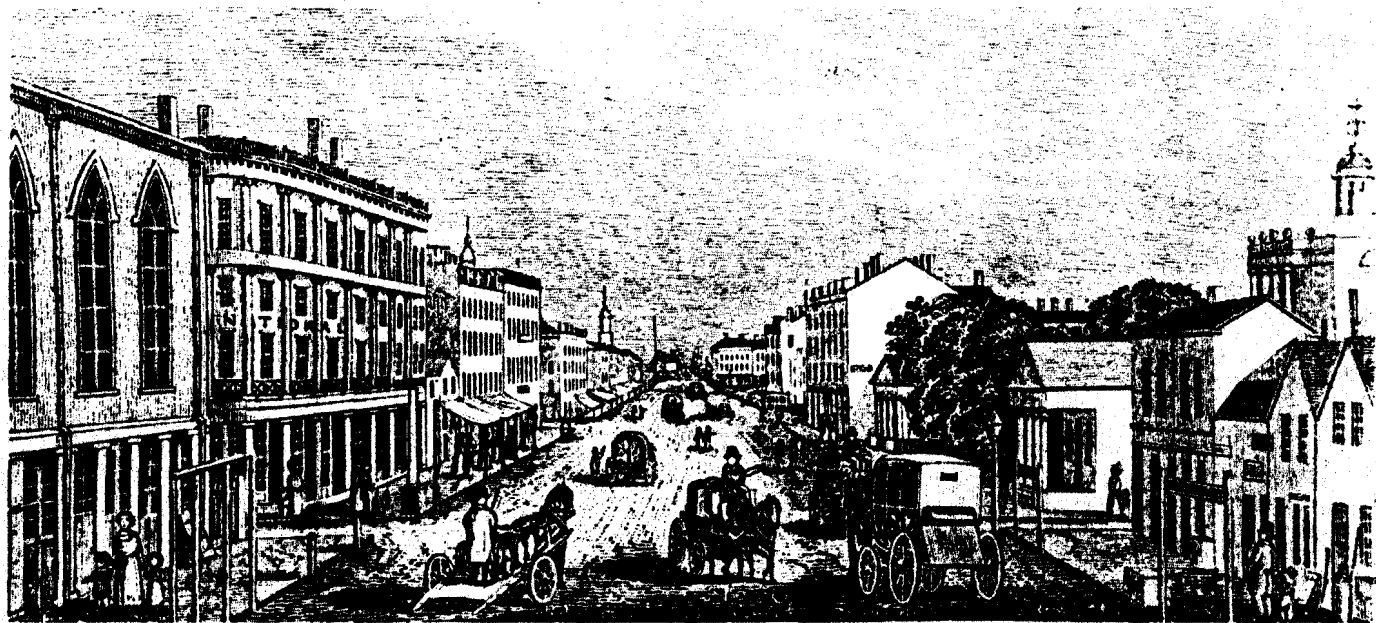


FROM EAGLE TAVERN TO EASTMAN THEATRE

A Sesquicentennial History of Music in Rochester



Vincent A. Lenti

1984

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## PREFACE

The story of music in Rochester is one which should be of considerable interest in this, the city's Sesquicentennial Year. Throughout its history, Rochester has been noted for the quality of its musical life. The history of its musical achievements is both typical and unique. It is typical in that the development of its music has had parallel in most other American cities. It is unique in that the musical accomplishments of Rochester have most certainly exceeded the expectations which the city might have had, given its size, age, and geographic location.

Rochester, in its early years, was known as the "Flour City" and later as the "Flower City" as milling gave way to the nursery industry. In more recent years, it has been called "Kodak Town" due to the great influence of the Eastman Kodak Company and its founder, George Eastman. But perhaps more appropriately, it might be called the "Musical City" since, throughout the years and decades of flour mills, nurseries, and cameras, music has been a consistent and notable achievement.

The story of that achievement follows. It is a record in which all Rochesterians can take pride.

