

1986

The Darius Milhaud Society Newsletter, Vol. 1, Summer 1986

Darius Milhaud Society

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THE DARIUS MILHAUD SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Cleveland, Ohio

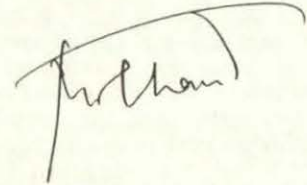
Summer 1986

No. 3

Each work calls for its own special style, which should keep intact the various aspects of its composer's personality. One does not write a quartet like a ballet, a film like a sonata. It is necessary to shape one's inclinations, to think how a ballet must be danced, must obey choreographic demands, that a film must at the same time retain the integrity of its composer, reach a vast untutored public and still keep the score on a level that is often a strict lesson in discipline and humility. A score of theatre music whose necessities clip one's wings and necessitate creating in a few measures a compelling atmosphere requires the same love as the

composition of an opera or of a quartet.

I have no aesthetic, philosophy or theory. I like writing music. I always do it with love, or otherwise I would not do it at all.



MILHAUD FILM FESTIVAL September 4, 1986, marks the occasion of Darius Milhaud's 94th birthday. To herald the start of his 95th year, the Milhaud Society, with the co-sponsorship of Cleveland Cinematheque, will present on Sunday evenings, September 7, 14, and 21, a festival of three films for which Milhaud wrote the music. Two showings of each film, at 7:00 and 9:15 p.m., will take place at the Cleveland Institute of Art, 11141 East Blvd., Cleveland. General admission is \$4.00 for non-members of Cinematheque and \$3.00 for members. Membership cards at \$1.00, good through August 1987, are available at the door. Secured free parking is available in the CIA lot. Entrance is from East Blvd., north of the building. Group rates are also available. Call (216) 921-4548 for reservations and further information.

Dreams That Money Can Buy, in English, showing on September 7, is a surrealist film (1947) directed by Hans Richter and includes art work by Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Alexander Calder. Milhaud wrote the music for the Man Ray segment. The story revolves around a poor young artist who sells dreams to several people, using fulfillment ideas from their subconscious desires. A short-subject curtain-raiser, ***La P'tite Lillie*** (1929), a silent film directed by Cavalcanti, with English sub-titles, will precede ***Dreams That Money Can Buy***. This vintage film about a young girl who wanders down the primrose path has a surprise ending.

On September 14, viewers will see ***The Private Affairs of Bel Ami***, based on a Maupassant story, directed by Albert Lewin (in English, 1947). This film centers around a rogue who charms and dupes everyone he meets. It features an all-star cast, including George Sanders, Angela Lansbury, Ann Dvorak, John Carradine and Warren William.

The September 21 film is ***Madame Bovary*** (1933) from the Flaubert story about Emma and her unhappy love affair. Directed by Jean Renoir, this film is in French with English sub-titles.

A gala champagne birthday celebration for Darius Milhaud will open the film festival on Friday, September 5. The party, from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m., for film festival Patrons (\$25.00 and up), will include a short program of Milhaud's music performed by the New Cleveland Chamber Players. For reservations, call 921-4548.

The Cleveland film festival is the first of many events planned to commemorate Milhaud's 95th birth year. The Milhaud Society plans an itinerary calendar for an informal national festival of Milhaud's music, through 1987 and the summer of 1988. Festival planning is underway in several states. Friends of the Darius Milhaud Society will be informed of events in advance when possible.

DARIUS MILHAUD AWARD David Wolfson, graduating composition major at The Cleveland Institute of Music, has received the first Darius Milhaud Award. Presented during commencement exercises on May 17, 1986, with a special citation read by CIM President David Cerone, the Award is a new prize funded by the Milhaud Society to recognize an unusually creative student with a record of academic excellence, a high degree of sensitivity and expressiveness, and exceptional accomplishment in the major field.

The Milhaud Award was established as the result of a benefit concert at John Carroll University on October 6, 1985, presented by the Dave Brubeck Quartet with the assistance of the University Circle Chorale, Gilbert M. Brooks, Director. The Cleveland Institute of Music was chosen to be repository for the Award because of Milhaud's associations with the school. In 1967, CIM presented Milhaud with an honorary doctorate, and the premiere performance of his Quartet Op. 417, for piano, violin, viola and cello. In 1981, CIM held a festival of the composer's works.

