

# In the MUSIC DEPARTMENT

William Kimmel

Professor H. Wiley Hitchcock, newly elected Chairman of the Music Department, came to Hunter College in the fall of 1961 from the University of Michigan. He is a pianist and musicologist and is well known in the musicological profession for his publications, as well as for his practical efforts to promote and expand musical studies in America.

Critical articles and reviews by Professor Hitchcock appear frequently in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *The Musical Quarterly*, and the Music Library Association's *Notes*. At present he is series editor for a forthcoming nine-volume series of books on the history of music, to be published by Prentice-Hall. The series will consist of single volumes devoted to each of the major periods of music history.

Professor Hitchcock is also a member of the planning committee for an ambitious venture of the Music Library Association known as The American Music History Project, with headquarters at the Library of Congress. Its aim is to produce a comprehensive and definitive history of American music that shall consist not only of a narrative history by competent scholars, but also of the publication of the major documents for such a history, including the musical works themselves, in scores and recordings. This monumental project, long overdue, will result in a major contribution to the study of American history.

In addition to his work in American music history, Professor Hitchcock has done significant research in 17th and 18th century music. Two recent publications are products of this work—*Messe de minuit pour Noël*, a midnight mass for Christmas by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, and a *Miserere* by Leonardo Leo, both published by Concordia. These are two choral works edited from original manuscripts.

*Dr. Kimmel, Professor of Music, conducts a Seminar in Music History and a course in Music Bibliography in the Graduate School of Hunter College.*

Marc-Antoine Charpentier, 1634?-1704, is only now being recognized as a composer of great stature, equal to his eminent contemporary Lully whose questionable monopolistic manipulations of the musical life at the court of Louis XIV frustrated the careers of numerous gifted musicians. The *Midnight Mass* for soloists, mixed chorus, flute, strings, and organ is especially ingratiating in that it is based upon ten early French carols.

Leonardo Leo's setting of Psalm 50 was composed when he was employed in the Royal Chapel in Naples, 1739. It achieved a splendid reputation during the 18th century and was printed twice in the 19th, but has been almost completely neglected until this new and original edition by Professor Hitchcock was printed. It was composed for double chorus and organ and achieves powerful expression through chromatic harmony and constantly varying sonority and color. Leo's style in music achieves an intensity of expression and pathos comparable to that of the Baroque sculptor Bernini.

Professor Louise Talma of the Music Department was on leave of absence from the College during the spring semester in order to attend the première and subsequent performances of her opera *The Alcestiade* in Frankfurt, Germany.

The opera, a musical setting of the play by the eminent American author Thornton Wilder, is a modern version of the legendary tales first given dramatic form by Euripides. Mr. Wilder's play was first written for the Edinburgh Festival and performed there with great success in 1955. It has had numerous other performances in Europe but none in America.

It was in 1955 that Professor Talma and Thornton Wilder met at the MacDowell Colony in Vermont, a meeting in which the idea of a musical version of the drama was conceived. Mr. Wilder recast the play in the form of a libretto and, during the next six years, Professor Talma devoted most of her energy to the composition of the work.

The première performance at the Frankfurt Municipal Theatre on March 1 of this year was a major European musical event. The élite of the musical world was in attendance. All reports describe it as a brilliant performance, stunning for both the eye and the ear. The rôle of Alceste was sung by the Swedish soprano Inge Borkh. Additional performances took place in Frankfurt throughout the season.

It seems regrettable that the work of two major American artists must wait upon the initiative of European producers for its realization in performance. It is to be hoped that Americans may soon have the opportunity to witness performances of both Mr. Wilder's drama and Professor Talma's musical dramatic setting of it.

A member of the Faculty of the School of General Studies in the Music Department, Mr. Steven Kennedy is a well known singer and voice teacher who has won repute here and abroad. He is an honor graduate of the Pittsburgh Musical Institute, with diplomas for piano and voice.

Mr. Kennedy serves on the Executive Board of the New York Singing Teachers Association and also gives private instruction in voice. At Hunter Mr. Kennedy observed the promise shown by one of his students, Margaret Warncke, when she was a sophomore, and felt that her talent would be "well worth developing". It is to her teacher's training that Margaret attributes her good fortune in having been named "Miss New York, 1962". (See Page 21)

