group like the playing musician, was left far behind during the organization of price scales and other benefits for which the instrumental musician learned to depend upon the union as his bargaining agent and protector.

In the early 1930's there were only a handful of arrangers who had been called to Hollywood with the sudden popularity of "sound" in motion pictures and the making of a number of musical pictures to meet that popularity. Until 1937 there had been no unified effort by the arrangers in their behalf, although the Federation, which was feeling its way in the new medium of recording soundtrack for films, had recognized the orchestrator and arranger as an important part of the musical retinue of motion pictures. (It wasn't until May 23, 1939 that the important "soundtrack agreement" was signed and the arranger, unfortunately, was not included in it.) The "get whatever price you can" attitude had resulted in some of the arrangers demanding "five dollar minimum" which several of the "name" arrangers had agreed upon, but other arrangers were settling on a flat fee per arrangement, which many times came out at only a dollar or two per page. It was difficult to foresee the tremendous problems and entanglements for the arranger and composer which would evolve out of the growing fields of radio, sound films and recordings due to the existing copyright laws and the future re-use of arrangements and compositions. A very deplorable situation was developing and it followed logically that the arrangers with vision and foresight would have to band together and go to the Musicians' Union for aid and protection, *as arrangers!*

As far back as 1921, Charles Maxwell had tried to organize the arrangers in New York City but with no success. Again in 1933, Leo Arnaud, Murry Cutter and Charles Haggett had tried to form an arrangers' society in

New York, but it was stopped cold by the Jack Rosenberg regime which thought the arrangers were trying to begin a new guild or union. Such was not the case, as was later proved in October, 1937, when a group of Hollywood arrangers, namely, Wayne Allen, Ray Heindorf, John Leipold, Charles Maxwell and Leonid Raab approached J. W. Gillette for help and co-operation in forming an arrangers' society . . . a social organization of arrangers who would meet together to discuss their wants and problems . . . and inform the Federation of their needs.

The group received the blessings of Local 47, Gillette and Joe Weber (then President of the Federation), and the idea of a society for arrangers spread rapidly and interested all the men working in motion pictures. (Radio in Hollywood was still in its infancy with most of the large shows emanating from the East). The most earnest of the arrangers spent a couple of months working on a plan; and on January 13, 1938, the AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MUSIC ARRANGERS was officially founded with the following stated aims:

- . . . to further the progress of our art.
- . . . to gain greater recognition of our work.
- . . . to establish a closer bond among members of our professions.
- . . . to provide opportunity for social discussion and analysis of our work.
- . . . to promote a mutual understanding with our contemporaries; and,
- . . . to work toward the fulfillment of the co-ordinate needs of all our members.

The first elected President of ASMA was Robert Russell Bennett; Vice-Presidents Adolph Deutsch and Hugo Friedhofer and Secretary-Treasurer John Leipold. A very ambitious program was outlined and much enthusiasm expressed towards its fulfillment. By May 17, 1938 a Constitution and By-Laws had been drawn up and legally executed. Stressing cooperation with the AFM, the Society incorporated Article VI of its Constitution as follows:

"Nothing in the Constitution or By-Laws of the American Society of Music Arrangers shall be construed or applied in

any manner that would compel any member to violate his obligation to the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS."

Many of the original members have taken prominent places as arrangers, composers and conductors in radio, motion pictures and dance bands.

Following is a list of the Charter Members:

Allen, Wayne	Leipold, John M.
Anthens, Bill	McKay, Arthur
Arnaud, Leo	Marquardt, Paul
Bassett, R. H.	Maxwell, Charles
Bassman, George	Mayfield, James
Bennett, Robert Russell	Me tz, Paul
Black, Frank	Miller, Charles
Bradley, Scott	Mills, Felix
Bradshaw, Charlie	Moquin, Albert
Buttroph, David	Moraweck, Lucien Alfred
Cailliet, Lucien	Morgan, Stephen
Cascales, John	Murphy, Spud
Chamberlain, Roy	Nussbaum, Joe
Cokayne, A. H.	Ocnoff, Eddy
Cutner, Sidney	Osborne, George A.
Cutter, Murray	Parrish, George
Deutsch, Adolph	Plumb, Edward
Dubin, Jos. S.	Powell, E. B.
Duncan, Ted	Phillips, Andrew
Eggert, Charles	Raab, Leonid
Erdody, Leo	Raksin, David
Fiorito, Ted	Reese, Max
Freeman, Ned	Roder, Milan
Frey, Fran	Ross, Edmund
Friedhofer, Hugo	Sainger, Conrad
Gerstenberger, Emil	Satterfield, Tom
Glover, Joe	Scharf, Walter
Gordon, Robert	Schrager, Rudolph
Grant, Chas.	Sharpe, Lyle E.
Green, Johnny	Shuken, Leo
Hallenbeck, Ralph A., Jr.	Skiles, Marlin
Halley, Glenn	Smith, Frank M.
Halmy, Lou	Smith, Paul
Hand, Herman	Sodeburg, William
Harline, Leigh	Spencer, Herbert
Harrington, Ray	Stark, Frederick
Hatch, Bill	Taylor, Herbert
Hatley, Marvin	Taylor, Robert
Heglin, Wally	Terry, Dave
Heindorf, Ray	Torbett, Dave
Henderson, Charles	Vaughan, Clifford
Hubbell, Frank	Virgil, Jack
Hubble, Harriss	Ward, Arthur
Huxley, Carroll	Weber, John R.
Jackson, Howard	Wheeler, Clarence
Jenkins, Gordon	Wolcott, Charles
Lange, Arthur	Zweifil, Harold
Leftwich, Vernon	

*In the next issue ASMA President Gilbert will tell of the growth of the Society to double its original size, the formation of the New York Chapter, and some of the problems yet to be solved.*