Award recipient, David Wolfson, a Cincinnati native, initially enrolled in Case Western Reserve University on a Proctor and Gamble National Merit Scholarship as a double major in physics and music. A year later, he was accepted as a composition major at The Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied under Eugene O'Brien, Marshall Griffith, Larry Baker and John Rinehart in composition, and James Tannenbaum in piano. While at CIM he performed with The Institute's Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Noteworthy among Wolfson's CIM activities have been his organization of a series of seminars for performance majors on the preparation and presentation of contemporary music and the debut of the Performance Ensemble, a group dedicated to the performance of works combining music, theater and dance, of which he is a founding member.

Several of Wolfson's compositions have been performed at CWRU's Mather Dance Center, and he was music director of the Youtheatre at the Cleveland Play House for three-and-a-half years. He also served as assistant musical director for three of the regular season productions of the Play House. Other musical theatre direction credits include the Huron Playhouse, Greenbrier Theatre, Cuyahoga Community College-Metro Theatre Department and Cain Park.

* * * * *

The Darius Milhaud Society thanks Frank Caputo, Eric Gordon and Michael Blume for information. The Society also extends warmest gratitude to Ruth Lamm, Nana Landgraf, Martha Schlosser and Lucile Soulé for editorial assistance.

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AMERICAN PERFORMANCES OF OPERAS AND DANCE

Dominican College Students At Dominican College in San Rafael, California, it is an annual tradition to present a challenging and unusual spring opera production. On April 11 and 12, students there performed two Milhaud chamber operas, *Le Pauvre Matelot (The Poor Sailor)* and *Fiesta*, as well as two sections of the capella work, *Cantique du Rhône*. Although both opera narratives focus on sailors, and though both feature tragedy and a strong ironic touch that is characteristically French, there is contrast in the emphasis of the two works. Thus, they make an excellent pair to present in one evening.



Le Pauvre Matelot/Lucy Wheeler and Robert Merenda

Jean Cocteau's libretto for *Le Pauvre Matelot* portrays the legend of the long-absent husband who returns home after many years to a long-faithful wife, who kills him, not knowing who he is, with the mistaken idea that she is helping her spouse by so doing. Milhaud uses sea chanteys evocatively, and in the preludes to the second and third acts, musically foreshadows coming dramatic events. There are subtle syncopations, imaginative use of percussion, and the sense of full, rich, orchestral sound effected with only thirteen instruments. The small cast consists of the sailor, the wife, her father and a friend. The use of limited forces makes this 1927 work readily accessible in terms of production.



Steve Saxon as Nuñez in *Fiesta*

Fiesta, from 1958, with libretto by Boris Vian, requires a larger cast of ten singers and an orchestra of sixteen. The opening scene presents three lazy drunkards who reflect attitudes of their social class and who also provide many comic touches. The mood changes dramatically from harmless fooling to serious concern when a castaway is sighted struggling to shore. In spite of the castaway's strong will to live, he is caught in a triangle of love and jealousy which leads to his death. Although his lover's compassion, enticement, and finally grief seem genuine, she is soon disposed to return to her former lover, who has killed the castaway, and so life goes on. The practical reality provides the supreme irony. In this opera, strong rhythmic contrasts, dance-like syncopations, and effective duets, trios and choral sections provide compelling textures and charming variety. The keening wail of the piccolo, the serio-comic song of the old sailor, the comic antics provided vocally and visually by the drunkards, the tale told by the castaway and the taunting by the little boy all offer a rich, varied, musical and visual experience.

Fidelity to the score and vocal excellence marked the performance of both operas. Stage deportment was appropriate, as were the colorful costumes. The sensitive acting of the sailor's wife and the fine characterization by the sailor were particularly effective. Lighting and staging were simple and practical to underscore the macabre and the bizarre in *Le Pauvre Matelot*, and to enhance contrasting moods in *Fiesta*. Each opera was conducted by a graduating master's candidate, and both Patricia Mason and Paul Rhodes handled their duties capably. Professor Martin Frick served as Artistic Director and conducted the excerpts from *Cantique du Rhône*.

