

*Library of
The Harvard Musical
Association*



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Library Committee

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To the Members of the Association:

The virtue in these bulletins, aside from the interest members may (or may not) find in them, lies in their recording in permanent form historical and traditional matters, most of which have not appeared in print anywhere, connected with the Association and with musical matters in Boston since the organization of the Association in 1837. On the seventy-fifth anniversary (1912) the Association published a small book which merely covered briefly certain historical facts. Much early historical and traditional matter continues so far successfully to resist diligent excavation, since for years no one apparently was sufficiently interested or far-seeing to record or to preserve what would be today of interest. Not until Miss Thayer became Ass't-Librarian was there systematic and careful assembling or recording of what makes history and tradition. It is the latter, quasi-history if even always that, which contributes "atmosphere", itself more personal and often more interesting than pure history.

Consequently, as a contribution to history or to tradition, the reminiscences of our members older in point of years of membership are of obvious value. It is a pleasure to include in this issue the reminiscences of Mr. Arthur Foote. In years of membership our oldest member and with a long life spent in the musical world, few can better write of many memories. The writer voices the appreciation of all of us in his willingness to accede to an urgent request. His article follows.

Entering Harvard College (as we used then to call it) in 1870 I had the good fortune to find John K. Paine there. His coming in 1869 marked the beginning of real musical instruction and of the development of a Department of Music, which now has become an important part of the curriculum. (By the way, Professor Spalding's book 'Music at Harvard,' just published, is good reading for a Harvard graduate interested in music). There naturally were few students for Paine at that time; in fugue I was the only one, taking my lessons at his house. He was college organist as well, and I had sense enough to appreciate the beautiful improvisations which I heard at chapel. I owe a great deal to him, not only for the excellent teaching but also for the important influence which he had on me at a time when it was sadly needed. As composer he was our outstanding figure, for it was not until 1880 that Chadwick came, to be the first of a group of a comparable character. Paine's music for 'Oedipus' was the high water mark in our music at the time of its performance, its date (1881) being still one of the memorable ones in the history of our music; it lives.

After graduation in 1874 and the A.M. degree in 1875 for work in music (the first of the kind at Harvard), I became a member of the Harvard Musical Association, soon afterwards becoming one of the programme committee. Our orchestral concerts gave to most of us the only opportunity of acquaintance with the music of the great composers, with the exception of the concerts of the Handel and Haydn Society, and of sporadic visits of artists, few indeed in those days.

For me, as for many others, these orchestral concerts were a revelation of beautiful things. It is easy to see what a first hearing of symphonies of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and, later, Brahms, meant. The performance was inadequate, the players as a rule not of the first rank, and the rehearsals insufficient through lack of funds. But I look back with especial pleasure to those afternoons in the old Music Hall. On the programme committee we were pretty conservative, although the concerts must be credited with a really fair number of novelties, e.g. the first Brahms symphonies and the Meistersinger overture (which was compared by some unfavorably with Mendelssohn, Gade, etc.).

The conductor was Carl Zerrahn, who was just the man for that time and for dealing successfully with an inferior orchestra. Our president, whose portrait hangs in our rooms, John S. Dwight, though not an educated musician, was a true and cultivated music lover. 'Dwight's Journal of Music', as far as quality goes, has had no superior since; it had strong influence for good. Like its editor, it was very conservative. Looking back, I cannot help feeling that this was perhaps a good thing, for we did need to 'hold fast to that which was good' and to learn to discriminate (as is quite as much the case today). A man of strong character and feeling, Otto Dresel, had deservedly a great influence in musical affairs. He was wise, seemed to me all-knowing, an authority on Bach and Handel, (e.g. with his intimate friend Robert Franz he collaborated in an edition of the Well Tempered Clavichord). He was certainly one of the best influences in my life. Dwight and Dresel were conservative; B. J. Lang, W. F. Apthorp, W. P. Blake, and I made what is today called the 'liberal' element on the committee. To Lang, for instance, in his own concerts of piano or chamber music and in the production of choral works then and later, we owe many novelties and first performances. Whether a new symphony by Rubinstein should be given a hearing was a big question then, as thirty years ago was the case with Debussy. It is perhaps remembering how many of the novelties of that time turned out 'duds' that I have since been slow about the new things of the last twenty years—Hindemith, Milhaud, etc.

