

MARDI GRAS

Chicago Symphony Orchestra 28-29 March 1924

Program Notes

"Mardi Gras" is one of five works—another of the five was Edward Collins' "1914"—which were selected by George W. Chadwick, Henry Hadley, and Gustave Strube from among some forty-seven score submitted in the Chicago North Shore Festival competition for performance at the public rehearsal held in the Northwestern University Gymnasium, May 26, 1923, and from which they chose the work winning the prize of \$1000. Frederick Stock was the conductor.

Concerning the musical significance of "Mardi Gras" its composer has supplied the following for the purposes of this program:

As the title indicates, the piece is boisterous and bizarre by turns, with now and then a romantic or even serious moment this latter the constant companion of wild frivolity. It begins wildly in the spirit of carnival, with cellos and horns shouting forth the main theme to a fiery accompaniment by the violins, trumpets and higher woodwinds. This theme is repeated by the full orchestra, and then suddenly gives way to subsidiary fragments.

The arrival of the enormous masks and the clowns on stilts is accompanied by the strings playing *col legno* (i.e., playing with the wooden part of their bows) and the hoarse notes of muted trumpets and the querulous tones of high woodwinds. Occasionally there is a loud guffaw in the brass.

The final coda is the whole work 'boiled down.' Fragments of the entire thematic material are tossed back and forth until the wild scene reaches a culmination in a fanfare of trumpets sounding above the full orchestra. At this moment the carnival royalty arrives, thousands of colored streamers are thrown from upper windows, the air becomes thick with confetti, and lurid lights play upon the fantastic floats and the grotesque costumes of the revelers.

~ Edward [Joseph] Collins