



The Lively Arts

By R. P. HARRISS
Art, Music and Drama Editor

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Of Toulouse-Lautrec And Seyffert, and a Sidewalk Cafe



SEYFFERT—Detail from self-portrait.

Thanks to the manure a horsey squire supplied, roses are blooming in my garden. Thanks to Dr. Ossman and liberal portations of unprescribed hot grog, my horrible cold is better.

(It was a prodigious cold, requiring a bottle of Chivas Regal and a half-pint of honey just making cough syrup to supplement for the pertussin. As for the grog, it proved exceptionally efficacious a bottle of Martell Cordon Bleu having been mistakenly used instead of the California brandy intended. With hot tea nights and mornings, it helped make the season of sniffles bearable if not actually enjoyable.)

And thanks to activities in the city's creative and performing arts citadels, events are springing up like the grass in my garden that keeps threatening to become a bumper hay crop. An especially pleasant event was the opening last week at the Baltimore Museum's downtown branch, at Charles and Redwood Streets, of a substantial exhibition of posters by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

It began with quite a flourish. Outdoor cafe tables were set up alongside the Redwood Street windows of the old Hansahaus where the Museum Downtown is now located, with French pastry and coffee available, while an Estelle Dennis troupe performed the can-can immortalized in the music of Offenbach and in some of the most famous of the posters on view.

A less public event, though it is open to visitors, is an exhibition of portraiture by Leopold Seyffert, 1887-1957, in the office of the president of the Maryland Institute — in the handsome white marble palazzo on Bolton Hill, where the paintings seem more at home than they might have in the Mount Royal Station Gallery.

Leopold Seyffert was born in Cal-



LAUTREC—Detail of poster advertising a cafe-concert singer.

ifornia and died in New Jersey. When he was a very young man he started as an apprentice in the office of a big Pittsburgh oil man, John G. Johnson, who happened also to have a keen eye for artistic talent. Johnson saw some of his apprentice's small drawings. Astonished at their excellence, he suggested an art career and generously offered to finance it.

Judging from the early Seyffert efforts shown with the portraits at the Institute, the Pittsburgh tycoon might himself have done as well as a dealer in oil paintings as in oil prospecting. They are indeed remarkable evidence of native talent.

Backed by his former boss, Seyffert studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and later in Paris and Spain, where he copied Rembrandt and Velazquez.

One of his more important commissions, once he had become established as a professional portraitist, was to paint his former boss and benefactor. The Johnson

portrait is in the Corcoran collection, in Washington. He also painted Andrew Mellon, Leopold Stokowski and other bigwigs of finance and music. Canvases by Seyffert are to be found in the Metropolitan Museum, Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute, the Los Angeles Museum, and other notable collections.

Though this is a rather small and informal exhibition of Seyffert's work, at the Institute, it reveals him as an admirable portraitist. During a stay in the Netherlands, his work took on something of the character of the Dutch masters, as in the case of "Dutch Girl," a detail of which is reproduced on this page.

A few of his paintings have slightly Impressionist characteristics, but most of them reflect the rather free but still traditional style he learned at the Pennsylvania Academy. This is observable in his fairly luscious nude portraits of the model who became his second wife, and also in his self-portrait (see detail on this page), painted with considerable dash.

During my visit to the Seyffert show, Eugene W. Leake, president of the Institute, mentioned that the artist's grandson is a sophomore there, and presently strapping young man in plaid shirt and blue jeans was introduced. He is Robert Seyffert, now studying with the landscapist Israel Hirschberg. He pointed to a portrait of his father as a child, among his grandfather's work; the child grew up to become the artist Richard Seyffert.

A larger and more representative exhibition of Leopold Seyffert's work is being organized for next fall at the Phoenix-Chase Galleries. It might well include something of the work of Richard and Robert Seyffert, to give it a three-

generations interest. Meanwhile the student Seyffert is teaming with an Institute classmate, Paul Vicino, in a two-man at Bartholomew's, Fells Point.

The Leopold Seyffert exhibition will remain on view at the Institute through May 30.

The Toulouse-Lautrec exhibition at the Museum Downtown affords a generous sampling of that artist's lithographic porters. They range from such light-hearted examples as the one he made to advertise short-lived Paris magazine called

"The Enraged Cow," to his grueling guillotine poster for "At the Foot of the Scaffold," the book by Ab Faure, serialized in Le Matin.

Most of the large and famous posters are there: "Babylone de France," among the book "Aristide Bruant and Audre," among the famous signers; several from the Moulin Rouge, Moulin la Galette, Le Chat Noir, Le Divan Japonais, and Le Divan Japonais. Mountmartre night spots frequented by the artist; and of course celebrated can-can dancers and other entertainers, such as Avril and La Gouloue.

There are also his posters for La Revue Blanche, the one he did for the semi-annual American literary review, the Chap Book, remembered for its having published writing by Stephen Crane, Henry James, and Butler Yeats and Thomas

The Toulouse-Lautrec exhibition is supplemented with period posters and photographs. One photograph shows the artist looking very much like a still from the Ferrer movie, and another is the first close-up in the film, which reveals the artist's features very remarkably. The photographer was Maurice Guibert.

This show will continue through June 28. Every Tuesday the sidewalk cafe will dispense coffee. That's a pleasing humanizing touch in a city that sorely needs more reminders of its former amiability.