Our programmes were constructed on a different plan from those of today, which often have but three or four numbers, contrast and variety being lacking. With us the beginning would be made by an overture (never a long symphony); there was nearly always a soloist; the symphony in the middle for solid fare, while a lighter piece might serve at the end as dessert. Henschel and Gericke later were notable for their well balanced and interesting programmes, while I think the other fashion came in with Muck.

The audience was mainly composed of people of the kind found in our own membership, and they were not there to be in the fashion; there were always a number of music students also, but there was no thought then of appealing to the public at large. As I remember, there were no cheap seats (twenty-five cents) as was later the case with our present orchestra. I should say that, by subscription price, tickets were a dollar, but I am not sure.

We were in no position to hire soloists very often, although this did sometimes happen. Boston pianists, violinists, and singers were as a rule willing to serve us without being paid, while naturally members of our Association were glad to help. For instance, Lang was responsible for our hearing, for the first time, concertos of Rubinstein, Saint Saëns, Brahms, and other composers. When a harp was needed in the orchestra, as there was no harp player in the town, one of us would do the best he could to replace it by playing its part on an upright piano. I remember Apthorp's performance with the cymbals when Saint Saëns' 'Phaeton' was played for the first time. It surely was a very different Boston in those days.

For pianists we had in Boston, besides Dresel and Lang, Madeline Schiller, Hugo Leonhard, W. H. Sherwood, Louis Maas, John Orth, George W. Sumner, Hiram G. Tucker, John A. Preston (these three pupils of Lang), besides, no doubt, others I do not call to mind.

As to critics, Apthorp was just beginning his critical writing, and Philip Hale dates from the middle 80s; and there was the redoubtable Ben Woolf, of the Saturday Evening Gazette, a musically well equipped critic, who was more feared than loved. How he did delight to pitch into John S. Dwight and B. J. Lang! He never could find any good in either.

Our concerts for a number of years were very successful as to audiences, which, however, dwindled as time went on. Why, no one can say. Just before the 80s a rival orchestra, the Philharmonic, was formed, a thing that helped to bring on the end of our concerts; while the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which had the generous and

unlimited backing of Henry L. Higginson, made it obvious that we had better gracefully retire from the field, leaving behind an honorable record. There is a humorous side in the fact that it was at one of our concerts that Henschel conducted an overture of his own, and Mr. Higginson was so much impressed by his enthusiasm and ability that he shortly afterwards engaged him as conductor of the newly formed Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In the Apollo Club, now over sixty years old, and the Cecilia Society, whose date is a few years later, many of our members were active. Lang was director of both, and their splendid record is in part due to his wise guidance, enterprise, and uncompromising ideals. In the 90s came his individual production of the music of *Parsifal*, in concert form.

In thinking of the decade 1870-1880, it is impossible for me not to speak also of Theodore Thomas and his orchestra. He was a great conductor; and in his orchestra (which travelled the country over, from Maine to California) he showed us for the first time what really fine orchestral playing was. His programmes were all-comprehensive, admirably made, and pleased the knowing ones as much as the average listener. He was a good friend to the American composer, only asking that the music should be deserving of a hearing.

In Spalding's book, which is referred to earlier, there is a list of Harvard men connected professionally with music that I think will astonish you. Besides those composers mentioned by him, we had in Boston a remarkable group in the 90s: Chadwick, Nevin, MacDowell, Horatio Parker, Arthur Whiting, and others. I like to look back at those days, and wish they might come again.

Arthur Foote.

Another poem from the pen of the Rev. James Reed, during his life time welcome poet at the annual dinners, will be found amusing. This poem was read at the dinner of 1903.

THE LADY ORCHESTRA

'Tis of a lady orchestra, this truthful tale is told.
It played each night, and brought delight to listeners young and old,
While gathering up a goodly store of silver and of gold.

This orchestra, it was so sweet that nothing could be sweeter,
The damsels looked so very neat that nothing could look neater,
Arrangements all were so complete that none could be completer.

And yet, one night, I grieve to say, a sad mishap befell.
Thus fail the plans of mice and men, contrived however well.
That strange calamity it is my humble part to tell.

Among the comely players one was easily the chief.
The French horn was her instrument, and sweet beyond belief
The sound that issued from it, but she brought the band to grief.

'Twas eight o'clock, the doors were closed, the audience ushered in;
The fair conductress stood erect, all ready to begin.
So still it was, you might have heard the dropping of a pin.

Then came a crash; the *tout ensemble*, which means the general toot,
Was heard; then should have come the duet between French horn and flute.
It came not, and it never came; for, lo! the horn was mute.