Bold Lion Production of *Medea* The newly formed Bold Lion Opera Company ambitiously chose Milhaud's *Medée* for their debut production, presented on May 16 at North Park College in Chicago. The Company is directed by Richard Boldrey, Assistant Conductor at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, also Maestro for the Bergonzi Festival in Busseto, Italy, from 1983 to 1985. Boldrey and his actress-pianist wife Polly Liontis, founded the Company and collaborated on the production of *Medée*, translating the opera into English for this Midwest premiere. (*Medée* was produced at Mills College in 1963 and has also been performed at the Manhattan School of Music.)

Medée, written in 1938 and premiered in Anvers on October 7, 1939, was the last performance Milhaud attended in Paris, on May 6, 1940, before he and his family fled the impending Nazi occupation of France for the United States during World War II. Just as this is one of the most dramatic of Greek tragedies, Milhaud's opera, with libretto by Madeleine Milhaud, is one of his most gripping scores. Highly dramatic and yet lyrical too, Milhaud's music audibly delineates and differentiates the characters of the actors. Subtle nuances reflect the speech rhythms and emphases of the text, extending even to Medea's vacillations between rationality and madness. This demanding role requires a singer who is vocally secure, flexible, and especially sensitive in projecting the conflict of emotions which beset this ill-fated woman. The scene of Creusa's death and the grief of Jason

AMERICAN PERFORMANCES (continued)

over the loss of his children present visual and musical climaxes of high passion. Throughout is an elemental, primordial power reflecting not only Milhaud's centuries-old Mediterranean and Jewish heritage but also his unerring feel for universal human tragedy. At the same time, in Milhaud's skilled hands this particular tale of the fury of a woman scorned seems quintessentially French. Here is the epitome of the grand-opera ideal of enhancing the drama through the music. Nothing is extraneous; the focus on essential events results in a strong distillation of unrelieved tragedy.

The Medea story provides exceptional musical and dramatic opportunities for all five main characters. The professional cast capably met the demands of their roles: Lauren Miller, Medea — Lisa Lutter, Creusa — Eugene Bender, Jason — Robert Hovencamp, Creon — and Joy Graham, the nurse. Conducting from the piano, Boldrey projected many of the nuances and colorations of an orchestra. Ms. Lontis as Stage Director made imaginative use of set and properties. Simple and practical staging involved two classic framing arches, one set, and lighting blackouts to serve as curtain. Costumes by Susan Loday and lighting by Karl Stephan underscored the intended effect. Boldrey and Lontis working in close collaboration, achieved a fine balance of all elements.



L'Homme et son Desir: Patricia Brandt, Susan Evert, and Tom Evert

L'Homme et son Desir at Lake Erie College *L'Homme et son Desir* (*Man and his Desire*), Op. 48, was the first of Milhaud's ballets, written in 1918 during his sojourn with Paul Claudel in Brazil. It was first produced in Paris in 1921 at the Théâtre Champs Elysées, danced by the Swedish Ballet. Milhaud, Claudel, and Audrey Parr (wife of the British consul), who designed costumes for the original production, met regularly on weekends at Petrópolis to collaborate on their idea to reproduce the exotic atmospheres of the Brazilian forest with its luxuriant foliage, colorful inhabitants, and multitudinous unique sounds.

The score is both highly polytonal and complexly polymetric and polyrhythmic; at one moment there are thirteen discernible different rhythms sounding together. In the dream sequence, the form derives from the texture. The instrumental ensemble includes a quartet of vocalists who sing without words, a string quartet, two groups of percussion, and two instrumental quartets: one of woodwinds (piccolo, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet), the other a mix of oboe, trumpet, harp and contrabass. These are to be stationed on either side of the stage on three levels. Thus Milhaud was using spatial concepts for music in 1918, long before general use of stereophonic and quadrasonic sound. (Antecedent for the concept

includes Giovanni Gabrieli in late 16th century Venice.) There are imitations and double counterpoint, inversions and crab canons, all subtly woven into varied contrapuntal and rhythmic textures. Musically this mirrors Claudel's idea of having dancers on the third level, representing the moon and clouds, reflected on stage level by dancers who duplicate the patterns exactly. The symbolism includes not only reflection but also the representation of heaven and earth. Claudel's scenario for the ballet describes this "plastic poem" as portraying one night in which the deep colors of the forest envelop the stage and the dancers. The stage is conceived vertically. Between the sky above and the waters of the primeval swamp below, Man, who has been robbed of Name and Countenance by Night and Sleep, is the principal character.

