

# Mary Howe, Independent Composer

By Estelle Sharpe

Composer Mary Howe says she has "one foot in the future and one in the past."

During her 28 years as a composer she has given allegiance to no school of composition—modern or otherwise. "If I want to use dissonance, I use dissonance," she says. "If I want to express feeling, I express feeling. I write what I want to write."

The National Symphony Orchestra honored Mrs. Howe by presenting a program of her works last Sunday at Lisner Auditorium.

Pursuing her independent course, Mrs. Howe has achieved international recognition.

Compositions by Mary Howe have been played in Europe, Central and South America, as well as in the United States and Canada. Recently the Voice of America recorded her orchestral version of "Spring Pastoral," as part of its program to transmit to European audiences the "best and most representative aspects" of the contemporary American cultural scene.

Mrs. Howe lives with her husband, Walter Bruce Howe, in a dignified old house at 1821 H st., n.w. The former Mary Carlisle, she was born in Richmond, Va., and—after the family moved north—made her debut in Washington.

As Miss Carlisle, she studied piano with Richard Burmeister in Europe and with Ernest Hutcheson and Harold Randolph, duo pianists. She was an apt pupil, later appearing with major symphony orchestras in a duo piano team with Anne Hull. (Two grand pianos still stand in the Howe music room.)

But not until after her marriage and the birth of her three children, did Mrs. Howe first turn to composing.

She began studying with Gustav Strube of Baltimore, later earned a diploma in composition from the Peabody Conservatory of Music and studied informally with Nadia Boulanger.

Mrs. Howe writes for full orchestra, chamber orchestra, two-pianos, ensembles and solo voices and instruments.

She "can't give a recipe" for her composing technique, because "things happen differently." Perhaps a piece of folk music gives her an inspiration. "It is almost always a poetic circumstance that gives you those ideas," she says.

Mary Howe sets no schedule for her writing stints. She may work five to six hours daily over her scores when she spends August at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N. H. She can rip off a short song in half a day, she says, provided the whole idea comes at once to her. But a tone poem, which may cover a manuscript of 40 pages, is quite another matter. "There's a rough copy, then corrections,

then a clean copy—the general complaint is that composers charge things too much," she says.

As mother of three and grandmother of five, Mrs. Howe has a ready-made plan for teaching music appreciation — "listening, listening, listening."

"If a child is exposed a lot to good music, for instance, folk music, he will grow to like it," she says.

Mrs. Howe holds quite a brief for folk music, which she states has had "a great influence" on the music of most countries.

She likes "many, many" modern composers — among them Aaron Copland and Gian Carlo Menotti and Paul

Creston. She considers Louise Talma, several of whose works were played recently at the Library of Congress, "a very talented young woman."

"Women composers should be played more than they are," asserts Mrs. Howe. "I don't think conductors have a prejudice against women composers now. But no one puts women writers or women painters in a class any more, and they still do so with women composers."

She looked back at her own personal history. "I know I considered it a handicap to be a woman, when I started composing. I'm not a feminist. But I think I would have gotten along faster if I'd been a man."

## On the Calendar

QUITE FITTING and proper for the holiday mood is the club schedule for the **Woman's Club of Chevy Chase, Md.** The first club division to meet in the New Year is the social section, which plans an evening of dinner, cards and dancing, January 3, 7 p. m. at the clubhouse.

DOWN GOES the welcome mat at the **Chapter House Corporation of the DAR.** It's there for the organization's open house, December 29, 2 to 4:30 p. m. Mrs. Frank P. Litschert is general chairman, assisted by Mrs. Clyde M. Hamblin, Mrs. George D. Nolan, Mrs. Frank Hickey and Miss Grace Parkhurst.

RED AND GREEN have re-

placed the old red white and blue in the affections of the **Mount Vernon Society, D. C. Children of the American Revolution.** The CARs will hold a Christmas ball, December 29 at the Hotel 2400, with Mrs. Charles Carroll Haig, national president, CAR, heading the receiving line. Members of other CAR societies in the area have been invited.

A "WINTER WHIRL" for boy and girl will begin December 27 at 8:30 p. m. in the **Eig Auditorium of B'nai Israel Temple.** It's a dance sponsored by **B'nai Israel Young People's Group.** The dance, which will last until midnight, will include entertainment and refreshments.

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