

❁ The Harvard ❁
Musical Association



Pro

Bono

Artium

Musicarum

150 Years: 1837 to 1987

Arthur W. Hepner



The two buildings on the left foreground became the home of the Association in 1892

**Harvard Musical Association
originally published this book
to mark its sesquicentennial.
1987**



The Association's House in spring of 2017

Background

SOCIALLY and culturally, the two continents were worlds apart. In the 17th and 18th centuries the expanse of ocean that separated them was narrower than their differences in values and patterns of life. Europe was mature and relatively stable. After a thousand years of religious strife and power struggles, the turbulence had finally quieted and society had taken shape. As the various states and empires evolved, so did their arts. Each epoch—the Middle Ages, the subsequent Renaissance, the Elizabethan era, the Baroque period, and eventually the Classical age—had, in turn, imprinted its mark on the Continent. In music, the sacred pull was strong, coming as it did from the likes of Monteverdi, Palestrina, Schütz, and later, Bach.

But it was no stronger than the tug of secular forces. In the taverns, at fairs, in drawing rooms, and at courts, many kinds of vocal and instrumental music made their appearances in the 17th and 18th centuries. Folk songs and dances, drinking tunes, the bawdy and titillating, and the pure, carefully-crafted abstract works formed substantial parts of the body musical. Here again were found Monteverdi, Schütz, and Bach, but they were at work along with the Gabriellis, the Scarlattis, Purcell, Vivaldi, Handel, and more, to be followed by Haydn, Mozart, and others. Europe already had a rich musical life with a literature containing distinctive kinds and levels of quality, the best of it setting the stage for further glories to come.

Across the Atlantic, the contrast was inescapable. Immigrants from the Old World had established only the rudiments of a society. Jamestown, Plymouth, and the other communal seedlings of the colonies had barely taken root. Formidable were the challenges confronting the early settlers who had to create and build communities in a new, strange environment; to develop a homeland hospitable to their views; and to master stern, often unyielding terrain.

Inspired by the religious motivation that had inspired them to seek New World shores, these Puritan pioneers solidified their settlements, found an identity, and carried out their lives in pursuit of the objectives Europe had denied them. Their outlook had little, if any, room for levity or frivolity. The ethic in New England called for hard work and rigorous education, leavened by prayer and more hard work. Reward was to come in afterlife, earned through adherence to the demanding code during one's lifetime.

The Puritan way was a rigid model, to be sure, long on prohibitions and short on sensory gratification. Musical pursuits were confined essentially to singing, mainly of hymns and psalms voiced for purposes of devotion.

Such was the setting in 1636, the year of the founding of Harvard College. At Harvard, life was a serious business, with the best of its earliest sons destined for the ministry. Except for psalmody, music was not a part of the curriculum, nor did it figure prominently in extra-curricular activity. In true Puritan spirit, Renaissance, Elizabethan, or Baroque melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and counterpoint had no place in Harvard Yard. Music was an attribute of worship, not a source of sinful entertainment.

As the years passed, the colonies assumed form and the original settlements grew rapidly. In the new, fledgling society, the beginnings of a culture began to show their outlines and in the early

18th century the secular strain first appeared in New England. In 1716, a Boston organist advertised that he tuned virginals and spinnets, sold flageolets, flutes, hautboys, bass viols, and violins, and taught dancing on the side. By this time, the strictures seemingly had been relaxed. Although hymns and psalms continued to be the principal forms of music tolerated, musical life in Boston as well as New York, Charleston, and New Orleans began to reflect a pattern found in England's cities other than London, which had a more sophisticated, active musical society.

One of the colonies' first composers, William Billings, born in Massachusetts in 1746, added a fresh touch to the hymnals and psalm singing, but he also composed a goodly number of fuguing tunes. Yet, the essentially rural character of the colonies militated against any broad movement toward the kind of musical diversity prevalent in the courts and urban centers of Europe. Not until the republic had established itself and seen its cities grow in size and number did music really shed its clerical garb.

The coming of the 19th century finally set it on a path to a rounded co-existence of the sacred and secular. In Harvard Yard, after more than 150 years of musical austerity, a handful of undergraduates began to move with the times. Some engaged in group singing of a non-devotional sort. Others took up a musical instrument—notably the flute, for some reason. None of this activity could be termed extensive; yet it was sufficient to reflect a budding interest in the world of melody. It occurred, of course, outside the classroom, for the government of the College had yet to introduce music into the curriculum.

Sometime before the 18th century dissolved into the 19th, efforts at Harvard to galvanize the musical interests, extracurricular though they were, into quasi-formalized bodies, achieved temporary success. Several singing clubs were formed - only to quickly fade away. Even though the faculty invited these clubs to offer their services for special events, their staying power was still to come.

The year 1808 saw the appearance of a new cultural factor, one less tentative, and that was to grow in significance until many years later it became the source of pressure for music to have an official status in Harvard College. That something was the birth of the Pierian Sodality.

From the records of the group's secretaries comes the information that, "At a meeting held on the 6th of March, 1808, by a number of students of Harvard ...they unanimously agreed to institute a society for their mutual improvement in instrumental music, to be denominated Pierian Sodality, which shall be under the direction of four officers, viz. President, Vice- President, Secretary and Treasurer."

The organization was dedicated to combining conviviality with serious musical practice. Its name, drawn from Greek mythology, referred to a Macedonian spring, sacred to the Muses. In reading the laws and restrictions imposed on the membership, it becomes evident that members' pursuit of music was not to be taken lightly. Offenses such as tardiness at meetings, absences, failure to copy tunes into one's book or to bring the book of tunes to a meeting, or not learning part of a tune, occasioned fines ranging from six cents to a dollar at a time when these amounts were considerable. In May 1809, for example, Sodality records showed that members Deering, Bigelow, and Bartlett were fined 25 cents "each for tardiness ...and Chase for neglecting to bring his book to the meetings."

As to the convivial aspects, the meetings- held frequently in the rooms of members - always ended with zestful entertainment. The report for March 9, 1810, stated: “The members of the society convened at Cary’s....At half past 8 they adjourned to Mr. Morse’s where they partook of an elegant repast. After the cloth was removed several very appropriate toasts were given, many songs, glees, airs and catches were sung, and the utmost harmony and good fellowship prevailed until half past 12 when they separated and retired to their respective habitations with order and sobriety ...”

So it went from week to week, month to month, and year to year. Pierians made music to their own delight, partook of social enjoyment, and produced the musical interludes at Commencement and similar occasions. Gradually the organization attained a place of recognition in Harvard’s social firmament. Nearing age 30, it achieved a potentially more significant distinction by siring another institution which, during the heart of the 19th century, handsomely enhanced the musical life across the river in Boston and, well into the 20th, exerted a quiet, indirect, but positive influence on the expanding metropolitan musical scene. That institution, now 150 years old, has since 1840 gone by the name of The Harvard Musical Association.

Music has long been a central stone in the artistic mosaic of Boston. Once freed from the Puritan shackles that dominated early New England life, escalating musical activity quickly turned the city into one of the nation’s principal music centers. Home to a renowned symphony orchestra, primary locus of the early music movement, strong in music education, and warmly responsive to new currents as well as the traditional, Boston is a place where music is taken seriously, as it has been for more than a century.

Even before secular music attained respectability, hymns and psalms held pivotal positions in the severe culture, with the musicians of the period constantly striving to improve the quality of these companions to devotion. By the time a republic had risen out of the ashes of revolution, musical practice and participation had grown wide-ranged and widespread. Leadership for this achievement came from a number of sources and a variety of locales with Harvard Yard being one of the most prolific. Several singing groups had held temporary favor in student circles before the 19th century arrived. Then came the Pierian Sodality, first and foremost of the College’s extracurricular instrumental forces.

Since what worked deserved emulation, on the heels of the Pierian success came the organization of a similar group of instrumental players, drawn mainly from the freshmen and sophomore classes. Making its bow in 1813, five years after the founding of the Pierian, the new group struggled more or less precariously for about 18 years before falling into oblivion. While it hung on, it continually sought to unite with the Pierian and apparently did become its subsidiary.

The records are not complete on this point, but what is available seems to confirm the absorption. Its name, Arionic Sodality, came out of Greek mythology. (Arion was a mythical lute player who supposedly served at the court of Periander in the 6th century B.C.) Many young gentlemen - among them scions of prominent New England families- moved through the two Sodalities. Of elite predilections, several of them ultimately became pillars of Boston’s musical affairs, which they dominated during the second half of the 19th century.

The Arionic group's original allegiance was to Harvard, where they endeavored to have music made a part of the curriculum. Failing in that objective, they shifted their sights to the general community beyond the Yard and flung their energies into working for the preservation of the highest musical standards for all of Boston. As undergraduates, they did not lack for assurance or arbitrariness.

Sketchy, informative, sometimes droll minutes left for posterity by the Arionic recorded several items of interest. The entry for September 17, 1829, contained a name that was destined to play a significant role in the musical life of Boston through most of the century, that of sophomore, John Sullivan Dwight, a candidate for the ministry, who played the "clarionett." The entry noted that Dwight was admitted to membership in the society that evening and was instantly elected president. This action by his fellow members was a masterpiece of foresight. From that moment, Dwight became a controlling force in the group as he would in every other musical undertaking with which he became associated.

The entry a fortnight later indicated that Dwight had already taken over: "Br. Dwight led the band and the music was pronounced by competent judges to have been unusually good. The Society will now, we hope, regain or surpass its former standing." At the meeting's conclusion, the minutes reported, "the pres. gave out the following tunes, to be played at the next meeting. Look out upon the stars (no.3), Yellow haired Laddie (6), Boston Cadets March (No.5), Bonaparte's quick step (No.4)." Not exactly a model of grammar or punctuation, the entry nonetheless offered a hint as to the kind of instrumental music attractive to some undergraduates of the era.

The final entry in the Arionic's still-legible record book bore the date "Friday evening, 10 June 1831." It said, "Met according to appointment this evening at Br. Gorham's room where we found no preparation at all made for our convenience. After discussing the state of the Society for some time the President moved that Mr. Gorham furnish lights. G. answered, 'I possess none.' President inquires 'how shall we see to play' the reply was 'Play in the dark.' We forthwith (with the exception of Mr. Gorham) adjourned to Gasset's room where J. W. Gorham was unanimously expelled from the Society."

No further reference to the Arionic Sodality seems ever to have been found. During its existence, the Arionic bore to the Pierian the kind of relationship the Hasty Pudding was later to bear to the final clubs. By 1837, having itself gone through slim times, the Pierian was the sole organized instrumental group in the Yard. Each year it held its annual meeting on a sweltering July day, about a month before Commencement, then observed in August. Several former Pierians always attended, staying on to participate in a post-meeting musical exhibition. That year, some of the graduates joined a number of the current student crop for a social hour at a room in Holworthy, one of the dormitories in the Yard. Refreshed by cooling spirits, they soon reached a familiar, if nagging, topic in their conversation: the neglect of music by the College authorities. Lamenting the situation, the Pierians considered how they might be useful in rectifying it. Before breaking up, they named a junior, two seniors, and three alumni to a committee that was instructed to work up a plan for uniting present, past, and honorary members of the Sodality in an association to promote the cultivation of music and the establishment of a music professorship in Harvard College.

Until Commencement the committee of six conferred almost daily. Airing their own ideas and soliciting the views of others sympathetic to their concerns, the committee members agreed that the basic objective was both desirable and practical. Circularizing all Pierians, they invited them to meet following the Commencement exercises on August 30 to form the organization proposed during the Holworthy hour of good fellowship. The invitation carried the names of the six committee members: Epes S. Dixwell, '29, John S. Dwight, '32, Henry Gasset Jr., '34, Christopher C. Holmes, '37, John F. Tuckerman, '37, and Wendell T. Davis, '38.

Instant response produced letters such as one from Henry Ware Jr., which said: "In compliance with your request for an answer to the circular you sent me, I write a hasty word to assure you that I am greatly pleased with your proposition, & shall enter heartily into any measures which may be devised for perpetuating & extending the good influences of our pleasant fraternity. Music should be put on a new footing in our university; & a permanent system of teaching & a well-supported professorship are extremely to be desired. Who can more properly take the first step than the Pierian Sodality?"

Between thirty and forty men appeared in University Hall 6 for the organizing meeting, at which the committee presented the elaborate report it had prepared on the prospective undertaking. In all likelihood, it was Dwight, the reporter for the committee, who was both perpetrator behind the proposal and author of the bulk of the text. Swollen and sentimental, the quaint phraseology might well amuse readers a century and a half later. "Finding ourselves together once," it declaimed, "with enough to remember and sympathize about, in scenes eloquent to us, as they remind us of what we once were, and so serve to cheer and encourage amid the dust and cares of life grown more selfish than it was then - scenes, which revive our faith in our old ideals - we cannot but feel that 'it is good for us to be here'; and we naturally are tempted to arrange some plan by which this meeting may be renewed at suitable times."

Holding that "nothing unites men more than music," it continued, in strained metaphors, that the art "makes brothers of strangers, - it makes the most diffident feel at home, - the most shy and suspicious it renders frank and full of trust. It overflows the rocks of separation between us; it comes up like a full tide beneath us, and opens a free intercourse of hearts."

The report urged the group to "form an Association, which shall meet here annually, on Commencement day; if for nothing more, at least to exchange salutations, and revive recollections, and feel the common bond of music and old scenes."

That was one objective. The other, considered ultimate, was "the advancement of the cause of Music, particularly in this University. We would have it regarded as an important object of attention within its walls, as something which sooner or later must hold its place in every liberal system of education, and that place not an accidental or a stolen one, but one formally recognized. We that love music must feel that it is worthy of its Professorship ..." Stripped of the excess verbiage, the aim of the committee was three-fold: (1) "to raise the standard of musical taste in the College;" (2) "to have regular musical instruction introduced in the College;" and (3) to create a Library of Music containing the works of the great composers, "all histories of music, and all descriptions and criticisms of music."

On August 30, 1837, an organization took form. Its name, descriptive but cumbersome, was the “General Association of Members of the Pierian Sodality of Harvard University.” The Rev. Jonathan M. Wainwright, rector of Trinity Church, Boston, was named presiding officer and Henry S. McKean was named recording secretary. Both served for one year.

At the next meeting on August 29, 1838, a constitution was adopted and the Rev. Henry Ware Jr. was elected president, with John S. Dwight becoming vice-president. Although continuing to meet on Commencement Day in University Hall 6, in 1840 the group abbreviated its name to the more manageable “Harvard Musical Association” and voted to exclude undergraduates from the fold - a decision that weakened the bond to the college.

A further severing resulted from the admission of alumni of other institutions and the introduction of a succession of “public benefits.” The first of the latter was a series of Commencement Day lectures on musical topics. Since the lectures tended toward ponderousness and were scarcely in keeping with the festive spirit of Commencement, they failed to draw many listeners. Nevertheless, the Association, committed to its mission to stimulate interest and educate the public in musical matters, kept them going for years.

By 1843, the desire to establish a music library had been fulfilled. It was located in the room the Association had rented on Tremont Row in Boston, a place frequented by members who lived nearby. That year, *The Salem Register*, referring to the library, said “three to four hundred volumes of some of the rarest and most valuable works had been collected, chiefly from private donations, thus forming the largest, the best, and the only public Musical Library in the country.”

The newspaper’s comment notwithstanding, Ware and Dwight eventually dismissed some of the donated volumes as “trash.” Years later, these, together with other books inappropriate to a Special Library of Music, were discarded. As time moved along, the library periodically received sums to strengthen its collection. The first in 1848, in the curious amount of \$37.47, was sufficient in that day to purchase a number of books and pieces of music.

WITH NOTHING BUT SILENCE from Harvard officials to the urgings that music be made part of the curriculum and to appeals that the idea be submitted to the Corporation for consideration, the Association looked to other musical precincts for achieving its objectives. These objectives were spelled out clearly in an act passed by the Massachusetts Legislature in March 1845. Said the text, “John Pickering, junior, Henry Gassett, junior, and John S. Dwight, their associates and successors, are hereby made a corporation by the name of the ‘Harvard Musical Association,’ for the purpose of promoting education in the science and practice of music, and of raising and holding a fund for the benefit of indigent members of the association, and for this purpose shall have all the powers and privileges, and be subject to all the duties, restrictions and liabilities set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes.”

The Legislature authorized the Corporation to hold real estate and personal property up to an amount not to exceed \$10,000 in value. Thus the founding group—prominent citizens high in social standing; well-known in industry, commerce, and the professions; and devoted to good music—became a corporate body of friends sharing a common aesthetic interest, which they

wished to spread to a wider community. For the time being, they ceased pressuring the University but proposed to resume their campaign when they deemed the climate likely to be more hospitable.

A year earlier, in 1844, the Association had taken a giant step toward enriching the musical life of Boston. Observing that Bostonians had not yet been exposed to the lofty, intimate literature of chamber music, the officers quietly moved to fill the vacuum. For nearly three decades, the Handel & Haydn Society had been performing the great choral works, while other organizations had dipped into catalogues of large-scale instrumental compositions. Visiting troupes, mostly from Europe, brought tastes of opera.

But of the sonatas, trios, quartets, quintets, and other gems of chamber music Boston had not heard an inkling. At Dwight's bidding (and his acceptance of responsibility for making them happen), the Association introduced and sponsored a half-dozen seasons of chamber music concerts, six in each annual series. These were performed in the Chickering Piano warehouse, thanks to Jonas Chickering, who made the facilities available for the purpose without charge. In appreciation of his generosity, civic interests, and fine character, Mr. Chickering was made an honorary member in 1846.

An enthusiastic committee of Association members sold the tickets to the chamber music concerts, attended to the business details, and set aside surpluses from successful seasons as insurance against leaner years. From this unforeseen source came that \$37.47 windfall to the Association's Library.