Lake Erie College in Painesville, Ohio, presented performances of this significant ballet on May 17 and 18. Patricia Brandt, Susana Evert, and Tom Evert, former principal dancer with the Paul Taylor Dance Company, danced the lead roles. Although the four levels visualized by Claudel for the dancers and the three by Milhaud for the musicians were not able to be realized, a portion of the dance employed a stairway on which four levels of dancing occurred. Many ideas expressed in Claudel's text were suggested in the dance; performers represented the Hours, the Moon, Memory, Illusion, Desire, Lust, and their interaction with Man. Man's relationship with the external world and his reaction to his own thoughts were expressed, as well as his struggle to relate the past to the present and to accommodate the future.

The choreography, by Assistant Professor of Dance Patricia Brandt, sensitively reflected the textures of the music. The action unfolded logically, and the symbolisms were almost always clear. With costumes by Fran Blau and Allyson Clemence, lighting by James Irwin, and set design by Daniel J. P. Walsh, the result was a complex, rich, absorbing panorama of light, color, movement and sound.

MILHAUD CONCERT IN CHARLESTON As a special event on the Piccolo Spoleto concert series, a program of Milhaud's music was presented on Sunday, May 25, 1986 at Temple Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina. Works heard were *Quatre Chansons de Ronsard*, Op. 223 (1940), *Deux Poèmes de Cendrars*, Op. 113 (1930, 1932), *Chants Populaires Hébraïques*, Op. 86 (1925), and *La Création du Monde*, Op. 83 (1923). Music Director David Stahl of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra conducted *La Création du Monde*, with the participation of eighteen selected orchestra members. Margaret Kelley Cook, soprano, sang *Quatre Chansons de Ronsard*, and Mark Hilton, tenor, performed *Chants Populaires Hébraïques*. Both were accompanied at the piano by Frances Trapales. The eight member a cappella vocal ensemble for *Deux Poèmes de Cendrars* was conducted by Samuel Sheffer, program coordinator for the concert.

NOW AVAILABLE ON RECORDINGS: All Eighteen Milhaud String Quartets

Announcement in the March-April issue of the Music Library Association newsletter of the recently completed professional recording in four volumes of all eighteen of Darius Milhaud's string quartets has resulted in orders for the quartets and new members for the Milhaud Society. The records, made by the Arcana and Aquitaine Quartets and produced by Cybelia in France, are available in music shops and from the distributor, Qualiton Imports, Ltd., 39-28 Crescent Street, Long Island City, New York 11101. These recordings will shortly be available also on compact discs.

EUROPEAN PERFORMANCES

World Premiere of *Le Cycle de la Création* One of Milhaud's earliest Biblical works, incidental music for the play, *Le Cycle de la Création*, Op. 139, was written in 1934 to a text by Dom Luigi Sturzo. An Italian priest and founder of the Social Democratic Party in Italy, Sturzo was forced to flee the country for his own safety prior to World War II. He had earlier asked Milhaud to set his text to music, and he brought the manuscript to Paris from his refuge in London. Although Milhaud completed the music with his customary speed and efficiency, the increasing turbulence of the following years, along with Sturzo's exile, contributed to the impossibility of producing it at the time. Finally, over fifty years later, the successful world premiere was given in Rome at the Quirinale on May 21, 1986, by the orchestra and chorus of Radio al Italia (RAI), conducted by Moshe Atzmon, with Cecilia Gasdia, soprano. Madame Milhaud attended the performance and was seated beside the President of the Italian Senate, Francesco Cossigi, also a Social Democrat.

