

# Concert-Managing as Catharine Bamman Sees It

"Stand Upon Your Feet and Play the Game" Is the Advice of This Successful Manager—Dependability Is the Biggest Asset a Manager Can Have, She Believes—Keep "Feminine Traits" Out of the Business Field—How She Has Utilized Her Early Training

By MAY STANLEY

SOME people start purposefully in pursuit of a business career, others are pushed into it, and a few drift into it. In the latter category belongs Catharine A. Bamman, known from coast to coast as one of the most successful of concert managers. But Miss Bamman hasn't done any drifting since she decided to be the connecting link between artist and audience. Quite the contrary. To-day she belongs to that envied group of concert managers whose names are synonymous with achievement. There are very few women in this list and I was curious to know how Miss Bamman had "arrived" there.

"Why don't you ask her?" suggested the managing editor.

So I did.

I found her late one afternoon in her delightful offices on Thirty-ninth Street. If you are a local manager or any one of a hundred artists you know them well—those comfortable rooms that have taken on in some indescribable way the attributes of their mistress. They are quiet rooms, with big low chairs. They look restful and genuine.

"No, I don't mind telling you," Miss Bamman smiled, when the question was asked, "although I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. You see, the success that I have had has come by such simple means. I didn't work out any rules or lay down any lines of procedure—I just played the game. I mean that when I decided to manage artists I resolved that if I couldn't win without resorting to 'feminine methods' I wouldn't win at all. You know a lot of women will go along splendidly so long as everything is clear sailing, but when it isn't—well, then they 'break training,' as my athletic brother would say. The hardest thing in the world for a woman to learn is to do without special consideration because she is a woman. When I make mistakes—and I've certainly made my share of them—I expect to stand up and take the result. If it means losing money, then I lose it—but I don't whine and I don't weep and I don't expect *not* to lose it simply because I am a woman. I do not think there is any one asset so valuable as to 'get over' to the people you deal with the fact that you are solidly back of your statements and contracts.

## Utilize Early Training

"There is another thing that I have found out, and that is that all one's early training, no matter how far afield it may seem, can be utilized when one decides on a definite field of work. For example, my art school training has been invaluable to me in designing my advertising. I have learned the value of type faces—I know the things that will be read, and the things that are valueless because they are unattractive or because they do not tell their story quickly or convincingly. My musical training—I sang at one time—was comprehensive. That also has given me an advantage, both with my artists and with local managers.

"When I first came into the field (and, as I said, I drifted in) the demand for chamber music was practically nil. Chamber music to the average concert-goer in the smaller cities meant 'high-brow stuff' and as such was viewed with suspicion. But I couldn't see any reason for giving fine music an unnecessary handicap, so when I finally decided to take the management of the Barrère Ensemble I didn't advertise them as 'chamber music' but as a 'novelty.' You see the difference? People were anxious to hear a novelty. They went and found that they liked it. The managers saw that they did and that, in turn, meant re-engagements.

"I had not the faintest idea of engaging in musical work from the business side, until one day I was talking with



Photo by Maurice Goldberg

Catharine Bamman, One of the Eminently Successful Concert Managers of This Country

Mr. Barrère and he suggested that I take the management of the Ensemble. 'But I don't know anything about managerial work,' I expostulated. 'Oh, well, you'll learn,' was the philosophical reply.

"I remember that one of the first things I did was to take a football guide belonging to my brother and dig out the lists of colleges all over the country. Then I wrote them—in fact, I wrote every organization I ever heard of. It cost Mr. Barrère a small fortune in stamps during that first year, but I got it back for him," she added, with a laugh.

"What do you demand in an artist, Miss Bamman?" I asked. "I mean, what qualifications must an artist possess to interest you in undertaking their management?"

"Distinction, first and foremost," was the prompt reply. "I will not manage an artist or organization in which I have not the most profound confidence. The first thing that the average artist says is this: I know you will want some money at the outset for managing me. How many thousands do you charge? When I tell them that I do not charge anything—that my business is not for sale—they are astounded.

One of the finest things that the National Musical Managers' Association and the Concert Managers' Association are giving us is the opportunity of exposing the evil practices from which the musical world has suffered for years. Fortunately the number is few, and growing smaller each year, but there are still unscrupulous managers who will take every dollar they can get from a would-be concert-giver, knowing at the same time that the man or woman doesn't stand a chance of making good. Publicity is the only thing that will remedy this evil, for the opportunity to give this much needed publicity we have the enterprise and clear vision of Milton Weil to thank. Through these associations—for the formation of which he is directly responsible—we can now air cases of managerial misrepresentation. Nothing in recent years has been devised that can so thoroughly check abuses of which a few managers have been guilty in the past.