The committee was not above discrimination. For the six concerts, the first violin of the string quartet was paid \$75, the cello \$60, and the second violin and tenor (viola) \$40. For solo appearances or assistance, the fee was set at \$10 per concert.

Despite the high quality and initial success of the concerts, subscriptions gradually fell off. Nevertheless, a standing committee remained optimistic about prospects for continuation and was empowered to proceed with plans for another season. This optimism proved unsupportable. When the requisite number of subscriptions was not forthcoming, a final series was given in Cochituate Hall, opposite King's Chapel, in December 1849. This ended the Association's public events for a time, but not its interest in contributing to the cause of good music in Boston.

Meanwhile, the Association further loosened its ties to Harvard by abandoning the University Hall meeting site. It did, however, keep links to Cambridge for a few more years by moving its annual meeting to the Lyceum Hall in Harvard Square. Then, at a special midwinter meeting in 1847, members voted to hold the annual meeting henceforth in winter and transfer it across the Charles to Boston.

At first, the event took place in the rooms of a member named George Hews. Then it began a round of musical chairs, moving to several different locations in downtown Boston. First it was held in the office in Scollay's Building of Henry Ware, nephew of Rev. Henry Ware Jr., the Association's first official president; later the annual meeting occurred in such notable places as Tremont House, then the Tricothic Building on Tremont Street, Chickering Hall, and for a time in the historic Paul Revere House in the North End. Following the business discussions,

members partook of sumptuous repasts and evenings of musical entertainment, usually held at some other site. The wine flowed freely, as did the feeling of good fellowship.

For patrons of the purest music and luxurious dining, these meetings were events not to be missed. The earliest menu preserved, for the year 1873, contained the following *table d'hôte* for the price of \$1.50: oysters on the half shell; mock turtle soup or *pate d'Italie*; *cusk a la creme au gratin*; saddle of mutton, mongree goose, or rib of beef; oyster patties, apple fritters, *croquettes*, kidneys in wine sauce; black ducks, red head ducks, prairie chickens; souffles, *charlotte russe*, wine jellies, meringues; grapes, oranges, almonds, walnuts, raisins; olives, cheese, ice cream, orange sherbet, and coffee.

No antacids or comparable aids were available to soothe the digestive tract in those days. And the wine cost extra. Prior to serving the oysters, the assemblage sang a Latin verse, sometimes in unison, sometimes as a three-part round. The earliest verse aired began, "*Non nobis domine.*" Later it gave way to another beginning "*Ecce quam bonum, quamque jucundum, habitare fratres in unum.*" A card with the text stood at each plate, and the words were sung before taking seats as a touch of grace before indulging. The same cards were used repeatedly until enough were lost or destroyed to discourage continuation of the practice.

Long before the dinners were replaced a few years ago by more modest offerings, the custom of the Latin prologue faded away. The music often featured songs by the Association's own glee club formed in 1859. It was only natural to expect a membership - many of whom had performed in the Pierian Sodality - to want to participate in making music, and singing was the simplest way.

At the annual repast in January 1859, "it was voted to form a Glee Club of such members of the Association as were disposed to take part, to meet monthly during the year..." Within weeks, the Glee Club was a going concern; it lasted for a number of years and performed mainly at the annual dinners. The company and the festivities carried an aura of elegance and aristocratic distinction. Through the years, the roster of those present at annual meetings read like a musical, literary, and social Who's Who of Boston. In addition to the names Ware, Gassett, and Dwight, a random sample of significant others included Bowditch, Pickering, Thorndike, Jennison, Langmaid, Perkins, Fields, Apthorp, Chickering, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Eliot, Underwood, Higginson, Peabody, Dana, Howe, and Adams, plus such distinguished professional musicians as Otto Dressel, B. J. Lang, J. C. D. Parker, Horatio Parker, John Knowles Paine, and later Arthur Foote, George Chadwick, Frederick Converse, Edward Burlingame Hill, Wallace Goodrich, and the musicologists Alexander Wheelock Thayer, author of the monumental life of Beethoven, and Hugo Leichtentritt.

The annual meeting roster was an impressive amalgam that grew more so year after year. At first, the cost of the annual dinner was borne out of Association funds. Dwight reported in 1865 that this largesse could no longer continue even though the early dinners had been "very economical," to the point at which their Spartan frugality had lost its charm. Falling into a decline and close to giving up the ghost, Dwight said, the HMA survived only because the expanded, generous, genial supper saved its life. Therefore, he asked, "Has not the time come when, still clinging to this pleasant custom, we may return to the serious ends of the Society, and

either spend our income upon present or fund it for future measures of real musical utility? Is there any member now, who does not value the Society enough ...to be willing to partake of the annual supper at his own personal expense .. .?”

Two years of referrals to committee and discussion led to the resolution, promptly passed, “that after this year [1867] the expenses of the annual sup- per shall not be paid, either in whole or in part, out of the funds of the Association, but shall be equally assessed upon the individual members who partake thereof ...” Some 75 years later, Charles R. Nutter, autocratic librarian and self-appointed historian, commented that, as of that time, the “meagre funds” of the Associated ceased to be “squandered in carnal rioting.”

Serious and pompous statements were sometimes leavened with fun. The annual feasts opened the way to levity and one of the diversions was the establishment of Roelker’s Fund of Convivial Impulses. Bernard Roelker, who came to Harvard Law School in the 1830’s after graduating from the University of Bonn, was a popular, genial Association member for three decades. He was at various times the Association’s librarian, treasurer, vice-president, and a director-at-large.

Roelker left Boston to practice law in New York City, but owing to his popularity he was annually invited to return for the festivities. On January 31, 1861, he sent the following letter to Dr. Henry I. Bowditch:

“Having an innate aversion to opening letters, which seems to me almost like dipping the hand into the urn of fate to draw you know not what, I felt the same aversion to breaking open your letter of 22nd and 28th Jan./61, not knowing from whom it came.

“Fancy my agreeable surprise in finding it to be a letter from you, and moreover one of such gratifying import. To be remembered by old friends at such a distance of time and space, and on such an occasion, is gratifying indeed! Not to be ready and eager to comply with so friendly an invitation to be present at the next annual meeting of the HMA would deserve the just punishment that my name be henceforth steeped into forgetfulness forever; and this punishment I shall not bring upon myself.

“The Ten Dollar Bill you sent, which you say was the result of passing round the cup to receive the spontaneous offerings of half Dollars as a sort of retaining fee and ticket expense paper is certainly a tangible assurance of the friendly desires to have me among you once more on the annual festive occasion which brings together the friends of Harmony.

“Duly appreciating the friendly convivial impulses which sent me this earnest of the invitation, I would on my part propose, and I request you, to deposit this sum in the Boston Savings Bank to form the beginning of [a] fund to be called ‘Roelker’s Fund of Convivial Impulses;’ there to remain until it shall have increased, by its own accumulation and subsequent spontaneous gifts, to a sufficient sum that the income of which may defray the expenses of the annual meeting and supper. The next annual meeting shall pass on this subject at the supper table, and shall otherwise modify the proposition as may be deemed best by the collected wisdom...”

Bowditch replied the following March that he had transferred the “deposit herein named to John P. Putnam, Esq. or anyone now Treasurer of the Harvard Musical Association, to be held by him and his successors in trust, as the ‘Roelker Fund of Convivial Impulses.’ I make this transfer

most cordially, and with the sincere hope that the benevolent intentions of the founder of the Fund may be ‘by annual subscriptions, donations, or legacies’ so increased that ere long a sum of money may be obtained” for carrying forth the Association’s social gatherings.

THE GATHERINGS CONTINUED in high spirits. At the 1863 meeting, with the Civil War in full swing, the guests included Rev. Dr. Thomas Hill, President of the University, and Prof. Joseph Lovering of the Harvard faculty. Reportedly, the festivities lasted until a “late hour.” A year later the principal guest was John A. Andrew, “His Excellency, The Governor.” Again, the meeting adjourned at “another late hour.”

Even with such eminent personages accepting the Association’s hospitality, their presence had little impact on increasing the University’s willingness to add music as an acceptable subject for study. That was to come almost a decade later. But at the meeting with President Hill in the audience, the members chose a committee of Ware and Dwight plus J.C.D. Parker, John Knowles Paine, and C.F. Shimmin to consider the HMA’s relations with the College. The group attempted a minor step forward by resolving “that the President of the Association be empowered, whenever in his judgement its services could be acceptable to the College government, to offer its aid in supervising or directing the musical exercises on academic festivals.”

Though the embers still flickered, there was no sign of a rekindled flame erupting. The HMA went one way, Harvard another. Years before, impatience with the inability to further the original objectives of the Association had bred disillusionment and discontent. Many former Pierians, who had joined expressly to advance the cause of music at Harvard, now questioned the wisdom of continuing their membership, or even continuing the organization itself. There was talk of dissolution.

The Directors responded with a trial balloon: at the next Annual Meeting they would air the issue. A lot of talk but little action led to the usual temporizing: a committee was appointed to study the problem and report its conclusions the following year. That report came in August 1846. It acknowledged the valid reasons for dissolving the Association, principally the lack of interest shown by members, the failure to exercise any influence beyond its inner circle, and the negative response of the College government to its proposals. Nevertheless, the committee asserted that the organization had shown, by its chamber music concerts, “that it does not intend always to sleep, but to rise at the proper time and show its strength and power.” And so, considering its growth from the small beginnings, the committee regarded the prospects as good as they were at the founding, despite the slippage in active interest. Recommending that the Association reawaken this interest through a greater supply of attractive musical fare, the committee implicitly rejected the dissolution motion and the matter was dropped.

There is some suspicion that the whole “dissolution” discussion was a put-up job to test the waters and increase activity. A few resignations did follow, owing to the lack of any progress toward realizing the formal Association’s goals. Yet, rather than dissolving the Association, the core group intensified its dedication to the cause and put forth greater effort to achieve its aims.

With the test passed, progress quickened. Quietly, but effectively, the Association increased its influence on the Boston musical scene. Given the leadership capabilities of several of its members, their social position, and their fondness for music, it was not surprising to find the HMA in the vanguard of concert organization and concertgoing. In the mid-sixties, the Association was the prime mover behind the formation of a symphony orchestra, known as the Harvard Orchestra. This activity returned it to the "public benefit" realm. For seventeen seasons it ran and supported a series of subscription concerts, which led to the creation of one of the world's most illustrious musical institutions, the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The Association was into its 34th year when one of its major objectives was realized: Harvard finally permitted students to choose music as an elective study. Moreover, the authorities tapped an HMA member, organist and composer John Knowles Paine, to head the Music Department. His later appointment as Professor of Music fulfilled one of the primary aims of that pioneer group that had enunciated its program that hot day in August 1837.

As these things were going on through time, the Association continued changing quarters with considerable frequency, taking its library along or finding a comfortable, interim resting place for its burgeoning collection. After Tremont Row came a room in the Melodeon on Washington Street. Then it moved to Ware's office and, for nine years, borrowed space in an alcove at the Athenaeum. Next came a pause at a Tremont Street location, which even in those years was not the ideal environment for a gentlemen's musical club and the quiet required for its library. A site at 12 Pemberton Square was somewhat more tranquil, but evidently not fully satisfactory. The Association considered renting space from the Boston Arts Club on Boylston Street - not exactly a soundproof oasis - but nothing came of the idea.

Pemberton Square remained the Association's address until the building was demolished to make way for the Suffolk County Court House. Before demolition, formal meetings were held at Pemberton Square, as were the first musical evenings, beginning in 1869. The surroundings were relatively congenial and conveniently situated for the many members who lived within walking distance. The annual dinners were held elsewhere, usually at the Parker House or Young's, a hotel of popularity and distinction. One last stopover at 11 Park Square preceded the acquisition of a permanent home. There the Association occupied an entire floor, allowing the librarian, who at the time happened to be Dwight, to reside on the premises.

Finally, in 1892, sufficiently secure with enough members of financial substance to make possible the purchase of real estate, the HMA bought a house owned by Malcolm Greenough at the corner of West Cedar and Chestnut Streets, to which it moved its belongings, its library, and its librarian. Now it had a home of its own "where music [would] be tolerated by all occupants."

If some members enjoyed affluence others suffered hardships, particularly some professional musicians. As the need for facilities increased, the annual assessment had to be raised. For the move to Park Square, the Directors recommended that dues be doubled to \$10, "as it was until within a few years past." A circular to the membership said the test question was: "Will you vote to restore the annual assessment to the old rate of ten dollars and will you abide with us in membership upon such terms?"

Most of the replies expressed willingness to go along, but others indicated that raising the fee would require them to withdraw. Violinist Julius Eichberg, who was concert-master of the Harvard Orchestra and a theater musician, was one of the latter. He wrote that he “couldn’t retain membership at the proposed rate of a \$10 assessment.” The year was 1885. Nothing was said about the stipulation in the act forty years before incorporating that authorized the “raising and holding of a fund for the benefit of indigent members.”

If there had been such a fund, it might have helped someone like John Fiske, who informed Treasurer [later President] Samuel L. Thorndike in 1875: “I remember well, even without the notice just received, that I am still in arrears for my admission fee and annual assessment, in all \$20. I wish I could forward it to you at once, but I can’t. I am so poor this winter that I am unable even to go to the [Harvard Orchestra] concerts, - or to any other concerts, though it is worse than having one’s teeth drawn to stay away. It is not ‘virtuous economy,’ but absolute incapacity to pay for a ticket that keeps me away. I fear it may be some little time longer before I can muster as much as \$20 to hand you, but you may be sure that I will settle the account as soon as possible...”

On the whole, resignations were few and came mainly from individuals who were leaving the Boston area. Essentially, the membership comprised prosperous professionals and businessmen among whom the amenities of gracious living were taken for granted. As a courtly member described it, “the Association is like any other club of well-mannered gentlemen, the difference being that rather than playing whist or reading erudite papers, they make or listen to good music.”

From time to time, members took to elaborate prose or elephantine verse to underscore a point. Facing dispossession at Pemberton Square, Charles C. Perkins wrote Dwight in 1885:

“My dear Mr. Dwight, I bemoan the sad plight
Of our time-honored Association,
Then let us show fight,
And put court-house to flight,
For the good of the club and the nation.
Though rents are so high, it is all in my eye
That no lodging for us can be found,
Then pray let us try
A fit place to espy,
By dint, Sir, of looking around.
In a quiet back street
There’s some house that is neat
Where our bodies can taste of repose.
There the members can meet
And enjoy Music sweet
As in Pemberton Square, I suppose.
“Then courage, my friend,
We will all our aid lend
To find out a suitable place,
The best way to end

All the woes the Gods send
Is to front them with equitable face.”

Dwight promptly replied in similar vein:

“Tune your harps, ye lively youth, Ye bearded minstrels old,
And show the world; not half the truth
Of our great enterprise, in sooth,
Has ever yet been told.

“Farewell, old home!

Three fell destroyers

Enact their arbitrary while;

And all to save some dainty lawyers,

And their litigious employers,

A little walk up Beacon Hill!

“I am satisfied. let’s not go too far.

I look about me for a lawyer to tell us how the matters are:

Some sharp and brow-beating annoyer,

Some wonderfully smart top-sawyer

Among the pillars of the Bar.

Perhaps he kindly will explain to our benighted apprehension

The wrong we puzzle o’er in vain,

Called ‘Right of Eminent Domain’

Which seemed so like the Devil’s invention.

Rev. James Reed was another member always ready to produce stanza upon stanza at the drop of a hat. For annual dinners and similar occasions, he could be depended on to deliver bumbling, sentimental verses such as the following, which saluted the Association’s first half-century:

“For fifty years our HMA

Has lived amid the scenes of earth,

And we are met to bless the day and

Happy thought that gave her birth.

Hers has it been, while others scoffed,

To plead sweet Music’s cause alone;

To raise her standard pure aloft,

To make the grand old masters known

Long may she live, our HMA!

Long flourish with increasing years!

And bring to earth the far-away

Celestial music of the spheres!

These dilettantish expressions, awkward and amateurish as they may seem today, reflect the flavor and style of the Association a century ago. They exude the essence of Brahmin Boston of their time, a secure, self-assured society replete with the characteristics of a select group. Good manners, good breeding, lofty principles, and an ingrained sense of taste were typical attributes of most of the members.

They were thoughtful, urbane, educated gentlemen, frequently men of wit and distinction. They knew what they wanted, whether it was the proper quality of music to cultivate and support or the right quarters in which to house it. Now that they had abandoned the public benefits and proposed to confine their activities to themselves and their guests, they turned to private undertakings for their own enlightenment and entertainment. They regarded themselves as the guardians of purity in musical expression. The composers to be revered and performed, certainly at HMA events, were the classicists, from Bach and Handel to Beethoven and Schubert. Schumann, Mendelssohn, Raff, and Weber deserved the same respect and support. But the less of Brahms, Wagner, and Berlioz, the better!

BEFORE TERMINATING its public benefits, the Association had begun struggling with the idea of increasing its schedule of social evenings. Until 1869, these occurred only once a year, on the occasion of the annual meeting and dinner. Then came the introduction of a series of periodic gatherings planned for the first Thursday of each month. At these events, music performed by members was followed by supper, with the cost per person not to exceed \$1.50. Although Dwight proclaimed the initial series “a good beginning” and urged they be made “periodical and permanent,” it took nearly two decades for this to happen. Support of sufficient magnitude was not forthcoming, however, and the evenings became on-again, off-again affairs.

They were constantly being discontinued because of insufficient interest and then resumed in the hope of attracting greater numbers. Changing to other nights of the week did little to solve the problem. Nor did a wistful appeal to members expressing the hope that a revival of these evenings might “be the means of preserving and strengthening the life of the Association” generate any significant response.