Vincent A. Lenti  
January 3, 1984

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## MUSIC IN ROCHESTER

### I.

#### FROM ITS ORIGINS TO THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF 1884

The City of Rochester enjoys a particularly wide-spread and excellent reputation for its music. Most of the musical institutions for which it is known, however, trace their origins no earlier than the years immediately following the First World War. Nonetheless, it would be a grave mistake to assume that music in Rochester was somehow lacking prior to the opening of the Eastman School and Eastman Theatre, or prior to the establishment of the Rochester Philharmonic. Music first appeared as part of the cultural and social life of Rochesterians not long after Nathaniel Rochester rode into the area and surveyed one hundred acres in town lots for what was to become the City of Rochester. Although not incorporated as a city until 1834, the booming settlement on the banks of the Genesee saw its first organized musical event in 1817 when the first band met and held its initial meeting at Reynold's Tavern on Buffalo Street. Preston Smith, a local merchant, was chosen leader, and efforts were made to procure instruments from Utica. Among the members of this pioneering ensemble could be found a tailor, a painter, a currier, a bookstore owner, a printer, and a goldsmith, the last of whom had the distinction of also bringing the first piano to town. But the most notable member was Nathaniel Rochester himself, who played the clarinet.

In addition to band music, early Rochester also witnessed a number of vocal concerts, perhaps the earliest one occurring in May of 1820. Prior to

1824, however, there was no regular place for musical or theatrical events, and entertainments were given in meeting houses or rooms fitted up for the occasion in taverns. The most popular location for these events was the Eagle Tavern, located where the Powers Building now stands. Eagle Tavern also served as the location of what might be considered Rochester's first museum when in 1821 Stowell & Co. announced that they had opened a museum there "consisting of thirty-four wax figures, two excellent organs, one playing a variety of music accompanied by a chime of bells, the other, a new patent organ, playing a variety of music accompanied by a drum and triangles; the Temple of Industry, a grand mechanical panorama, consisting of 26 moving figures, each working at their different occupations."

If music in taverns offended some of the more puritanical early settlers, there was also ample music in Rochester's first churches. The two oldest congregations, St. Luke's Episcopal and First Presbyterian, both had early church organs built by Appleton of Boston. The instrument at St. Luke's was installed in 1825 and played by Daniel Clark, who was the first organist in the city. As other congregations were established, most could not initially afford the luxury of an organ, but congregational singing and choirs flourished under inspired local leadership, and instrumental music was a frequent addition to worship services. At Brick Presbyterian (now Downtown United Presbyterian), for example, there was no organ until 1852, twenty-eight years after the construction of the church building. But Jerry Copeland, a member of the congregation, played bass viol during services along with Edwin Scrantom, third son of pioneer settler Hamlet Scrantom, who played the flute. And around the corner at Central Presbyterian Church, an ensemble consisting of violin, cello,

and flute similarly assisted the singers.

By 1834, the year in which the city was incorporated, Rochester had grown to over 12,000 inhabitants. The following year, the first choral society made its appearance with the establishment of the Rochester Academy of Sacred Music which was dedicated not only to the improvement of choral singing in church, but also to providing a chorus for performances on behalf of various charitable projects. Two years later, in 1837, the Mechanincs Musical Association was organized with similar objectives. At approximately the same time, there arrived from England (via Canada) Henry Russell who later achieved extraordinary popularity in his native country as a composer and singer. In addition to serving as organist at First Presbyterian Church - position which provided him with \$300.00 per year - Russell appeared numerous times in concert, often with the Academy of Sacred Music or other choral societies. He was probably the first musician of genuine accomplishment to reside here, and did much to elevate popular taste and appreciation for music during his Rochester years.

Rising interest in music led to the opening of Hervey Warren's music store in 1836 and to a growing number of local music teachers available to aspiring young singers and other students. The honor of having been the first teacher of music in Rochester probably belongs to George Pryer who had been engaged to provide instruction for the members of the early Rochester Band, but others gradually established themselves as residents of the city. Along with Henry Russell, Benjamin Hill was one of the best known teachers of the period.