"One of the secrets of success in managerial work," Miss Bamman continued—"in fact, I think it the outstanding feature—is a study of the artist's individuality. That is why it is so hard to lay down set rules, for the campaign that would be most effective with the Barrère Ensemble, for example, would be useless in directing the attention of the public to Lucy Gates's qualifications. One must study the artist as painstakingly as he or she studies a piece of music—yet with a difference, for by no chance must the manager look at the world through the artist's eyes.

"The successful artist is of necessity

an egoist, self-centered. A passionate belief in oneself is vital to the interpretative mind. The person who deals with artists and does not recognize this fact is in for trouble. The manager who does not expect to do everything for the art-

Qualifications She Demands In an Artist—"Stage Husband or Stage Mother Greatest Handicap to the Young Artist"—Manager should Avoid Acquiring the Artistic State of Mind—Successful Artist Must Be an Egotist, but Manager Should Learn Self Effacement

worst of all, made the young artist believe that his or her art was perfect, and that the manager was not pushing the artist ahead quickly enough. I recall case after case of this kind—young women whose inexperience or greed of money made them unwilling to work slowly and patiently to build a solid foundation for a career, and almost without exception it is the stage husband or mother who fosters this state of mind. With the young man it's the doting mother who makes the trouble, and the parasitical husband where the woman artist is concerned.

"All things being equal, do you think that the concert field offers a good opening for the woman manager, Miss Bamman?"

"But all things are not equal," she replied. "Naturally men resent encroachment on territory they have considered peculiarly their own. They don't mind a woman entering the field, or even making a moderate success—but a big success is different. And one can't blame them, you know. It is true in every field. The physician is quite willing to have a woman service in the capacity of a trained nurse, but does he approve when she becomes a skilled surgeon? He does not. She's strayed into territory that he considers strictly masculine. On the other hand, the woman of ability is willing to work harder than men, she

## Lines from Miss Bamman's Note Book

*The hardest thing for a woman to learn is to do without special consideration because she is a woman*

*There is no one asset so valuable as to "get over" to the people you deal with the fact that you are solidly back of your promises and statements*

*All one's early training can be utilized when one decides on a definite field of work*

*Distinction is the greatest asset the artist possesses*

*I am delighted when I find loyalty and gratitude in an artist—but I do not expect it*

*The average stage husband or stage mother is the greatest drawback the young artist can have*

*I have always tried to play the game like a man — because they have been at it a long time and they know the rules*

ist—from securing the engagement to putting him on the stage for that especial performance—will not succeed. And the manager must not expect gratitude or loyalty in return for the most successful and painstaking efforts. I do not mean by this that a great many artists are not fine and loyal and grateful, but they are exceptions. The artistic mind takes everything for granted—and it is part of the curious compound which we call the artistic temperament that this should be the case. I am delighted beyond words when I find loyalty and gratitude in an artist—but I do not expect it.

"The manager must learn to submerge his or her personality absolutely. Yes, I know there are a number who, obviously, do not do this—but they have probably found the artistic state of mind contagious."

"What is the greatest drawback of the average artist?" I asked.

"I would say the stage husband and the stage mother," was the ready answer. "Every one of us knows of instances where young artists of exceptional talents have had their opportunities absolutely ruined by some one in the background, some one who constantly talked about the finished art of the person in question, who believed and,

usually puts more into her work than a man does, so it pretty well balances. And, after all, that's the way of life.

"I've learned, on the road, to adjust myself to every conceivable condition; I can count tickets in the box office as fast as the man who makes it his life work; I've learned to meet the local manager and the theater manager and the stage manager on his own ground, in short, I've been willing to learn every angle of my business and then lie awake nights devising ways and means whereby I could do it a little bit better. And I've always remembered to play the game like a man—because they have been at it a long time and they know the rules."

## Ernest Schelling Reported Improving

Ernest Schelling, the pianist, who was severely injured in an automobile accident in Switzerland, as noted recently in MUSICAL AMERICA, has improved to the point of being able to leave the hospital at Glard for his home at Celigny. Lieutenant Matlock of the American army, who accompanied Mr. Schelling, sustained only minor injuries and was able to leave the hospital the day after the accident, but Mr. Schelling broke two ribs and was injured internally so that for a time his life was despaired of.