For a while the outlook was far from promising. Finally, in 1888 came a turnaround. Introduction of an outside professional ensemble, The Adamowski Quartet, as performing artists wrought the change. The season, now consisting of fortnightly programs, succeeded at last. Subscriptions rose to a high of 70. They produced enough income, the Directors believed, to allow an allocation of funds to cover the cost of the suppers as well as the engagement of professional musicians who were not Association members to provide the music on some of the evenings.

Nevertheless, the social evenings still had not found firm ground. Questions continued to arise. “Is it necessary,” asked Dwight in his 1890 presidential report, “to have so formal and elaborate a supper ...? Would it not be quite as satisfactory and pleasant, involving far less preparation, and occupying less room, if there were just a simple buffet where anyone could find a glass of beer or punch, with a bite of cheese and crackers, or at the most a sandwich?” Further, “is it desirable always to have guests as well as members in the company?” And finally, “Why is there so much difficulty in securing plenty of good music at our social meetings? We have excellent performers within our own membership; ...How can we stir up a true musical enthusiasm in the community if we do not do it among ourselves, at our own club fireside?”

Whether the success of the social evenings would last was uncertain. Some performers attracted an acceptable number of listeners; others did not. But the mechanism for these musical soirees had been established, and it continues to the present day. Filling it brought forth a wide variety of names, both members and non-members. Early performers included Arthur Foote, Charles

Martin Loeffler, the critics Louis Elson and William Apthorp, a male chorus from the Apollo Club, the Cecilia Society, the Hoffman Quartet, B.J. Lang, Edward Burlingame Hill, Otto Dressel, Ernst Perabo, and others of comparable distinction.

The music, of course, centered on the classics - Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn, and Schumann, plus compositions by HMA members such as Foote and Percy Lee Atherton. Numerous proposals were advanced to draw a larger number of members to the gatherings. Ladies were invited as guests, setting the stage for the institution of Ladies Night which eventually led to the election of the Association's first female members. One effective innovation came in 1908 from the publisher George H. Mifflin: a series of bi-weekly afternoon teas at which members performed for an audience of other members plus their guests, often including ladies.

The venture succeeded in part because of the amusing invitations from the host, for example: "The Association can summon from its ranks composers, singers, instrumentalists, and critics, and whether the feature of the afternoon be song, piano, stringed instrument, or flute, the artist will be glad to hear our comments, or at least see how the subject impresses us. (He'll see!) Perhaps a composer will give us - what shall we call it? - a first hearing of his latest work, and then the instrumentalists and singers will make us more familiar with, for instance, some new opera, or a series of songs, or a suite unfamiliar to most of us; or give us certain works of great composers which, taken together, have a particular interest. As for the critics, they have much to tell us which we shall be eager to hear; indeed, the possibility, from them, quite begs all description! Please keep this announcement as a constant reminder, and also as a special source of worry to you, in case your ill luck makes you miss any [program] ..."

Another invitation urged: "Do come early. You see the music must begin at five o'clock, as many of the members cannot stay late. These members, whenever they come, must be given tea, and if they come late and get tea at once, the music must wait; and that doesn't soothe the performers! If, on the other hand, the members have to wait, that doesn't soothe the members! Therefore, as the committee are particularly eager ...to have everyone soothed and then enthusiastic, they modestly, and at the same time eagerly, beg that all will make an effort to come as soon after four as possible, so that we may have a good... talk together before the music begins..."

On occasion, outside guests performed together with members at these teatime affairs. The Boston Opera Company's soprano, Alice Nielsen, sang arias of Mozart and Puccini, accompanied by HMA member Wallace Goodrich. A large audience responded enthusiastically. Owing to the interest, the concerts continued for seven seasons. Programs varied between music and talks, frequently combining the two. Professor Hill explained how the study of music history lent fresh perspectives to current views on music, and on a subsequent occasion expatiated on one of his favorite subjects, the historical import of Cesar Franck.

Songs and other music composed by Association members frequently graced the programs. The surroundings contributed to the pleasantries. They were the very same as the site of the current social evenings. Then, as now, books and musical scores filled the shelves lining the walls, and the presence of fireplaces, paintings, plants, and memorabilia made the setting friendly and congenial.

Since renovation of the quarters in 1907, the former Greenough residence has been an ideal place for intimate musical events. Even in the previous 15 years, it had provided a warm background for entertaining and honoring visiting musical dignitaries. Dvorak was present at the inauguration of the new home in November 1892. Karl Gericke, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was honored there on two separate occasions. His successors, Karl Muck, Henri Rabaud, and Pierre Monteux, received similar tributes. Other well-known visitors feted in these quarters included the composers d'Indy and Coleridge-Taylor, the virtuoso pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni, and the pianist Ethel Leginska.

OVER THE YEARS, a number of individuals contributed significantly to keeping the Association's ideals and programs afloat. Many of these men at one time or another held the presidency. Dwight was perhaps foremost in this group, but was certainly not alone. For more than a century, there was a Ware on the membership list. After Henry Jr., the first president, whose father had been acting president of Harvard College, came a brother, Rev. William Ware, whose own son, Henry Ware, held several principal offices in the Association including an 18-year stint as librarian. There were also a John Ware and C.P. Ware, father of another Henry Ware, who was treasurer for a dozen years and later secretary for eleven. This Henry Ware, who died in 1956, was the last in the family line.

Other pre-eminent members of the Association, beyond the original organizing group, included Henry White Pickering, president from 1852 to 1872; Samuel Lothrop Thorndike, who in 1894 succeeded Dwight's 20-year presidency; Samuel Wood Langmaid, who followed Thorndike in 1902 for a decade; and later Courtenay Guild, who held office for a quarter of a century, followed for two years by G. Wallace Woodworth (Harvard's beloved "Woody") before the dapper, George Apleyish Richard Wait settled in for 31 years in 1948. (Wait is said to have considered dissolving the nominating committee if it proposed a nominee other than himself.)

All these men left distinctive marks on the society. Nor were they a lone set. Ernest Hiler, an attorney and amateur musician, who for years served as librarian and entertainment committee chairman, was another important contributor. So were Bernard Roelker and Dr. Henry Bowditch. Hiler was responsible for development of the Marsh Room, which has played so prominent a role in the Association's life at its Chestnut Street location. A man of strong powers of persuasion, he was a friend of Julia M. Marsh, widow of Charles Marsh of the Jordan March Company.

Hiler interested Mrs. Marsh in the Association, an interest reflected in her will which was filed for probate in the Suffolk County Court House on November 18, 1908 (twenty-three years after that Court's new building had forced the HMA out of Pemberton Square). Mrs. Marsh bequeathed her piano, two violins, mantel vases, and reception hall clock together with paintings and family portraits to the Association. The legacy included a vase of wood from the frigate Constitution. She further bequeathed a sum of \$75,000, the income from which was to assure a place where her belongings would be properly hung, protected, and preserved. The will stipulated that room and contents be accessible to deserving students of music and others - they have been ever since.

George Mifflin's contributions have already been noted. Both Charles F. Atkinson and Dr. Charles W. Galloupe, as did Henry Gasset Jr., left bequests to the Association which have

grown considerably. And Samuel Jennison Jr. advanced a valuable idea when he proposed in 1852 that the Association “be authorized annually to offer a Prize of the value of Dollars, in medal or money at the election of the winner, for the best original four or five-part glee (or anthem, or for each), the manuscript, after publication to become the property of the Society ...”

Like the Association’s original hope for music at Harvard, Jennison’s proposal languished. It finally saw the light of day a little over a century later. In the fall of 1957, the Directors invited young composers to submit credentials for qualifying for a chamber-music commission. The following March, four young men in their thirties were awarded \$500 each to produce a work of ten to thirty minutes’ duration. They were John David Kraehenbuehl, Robert Walter Moevs, William Overton Smith, and Chaloner Porter Spencer. Kraehenbuehl composed a work for tenor, soprano, flute, bassoon, trombone, violin, and cello; Moevs a sonata for solo violin; Smith a quartet for piano, clarinet, violin, and cello; and Spencer a string quartet. All except the Moevs sonata were performed at a regular Friday social evening on October 30, 1959.

This commissioning program remains very much alive. Commissions have gone to a number of composers, some neither young nor unknown. The ranks include Walter Piston, Peter Maxwell Davies, Alan Hovhannes, Daniel Pinkham, Arthur Berger, Alvin Eder, Werner Janssen, and the HMA.’s own John Bavicchi and Thomas McGah. For the sesquicentennial celebration, the Association commissioned a string quartet from the Cambridge composer and Pulitzer prizewinner, John Harbison. In the 1980’s, the Association has backed its support of fine music with numerous grants to local musical groups for the purpose of lightening their financial burdens. Beneficiaries have included Banchetto Musicale, the Boston Symphony Youth Activities, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, Boston Muska Viva, the Community Music Center of Boston, the Elma Lewis School, Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra (today’s version of the Pierian Sodality), Longy School of Music, New England Conservatory, and Young Audiences of Massachusetts.

The latest recipients of the Association’s encouragement are secondary school students in Boston and Cambridge. Talented young musicians were made eligible for a new set of HMA Achievement Awards ranging from \$100 to \$500. Approved by Directors in September 1984, the program conferred its initial prizes a year later, one first, three second, and three third prizes. Nehemiah Richardson, a talented cellist who won the \$500 first prize, shared the spotlight with the six other prize-winners at a special concert in the Association’s home on May 8, 1986.

A fund-raising effort tied to the sesquicentennial had as its objective the desire to expand this program and reach beyond Boston and Cambridge for exceptional young instrumentalists, vocalists, and composers. Like the commissions and grants, these Achievement Awards advance the Association’s interest in promoting musical excellence throughout the area. Finding funds for commissions, grants, and awards took little effort. From the beginning, despite a number of impecunious members, it was seldom a problem to fill the coffers of the Association or to find support for an idea or project that attracted the interest of the members.

As the sesquicentennial neared, the collective value of legacies and gifts received through the years reached more than \$2 million dollars. As one member quipped: “We’re the Getty Museum East. We have more money than we know what to do with!”

On another front, the Association reached social maturity in the early 1980's. Until 1983, it was a male stronghold. Although there had been an annual Ladies Night for years and ladies had been invited to some of the Mifflin teas and were now welcome at most of the social evenings, membership in the HMA was restricted to gentlemen, mostly of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant lineage. As late as 1947, a member discussing a potential guest participant in an HMA music-making activity wrote, "Although he is of the 'chosen people' his manners are excellent and he is never guilty of any unpleasant or undesirable attitudes."

Such restrictive views were common in the last century and on up through World War II. Considered neither undemocratic nor bigoted, their hand-maidens, anti-Irish and anti-union sentiments, were fodder for fun with no harm intended. The Rev. James Reed poked his wry annual-dinner verses of 1906 at the Boston Board of Aldermen, a municipal body then very much involved in the city's governance. Inquired the clergyman for the delectation of his fellow HMA members:

"Shall Boston's reputation be suffered to die out?
Shall music be a lost art in our city?
'No, not if we can help it, and we know what we're about,'
Said the aldermen, appointing a committee.
There was Alderman O'Flaherty and Alderman Dugan,
And Aldermen O'Brien, Flynn and Brady;
To whom the council added Messrs. Quinn and Callahan,
O'Sullivan, O'Donnell and O'Grady. The honorable gentlemen were chosen to protect
The City from bad music and musicians,
Each instrument and player they would carefully inspect,
And keep the standard up to our traditions.
So all the hurdy-gurdies, organ-grinders,
German bands were summoned to a strict examination.
They came a motley company of tramps from foreign lands,
All tremulous with fear and expectation.
Here comes a modest organ-man from Italy's far shore,
His face is brown, his figure short and chunky,
He bows and scrapes, and slowly passes thro' the open door,
Then disappears; and with him goes a monkey.

The chairman called to order in a most emphatic voice,
And pounded with his gavel on the table
'Attention gentlemen!' he said, 'prepare to make your choice
Among these artists, as you may be able.'
'Step forward, man,' he blandly beckoned to the candidate,
'Tune up your organ, play a lively ditty.
Grind out your very sweetest strains,
Fear not, nor hesitate, and listen, gentlemen of the committee.'
The dolefullest of melancholy dirges smote the air,
Even the monkey bowed his head in sadness.
The whole committee eyed each other with profound despair,
They had no words to tell that organ's badness.

‘What shall we do?’ said Callahan, ‘What shall we do?’ said Flynn.
‘Let’s turn him down’ said one and then another.
‘Go softly, softly, gentlemen,’ quoth secretary Quinn,
‘For is he not a voter and a brother?’
‘He’s one of my constituents, I’m bound to put him through,
I beg you, show a little fellow-feeling.
You can’t expect a perfect organ and a monkey too,
To ask for such a thing is not square dealing.’
It was a puzzling question; but at last the answer came,
When after long and serious communion
They voted that the man might play, if he could get his name
Accepted by an Organ-grinders’ Union.”

Gradually, the barriers withered and men of other racial identity and religious persuasion were admitted to the fold. Then in 1983, catching up with developments in the world beyond its walls, the Association elected three women to membership. Marion Eiseman, widow of long-time member Philip Eiseman, was the first. The others were Joan Bok, a lawyer actively engaged in the corporate world, and Luise Vosgerchian, former chairman of Harvard’s music department. Additional women subsequently joined these pioneers as their numbers among the membership slowly increased.

AN ORGANISM or institution that does not grow over a 150-year span is not likely to survive. Despite the anachronisms surrounding it, the Harvard Musical Association has grown indeed. It is a unique organization; nothing like it is known to exist in the world of music; no other city in this country or abroad has anything resembling it. There are social clubs everywhere, to be sure; there are musical groups and clubs of many kinds in many places; but none spins the numerous, diverse goals, people, and practices into a web that in any way replicates the HMA. Its growth - from a small body of devoted Harvard under- graduates and alumni concerned over the College’s snubbing of music, to a larger collection of civic and social leaders immersed in the enjoyment, preservation, encouragement, and support of high musical standards - has been a long process.

But it has occurred, even with obstacles and disappointing setbacks, and without public fanfare, often in an atmosphere of privacy. The Association is a rare specimen of musico/social identity. Its contributions, musical conscience, and activities have been critical factors in shaping the classical music traditions of Boston.

Undertakings

By 1850 musical activity around Boston was extensive enough to warrant construction of a large concert hall. Underscoring the urgency of the need was the inability of the showman, P.T. Barnum, to find a Boston facility capable of accommodating the throngs eager to take in his fabled attraction, the prima donna Jenny Lind.

The Musical Fund Society, the first orchestra of professional musicians in the area, showed interest in building a concert hall but could not obtain sufficient public support to make a go of it. Behind the Society's effort was Dr. Jabez Baxter Upham, a physician, musician, and entrepreneur, who was also a member of the Harvard Musical Association. When the Society proved unable to round up the necessary backing, Dr. Upham turned to his fellow members of the HMA.

At the 1851 HMA annual meeting, Dr. Upham invited the Association to throw its weight behind the construction of an adequately-sized music hall. Acceptance was instant, and a committee was designated to follow through. In addition to Dr. Upham, its members were Charles C. Perkins, Robert E. Apthorp, George Derby, and, as always, John S. Dwight. Less than a month later - on Washington's Birthday actually - the committee presented four plans for HMA consideration. The one that seemed to make the most sense both to the committee and the membership was the purchase of the Bumstead estate on what is now Hamilton Place.

The site had once been the residence of Adino Paddock, a Tory coach-maker best remembered for planting the row of elms imported from England on the Tremont Street side of the Common. When Paddock left Boston with the Royalists, the property was acquired by another coach-maker, John Bumstead, for whom the site was named. In its report urging the purchase, the committee noted: "The Bumstead Lot is bounded on the N.W. by Hamilton & Bumstead Places from the latter of which it is approached; on the S.W. by a passageway leading to Winter Street; (these two avenues being the two contemplated entrances to the Hall); S.E. by the Marlboro' Chapel & N.E. by the Bromfield House, on the North side of which is a third passageway through which carriages would pass out after dropping visitors at the foot of Bumstead Place."

The lot occupied more than 20,000 square feet and was purchasable at a price of \$3 per square foot. This included a right of way through the three avenues. To buy the land and begin construction necessitated an initial outlay of approximately \$100,000. Led by Dr. Upham's enthusiasm, HMA members quickly subscribed roughly one-fourth of the amount, and the rest was raised within sixty days.

Meanwhile, a committee comprising George S. Hillard, Jonas Chickering, Robert E. Apthorp, George Derby, and Dr. Upham, all HMA members, engaged the architect, George Snell, to draw up preliminary plans for the building. By June, a company was formed with Charles P. Curtis as president. But Curtis soon stepped down and was succeeded by Dr. Upham who applied his customary vigor and drive to bring the what was to become the Music Hall into reality.

Construction was rapid. Less than two years after Dr. Upham appealed to the HMA for support, the hall opened on November 20, 1852, with a gala musical festival. Even before opening, Dwight wrote extensively and glowingly about the new facility. For the first time, he said,

Boston had a hall containing “comfortable seats.” He found the swinging doors noiseless and admired the “agreeable” new gas lighting system. (The outer walls of the Music Hall still stand but now house the Orpheum Theater, whose rock concerts are a far cry from the premises’ original intent.)

Many of Boston’s premier musical organizations of the day performed in the festival: the Handel & Haydn Society, the Musical Fund Society, the Germania Serenade Band, the Musical Education Society, and the German Liedertafel. There were also a number of prominent singers with imposing Italian names: Mme. Marietta Alboni touted as “the greatest contralto - greatest in the world with whom no one is ever compared, unless it be Angri,” Signores Sangiovanni, Roviere, and Arditì.

