

DEATH OF FRANZ LEHAR

MEMBERS of the older generation particularly will have learned with regret of the death, near Salzburg on October 24, of the Hungarian composer Franz Lehar, at the age of 78. His name recalls the gracious days of the programme-balls, once so popular in New Zealand, and dancing to such famous waltzes as those from *The Merry Widow* and *The Count of Luxemburg*.

Lehar started his musical life studying violin and theory, but on the advice of Dvorak he took up composition. His greatest success—and it remains one of the greatest of all light opera successes—was *The Merry Widow*, which was first presented at the Theater-an-der-Wien in 1905 and later ran to the ends of the earth. The next season it was produced in America and had more than 5,000 performances. It was played more than 1,000 times in London, Vienna, Berlin and Paris, and in Buenos Aires it ran simultaneously in five theatres in five different languages.

In 1924 Lehar formed a strong friendship with Richard Tauber, who died at the beginning of this year. Lehar com-



FRANZ LEHAR

posed for him the operettas *Paganini*, *Frederica*, and *The Land of Smiles*. His works also include composition in absolute forms such as sonatas, several symphonic poems, marches, and dances.

A recorded version of *The Merry Widow* will be broadcast from 3YA at 8.25 p.m. on November 20.

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bright clothes. First come, first hung, but when a young Frenchman turned up from Paris, it is said, an English artist took down some of his pictures and gave him room.

WOMEN'S compacts decorated with small Van Gogh reproductions are not new. Now it has occurred to someone to design hats after the headgear worn in famous paintings. A display in London the other day included a black felt hat with a small brim, trimmed with green feathers, after Renoir's "Head of a Woman," and the *Manchester Guardian* says it was "perfectly wearable to-day." Even Picasso was represented by a green pierrot hat with an upturned brim.

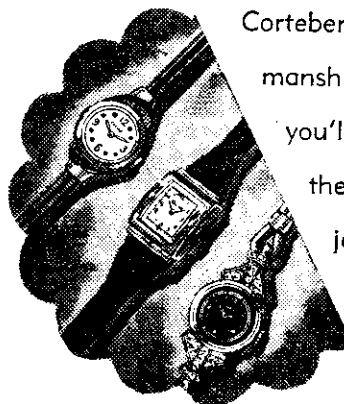
IN the end, this story leads back to the Arts Council, which has lately opened in its headquarters building in St. James's Square, near Piccadilly, a gallery where small special collections are to be shown free of charge, and open till 8.0 p.m. on two nights of the week. The room is extraordinarily beautiful—parquet flooring, graceful plaster moulding painted in an off-white shade of which the pigment is mauve, and graced with magnificent yellow curtains beside the windows.

The first exhibition was one of drawings by old masters from the collection of the Earl of Leicester, Holkham Hall, (and this may suggest the same idea to some of the other owners of master-

pieces who can no longer look after them). The second, now open, is a collection of 55 lithographs by Picasso. Picasso, when he was last exhibited in England (by the Arts Council, three years ago) started a storm. Now he is again being "foisted upon the public." He was first introduced to England, by the way, in 1911, by John Middleton Murry and Michael Sadleir, who started a quarterly magazine called *Rhythm*, and printed a study by Picasso in the first number, and several more drawings in later numbers; they were attacked at the time. Storms and rages blew up in 1945, although that seemed rather late in the day. Now there are these lithographs, all done between 1945 and 1947, and a good many of them done on "Dimanche." They cover a wide range of Picasso's own diversity, some reproducing the style and texture of Spanish cave drawings, some (like the owl squatting on a chair) returning to cubism, and some using the technique of the phone-box doodler, but to considerably better effect. Some (mostly illustrations to Buffon—shells, birds, beasts, and flowers) are frankly naturalistic and romantic. And two or three centaur-variants are very risible. Eric Newton has written of them, and he fastened on to the fact that so many were done on Sunday—like a man solving the crossword puzzle while the dinner is cooling. If it is true that they don't carry Picasso's full force, that may be why there has been no howling and raging so far at the State's patronage of them.

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