By 1840 the population of Rochester reached 20,000 and by 1850 had grown to 36,000. Contributing to the growth was the influx of many German immigrants who brought with them a sophisticated and highly developed taste for music. In time, the German choral organizations, such as the Maennerchor, became very prominent locally, and the German influence on music always remained very strong. As a reflection of the great development of musical interest and abilities which had developed, Rochester in the 1840's was the scene of a number of "musical conventions". These were not conventions in the modern sense of the term, but institutes given by teachers from Boston for the benefit of local choral directors and teachers. These were first held in 1843, and then repeated in 1845, 1848, and 1850, under the direction of Lowell Mason and George Webb of the Boston Academy of Music. It is significant that these were the first such conventions to be held outside of Boston, then the music capital of America.

Concurrent with all of these activities were the first concert appearances of international artists. Ole Bull, the famous Norwegian violinist, gave a concert on June 21, 1844, the first of a number of visits which he made to Rochester. Perhaps on a less serious note, Joseph Dudonier appeared the following year. Monsieur Dudonier was from Paris and performed on his Componium Quintetto, which was described as "an instrument that has required his personal attention for seven years in its construction" and which represented "a perfect band of ten instruments and twenty-five bells". A more traditional concert occurred in 1846 with the appearance of Leopold de Meyer from Germany who was considered to be one of Europe's great piano virtuosi. Shortly after-



wards, the brilliant Austrian pianist, Henri Herz, performed a concert with violinist Camille Savori. Herz's American tour, including the stop in Rochester, was the result of seeking a way to recover from serious financial losses which he had incurred as a manufacturer of pianos. Apparently his tour was an enormous success for he returned to Europe and established a highly successful piano manufacturing concern.

All of these events took place in the few theaters of modest proportion which had been constructed in the 1820's and 1830's, principally Concert Hall which was founded by Edwin Dean in Child's Marble Building on the east side of Exchange Street. In 1845, a Mr. Dempster opened an impressive new theater called Minerva Hall on Main Street, but it was destroyed by fire some thirteen years later. Of more significance, however, was the opening of Corinthian Hall in 1849. With a seating capacity of eleven to twelve hundred, it was erected by William Reynolds behind Reynolds Arcade at an impressive cost of \$12,000.00. This hall became the absolute center of Rochester cultural life for thirty or more years, and was one of the city's most historically significant buildings. It survived into the twentieth century but, like far too many Rochester landmarks, was finally demolished in 1928. But during its years of glory as a concert hall, it hosted an unsurpassed array of visiting international artists. Furthermore, it was generally recognized by most of the famous artists who performed there as one of the finest halls acoustically in the entire world.

The musical prominence and affluence of Rochester during the 1850's is best illustrated by the appearance, in July 1851, of three great singers within a period of three weeks. First came the celebrated English soprano, Anna

Bishop, followed by Theresa Parodi. Madame Parodi appeared under the management of Maurice Strakosch, the most important impresario of his time, who was so pleased with Rochester that it became one of his favorite concert locations.

The third event in July 1851 was one of the greatest musical happenings in the history of the city. On two memorable evenings, Jenny Lind presented concerts in Corinthian Hall. As probably the most famous soprano of her time, her appearance in Rochester was an absolute sensation. Tickets were sold at the unheard of price of two, three, and five dollars, but dissatisfaction with the sale of tickets ran so high that admission to the second concert was accomplished through an auction, and extremely high premiums were paid to gain a seat in the hall. To her credit, the famous singer donated the premiums from the auction to various charitable institutions in Rochester. Interest in her appearance was so high that those who were unable to obtain tickets listened from outside Corinthian Hall by lining up on the Court Street bridge. The following year, violinist Ole Bull returned to present another concert, this time assisted by Maurice Strakosch's sister-in-law, Adelina Patti. The young coloratura soprano was, at the time, only nine years old. Other visitors during the period included the famous Italian contralto Marietta Alboni, the great American pianist, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and Sigismond Thalberg, the only pianist whom European audiences considered as a possible rival to Franz Liszt.