It was a glamorous fete. After it came many enjoyable, if not always memorable, musical experiences. Local and traveling organizations put the Music Hall to frequent use. It was the Symphony Hall of its day and a boon to the city’s musical life. The Orchestral Union gave concerts there on Wednesday afternoons. Its band of forty players presented mixed programs of overtures, perhaps a symphony, waltzes, selections from opera, and pieces of popular music. The Civil War made that ensemble its victim, tapping many of its instrumentalists for service.

Among the visiting forces that performed in the Hall, two lent particular cachet to the Boston musical scene. The Germania Musical Society included many excellent musicians compelled to flee their homelands by the revolutions of 1848. Fifty strong, the Society gave six years of concerts up and down the Eastern seaboard, scoring its greatest triumphs on Boston soil. This was the ensemble that introduced to Bostonians the “Tannhauser” overture, the great C-major Symphony of Franz Schubert, and, with the choristers of the Handel & Haydn Society, the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. Despite its successes, the orchestra disbanded in 1854.

The Mendelssohn Quintette Club was around longer, its orchestra having lasted almost half a century. For many years between 1849 and 1895, the Club offered annual subscription series of eight programs in Boston. The city was one of its favorites because of its consistent support year after year. The Club attained a fine reputation for both its performing abilities and its repertoire. Program choices were of the highest quality, and soloists of distinction appeared at its concerts. Among the pianists were Ernst Perabo, Otto Dressel, B.J. Lang, and Hugo Leonhard, while vocal guests included Christine Nillson, Adelaide Phillips, and Annie Louise Cary.

Once completed, the Music Hall became the Boston home of both the Germania orchestra and the Mendelssohn Quintette Club. If the Association had done nothing more, it certainly commanded the respect of Boston’s music lovers by assuring provision of an important element of musical life. That backing did not dissipate with erection of the Music Hall. In fact, completion of the Hall touched off thoughts among HMA members about how they might enhance the premises. Inevitably the conclusion was reached that what the Hall needed most was a great pipe organ, and the indefatigable Dr. Upham was dispatched to Europe to consult the best-known organ builders.

After exploring and questioning thoroughly, he settled on Walcker & Co, located in Ludwigsburg, Germany. The Walckers took five years to build an instrument containing 89 registers and 5,474 pipes. When finished in 1862, the \$60,000 organ had to be transported to this

side of the Atlantic. Successfully evading Confederate vessels, it arrived safely in Boston and, after seven months of installation work was fully ensconced in the Music Hall.

The organ was a handsome instrument, with a casing splendidly carved by the New York firm of Herter Bros. With a glorious sound, it was then the largest specimen of its kind in the United States and fourth largest in the world. As with the Music Hall itself, the Association had quietly but effectively made a valuable contribution to music in Boston. The instrument is now located in the Memorial Music Hall in Methuen, Mass. built in 1909 expressly to house it, and is still used for annual concert series.

One more major undertaking kept the Harvard Musical Association in the musical spotlight during the latter years of the nineteenth century: fostering of the city's first homegrown symphony orchestra.

THE CIVIL WAR “well-nigh killed music in Boston,” wrote William F. Apthorp in the *Boston Transcript* nearly 25 years after Appomattox, and unless “some stronger power stepped in, orchestral music... would die outright of sheer inanition.” The need for conscripts had not only drained the Orchestral Union; it further dried up most other forms of public musical life. The Union's valiant struggle to hang on was doomed. In the long run, it could not make it, and by war's end orchestral music had just about expired. But there was breath left, supplied by the Harvard Musical Association. As Apthorp reported, the Association “proved itself equal to the emergency.”

Taking the matter to heart, HMA engaged in discussions and plans for creating and backing a symphony orchestra. The zeal that had given Boston a music hall and a unique organ reappeared. On December 28, three days before the close of 1865, the Harvard Orchestra, latest project of the HMA, made its initial appearance in the Music Hall. For seventeen seasons, this well-meaning, dedicated, often bumbling venture gave Boston a chance to hear some of the highest-quality orchestral music. Unfortunately, the level of performance more often than not failed to measure up to the distinctiveness of the fare. But it filled a vacuum and a need. Many listeners welcomed the opportunity to hear the great works of the classical literature, even though they had no illusions about the playing.

Naturally, Dwight was in the middle of the action, having been appointed in January, 1865 to a committee to consider how orchestral activity might be resuscitated in Boston. He was also chosen to manage the concerts, a role unsuited to an individual of his narrow, conservative perspectives. Adamantly opposed to most all new music, Dwight deplored the pressure to include “works of Liszt and Berlioz and Wagner, and other living composers less notorious, into concerts” intended to preserve “the purest standards.” He held that the “very life of the institution is endangered the moment we lose sight of this first central aim.”

This point of view, which dominated the programming, ultimately created considerable dissatisfaction among a large corps of subscribers. For the time being, however, Dwight was able to write eagerly in the musical journal he then edited (another HMA-supported venture to be discussed presently): “At last a hope has sprung up ... the Harvard Musical Association, a

society of gentlemen interested in music simply on the grounds of higher culture, wishing to have it take its equal rank among the ‘humanities ‘...announces a series of six ‘Symphony Concerts.’ The plan has some hopeful features, which entitle it to peculiar consideration.”

But all was not silken splendor. Originally composed of fifty players, the Harvard Orchestra grew to sixty-two; yet desired instruments were not always available.” When a harp was needed in the orchestra,” Arthur Foote wrote some time later, “as there was no harp player in town, one of us would do the best we could to replace it by playing its part on an upright piano.” Apthorp helped out by taking up the cymbals, Foote recalled, when the Orchestra played Phaeton by Saint-Saens for the first time. Dwight commented in his journal in mid-February 1866 that “the band were not so well up in their parts; in one instance, important instruments were unwittingly or wisely silent...”

Presiding over the ensemble with its mixed talent (some of it excellent, corralled from the theater musicians around town) was a tall, long-armed, adequate conductor, Carl Zerrahn. Having begun as a flutist, Zerrahn was a competent musician without much panache who had acquired a mass of conducting experience. He had been in charge of the Orchestral Union, the Handel & Haydn Society, and the Worcester festivals. Amiable and considerate of the limitations of the fledgling performers under his leadership, he never engaged in berating his players. Foote regarded him as “just the man for that time and for dealing successfully with an inferior orchestra.”

Otto Dressel also had considerable uneasiness about Zerrahn. On a mission to find music in Europe for the HMA library, he wrote Dwight: “There is nothing to hope for the advance of musical understanding in Boston under the prestige of a Z and it seems a pity that you are committed to him to such a degree; he seems to have you completely under his thumb ...

“In Leipsic there is the leader of the ‘Euterpe,’ a young man of remarkable talent as a leader, a good pianist and an excellent hand at drilling vocal choruses and his concertmaster is a most excellent violinist...both I think would be very willing to come - if of course you could warrant them a living. But how to get rid of Z ...[his] powers of intrigue are great...”

Dressel’s letter said that he considered the Orchestra “a bad one.” The concerts were held on Thursday afternoons, preceded by a public rehearsal the previous Tuesday. Even with the shortcomings of the performances, the early response of the HMA members, their friends and guests, and the public was positive. After an initial season of six concerts, the series was expanded to eight and later to ten. At first, season tickets cost \$6; eventually they went to \$10.

The quality problem, as often, resulted from an insufficiency of funds. Ticket sales were not open to the public; consequently public appeals for financial assistance could not be made. Only Association members could subscribe for seats. If others were permitted to do so, it was reasoned, the familiar box-office scramble would follow, and the members who had made the enterprise possible might find themselves deprived of choice seating locations.

So the public had to work through Association members to gain access to the concerts. Members, their friends, and guests took up approximately half the Music Hall seats, leaving another half, but not the prime locations, available for outsiders. This system ensured support for the series, for members assumed the responsibility for acquiring a given number of subscriptions. However,

it necessarily put a damper on fund-raising and prevented the Association and the Orchestra from obtaining the additional manpower and rehearsal time needed to refine and polish the performances.

The concerts did, however, keep alive an interest in the best orchestral music of the time. Controlling the programming was a music committee originally composed of Dwight, Samuel Jennison, and Dr. F. E. Oliver. Later Dressel and J. C. D. Parker were added, and over the years a number of Association members, high in standing in music and business, served their turns. Among them were Arthur Foote, B.J. Lang, John Knowles Paine, Hugo Leonhard, and William F. Apthorp.

Although Apthorp termed the Orchestra a “scratch” aggregation, it boasted a number of topflight musicians, especially in the string sections. The ensemble presented a repertoire essentially of a conservative cast. Yet it introduced a considerable amount of music previously unknown to Boston. Zerrahn and the Orchestra brought Bostonians the first performance of the Brahms Second Symphony in 1879. Five years earlier, with Hugo Leonhard as soloist, they presented the first local rendering of the Mozart Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491, and five days afterward the first orchestral presentation here of Schumann’s “Das Paradies und die Peri”, op. 50.

The Cecilia Society, a mixed 100-voice chorus created by the Association and conducted by Lang, assisted in the Schumann. But the real shape of the repertoire could be judged from that opening program of December 28, 1865. It included the *Euryanthe* Overture of Weber, the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Bach Chaconne for solo violin, the Mozart G minor Symphony, K. 550, and similar entries of distinction. Even if guilty of old-fogeyism, this was all proven musical fare whose unique quality none could question.

Instrumental soloists and choral groups joined in almost every concert. Local talent tended to volunteer its services, and the total roster of both locals and imports contained an impressive list of names. Carl Rosa, Camilla Urso, Lang, Dressel, Leonhard, Perabo, Foote, George Henschel, and Leopold Damrosch were some of the headline guest artists.

There was always some impressive feature to attract attention, as the programs spared no effort to espouse the HMA’s dedication to preserving the highest musical culture. For the first few years the concerts turned a profit, with the surplus funds put away into a Concert Fund as a contingency for rainy days.

In 1873, however, the profits turned into losses. Prospects continued to dim, deficits increased, and superior competitors such as the famed Theodore Thomas Orchestra drew away portions of the audience with their elegant playing and adventurous programming. In his report on the Orchestra’s 1873-74 season, Dwight commented: “For the first time in the nine years of their history, the Symphony Concerts have resulted in a pecuniary loss. It was clear to the Committee from the beginning of the season, that it would be so; yet, in spite of this discouragement, it was resolved to make the Concerts as good as possible, the honor of the Association being of more account than mere success financially...”

The concerts continued, the Committee feeling at that time that they were of such importance that they must go on even with extra effort and sacrifice. The fear, Dwight said, was that other

enterprises “not projected in the same spirit, nor seeking the same ends as our own” might move into the field. But despite the eagerness of some members [mainly Dwight] to keep the concerts going, the handwriting on the wall was large.

A possible solution to the problem loomed in the spring of 1876. B.J. Lang informed the committee that Hans von Bulow, the eminent German pianist and conductor who was then touring the United States, would be willing to extend his visit under the right circumstances to direct the Orchestra’s 1876-77 season. Foregoing his antipathy to the music of Wagner, Brahms, and Liszt which von Bulow championed, Dwight wrote the distinguished visitor to inquire about the terms and conditions under which he would agree to accept the post. A charming reply written in halting French came a week later. Von Bulow was flattered by the invitation but the willingness of which he had spoken to Lang had been shaken by the state of his health, the fear that at his age he could not adjust to the climate, and private considerations connected with his relations in Europe. For Dwight von Bulow’s declining the opportunity probably avoided a dilemma. How he would have endured von Bulow’s programming is not difficult to guess.

By 1878 the Concert Fund which had once stood at \$6,500, had shrunken to a little more than \$1,000. Many HMA members favored abandoning the enterprise altogether. A majority of the concert committee shared this view. Dwight alone stood firm against them. Various ideas for economies were advanced, such as dividing the concerts between the Music Hall and Tremont Temple, or trimming the length of the series and moving it to a smaller hall at reduced ticket prices.

The proposals were not well received. Writing from Newport, Charles C. Perkins called removal from the Music Hall “disloyal,” “impolitic” and “unjustified on musical grounds.” He offered to resign from the Association if the plan persisted and declined to take tickets for concerts at the Temple.

Season after season the financial situation of the Orchestra worsened. Alternative possibilities began to be mentioned; and after another losing season in 1880-81, Henry Lee Higginson, an HMA member, purchased space in the newspapers in the spring of 1881 to announce a plan he had developed as an individual to assure Boston music lovers of continuing symphony concerts. His announcement said:

“Notwithstanding the development of musical taste in Boston, we have never yet possessed a full and permanent orchestra, offering the best music at low prices, such as may be found in all the large European cities, or even in the smaller musical centres of Germany. The essential condition of such orchestras is their stability, whereas ours are necessarily shifting and uncertain, because we are dependent upon musicians whose work and time are largely pledged elsewhere.

“To obviate this difficulty the following plan is offered. It is an effort made simply in the interest of good music, and though individual inasmuch as it is independent of societies or clubs, it is in no way antagonistic to any previously existing musical organization. Indeed, the first step as well as the natural impulse in announcing a new musical project, is to thank those who have brought us where we now stand. What- ever may be done in the future, to the Handel and Haydn Society and to the Harvard Musical Association we all owe the greater part of our home education in music of a high character. Can we forget either how admirably their work has been supplemented

by the taste and critical judgment of Mr. John S. Dwight, and by the artists who have identified themselves with the same cause in Boston? These have been our teachers. We build on foundations they have laid...

“The orchestra is to number sixty selected musicians; their time, so far as required for careful training and for a given number of concerts, to be engaged in advance. Mr. Georg Henschel will be the conductor for the coming season. “The concerts will be twenty in number, given in the Musical Hall on Saturday evenings, from the middle of October to the middle of March.

“The intention is that this orchestra shall be made permanent here, and shall be called ‘The Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Thus, in 1881, after 16 years of well-meaning but makeshift orchestral effort, Boston was to acquire a full-time, professional symphonic ensemble. For all its dedication and noble intentions, the Harvard Orchestra had too many deficiencies to fill the bill. With its musicians’ primary obligation to other employers, it could not develop the elegance expected of a permanent body. It could not hope to compete against the kind of institution Higginson contemplated.

Long after the Harvard Orchestra’s final concert in April 1882, George O.G. Coale, a one-time president of the HMA, recalled for members that “the committee in charge of the concerts changed somewhat from year to year [but] was really under the control of... Dwight who made trouble from time to time by arbitrarily changing the program after it had been adopted, to make it conform to his very conservative notions.” Nevertheless, when orchestral music needed leadership and support in the bleak artistic decades after the Civil War, the Harvard Music Association had risen to the occasion.

WITH THE DISSOLUTION of the Harvard Orchestra after its final, five- concert season in 1881-82, the Association withdrew from public view, this time permanently, and locked itself into a clublike existence. HMA concerned itself chiefly with its quarters, library, and social occasions built around music-making for the members’ pleasure. The era of “public benefits” that had begun with the Cambridge lectures on musical subjects in 1840 came to an end.

From behind its walls, nonetheless, the HMA continued to support any move to elevate musical practice in Boston. And that included all-out backing for Higginson’s new symphonic adventure. One project behind which the Association had put its weight spanned the period that produced the Music Hall and the Harvard Orchestra concerts. From 1852 to 1881, the members gave loyal, active support to the music journal established by John S. Dwight.

During its lifetime, *Dwight’s Music Journal*, was a forceful voice for education and raising musical taste. But like anything with which Dwight was associated, the journal had no interest in catering to popular desires. That is why it never really succeeded. Dwight would not lower his sights to assure his journal’s commercial viability. As Dwight planned the project, he discussed his intentions with many members of the Association and finally issued a circular that stressed his determination to produce a superior kind of musical periodical.

When Dwight presented his idea formally at the 1852 HMA annual meeting, he asked for a fund to guarantee against loss for a year while he established a vehicle that would concentrate on music and the allied arts, which he would both edit and publish. The membership did not take action that evening, but a month later it overwhelmingly adopted a resolution “that we heartily approve the plan of our associate, Mr. John S. Dwight, for establishing and editing a Musical Journal; and that every member of the Association is earnestly called upon to use his best endeavors to ensure its success by procuring subscriptions, or by becoming responsible for a certain number of copies, or by any other means.”

Throughout the life of the journal, HMA members did their utmost to recruit subscribers as well as to give Dwight business advice. But from the start the publication bore the stigma of elitism that diminished its chances for prospering. The content, to be sure, always remained of a high order. Dwight’s own writings accented the music of the masters, but also commented on the music of the moment. Articles came from abroad and there were also translations from European journals and correspondence from the Continent’s major musical centers as well as reports from several cities in this country. Whether it was the most authoritative periodical in its field is open to debate, but certainly the journal’s contents were taken seriously.

In 1859, the music publishers Oliver Ditson and Co. took over publication of the journal, retaining Dwight as editor while adding advertisements and introducing music scores in each issue. Dwight made the musical choices mainly from works by the old masters. A year after Ditson became publisher, Dwight took a sabbatical in Europe to study music, and Henry Ware filled in as editor. On return from Europe, Dwight resumed editorship of the journal and for a time also served as music critic of the *Boston Transcript*.

By 1879 Ditson no longer wished to run a marginal proposition. The company desired to make the journal more popular to improve its financial prospects. Opposed to Ditson’s conditions, Dwight refused and took his periodical to another publisher. The new publisher, Houghton, Osgood & Co., trimmed its size and reduced the frequency of publication while allowing Dwight to present even more elite material. Soon it was evident that a sufficient audience would not be forthcoming for a publication of such exclusivity, and the venture expired in September 1881, shortly before Boston’s new symphony orchestra was born.

When the journal ceased publication, expressions of sympathy came from many sides mingled with criticisms of the editor’s extreme conservatism. Less than a year before the paper’s demise, a concert was given to honor Dwight. In response, he wrote: “What you would honor in me is simply the high purpose, the honesty, and the consistent perseverance of my course. To this, and to nothing more, can I lay claim. When my work began, music was esteemed at its true worth by very few among us. I simply preached the faith that was within me. Now we are almost a musical people.”