Holland Festival Features Milhaud Program On Wednesday, June 4, 1986, Madame Madeleine Milhaud was in Amsterdam to perform as *écitante* in the *Cantate de l'Enfant et de la Mère*, Op. 185 (1938), written for her by Milhaud, to poetry by Maurice Carême. The concert, organized by the Holland Festival, was presented in the *Kleine Zaal* of the *Concertgebouw*. Other Milhaud works on the program included the *Third String Quartet*, Op. 32 (1916), *Adieu*, Op. 410 (1964), and the *Suite de Concert de la Création du Monde*, Op. 81b (1926), which is the version of this music for piano and string quartet. Soprano soloist in the *Third String Quartet* and *Adieu* was Marjanne Kweksilber. Other performers included the Mondrian String Quartet, Leonore Pameijer, flute, Ernestine Stoop, harp, and Stanley Hoogland, piano.

TWO "UNKNOWN" STRING QUARTETS

Extract by Paul Cherry of a paper delivered at the University of Colorado, Boulder, on April 5, 1985 and published in the *Report on the Proceedings on the Ph.D. in Music*, Ed. William Kearns, Boulder: University of Colorado, 1986. Dr. Cherry is Professor of Music at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion.

Milhaud regarded his eighteen string quartets composed between 1912 and 1951 as a completed cycle, and he did not write again in this genre for the next twenty years. Then, in 1971 and 1973, he composed two more string quartets which are almost unknown even to those most interested in his music.

The first of these "unknown" quartets, *Hommage à Igor Stravinsky*, Op. 435, is a complex sixteen-measure canon dedicated to Stravinsky's memory. Written in 1971, the work was one of seventeen composed in honor of Stravinsky at the request of David Drew, Editor of the English journal *Tempo*. Milhaud based his epitaph on Stravinsky's double canon, *Raoul Dufy in Memoriam*, composed in 1959. Milhaud borrows the idea of the setting for string quartet and of canonic imitation and rhythmic complexity from the Stravinsky work, but there is no further similarity.

Milhaud's score, published in *Tempo*, No. 98 (1972), employs a single canon in inversion which occurs between the cello and the first violin. The second violin has a free part marked *choral*, and the viola has a virtuoso part marked at a faster tempo so that it moves 25 per cent faster than the other parts. Over the centuries, composers have employed their best compositional artifices when composing epitaphs for their departed colleagues. Milhaud's display of complex contrapuntal and rhythmic devices is his tribute to the master composer Igor Stravinsky.

Thèmes liturgiques du Comtat-Venaissin, composed in 1973, is based on Jewish melodies once sung in the Comtat-Venaissin, an area in southeastern France near Aix-en-Provence, Milhaud's childhood home. The Jews in the Comtat-Venaissin were primarily Sephardic, but they had developed their own language, a mixture of Hebrew and Provençal, and had their own Synagogue rite, differing in some of its texts and rituals from normal Sephardic traditions. This sect of Jews was exterminated by the Nazis during World War II, and their unique dialect and liturgy were lost. However, some of their melodies survive in a rare collection that was published in 1887 under the title *Chants Hébraïques Comtadins*. Milhaud owned a copy of this book and selected ten melodies from it as source material for his *Etudes*, but he did not identify the melodies or *Chants Hébraïques* as their source. The *Etudes* is cast in three movements, with the melodies from *Chants Hébraïques* arranged so that they constitute a Mahzor, or cycle of festive prayers as practiced by the Jews in the Comtat-Venaissin. The first movement employs melodies that represent the three major Pilgrimage Festivals of the Jewish year: The Feast of Tabernacles, Passover and Pentecost. The final movement uses melodies that represent the Sabbath and which complete the cycle by returning to Rosh Hashanah. Milhaud's *Etudes* is a fitting tribute to his own Jewish faith and to the lost Jews of the Comtat-Venaissin who nurtured it in his youth.

WINNER OF MILHAUD PRIZE WINS AGAIN Word has been received from France that Véronique Pelissero, First Prize winner in the Darius Milhaud Competition in Marseille last November, has just won the competition at the National Conservatory in Paris, held in June. Mlle. Pelissero is a piano student of Yvonne Loriod at the Paris Conservatory. Members of the jury included Grant Johannesen, former President of The Cleveland Institute of Music. Mlle. Pelissero will perform the *First Sonata for Violin and Piano*, Op. 3 (1911), in Aix-en-Provence this summer. The violinist won 1st prize in violin during the June competition at the National Conservatory.