Local musical efforts did not diminish in the wake of such impressive imported entertainments. A new musical society, known as the Harmonic, came

into existence in 1852 and soon developed into a chorus of one hundred and an orchestra of twenty. This society presented what might have been the first local hearings of both Haydn's Creation and Handel's Messiah, plus many other choral masterpieces. Band music also continued to be highly popular. The original Rochester Band of 1817 had been succeeded by the Rochester City Band, followed successively by Perkins' Band, Cheshire's Band, Adams' Band, Holloway's Band and others. Music in Rochester's churches similarly grew in scope and importance. More and more houses of worship found themselves able to afford organs. Prominent among Rochester churches known for their music was St. Peter's on Gibbs Street, the music being especially promoted by Rev. Edwin Yoemans, who was pastor from 1863 to 1869 and a highly accomplished musician himself. The first organ in the church was built by Jardine in 1852, later replaced following a fire in 1868 by a magnificent instrument constructed by Hook. A growing number of Roman Catholics in the city also witnessed an impressive development of music in their churches. At St. Patrick's, Rochester's first Catholic parish and later the first Cathedral, Fred Miller served admirably as organist. He had been musical director of the Parodi Opera Troup, but settled in Rochester after marrying a local resident.

Local musical efforts were given great encouragement with the construction of Rochester Savings Bank which donated a hall on its upper floors for concerts and rehearsals. An organization known as the Rochester Academy of Music was formed in 1864 and used the savings bank facility for its activities. After the Civil War, Washington Hall was erected on Main Street, occupying the location where Sibley's now stands, and many concerts were given there. Its in-

terior was almost identical to Corinthian Hall, but for some unexplained reason the acoustics were poor, and the hall never gained great popularity. At about the same time, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra was established under the direction of John Kalbfleisch. Not to be confused with the present orchestra of the same name, the early "philharmonic" was an instrumental ensemble of only eighteen players. Nonetheless, it was probably the first local effort dedicated solely to orchestral music. Kalbfleisch soon relinquished direction of this group to Henri Appy, a talented violinist who had moved here in connection with the establishment of the Academy of Music. After assuming direction of the Philharmonic, Appy moved its rehearsals to the Academy, and presented many public rehearsals for the enjoyment of the local citizenry. As the orchestra grew in numbers, its programs grew more ambitious, and many fine works in the orchestral repertoire were given their first local performances.

The same period of time as that which saw the establishment of the Rochester Academy of Music and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra gave rise to the first music publishers in Rochester. The first on the scene was probably Joseph P. Shaw who began, in 1856, as a piano dealer. Soon afterwards, he began a publishing career by printing the "Ontario schottisch" of R.F.C. Ellis in 1859. William S. Mackie began publishing music perhaps as early as 1861, later followed by George H. Ellis, Gibbon & Stone, and Cook & Martin. The most interesting figure in the early history of music publishing in Rochester was, perhaps, Edgar H. Sherwood. Born in 1845, Sherwood was the son of Lyman Sherwood, a leading attorney in Western New York. Because his

father disapproved of the music profession, he was trained as a physician, but made a quick career change as soon as his father had died! He was the uncle of William Sherwood, one of the foremost pianists in America, and built a solid reputation as a music teacher and composer. A considerable quantity of Sherwood's compositions were published in Rochester. Although not of lasting value, his works - unlike most of his contemporaries - were quite fine, at least according to the tastes of the day.

During the years following the Civil War, international artists continued to appear in Rochester for concerts in undiminishing numbers. By 1870, the population had reached 62,000, and the year witnessed the first of many appearances by Theodore Thomas and his orchestra. A German by birth, Thomas began touring in 1869 with an orchestra of fifty-four players, and his influence on the development of orchestral playing in America, including in Rochester, was very great. The following year, Rochester was honored by the presence of Anton Rubinstein and Henri Wieniawski. Rubinstein was, at the time, rightly called "the king of pianists", and his collaboration with a violinist of Wieniawski's stature must have been an extraordinary artistic treat for the local audience. In 1872, Ole Bull returned for yet another Rochester appearance in Corinthian Hall, and the same year witnessed a vocal recital by Carlotta Patti, the sister of Adelina Patti. She was assisted at her recital by a number of artists including the famous pianist, Teresa Carreno, and the tenor, "Signor Mario". This renowned Italian vocalist had an interesting background in that he was of aristocratic lineage. Destined for a military career, he created a sensation in Europe by eloping with a ballerina and becoming an opera singer. In order not to embarrass his family, he always appeared under his Christian