The concert program fitted the Dwight formula perfectly: the Beethoven Fifth Symphony, Schubert’s “Twenty-third Psalm,” a Bach concerto, Schumann’s *Konzertstueck*, selections from Beethoven’s “Fidelio,” and a Mendelssohn overture. Of the concert, Dwight wrote in the journal: “Never was a finer programme, either intrinsically or in its fitness for the occasion, presented in Boston; never a more conscientious con amore rendering, seldom one with finer means, and by all artists who had kindly, eagerly, offered their cooperation freely...”

The “finer means” may have been carrying it a bit too far, for the orchestra was the one Arthur Foote had dubbed “inferior,” the Harvard Orchestra under Carl Zerrahn. But the emotional reaction showed how greatly the gesture and the event had moved Dwight. As John Howard Tasker put it in his, *Our American Music*, “He [Dwight] was the foe of humbug, of charlatanism, and though he made some grave errors, he generally knew what he was talking about.” It was a fascinating era for classical music in Boston.

Meanwhile, the HMA social evenings were constantly gaining new stature. Members capable of performing and outside individuals and groups provided a quality of chamber music not widely heard in the Boston area. On New Year’s Eve 1897, for instance, members and their guests were entertained in the Association’s quarters by the Kneisel Quartet, the country’s preeminent string quartet at the time. In addition, a number of artists who later attained great distinction in American music circles gave their earliest domestic recitals at the HMA. Among them were the pianists Egon Petri, E. Robert Schmitz, and Irene Scharrar, a cousin of Myra Hess; the cellist Emanuel Feuermann; the Griller Quartet; and the fabled harpsichordist Wanda Landowska. (It is believed that Landowska made her American debut before the HMA.)

Others who appeared at social evenings before developing their reputations included the pianist Jan Smeterlin, the violinist Isaac Stern (who also performed at an annual dinner), violinist Carroll Glenn, the cellists Ray Garbousova and Maurice Eisenberg, pianists Ania Dorfman and Beveridge Webster, the duo-piano team Pierre Luboschutz and Genia Nemenoff, the Gordon String Quartet, the Compinsky Trio, the Roth Quartet, and the Stradivarius Quartet. Deep in the Association’s records is the information that each of these individuals and groups performed for a fee of from \$100 to \$150. Even discounting the inflations along the way, Stern’s fee was a far cry from the \$10,000 and more that he commanded in the 1980’s as well as the current HMA scale of \$800 for soloists, an additional \$100 for an accompanist, \$1,050 for trios, and \$1,400 for quartets and quintets.

In years to come, ensembles such as the Mendelssohn Quartet and the Empire Brass can be expected to repeat the progress of others who appeared in their youth before the HMA audience. The house on Chestnut Street has been an important early stop on the road to many an illustrious career.

FROM ITS EARLIEST days, many members of the Association not only liked to listen to music but also enjoyed making it. Through the years, the founders and many among their successors continued an interest in playing a musical instrument. Despite occasions of impromptu, informal playing together, for more than a century there was no effort to organize an activity that might regularize participation in music making. Finally, in March 1947, HMA members received the following communication from John Codman, realtor, flutist, and at the time a member of the Association’s Board of Directors. “Your Board of Directors believes,” Codman said, “that some members of the Association who play orchestral instruments might enjoy playing together at the Club House. It is proposed therefore to organize an orchestra - if enough are interested - to meet weekly or twice a month in the evening and play for pleasure and possibly for the entertainment of the Association after the Annual Dinner... As this project is purely for fun, no more difficult

music will be attempted than the group can perform easily. Don't be bashful, dust off that old fiddle and come along. You are certain to find someone there who plays worse than you do ..."

Thus began "orchestra night," an evening for amateurs to have a good time traipsing through the golden fields of orchestral literature. For forty years since then, dozens of individuals, most of them toting instrument cases, have climbed the winding staircase at the HMA on alternate Fridays from October into May to settle down in the Marsh Room for another session of making music for sheer enjoyment. Members and their guests have entertained themselves sight-reading great works of the past and present. Full of warmth and vitality, the meetings exude a special charm. To the participants, they have offered a chance for a stimulating musical experience plus a sense of fulfillment.

Positive replies to the Codman memorandum ensured the orchestra's formation, though not without caution. A thoughtful Dr. William Stevens considered the plan worth effectuating as long as the following ground rules obtained: "(1) There should be a conductor, preferably paid something, who would hold as high a standard as the individuals were able to meet. (2) Somebody must make the group play in tune; nothing is worse than an amateur group which does not play in tune. (3) The music should be as interesting as possible, bearing in mind the technical abilities of the individuals. (4) A reasonable level of technique should be required for entrance, with auditions if necessary; and the really even better amateurs in the organization should not be expected to play with those of us who are technically limited." Dr. Stevens professed himself qualified only for a second violin assignment, but his self-evaluation evidently stemmed from modesty, not fact. For years, he valiantly served in the first violin section.

The original recruits were five flutes, a pair of oboes, ten violins, six violas, a cello and double-bass, three pianists, and a page-turner. Not all belonged to the Association, but they became devoted to the orchestra. Later the ensemble acquired clarinets, a bassoon, brass, and additional strings, particularly cellos.

From the outset, it was blessed with a splendid conductor plucked out of the ranks of the H.M. A.: Malcolm Holmes, dean of the New England Conservatory and conductor of Harvard's Pierian Sodality Orchestra. Not only was Holmes a man of great personal charm and solid musical background, he also proved a musician with a lively sense of humor. Sessions supervised by him were always interesting and cheerful, and he had a special way of ferrying the players over rough waters with his wise, witty comments. Working through a piece that opened easily and lyrically but then picked up complexity, he warned jauntily over the music, "Look out, there's trouble ahead!" When an involved passage being sight-read threatened to fall apart, the players were kept on an even keel by the consoling advice, "It's not the notes that are troubling you, fellas; it's the rests." And when the cellos slaughtered the lilting, lullaby-like second theme in the first movement of the Brahms Second Symphony, he chortled, "My God! I knew a man who took up the cello just so he could play that passage."

Although formed primarily for the players' relish, the orchestra could not contain its yearning to perform for others. For the 1948 Annual Dinner, it prepared an after-dinner program of music by Mozart and Hoist, plus a Hoist arrangement of a Purcell suite. In the spirit of the occasion, it distributed a printed program that deliciously lampooned the Boston Symphony Orchestra

format. Typeface and paper color alike cribbed the BSO style, exactly reproducing the hue of the Symphony's program-book cover of that period.

Subsequently the group entertained at a Ladies Night and then gave one final concert after completion of the 1948-49 social evening schedule. Then it retired into privacy for the delights of dipping into treasures of the orchestral repertoire. Observing hallowed H.M.A. traditions, the players finish off each meeting with refreshments. The practice shows no signs of ending.

Holmes remained at the helm for a half a dozen seasons until terminal illness befell him. To ease stress at the end, his faithful followers presented him with a television set, a property less common in 1953 than it became soon after. The gesture symbolized respect and affection for the individual who had led them through so many endearing moments.

Holmes' successor at the Conservatory, Chester Williams, also followed him on the H.M.A. podium. The year before, Holmes had gotten Williams into the Association and persuaded him to bring his oboe to orchestra nights. Taking over as conductor, Williams showed a geniality and imaginativeness comparable to its predecessor's. When instruments were missing, HMA improvised ingeniously. One evening no cellists appeared, but an unexpected trombonist did. Without hesitation, Williams placed a cello part on the stand before the trombonist, and no one who was present that night recalls any problem or complaint. Resort to such inventiveness became imperative to compensate for no-shows. It was not unusual for only half a section or fewer to turn up, and, as with the cellists, the times were not unique when an entire section was lacking.

Sometimes vacancies could be anticipated. Knowing no oboe would be on hand for a particular session, Orchestra Committee Chairman Codman wrote Eldon Stark, a former regular but not an HMA member, asking if he might return for the occasion to sound the A. "We all miss you very much," Codman lamented, "and would like to see you again."

The project had developed a familial aura. Actually, Codman was a busy correspondent, writing letters and sending notices to be sure the orchestra's forces would know when to turn up. At a time when penny postcards still existed and letters moved for 3 cents, a notation in the Association's files showed that he was reimbursed for postage used in the interval from June 2 to December 23, 1948, in the amount of 75 cents.

Ideas, requests, and suggestions proceeded in two directions, from top down and bottom up. Before Holmes succumbed, Stark addressed a note to Codman under the salutation, "Dear Mr. Flutist." His message said, "The esteemed first oboist [non-HMA member Kenneth Wade] of the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra is dying I think to play English Horn. I am wondering if you could suggest to Mr. Holmes that he bring along next time Cesar Franck's Symphony if he thinks it is at all playable by the aggregation. I am sure Mr. Wade would find plenty of English Horn in it..."

Opinions were many and varied on how to conduct the amateur orchestra's affairs. In one player's estimation, the Orchestra Committee wisely concluded there was no audience for the group's music. But this individual thought a social evening at the close of the season would be an excellent idea. "In place of a concert," he remarked, "I should like to see us work on one

standard symphony, tone poem, or what have you, for perhaps one half-hour out of each session and get so that we can play it reasonably well by the end of the year. In this way, one could work on intonation, phrasing, dynamics, et cetera, and I think we would all get a good deal out of it.”

The venture’s longevity attests to its success. A key explanation is the absence of a compulsion to play or listen. Participation is voluntary, and once the pressure of having to hone for a concert was removed, people could come to orchestra night whenever they pleased, which was more frequently than not. In the view of one veteran, who very likely echoed the sentiments of others: “We all like it that way.”

In sum, the late Dr. Werner Mueller, who for years manned the lead when not the lone double-bass, reflected the feelings of the individuals who join in these fortnightly outings. He put it simply and with eloquence: “I have said it before, but I want to say it again and right here that the HMA orchestra rehearsals are my greatest musical pleasure, and the last one I shall ever give up.” A tribute not easily forgotten.

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the Harvard Musical Association has been enjoyable fun and has made a significant contribution to the advancement of Boston’s musical culture. On the public end, the Music Hall and the organ, the Harvard Orchestra, and *Dwight’s Music Journal*, for all their problems and warts, raised the quality of the classical music scene by stressing the values of the finest elements in musical literature. Their ideas and efforts kept standards high, preserving purity in musical practice and the state of the art. As nothing is ever perfect, they provided the best representation of superior musical principles until something better came along.

The private side—the Social Evenings and the delights of making music in the HMA orchestra - has brought repeated pleasures to a sophisticated group. Although these experiences have had little to do with the direct maintenance of supreme musical standards, they established an environment that has inspired an influential collection of individuals to work continuously toward that objective. In both public and private undertakings, the Association played a pivotal, if reticent, part in making Boston the important music center it has been for more than a century.



SECOND CHAMBER CONCERT

OF THE

HARVARD

MUSICAL ASSOCIATION,

Tuesday Evening, November 26,

AT THE

MUSIC ROOM OF MR. J. CHICKERING, 334, WASHINGTON STREET.

PROGRAMME.

Part 1.

- 1.—QUARTETT IN G MINOR, OF . . . MOZART.
Allegro.
Adagio con moto.
Rondo finale.
- 2.—DIVERTISSEMENT FOR FLUTE, OF . . . BOEHM.
Theme by CARAFFA. . . . MR. WERNER.

Part 2.

- 1.—RONDO FOR PIANO FORTE OF ALOYS SCHMITT.
with Quartett accompaniment. . . . MR. LANGE.
- 2.—QUARTETT IN G OF J. HAYDN.
Allegro moderato.
Allegretto.
Menuetto and Trio.
Finale Presto.

PERFORMANCE WILL COMMENCE AT 7 O'CLOCK.

☞ Holders of Tickets are requested to show them to the person in attendance at the Door.

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From 1845

PROGRAMME.

Harvard Musical Association.



FIRST SYMPHONY CONCERT,

AT THE

BOSTON MUSIC HALL,

Thursday Afternoon, Dec. 28, 1865.

AT 4 O'CLOCK, PRECISELY.

Conductor, CARL ZERRAHN.

❁ The Harvard ❁ Musical Association

Friday Evening, January 15, 1909



The Harpsichord, Clavichord, & Viola d'Amore
Mr. ARNOLD DOLMETSCH

The Viola da Gamba
Mrs. ARNOLD DOLMETSCH

The Harpsichord
Mr. CHARLES WILLIAM ADAMS



Program

- 1 Three pieces for two Viols and Harpsichord
 - I. Almain
 - II. Corant
 - III. Saraband *John Jenkins, c. 1630*
- 2 Suite in C major for the Harpsichord
 - I. Prelude
 - II. Almand
 - III. Corant
 - IV. Saraband *Henry Purcell, c. 1670*
- 3 Two pieces for the Viola da Gamba accompanied by the Harpsichord
 - I. La Régente *Antoine Forqueray, c. 1700*
 - II. La du Vaucel *Jean Baptiste Antoine Forqueray, c. 1730*
- 4 Pieces for Harpsichord
 - I. Soeur Monique *Francois Couperin, 1710*
 - II. Sonata in D minor *Domenico Scarlatti, c. 1715*
 - III. Gigue in B flat *J. S. Bach, c. 1720*
- 5 Pieces for the Clavichord from "Das Wohltemperirte Klavier"
 - I. Prelude and Fugue in C major
 - II. Prelude and Fugue in B flat major *J. S. Bach, 1722*
- 6 Sonata No. 11 in G major for the Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord *J. S. Bach*
- 7 Troisieme Concert—For the Harpsichord, Viola d'Amore and Viola da Gamba
 - I. La LaPoplinière *J. P. Rameau, 1741*
 - II. La Timide
 - III. Deux Tambourins

The Harpsichord and Clavichord by Chickering & Sons



1837 SEVENTY-FIFTH 1912
ANNIVERSARY



Menu

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CUCUMBERS

FILET MIGNON WITH BÉARNAISE SAUCE

CRÈME YVETTE PUNCH

BAKED DEVILLED LOBSTER IN SHELL

OPERA PUDDING
ICE CREAM

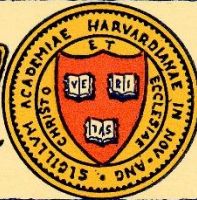
CAMEMBERT AND ROQUEFORT CHEESE

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:YOUNG'S HOTEL: JANUARY 26th 1912:



HARVARD
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MUSICAL
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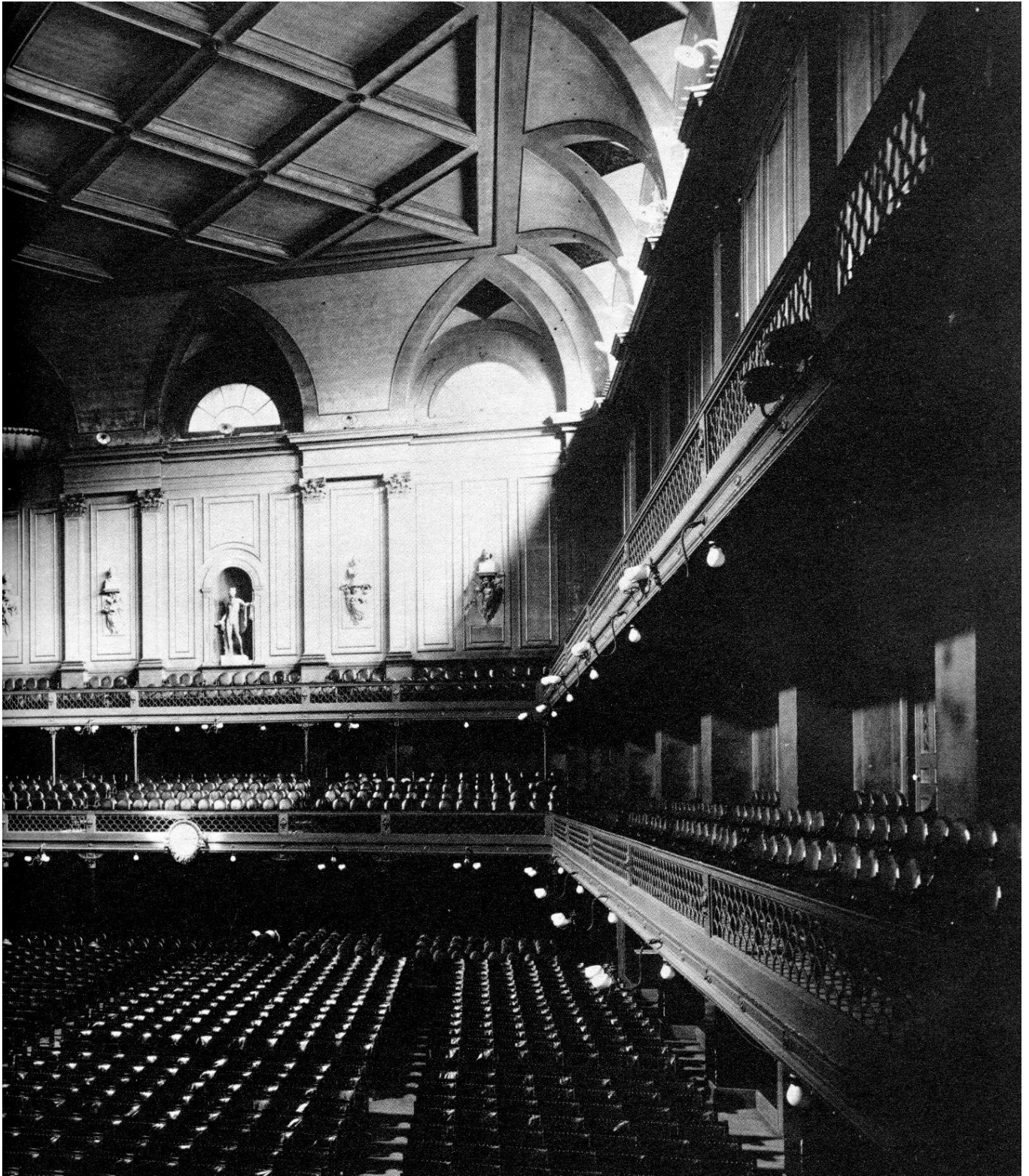
NEW ENGLAND LITH. STEAM PRINTING CO.