MA VIE HEUREUSE REPRINTED

Ma Vie Heureuse, Darius Milhaud's autobiography extending to 1972, published by Belfond in Paris (1973), is being put back into print. It should be ready at the publisher's in October or November. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the book should write to the Darius Milhaud Society as soon as possible, and your request will be sent to Paris, to ensure printing of sufficient copies to meet the demand.

MILHAUD POSTER AVAILABLE

Ursula Korneitchouk, Assistant to the Director of the Cleveland Institute of Art, designed a beautiful poster featuring the 1985 French Europa stamp honoring Darius Milhaud, to announce the Dave Brubeck benefit concert given for the Darius Milhaud Society on October 6, 1985. The poster lettering is white on a reverse field of dark bright blue. A few copies are available as a memento souvenir for \$10.50 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling. The poster measures sixteen by twenty-two inches. Send your address with your check or money order made out to the Darius Milhaud Society, and your poster will be sent to you.

AMERICAN PERFORMANCES (COMING EVENTS)

California

San Francisco/*Concerto for Percussion and Small Orchestra*, Op. 109, Barry Jekowsky, percussion, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Eric Leinsdorf, conductor, October 30, 31 and November 1, 1986.

Ohio

Akron/*La Création du Monde*, Akron Symphony Orchestra, Alan Balter, conductor, March 28, 1987.

Cleveland/*Suite d'après Corrette*, Op. 161b, *Pastorale*, Op. 147, *La Cheminée du Roi René*, Op. 205, New Cleveland Chamber Players, September 5, 1986.

Darius Milhaud Film Festival, September 7-21. (See article, page 1.)

South Dakota

Vermillion/*Sonatine* for clarinet and piano, Op. 100, Paul Cherry, clarinet, Larry Scully, piano, University of South Dakota, fall 1986.



Lauren Miller as Medea in The Bold Lion's production of *Médée*. (See article, pages 2-3.)

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EUROPEAN CALENDAR OF PERFORMANCES

Holland

Amsterdam 1985: Concert performance of opera, *Christophe Colomb*.

June 4, 1986: *Cantate de l'Enfant et de la Mère*, Op. 185, Madeleine Milhaud *récitante*

Third String Quartet, Op. 32, *Adieu*, Op. 410, for voice, flute, viola and harp; and *Suite de Concert de la Création du Monde*, Op. 83b for piano and string quartet. (See article, page 4.)

Italy

Rome, May 21, 1986: World Premiere of *Le Cycle de la Création*, Op. 139. (See article, page 4.)

Venice, May 1986: *La Création du Monde and Le Boeuf sur le Toit*.

West Germany

Wiesbaden, May 1986: *Scaramouche*, Op. 165c for saxophone and orchestra, Detlev Benschman, saxophone.

France

Aix-en-Provence, Summer 1986: *Première Sonate* pour violon et piano, Op. 3, Véronique Pelissero, piano. (See article, page 4.)

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STONE HELD BY DAVID CERONE David Cerone, President of The Cleveland Institute of Music, proudly displays on his desk in his office at The Institute a beautiful polished stone, sent to him by Madame Madeleine Milhaud after her 1985 visit to Cleveland. The stone was given to Milhaud by Ernest Bloch. The two composers had visited one another in Oregon during 1961 while Milhaud was there for the premiere of his *Tenth Symphony*, written for the Portland Orchestra. The gift to CIM is symbolic as well as sentimental, since Ernest Bloch was the first President of The Institute, from 1920 until 1925.

READERS RESPOND Readers have written to challenge a statement made in the Winter 1986 Milhaud Society newsletter. Among prominent 20th century composers, the six string quartets by Bartok are not the upper quantitative limit except for the eighteen by Milhaud. Shostakovich wrote fifteen string quartets, Hindemith seven. Although less well-known, Peter Sculthorpe of Australia has written nine. The paucity of major names and numbers still amply demonstrates that string quartet writing is uncommon in the 20th century, and that to compose a major body of quartet works is rare indeed.

The Darius Milhaud Society welcomes your comments and suggestions, as well as information on all Milhaud-related events. Please let us hear from you.

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