What ails that horn? Why sends it forth no sweet enchanting note?
The lovely player puffs and blows; why does no music float
Around its brazen aperture, or fill its husky throat?

Her eyes dilate, her cheeks swell out. Like one in mad carouse
Her face is scarlet. Fixed on her all eyes throughout the house.
One final gasp, one awful blare, out shoots a poor dead mouse!

Let Fancy paint the thrilling scene; that is, if Fancy dares
To tell how forty women screamed, and stood in forty chairs,
While they that played the double-bass made bee-lines for the stairs.

The fair conductress found herself upon the kettle-drum.
One little moment all was still, and every voice was dumb.
Then rose a gentle murmuring, a kind of "hum, sweet hum."

This is my story, passing sad, yet not more sad than true.
If tale less mournful I had had, I would have told it you.
But whether it seem good or bad, methinks 'twill have to do.

Yet pause once more. With tender hearts regard the fate forlorn
Of that poor little rodent beast that died with ear drums torn
Amid the convolutions of a terrible French horn.

Those who have enjoyed attendance at a National Eisteddfod of Wales will be interested in the programme of the one held this year—August 5 to 10—in Caernarvon. Because of the depression, the number of entries was fewer than in the past, a result not wholly unwelcome to some in daily attendance. The competitions in music were, as usual, the chief feature, especially among the fine choral and in some instances the vocal solo competitors. The evening concerts by the London Orchestra, conducted on one occasion by Dr. Malcolm Sargent as guest conductor, and by the Eisteddfod chorus of over 300 voices, were excellent. The productions of modern Welsh drama, according to rumor, revealed no gifted Welsh dramatist. The literary contests, however, were said to have been of high quality. The ceremonial meeting of the Gorsedd—the origin of which society is lost in a pre-Christian era—was impressively held in full state in the open ward of Caernarvon Castle. As usual, the visitors to the Eisteddfod came from far flung lands: Paraguay, the Argentine, and other South American and European countries, India, Africa, Asia, the United States, the Channel Islands, etc. There was, however, apparently no one from China or Ethiopia. Next year the Eisteddfod will be held in Machynlleth.

The following list contains some of the recent purchases and gifts. The Library acknowledges with gratitude the generosity of the donors. Their names are in parentheses. An asterisk denotes a member of the Association.

PURCHASES

Garland of Green Mountain songs—Helen H. Flanders
California composers—J. M. Fredricks (compiler)
Caruso and the art of singing—Fucito and Beyer
Franz Schubert and his times—Karl Kobald
"The Musical Grammarian" (extract)—Roger North

GIFTS

Music and books, from the estate of B. J. Lang

Sheet and bound music; theatre and concert programmes—(Bequest of Mrs. Augusta Faxon)

Compositions by Stephen C. Foster; ten issues of "Foster Hall Bulletins"—(Josiah K. Lilly)

Autograph letter of Lowell Mason (Jan. 6. 1833)—(*Horace Blackmer)

Collection of programmes—(*R. R. Gardner)

R. C. Robbins—Songs, Op. 1- Op. 120—(Reginald C. Robbins, H. '92)

L'Evolution: Arbre Genealogique—(*John G. Greene)

Printed material on the Peace Jubilees of 1869 and 1872; Harvard song books, oratorios, etc.—(Edwin T. Stiger, H. '95)

Programme of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales, 1935, 300 pp. (*C. R. Nutter)

The Bardic Gorsedd; Its History and Symbolism, by Beriah Gwynfe Evans, *Cofiadur*. (nid ydyw rhain iw dosbarthu)—(*C. R. Nutter)

The following are from *George A. Burdett

Franz—Songs (4 vols)

Schumann—Pianoforte works (5 vols)

Schubert—Songs (2 vols)

Perosi—Trasfigurazione

Mrs. Augusta Faxon was a parishioner of the Rev. James Reed, and perhaps through him became interested in the Library. She was an amateur pianist. Her bequest included much sheet and bound music, and a collection of old programmes collected by her husband.

Mr. Lilly has established near Indianapolis a music hall dedicated to the gathering and the preserving of data concerning the life and the career of Stephen C. Foster. Here is the most complete collection of Fosteriana in existence. Mr. Lilly's gift includes a facsimile copy of every known composition by Foster. These were gathered and edited by experts over a period of years. One thousand sets were made and presented to libraries in this country and in other countries. No sets are for sale.

CHARLES R. NUTTER.