Presented to the Public by the Boston Music Hall Association, in the year 1857.

34 CHAUNCY ST. BOSTON.

THE GREAT ORGAN IN THE BOSTON MUSIC HALL





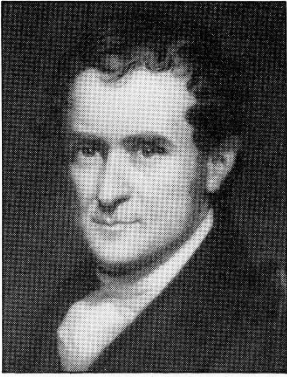
The interior of the Boston Music Hall around 1890



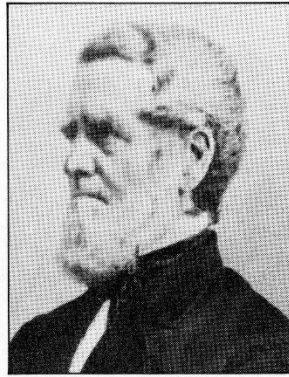
Prosit Neujahr! 98! Lillian & George Henschel



Julia Marsh by Benoni Irwin



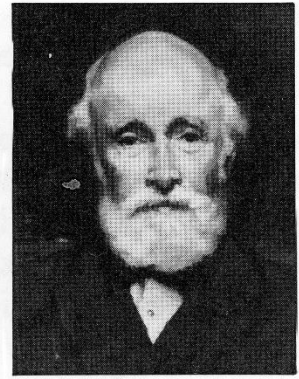
HENRY WARE JR.
1838-1844



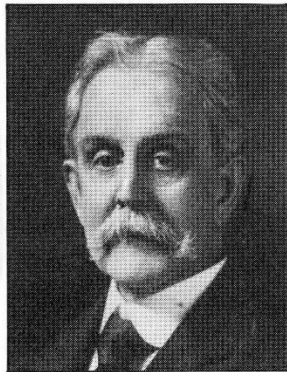
CHARLES BECK
1844-1852



HENRY W. PICKERING
1852-1873



JOHN S. DWIGHT
1873-1893



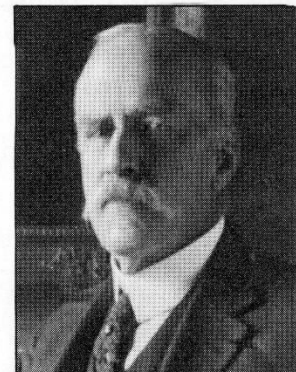
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1894-1902



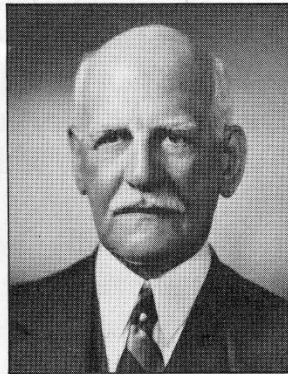
SAMUEL W. LANGMAID
1902-1913



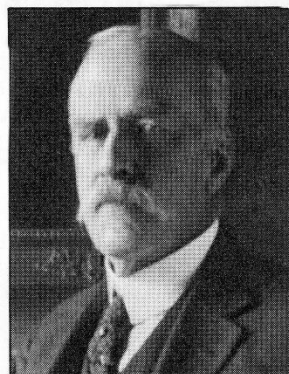
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1913-1919



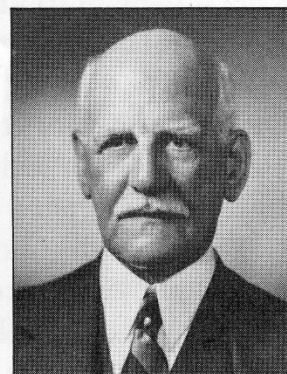
GEORGE O. G. COALE
1919-1921



COURTENAY GUILD
1921-1946



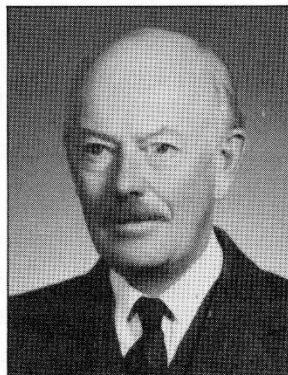
GEORGE O. G. COALE
1919-1921



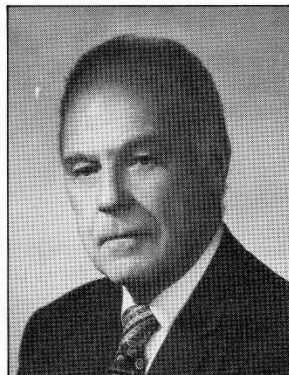
COURTENAY GUILD
1921-1946



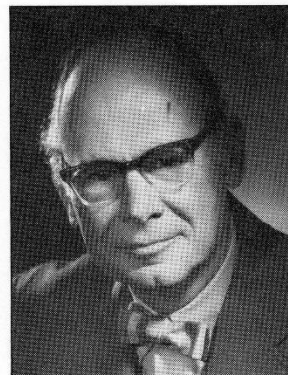
G. WALLACE WOODWORTH
1946-1948



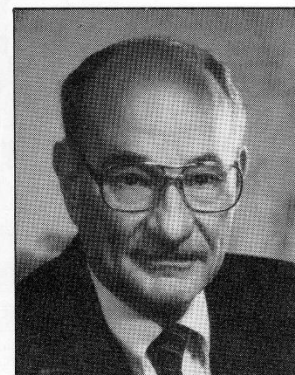
RICHARD WAIT
1948-1979



KENNETH W. BROWN
1979-1982



ABRAM T. COLLIER
1982-1985



JOHN D. MONTGOMERY
1985-



Chester Williams conducts reading orchestra in 1986



Pianist Leslie Amper concluding a social evening performance.



John D. Montgomery serving artist at post-recital supper.



The Association's Julia M. Marsh Room in 1990



Virginia Garber readies Annual Dinner



After a Social Evening: member Betsy Warren Davis still composing in her 90s

Below: High School Achievement Awards Winners



Infrastructure

At 150, the Harvard Musical Association is healthy, financially secure, and actively engaged in the propagation of fine music. Its ranks contain approximately 300 resident members - a number fixed in 1905 - thirty-odd non-resident members, and a handful of distinguished honorary ones.

As it moved into its 150th year, the value of its assets, composed mainly of a substantial endowment, exceeded \$2,500,000, a figure that does not reflect the real price that its handsome Beacon Hill home would fetch on the open market. In its unobtrusive way, the organization continues to work for the maintenance of the highest musical standards in the community beyond its walls while encouraging good fellowship and enjoyable musical experiences within.

As a charitable, non-profit, tax-exempt, private association dedicated to good works in music and the enrichment of the surrounding area's musical life, HMA has no counterpart anywhere. Like many institutions, the Association reflects the views of the individuals who brought it to life and later provided its leadership. For a large part of its history, HMA has clung to conservative musical and social traditions. In recent decades, however, the winds of change have blown much of this disposition away. The once male, white Anglo- Saxon Protestant bastion has been opened to men and women of all races, religious persuasions, and national origins. The qualifying criteria for membership remain good manners, civic responsibility, and a preference for the noblest types of music.

The principal force behind the conservative bent was the 19th-century critic and arbiter of musical taste, John Sullivan Dwight, who made himself the central personality of the Association from its beginnings until his own final days in 1893. For more than half a century Dwight held either the presidency or vice-presidency of the organization, while much of that time serving also in the pivotal post of librarian. Few committees named to grapple with Association problems or deal with significant matters acted without his involvement. In his day, he was doubtless the most influential member of the Association.

This close relationship had its price. It imprinted Dwight's outlook on virtually every Association action, however much others might take issue with it. To be sure, he was driven by an immeasurable love of music and a deep respect for the classics. But the standards that the classics represented frequently differed from those respected by individuals of greater tolerance. Dwight could not countenance any deviation from his own position; his writings and reports leave no doubt as to where he stood.

"Such concerts as we have at heart," Dwight said vehemently, reporting on the ninth year of Harvard Orchestra operations, "cannot be safely left to publics who feel no duty of support for good, normal, permanent institutions. Are we not to be allowed to have any sets of concerts consecrated to the best, and to the best alone? Leave the question to the public, and the answer you will get, both through its stinted patronage, and through too many of its 'critical' oracles and organs in the press, will certainly be, No! Withdraw the organized support of a society like ours, leave all to the capricious, changing tastes of the public, and very soon ... there will be nothing of a settled character." The classics, he continued, "of paramount importance, both as a means and as a measure of our real musical culture and progress, will be sure to languish."

On another occasion, writing of the Orchestra's programs, Dwight said: "We want to keep control of our own programmes, - having always had in our own program committee musicians whose knowledge and musicianship is [sic] of the highest order, and to whose taste and culture and artistic purity of motive we can look upon with un-misgiving deference. We can rely on them for what is best. If we forsake their counsel, renounce our faith, and quit the field half won, then what befalls the general tendency of music in our city? ... Will there be anything superior to the capricious fashions of a day? The Symphony Concerts are our bulwark against fashion, against misleading lights and superficiality, against such lessons and examples in musical taste as concert speculators think it for their interest to give."

Such statements led Gilbert Chase in *America's Music* to label Dwight "pontifical" and a "musical snob." He could have added "pompous, careless writer!" If there is a touch of preaching or sermonizing in these pronouncements, it comes naturally. Dwight went on to Divinity School after graduation from the College, as did many other young men of his generation. But he soon concluded that the ministry was not for him. He could not wait to devote his full attention to music. Responding to an invitation to preach in Salem for a few Sundays, he said: "The truth is, my mind has been for some time past verging more and more away from the clerical profession ... I have less sympathy than I had with the prevailing spirit of the churches, and less hope of ever being able to mould the Church and the profession to my idea; so that I could be true to my conviction while continuing in them" That conviction was a need for dispensing with the "forms" of Christianity, in particular public prayer. Even during his short stay in the ministry, Dwight spent considerable time preparing lectures on musical subjects for HMA and other audiences. Some of them were published in *Hach's Musical Magazine* while others appeared elsewhere. One penned in 1847 showed that music was more than Dwight's true love; it was his religion. "Music," he said, "is more catholic than all the churches; - the faithful, many-sized servant of the human heart; and whatsoever is good music is a harmony and help to what is most religious, loving, and profound in human souls."

Actually, Dwight became a Transcendentalist, lived a while on the utopian Brook Farm, and adhered to a creed of liberal idealism in religious matters. To some, Dwight was kindly, even lovable, as well as capable of the kind of lofty expression reflected in the previous paragraph. Others found him arbitrary, autocratic, and determined to have his own way. Yet, he attracted as friends such eminent contemporaries as Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, both Howes, Gov. John Andrew, and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Nevertheless, Dwight was intolerant and contemptuous of individuals and institutions whose horizons stretched far beyond his own. Their support of romantic expression could snuff out an institution that kept "the best & most inspiring, the undying models, always bright & fresh before us," he maintained. But he was not beyond being duped and caught off guard, even though he insisted he knew the music of composers whom he regarded as vulgar. In *Our American Music*, John Howard Tasker tells of an incident in which Mrs. H. H. A. Beach completely fooled Dwight and Otto Dresel. "Neither of them could see much good in Brahms," wrote Tasker. "One day the young pianist played them a Capriccio that had just come to America. They were enchanted; what was it? who wrote it? 'Brahms,' said the young Miss Cheney [her name before marriage]. Dwight and Dresel choked ... "

This embarrassment did not prevent sycophants and supporters, of whom there were many, from regarding Dwight as “invariably tactful, mild-mannered, and considerate.” Their acceptance of his ideas - and prejudices - gave him the authority to set the tone of the Association. It must not be forgotten that, for all his narrowness, Dwight was a principal force in choosing the original objectives of the Association: to raise the standards of musical taste in the College, to introduce musical instruction to the curriculum, and to organize a library of distinction.

Of the three objectives, the quickest headway was made with the library. As early as 1843, its praises, as noted earlier, were sung by the *Salem Register*. Today, it remains a unique institution: a private, specialized library of approximately 11,000 volumes, two-thirds of them music and the remainder books on the subject.

THE LIBRARY had its beginnings soon after formation of the Association. At the Directors’ meeting on September 5, 1838, in the room they had rented at 19 Tremont Row in Boston, two of the group were deputized to find suitable materials for housing the collection, while two others were charged with setting up rules and regulations for library use. After moves to many different locations, the library ended up in its present home on Chestnut Street.

Initially there was no money for buying books and music. Members were invited to make gifts of them. The response produced results, yielding some treasures but more chaff. Elegant editions of classical works arrived, along with remnants from family attics. For a library limited to music, materials on the other arts and other subjects were useless, and indiscriminate donations of household surpluses provided a lot of what two librarians, Dwight and Henry Ware, dismissed as trash. Items in both categories were eventually discarded.

Unsuitable gifts continued to come in. On the copy of a letter in 1957 thanking a donor for one such gift, Charles Nutter, librarian at the time, scribbled the notation: “As a matter of fact, these programmes [the gift in question] are of no value whatsoever, but the gift cannot be declined & they will be kept an indefinite length of time only. The practice is to accept most gifts we do not want & keep them long enough for the donor to forget the act & then to dispose of them.”

With the dross cast off, a rich collection survived. It includes a number of distinctive acquisitions beginning with pieces of music picked up by Henry Gasett Jr. more than a century ago on a European trip. From Nathan Richardson came a superb gift of 46 volumes containing the complete works of Bach, as known to that time, in expensive, handsome bindings produced by the Bach Gesellschaft of Leipzig, in which the hand of Mendelssohn was evident.

Even after the library began to receive minuscule sums for the purchase of books and music, other benefactors continued to contribute useful materials. Henry Ware was a steady donor. Joseph Coolidge gave 50 volumes of music, H. K. Oliver 25 volumes of English glees, the publisher Oliver Ditson and Co. 122 volumes of both books and musical selections, and the composer, Arthur Foote, during his long years of devoted membership, many valuable scores and a number of books on musical topics.

Over time, many other members, friends of members, and even individuals not connected with the Association but appreciative of its aims, supplied large collections, many of which were gratefully received. When Herbert Boardman died in February 1941, his lifelong friend and

partner William Dietrich Strong gave the library in Boardman's memory 90 compositions for two pianos, 20 volumes of piano solo music, and a number of chamber music compositions, scores, and books. For a quarter-century the two men had played the Marsh Room pianos once a week, and Strong had performed at a social evening in 1898. Though not a member, in appreciation of these experiences, he chose to present the music to the HMA. A few years earlier, the B.J. Lang estate contributed 29 volumes of music by Beethoven, which contained the complete works of the composer, save for the piano sonatas.

In 1848 the Association became able to make modest allocations to the library. In the year after the \$37.67 surplus from the 1848 Chamber Concerts, the amount increased to \$50. Then it reached \$90. Eventually, in the profitable seasons of the later Harvard Orchestra concerts, the surpluses turned over to the library ran as high as \$1,000. With this sum available, Otto Dresel was empowered to buy music for the library on his periodic trips to Germany.

Through Dresel's expertise and sophisticated judgment, the library acquired a wide range of distinctive compositions. The earliest report on the library's content appeared in 1841. It noted that there were 190 volumes all told, of which about 100 were treatises on different aspects of music, biographies of musicians, and the like, while 90 or so contained printed music. Some of the music was rare and valuable, such as 15 volumes containing "a complete set of the works of Handel in full score, with pianoforte or organ accompaniment" and the Beethoven symphonies arranged for piano by Kalkbrenner.

The librarian's 1845 report remarked that the privilege of borrowing books "would no doubt be more frequently resorted to if the Library contained more works of music for performance." The few it had, such as the symphonies of Beethoven - in the Kalkbrenner arrangement "for the pianoforte" - were in constant demand. The report, which urged the acquisition of additional works of a similar nature, mentioning in particular the sonatas of Beethoven and the songs of Schubert, said: "This would show to members the advantage of belonging to the Association and increase their interest in it." In fact, George Cushing that year donated several sonatas for the pianoforte and other instruments by Hummel and other composers.

Henry Ware became the librarian in 1851 and filled the position for 18 years, 17 consecutively until 1868 and the 18th in 1870. His concern was more with quality than quantity. As he saw it, a library might be "either a collection of the ephemeral productions of the passing day, for the present convenience and pleasure of the members, very useful and agreeable in its way; or, on the other hand, a carefully selected collection of the works of the great masters, of a permanent and unquestioned value, the great, acknowledged classics of the art." Ware proposed that the library choose the second option to become a "valuable Library of reference" where both amateur and professional musicians might find the rarer works "which few can afford to own and which are somewhat difficult of access."

Although Ware took pride and satisfaction in the many treasures the library did possess, he expressed unhappiness over its deficiencies. Richardson had begun his gift of the Bach volumes, but these were still in the process of publication and would come to the library only as they appeared annually. Ware urged that the collections of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven be completed and that the holdings of works by other composers be made as complete as possible.

By 1855, Ware's efforts to strengthen the library began to bear fruit. In several instances, he said, the library had both "a full score for the use of the real music student and a piano arrangement adapted to the enlightened ignorance of amateurs." Among the full scores available were all the symphonies of Beethoven, the complete works of Mendelssohn, and several volumes of works by Handel. Still concerned about quality, Ware said he did not seek the "trash that comes every day from the modern press" but asked that "books or compositions of enduring, permanent value, which may be in the possession of any member and not essential to the comforts of his daily life ... be given to the Library of the Association."

