

OUR GLORIOUS PAST

Presented to the "Women In Music" Study Section

researched and narrated by

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The Womens Music Club, now known as "Women in Music," is the second oldest, active, musical organization in Columbus, dating back to 1882. Miss Mary Failing, founder of the club, invited a number of ladies, all trained musicians, to her home on East Broad Street. At this time the club was organized not for profit but for service to the community. It was known as the Ladie's Musical Club, but later became the Women's Music Club in 1905. There were ten members.

At first the recitals were held in the homes of members, followed by refreshments and a social gathering, It was quite informal.

Soon guests were invited, and when the homes could no longer accommodate the attendance, the recitals were presented in various halls throughout the city. Mrs. Theodore Schneider was the first president.

In 1892 the Club gave a concert in the Board of Trade Building for the benefit of Free Kindergartens. The club was known for its high musical standards, and all concerts were open to the public.

In 1895 they presented the American composer and pianist, Edward A. McDowell in the Y.M.C.A. auditorium to a capacity audience. This was probably the greatest event in the life of the Club, at this time.

In 1901, Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heinke, German contralto, gave a concert for the club at the Southern Theater. It was her first American tour. She returned for another concert in 1907.

Oley Speaks gave a song recital in 1901 and again in 1904.

The Club became more ambitious as time went on, and continued to grow with public interest. By 1902 there were thirty active members. Ella May Smith was elected president, an office she held for thirteen years. Under her leadership the Club attained a national and international reputation.

In 1906, Memorial Hall was dedicated to honor Franklin County's Civil War dead. The seating capacity was 4,200. It became the concert hall for future concerts.

Mrs. Smith enlarged the associate membership to 3,000 members to insure a dependable audience and financial support. Under her administration some of the following events took place:

1. Six artist concerts
2. A mixed choir of 100 voices to present Oratorios in Memorial Hall
3. Organization of the Saturday Music Club, to qualify young musicians for membership in the Woman's Music Club
4. Purchased the \$25,000 Felgemacher Organ for the Memorial Hall
5. Established the music alcove at the Columbus Public Library of 15,000 volumes and sheet music.
6. Joined the National Federation of Music Clubs, later becoming a life member
7. Gave \$10,000 for war relief in World War I

From 1916-1919 a music study section was added, and a Central Music Settlement program was established, where young people who had no musical instruments could be given instruction with instruments provided by the club. A full faculty of members participated. By 1923, eight schools were providing lessons for instruments, piano and voice. More than 2,000 lessons were given by member teachers providing their time and talent.

A scholarship fund was established in 1923 giving assistance to talented members of the Club. One member was sent to a well known conservatory to study with a Master teacher, another received a fellowship at Juilliard to study voice with Mme. Sembrich. A talented pianist was sent to London to study with Myra Hess. There were a number of members assisted in this manner.

As a pioneer in bringing Artist Concerts to Columbus from 1895-1957 the record includes:

- 387 visiting artists
- 55 orchestra performances
- 24 chamber groups
- 23 Opera performances
- 6 Ballet companies

and many lectures by distinguished Music educators.

Some of the famous artists were: John McCormack, Percy Grainger, Jascha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler, Efrem Zimbalist, Alma Gluck, Rosa Ponselle, Feodor Chaliapin, Lawrence Tibbett, Pablo Casals, George Barrere, Vladimir Horowitz, Grace Moore, Eileen Farrell, Yehudi Menuhin, Nelson Eddy, Jeanette MacDonald, Kirsten Flagstad, and many chamber music groups and orchestras.

In 1946-49 the Women's Music Club founded the Chamber Music Society to meet the need in the community for chamber music.

Margaret Truman, soprano, daughter of President and Mrs. Truman was presented in concert in 1949 with a reception at the Governor's Mansion following the program.

During the 75th anniversary year, 1957, two great artists were presented to Columbus audiences, Gina Bauchauer, pianist and Richard Tucker, tenor, of the Metropolitan Opera.

The 80th anniversary in 1961 was celebrated with a Musical Supper Party at the Columbus Athletic Club with Claudette Sorel, pianist, as guest artist.

In 1962 the "Soiree Musicale" was introduced, presenting Ilona Kombrink, leading soprano of the Canadian Opera Company, followed by a candlelight reception at Battelle Memorial Institute. This continued for several years bringing talented young artists to Columbus.

In 1976 Kathleen Battle was presented at the Soiree Musicale which the critics rated as a "most promising" young singer. Those present had a feeling they were in on the early stages of a career that should lead to great heights.

During 1982 the Club entered their 100th year. As they continue into the second century they hope to meet the demands of the ever-growing cultural needs of the community, with emphasis upon the excellence of its own membership, scholarships, altruistic service, study programs, chorus, String Sinfonia and a Women's Symphony Orchestra with guest conductors.

It has been a "glorious past" but also brings the outlook of a "glorious future."