Actually, Ware did not serve out his 18th year as librarian; shortly after his appointment he left for Europe. Dwight filled in unofficially for the remainder of the term and took over officially the following year. From that time, 1871, until his death he held the post simultaneously with his vice presidency and subsequent presidency. Because Dwight was not a man of means, the Association paid him a small salary. Some of this was recouped through the rent he paid for the room he occupied at the Association's quarters, first at Park Square and then at Chestnut Street.

In 1870 the library added nearly 200 volumes. But all was not well. Rules were made but not enforced, causing the library to suffer. "Members enter, take out what they please, and keep it weeks and months beyond the period allowed," wrote Dwight. "In not a few instances volumes have been as if not at all belonging to the library," but as if to "individuals who kept them as part and parcel of their household furniture." By 1883 the library had expanded to approximately 2,600 volumes. Nevertheless, the Association lost a larger number of books in a year than did the Boston Public Library, which owned many times as much comparable material. "Some works," wrote Dwight a few years later, "might as well not belong to the library at all but pass into the private possession of the members who are so fond of them." Though considerably reduced, the practice lingers.

Every library contains rare items that are carefully preserved and stored for safety. The Association's library is no exception, with several of these publications kept in a safe place. They are available for inspection but may not be circulated or exposed to general view. Some of these books go back to the 17th century, the oldest bearing the date 1608. It is Thomas Morley's "A plaine and easie introduction to practicall Musicke." The book has been described as the second edition (the first having been published in 1597) of one of the most important of early English theoretical books. Other titles in this set of rare possessions bear the dates of 1673, 1676, 1719, 1731, 1739, 1757, and on into the current century.

The books in the special collection are in several languages—English, French, German, and Italian. The 1731 volume by Alexander Malcolm, "A treatise of musick, speculative, practical, and historical," is said to be the first history of music in English. There are works by Johann Adolph Scheibe, a bitter enemy of Bach; Johann Mattheson, a great 18th-century German theorist; and Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach; and music by Handel, Domenico Scarlatti, Mozart, Cesar Franck, Stephen Foster, and others.

One truly unusual work, published in 1843, was a collection of anti-slavery melodies prepared for the Hingham anti-slavery society. A remarkable collection came into the library's possession in 1935 when the Association purchased from the Italian composer Francesco Malipiero a set of

the 250-copy limited edition of the complete works of Monteverdi, which Malipiero edited and personally printed on handmade paper. The full set comprises 16 volumes.

For more than a century, materials available to members could also be borrowed by outsiders. In Boston, musical organizations became able to schedule symphonies by Haydn and Mozart, even though otherwise unable to obtain parts. On numerous occasions, the Musical Fund Society borrowed music from the Association to shore up deficiencies resulting from the destruction of its own library and also when needing additional parts. Music was loaned, of course, to the Harvard Orchestra and to the Handel & Haydn Society, the Apollo Club, and similar institutions. Outside of Boston, it was lent for a festival in Philadelphia in 1883, and in the 1930's Ernest Hoffman, conductor of the Houston Symphony, well-known in Boston musical circles because the area was his basic home, borrowed music no longer in print or available elsewhere for his concerts.

Although such loans implemented the Association's objectives to promote high musical standards, the practice was discouraged at one time owing to the whims of the librarian, Charles Nutter. Borrowing became difficult for non-members and, in some instances, members as well. The pianist Jesus Maria Sanroma, a member of the Association who performed on numerous occasions, was denied permission to take a substantial amount of chamber music to his native Puerto Rico for a series of concerts in the summer of 1934. Sanroma was informed that it was not regarded in the Association's best interests for music to be taken out of the country, or to be out of the library so long or in such volume.

Two decades later, Samuel Baron, the distinguished flutist and leader of the New York Woodwind Quintet, wrote to say how much the group had enjoyed browsing around the library when rehearsing for an appearance at a social evening. His letter asked if the ensemble might borrow the parts for a Dvorak Serenade which it had programmed for a New York City concert. The work was out of print, with not a set of parts to be found anywhere in the vicinity. In reply came a tart note from Nutter: "This music is very valuable, as it cannot be replaced," it said. "Even if such is loaned to a member it would be with caution and certain restrictions. It cannot be loaned to an outsider. Moreover, it is not our policy to loan music much to outsiders, and certainly not music with parts."

The high-handed rejection was hardly the kind of response due a musician of eminence who had given much pleasure to the membership. From all indications, this was not Association policy, but Nutter's own. It neither squared with the subsequent practice of lending materials to scholars and performers nor with Dwight's view, expressed some 70 years earlier, when he wrote, "The loan of books and music to reliable and worthy applicants not members of the Association . . . has never been refused."

The development of photocopying has eased the library's lending job. Except where materials are so old that copying might damage them, books and music in danger of being lost or harmed can be copied speedily and the copy lent in place of the original. This procedure applies to members and outsiders alike.

Since its opening the day before Christmas in 1913, the allied Marsh Room has received considerably more use than the library collection. Numerous individuals and groups, both

members and outsiders, have come to Chestnut Street for the opportunity to enjoy making music. The Librarian, who is also custodian of the Marsh Room, has considerable control over how it is used, approving requests to rehearse, perform, or otherwise engage its facilities.

For more than three decades commencing in 1932, that function fell to Nutter, who constantly and arrogantly assumed powers for himself without consulting with directors or officers of the Association. Although he gave his time willingly and generously, he tended to make or twist rules to suit himself. The Association files are filled with evidence of his crankiness, dictatorial, and often contradictory stances, which were seldom brought to the attention of the people to whom he reported.

For example, denying the McDowell Club permission to rehearse on Thursdays over the season, Nutter said, "The Room cannot be engaged ahead more than a week. Allotment of the Room for fixed days and hours through the year would result in restriction of its use to a few favored persons." Fair enough, but some time later he responded to a parallel request from The Concert Ensemble by saying he saw "no reason why you cannot have Monday evenings until along the middle of June."

More uncomfortable was an episode in which Nutter was threatened with libel action unless he apologized for allegedly making false, damaging accusations against a user of the Marsh Room. In a letter to a third person seeking approval to use the Room, Nutter said: "The last time permission was granted to you there was a disgraceful and noisy scene caused by Mrs. [Lillian] Tratten [Moldawan], which had never occurred before and has not since." Mrs. Moldawan, then living in Japan with her husband, an Army major, demanded an immediate apology, threatening suit. Nutter, who had not been present at the event on which he based his contention, wrote a squirming reply, which he cleared with an attorney, blaming others who reported the incident to him for the misunderstanding. Although he skirted the apology, the threat of suit was dropped, leaving simple rancor over the matter.

Currently the Library is in excellent shape and in highly capable hands. Chester Williams, the affable conductor of the HMA amateur orchestra that fills the Marsh Room with diverse sounds on alternate Friday evenings, is the librarian. He is assisted by Natalie Palme, a knowledgeable musician who oversees the library's day-to-day operations and use of the Marsh Room. Together, they keep things running smoothly; encounter a minimum of loss, damage, and unreturned borrowings; handle Marsh Room requests with grace and impartiality; and have a wealth of information to offer to those in need of it.

The library has a small corps of member-users, plus occasional visitors from outside who consult it for material unobtainable elsewhere. Its principal attraction remains, however, the Marsh Room, where members and others reserve time to work through orchestral compositions, play two-piano or four-hand music, give recitals, or simply bone up on the piano literature.

The library has not yet received another application like the one some years back from two boys who wished to use the space to practice on their trombones. They explained that they were so unpopular in their home neighborhood that they sought a more sympathetic atmosphere. Their request was regretfully denied.

THE LIBRARY FILLS the two-tiered, cypress paneled street level of the HMA.'s five-story home. Its shelf-lined lower tier serves as the hall for concerts on social evenings. Recently the entire floor was named in memory of Richard Wait, whose presidency extended from 1948 to 1979. Entering the room from the foyer, members and others come into the library area where a desk, library table, catalogue, and books on music are located. Then proceeding down a flight of four stairs they drop to the concert area whose ceiling matches the cypress panelling of its walls, which are lined with musical scores. On heavily patronized social evenings, chairs are available on both tiers to accommodate a maximum audience of 120. On the wall behind the stage hangs a portrait of Christopher Willibald Gluck painted by the 18th-century French artist Joseph Duplessis. It replicates the portrait on display at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and is said to be the best likeness of the celebrated early opera composer.

At the opposite end of the concert-hall area, a portrait of Henry Gassett Jr. fills the wall, while on the upper level over the fireplace hangs a portrait of John Sullivan Dwight by Caroline Cranch, whose father, Christopher Cranch, was a member of the Association. Nearby and on the wall of the stairwell in the foyer are photocopies of autographed letters, once owned by the HMA [and sold in the 1960s], written by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Wagner, Berlioz, Liszt, Verdi, and Richard Strauss. Busts of Beethoven and the conductor, Carl Zerrahn, are also part of the surroundings.

Directly over the library, most of the second-floor space is taken up by the Marsh Room, where, in addition to its many other uses, supper is served on social evenings and after the annual meeting. On its walls hang the paintings and portraits bequeathed to the Association by Julia M. Marsh, who also donated a Steinway, since replaced. Glass-enclosed cabinets hold chamber-music parts and music for performance on two pianos. Another large cabinet contains bound volumes of periodicals. The Marsh Room is a comfortable room aptly designed for making music. Its low-key elegance provides a friendly atmosphere for recitals, rehearsals, or informal musical activity.

Together the library and Marsh Room occupy the major portion of the building. The remaining part not given over to storage facilities contains the caretakers' quarters and the Guild Record Library. The caretakers' lodgings are split between the basement and the top floor, the former for cooking, dining, and relaxing, with the latter for sleeping. A living room and terrace are also available on the top floor. The basement kitchen is the source of the unique Boston aroma of warming baked beans that drifts up to the concert hall on social evenings while the performance is still in progress. Later the beans will join the Welsh rarebits in the Marsh Room.

The Guild installation on the third floor has not been used much in recent years. It contains a comprehensive collection of recordings made possible by a legacy to the Association in 1946 from Courtenay Guild. An elegant gentleman of distinction, musical interests, entrepreneurial gifts, and philanthropic inclinations, Guild was the Association's president during 25 years of his 60-year membership.

When the house was acquired in 1892, the interior was markedly different from its present appearance. The entrance was on West Cedar Street, the street floor had a large room suitable for

musicales and space for books and music; the floor above contained several rooms, and the upper floors still further chambers.

Seven years earlier, in 1885, when the Association had to give up its Pemberton Square location to make way for the Suffolk County Court House, the Board of Directors sketched the prescription for its needs. "Our wants," they said, "are complicated and the problem full of difficulties." They wanted rooms large enough for a valuable collection of books and music; a location in the central part of the city within easy reach of most members; a place where the librarian might reside; and "ample room for social meetings and for music, with high ceiling, as well as good air and light, and in a house."

Unable at the time to find the combination that would satisfy these needs, the Association rented the Park Square quarters while continuing the search for more suitable accommodations. Those they seemed to find in the house of Malcolm Greenough, which they purchased in 1892 for \$22,000. Boston's assessors valued the property at the time at \$18,500, of which \$8,500 was for 1,875 square feet of land and \$10,000 for the house. A suite of two rooms on the front of the second floor was assigned to Dwight "who found comfort and great happiness" in them, until his death on Tuesday, September 5th, 1893.

By September 1, 1894, all the lodging rooms on the upper floors were rented to tenants regarded as permanent, at rates considered fair by the House Committee. From November 1892 until September 1, 1893, rental income totaled \$367.02; for the year after, it was \$773.48; and from September 1, 1894 to September 1, 1895, it was \$1,372.76, this last "under the leases now contracted by the House Committee."

With rooms to house both the library and the social evenings plus the rental income, one would think that the Association's nomadic pattern had ended. Actually, it had, but there were still indications of unrest. At the 1905 annual meeting, a committee of seven was appointed to consider, among other things, the wisdom of acquiring "more commodious house and quarters." The general feeling seemed to be, the committee said, "that the present house is not what the Association ought to have."

From the apparent discontent, subjected to extensive thought and discussion, came a decision to stay put but to renovate the premises to counter the negative feeling. By 1907 the music room had been remodeled. Its floor was dropped four feet to achieve more of a concert-hall appearance, creating the two-tier arrangement never altered since. The change, which added a platform to the far end of the room, necessitated moving the entrance to the house from its location on West Cedar Street around the corner to Chestnut, thus giving rise to the Association's current address at number 57A. After the remodeling, a genial housewarming set the tone for the social evenings held there ever since.

Another substantial renovation took place six years later. To satisfy the provisions of the Julia M. Marsh will, the set of small rooms on the second floor of the house was replaced by one large area, the spacious high-ceiling Marsh Room. To students, private teachers, professional musicians, and those who simply wish to play the piano, the room has been a boon. Completion of the Marsh Room ended major renovations of the House. Some 30 years later the Guild Record Library was installed in a room on the third floor that was simply redecorated.

So the house has stood in quiet elegance with little change since Christmas 1913. A quaint charm pervades the place, an old-fashioned feeling of gentility prevails, and vestiges of Brahmin Boston linger. The surroundings contain an air of security and gracious living. In recent years, the preservation of these characteristics has been assured and enhanced by the dedicated attention of two indispensable individuals, George and Helen Corbett. From this base, the Association has for almost a century supported worthwhile endeavors and subtly applied its pressure for preservation of high standards, from which all serious musical causes in the area have benefited. It has drawn on the power of its members discreetly and exerted its influence tastefully. If it has shown touches of elitism, it has done so with lofty intentions.

WITH ACQUISITION of the house, the social evenings settled into a successful pattern. Before that, they experienced a somewhat checkered existence. In reporting on them since their inauguration in 1869, Dwight alternated between glow and gloom. At first the idea was bigger than its reception; gatherings of 16 or 27 hardly offered promise of success. Each season began with enthusiasm and hope, mainly from Dwight and a handful of others, that a series would draw good response. But reality quickly cooled the expectations. Committees either failed in their assignments or caused delays in getting the programs started.

Most of the evenings at this time featured performances by members, and, even though these included such individuals as Arthur Foote, the affairs were largely amateurish. The periodic engagement of professional groups, from either the new Boston Symphony or touring chamber ensembles, raised interest somewhat, but cost limited the number of such occasions.

For the observance in 1885 of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach, the Association built an evening around a paper written by Dwight on the master. There were music and supper as well, and the committee deputized to arrange the event was asked to ponder the prospect of inviting the ladies - apparently the first time in HMA annals that the subject was raised. The program, a Bach symposium, as it was called, was given on March 18, three days before the actual bicentennial. It opened with a Prelude and Fugue, key unspecified, in a transcription by Liszt. (One wonders how Dwight tolerated the soiling of a classical Bach treasure by the romantic hand of Liszt!) Then came Dwight's presentation of his paper, an hour-long exercise. After he finished, a group comprising an unnamed tenor aria, selections from the Well-Tempered Clavichord, and the famed Chaconne for unaccompanied violin rounded out the musical proceedings before adjournment for supper. The performers were Association members. How many attended and their composition are not exactly known, but the group is not believed to have been very large.

In 1890, a year thought to offer an attractive lineup of evenings, attendance ranged from 15 to 39 members plus two to 10 guests. In one attempt to improve the situation, an entire program was devoted to works of three young local composers: Arthur Foote, Arthur Weld, and George Whitefield Chadwick.

Finally, in 1893, the evenings found the firm footing on which they have continued to the present. For several years, many of the musical programs were larded with papers on musical subjects. The critic Louis C. Elson addressed the topic of early English music one evening in

1894. A year later, William F. Apthorp delivered a paper on 'Netherlandish Tricks in Counterpoint.' On other occasions, the going sometimes became even heavier. In 1896 O.B. Brown talked about "The Organ and its History and Construction, including the Pneumatic and Electro-Pneumatic Feature." But there were more relaxed topics as well. George Riddle read "Enoch Arden" as B.J. Lang provided the accompanying Richard Strauss score. Frederick Converse discussed his dramatic poem "Job" a month before its first performance. Sometime afterward Lang gave a lecture on Mendelssohn on the centennial of the composer's birth. Cecil Sharpe in 1915 titled his presentation "An English Folk-Song Talk" and illustrated it with stereopticon views and vocal examples.

These were yeasty additions to the programs, even if some were too yeasty to attract an audience. As to the music, novelty was not infrequent. Foote presented an evening of his own compositions in 1899. Two years later, "The Maharaja," a one-act comic opera with music by Percy Lee Atherton, an HMA member, was given. Instrumental accompaniment of the three solo voices was supplied by the composer and Edward Burlingame Hill at the piano. Selections from John Knowles Paine's "Azara" and "The Birds of Artistophanes" were sung in 1902. In 1921 a visitor from the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp presented works by Belgian composers. One year afterward, the touring Scottish Musical Comedy Company filled a social evening with a performance of "Tam O'Shanter," a one-act musical sketch stemming from the Robert Burns poem.

Other off beat programs brought Indian classical songs and Kashmiri folk music to HMA audiences. And the remarkable Russian soprano Olga Avierino, who found peace in Cambridge after fleeing the revolution, gave an unusual recital in costume in 1928 of Russian, French, and American vocal music. By 1930 novelty yielded to more traditional fare. There was a single exception on New Year's Day 1932, although the novelty was more a matter of presentation than of musical content. R.C.A.'s Custom Reproducing System, through the courtesy of M. Steinert Sons & Co., the R.C.A. Boston distributor, presented a recorded concert to which the ladies were invited. The recording artists were the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock and the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. Sergei Rachmaninoff and Lily Pons were soloists in a program of works by Brahms, Wagner, Rachmaninoff, and Donizetti.

Apart from this digression, the social evenings have fallen into one general mold for more than half a century. String quartets have consistently drawn the largest patronage. Particular individual soloists and certain other chamber music groupings have often done well, if not so well as the quartets. The weak spot has been the vocal evenings. However gifted the artists might be, they have attracted only token audiences.

FOR MEMBERS, THE SOCIAL evenings require no fee; a modest charge is levied for guests. Dues and guest charges for the most part cover the cost of the entertainments, including the suppers after the concerts. The running of the library and the house along with the funding of awards, grants, commissions, and other beneficences are financed out of income from the endowment, which derives principally from legacies and gifts to the Association from members, families of members, and friends. These contributions have ranged in size from less than \$100 to

more than \$100,000. Some had strings attached, the Marsh bequest being a case in point. Others were given without conditions or restrictions.

One of the earliest gifts came in 1887, coincidentally the year of the Association's fiftieth anniversary. It was a \$1,000 bequest from the estate of Henry Gassett Jr. who had died the year before. Income from the gift, known as the Gassett Fund, was to go to the library. It is thought that today's equivalence of the Gassett legacy would fall between \$10,000 and \$12,000. In the 1950's, the number of funds having grown considerably, the directors decided in the interest of efficiency to consolidate as many of them as they could into the Association's General Fund. Eight funds, the Gassett Fund among them, were included in this action.

Of the eight, the largest owed its existence to the generosity of Courtenay Guild. In 1949, three years after Guild's death, the Association received two sums from his estate, one of \$63,212 and the other of \$15,500. Until folded into the General Fund, the fund formed from these gifts was known as the Guild Fund #2. (An earlier Guild Fund will be mentioned shortly.) Meanwhile, that same year, Guild's sister, Sarah L. Guild, gave the Association the first of two \$2,500 gifts. The second was added the following year. The Sarah L. Guild Fund was another of the eight that became part of the General Fund. So was the Concert Fund, which had blossomed from the slight reserve left unexpended when the Harvard Orchestra concerts were terminated after the 1881-82 season.

Four more funds lost their identity in the consolidation. Two of them, each financed by a \$1,000 bequest, were the Atkinson Fund and the Galloupe Fund. The former, established in 1918, three years after the death of Charles F. Atkinson, had its income earmarked for the library. The Galloupe Fund, created by a 1925 legacy from Dr. Charles W. Galloupe, contained no specifications; its income ended in the General Fund even before the consolidation. Rounding out the eight were two smaller funds, one based on a modest gift in 1937 from Louis B. Thacher and the other on a 1945 bequest from the composer, Percy Lee Atherton.

At the latest accounting, the principal and accumulated income of the General Fund reached a level of \$784,573. At the 1986 annual meeting of the Association the year's audited report showed the continued existence of six other funds in addition to the General Fund and the new Sesquicentennial Fund, started in 1985 in anticipation of the Association's approaching 150th birthday. The Marsh Fund topped the list in value. Its original bequest of \$75,000 had multiplied more than ten times to a worth of \$783,574, or \$999 less than value of the General Fund.

Much of this enhancement could be attributed to how the legacy was invested; it resulted partly from the addition to the Marsh Fund of other gifts. Income from the Marsh legacy has been supplemented by income from the Ernest O. Hiler Fund, named for the attorney and friend who sparked Mrs. Marsh's interest in the HMA. In the early 1950's after his death the Association received two legacies from his estate. At the time, they were worth \$42,732, but they have since grown in value to \$179,945. As Hiler's legacies fitted the conception of how the Marsh bequest was to be used, the income from the Hiler Fund has been added annually to Marsh Fund income. Because the income from that fund has been more than enough to finance the purposes for which the bequest was made, a large part of it has been used each year to support many of the Association's other endeavors.

The first Guild Fund actually resulted from the original \$25,000 legacy Courtenay Guild left to the Association in 1946. Here again, the provisions of the bequest permitted only the income to be spent. At the close of each year this income is appended to the income earned by the General Fund. Combining the three sums received by the Association from the Guild estate, the one of 1946 and the two of 1949, yields the largest amount, \$103,712, left to the organization by any individual. Current value of the Guild Fund #1, which has retained its independent identity, totals \$152,816.

From Arthur Moors, who served as treasurer from 1919 to 1924, came a gift of \$5,000 in 1950. Because of a perception that the principal of the Arthur Moors Fund had to remain intact, its capital has never been touched, while income earned has been turned over annually to the General Fund for use in any manner. At last report, the value of the Moors Fund's principal had reached \$39,689.

The affection that Malcolm Holmes inspired among many members, and those in particular who participated in the amateur orchestra under his direction, led to the establishment of the Malcolm Houghton Holmes 1928 Fund in 1966. (1928 was Holmes' class at Harvard.) Forrest Collier, a lawyer who played regularly in the first violin section of the orchestra, initiated the fund with a gift of \$1,000 about a dozen years after Holmes' premature, painful death. Collier's son, Abram, the Association's president from 1982 to 1985, and others augmented the original gift so that its combined principal and income has grown to a value of \$17,684. The income has continued to accumulate and thus far has never been spent.

Whether, when, or how it is for the Directors of the Association to decide. In 1953, a legacy of \$10,000 from the estate of Dr. Frederick L. Jack was added to the endowment. Since this bequest came after the consolidation had occurred, the inheritance from Dr. Jack was placed in the General Fund.

Very likely the earliest of the gifts was Bernard Roelker's \$10 that accompanied his letter from New York of January 31, 1861. Roelker, as we saw earlier, proposed that his gift mark the start of a fund to be known as Roelker's Fund of Convivial Impulses. He hoped it would accumulate sufficiently and attract "subsequent spontaneous gifts" to create an eventual sum large enough to produce income that could help defray the cost of the annual meeting and supper. The money has simply grown and never been used. In the most recent listing of Association equities, its principal stood at \$22,230 and its income at an additional \$12,196, not a bad record for what began with a \$10 contribution. Someday a portion of these convivial impulses might be applied the way Roelker hoped they would.

With the sesquicentennial approaching and the endowment composing the major part of the Association's assets, John D. Montgomery, incumbent president, said in a letter to the membership: "To continue to have a positive impact on the musical community, our budgeted expenses must increase over time. Prudence dictates that these increases be balanced by additional income derived from our endowment, which must be enlarged correspondingly."

At the suggestion of Abram Collier, the Sesquicentennial Fund was started. One proposal recommended aiming at adding to the endowment the equivalent of \$150 per member through voluntary gifts. Another set its sights higher and hoped a total of \$150,000 could be raised. By

summer of 1986, the Sesquicentennial Fund approached \$11,000 and in the fall gifts were coming in at a steady pace.

As the Boston musical scene grows in size and diversity, the Association recognizes that demands on its resources will only increase. To shy away would hardly suit the image built up so carefully over 150 years. Given its record of pressing for high musical standards, first at Harvard College and later in the wider community, the HMA cannot turn its back on the burgeoning activity.

What began in 1837 and later spread out in several directions needs to keep pace with current patterns in musical Boston. To do so means supporting both deserving new movements and institutions as well as the older, established ones, while ensuring the continuance of social, civic, and musical satisfactions for the men and women who enjoy HMA membership.



Wanda Landowska played at HMA in 1923

Turning Point

FOR New England - and Boston in particular - the 19th century was a time of literary splendor. Before the Civil War broke out, Ticknor & Fields was publishing the books of the region's foremost authors, and the *Atlantic Monthly* had been founded. Even academia colored the scene. Harvard luminaries were recognized and often honored far beyond the Yard. In intellectual circles across America the names of New England's writers and poets were common currency. Longfellow, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, Whittier, Thoreau, Holmes, and Dana were followed by Aldrich, Howells, Parker, Underwood, and James.

In addition, numerous clergymen, scholars, novelists, essayists, and poets turned out verse and prose equal in quality to the works of the men mentioned above. Creative ferment and productivity characterized a significant segment of Boston cultural life. Many of the creative individuals were friends or, more to the point, friendly competitors. While they toiled independently, each in his own orbit, they served as foils for one another in various clubs and discussion groups. The Saturday Club, the Examiner Club, and the Atlantic Club were typical. Their members met periodically to listen to specially prepared papers and to exchange ideas. Without clubhouses of their own, these groups simply gathered for lunch or dinner at an appointed place, conducted their affairs, and adjourned until the next scheduled meeting. The short-lived Atlantic Club was comprised of contributors to the magazine who dined together from time to time. After the Atlantic Club's demise, the Saturday and the Examiner continued their activities with relish right down to the present.

Beginning in 1880, three other clubs were formed which attracted men of literary, artistic, or civic interests and distinctions. Today, the three—the St. Botolph Club (1880), the Tavern Club (1884), and the Club of Odd Volumes (1887)—remain stalwart parts of the Boston cultural complex. At each, members came and went at will, engaging in lively conversation and pleasant fraternization even when no formal or organized events were planned. This came about easily, particularly after each had acquired a home. Memberships often overlapped and frequently were duplicated by that of a much older organization, the Harvard Musical Association.

This, then, was the milieu in which the HMA flourished after the early 1860's. Like the Association, the newer clubs were clearly elite. Democratic practice was not an integral part of their nature. For years, their rosters, like the HMA's own, were studded with familiar Brahmin, fine arts, and literary names.

Aside from occasional art exhibits at the St. Botolph, to which non-members were invited, and outside speakers now and then at the Tavern, the newer clubs had virtually no contact with the public. The HMA., on the other hand, opened its events to non-members almost from the beginning. Many of the lectures on musical topics at its early annual meetings were delivered by authorities or well-informed individuals who had no ties with the Association. And the chamber-music concerts begun in 1844, as well as the later symphony concerts by the Harvard Orchestra, courted public patronage even though, as we have seen, non-members of the HMA had to procure their subscriptions through members who, with their guests, constituted the core of the audience.

Direct contact with the public ended with termination of the symphony concerts in 1882 and a change toward private undertakings for members and guests only. Yet, the wish to serve the musical community remained in full force. This desire accounted in large measure for the grants to local groups and institutions, commissions for new works, and cash awards to promising young musicians. Through such outlays the Association reached out to individuals and organizations in pursuit of goals similar to its own, thus becoming a prime force in the effort to preserve good taste and high standards in music.

Raised eyebrows over some works resulting from its commissions attest to the tension between progressive music lovers and the conservative stances persisting among other members. Neither as pervasive nor as encompassing as it once was, elitism, still prevails sufficiently to exclude from Association support many of the new music movements born in the 1970's and 1980's. Although the Boston Musica Viva, granddaddy of the area's modern music ensembles, has won HMA backing, other proponents of new music have not. As a rule, establishment organs have been favored with financial contributions, whereas such consortia as Composers in Red Sneakers, Extension Works, Griffin, Underground Composers, Collage, NuClassix, and the Boston Composers Orchestra tend to be ignored until they find their way into the mainstream.

Deeply embedded, old attitudes are not uprooted easily. In 150 years, the Harvard Musical Association certainly has departed from its initial, cherished classical orientation. Romantic composers, whom most of its founding members abhorred, have long graced Social Evening programs. Despite some reluctance, certain pieces of modern music have proven acceptable, too, although many members continue to digest a steady diet of pure classical confections more easily than the extreme developments of recent times.

Even works of such 20th-century sovereigns as Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Bartok, and Schoenberg raise nearly as many hackles as electronic or experimental concoctions. In essence, there appears to be more identification with traditional views than with progress, at least in a musical sense. Much of the elite outlook remains intact, hardly changed in spirit from the sentiments underlying the spring 1873 report by John Sullivan Dwight on the eighth season of Harvard Orchestra concerts. Commenting that concert activity had increased markedly all over the country, Dwight asserted that "one of the first results of [Boston's] fame for music is to tempt all speculating managers and virtuosos this way; 'there's business in it—we must have a share—grab it all if we can.' Shall we go into the competition? No. We never compete—we are out of the scramble. What we do is for Art's sake, and we shall go on and do it faithfully as long as we can, as well as we can, sure that our work is needed."

Social progress came faster, though not fully until well into this century. Yet, the aura of elitism did not fade. Even with social consciousness growing among members, new ones were expected to meet the same criteria as met by their predecessors. An interest in music was paramount, of course, but, consciously or subconsciously, each nominee also had to be a person of substance or professional or social distinction and committed to community values. As the ranks opened to women and minorities, candidates from these sectors of society had to satisfy the same qualifications. While never stated outright, there seemed to be a tacit understanding that the Association would remain elite and exclusive in keeping with its practice of respecting refinement and fostering the highest musical values.

There is nothing wrong with being called “elite.” In the Swiss Army, “elite” refers to the finest cadre among the troops. Elsewhere it means the choicest part. If in relation to mankind it connotes an attitude of social superiority, it also implies the ability to lead others to finer things.

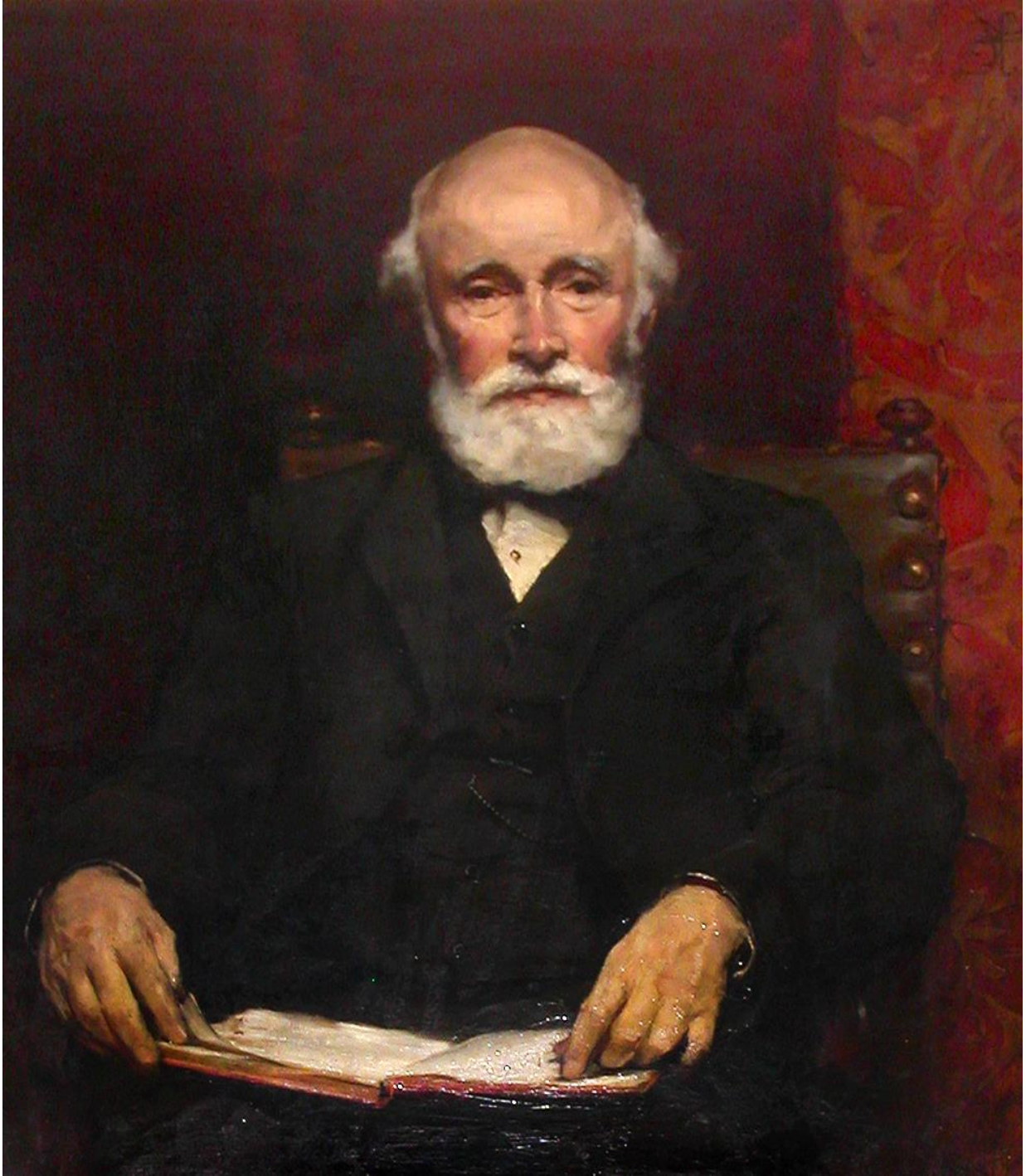
The elite aspect of the Harvard Musical Association, far from putting a damper on musical plans and activities, has enabled the organization to serve as a catalyst for expanding the range of opportunities. Through its encouragement of the performance, appreciation, and enjoyment of good music, it has played a prime role in cultivating a desire for the best among an increasing number of people in the metropolitan area. Without the Association’s elite touch, the interest might not have been kindled that created a ready-made audience for a Boston Symphony Orchestra or that sublime form of aesthetic experience, chamber music.

The pioneer work of the Association in the middle of the 19th century produced excellent results. Boston today is second only to New York among American cities in the abundance and variety of great music. Other forces have taken part in the effort to give Boston its fine standing, but none has matched the HMA in providing motivation. Some might believe that its work is done; that Harvard has now long had a distinguished music department including several first-rate composers, theorists, musicologists, and performers; that Boston has achieved musical eminence, particularly as capital of the early musk movement; and that the number of world-class institutions based here reinforces and ensures the continuation of the area’s status.

Yet the changes that have already occurred leave room for the Association to commit itself to a strong, if somewhat different, role in contributing to the further growth of Boston’s musical life. As the HMA celebrates its sesquicentennial, its leadership and many of its members look forward with eagerness to meaningful new challenges.



The Association’s front door dressed for the Centennial of the House



John Sullivan Dwight Bids adieu to readers.