name, Mario, rather than using his surname, Cavaliere di Candia. Other artists of the period included the eminent Hungarian violinist, Eduard Remenyi, and the famous German violin virtuoso, August Wilhelmj. The German pianist, Hans von Bülow, came for a concert in 1876, some years after the notorious public scandal of having his wife, Cosima, abandon him for composer Richard Wagner. A few years later, Liszt's distinguished student, Rafael Joseffy, made his local debut with a brilliant piano recital in Corinthian Hall.

During this period, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra continued its local concerts, but was finally forced to disband. The void it left behind was filled for a while by a new Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Albert Sartori, but it was unfortunately a short-lived enterprise. Shortly before 1880, an Opera Club was organized which also had a brief, although successful, local career. And in 1882, a pioneering Oratorio Society of Rochester was organized with Henry Greiner as its music director, and soon grew to a vocal ensemble of close to 350 members. Like so many other efforts, it too had a rather short-lived existence, but greatly contributed to the elevation of local musical tastes and paved the way for more permanent efforts in the future.

As the City of Rochester noted its Semi-Centennial in 1884, it could reflect with considerable pride upon its cultural achievements. Its population had shown an amazing growth since the first twelve settlers had arrived in 1812, with numbers estimated at 110,000 in the Semi-Centennial year. Initially, there had been considerable opposition to all forms of popular entertainment,

reflecting the puritan New England upbringing of many of its early inhabitants. In 1828, for example, the Rochester Female Charitable Society declined the profit from a benefit performance at the Rochester Theater on grounds that the theater had a "demoralizing effect" on the morals of the community. Gradually, however, there was a growing interest in all forms of entertainment including, of course, music, and the high level of concert activity must be considered as one of the outstanding achievements of the city's first fifty years. Without this achievement, future generations would not have been able to so successfully build upon this musical heritage as to make Rochester so notable as a musical city.

## MUSIC IN ROCHESTER

### II.

#### FROM THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF 1884 TO THE CENTENNIAL OF 1934

The growth of music in Rochester for the fifty years following the celebration of the Semi-Centennial was no less remarkable than the fifty years preceding it. A growing population, growing affluence, and continuing influx of immigrants for whom music was of great importance all contributed to making this half-century of Rochester's history perhaps its most significant in terms of musical accomplishment.

Local singing societies continued to be popular, maintaining a tradition dating back to the city's earliest days. Of importance during the 1880's was the Mendelssohn Singing Society, as well as the Apollo Club, "Melourgia", and the Choral Union. All presented enjoyable concerts, but quickly passed into history.

Of longer significance on the local musical scene, however, was the Tuesday Musicale which had its origins in 1889 when Mrs. John Whitbeck invited about twenty-five of her musical friends to her house. Beginning with a limited membership and with meetings at the members' homes, the Tuesday Musicale was originally intended for the mutual improvement and entertainment of its own members. There were twelve meetings each year, six devoted to musical study and six to recitals. As the Tuesday Musicale grew in size and importance it soon developed a series of evening concerts for the general public in addition



to its morning sessions for members. Thus the women who constituted this organization began to act as important impressarios, and their public concerts had a marked effect on the musical taste of the community. The Tuesday Musicales was responsible for bringing to Rochester such artists as the English pianist Harold Bauer and cellist Pablo Casals, as well as the Boston, Pittsburgh and Detroit Symphony Orchestras.

The Tuesday Musicales had a history spanning numerous decades unlike so many other local musical endeavors which had been so short-lived. Part of its longevity was due, no doubt, to the industry and talents of its leadership. Nonetheless, it may also have succeeded because Rochester, by the turn of the century, had grown in population and prosperity to a point where it could indeed support more permanent cultural institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the opening years of the twentieth century witnessed the beginnings of what became Rochester's first truly professional orchestra. The credit for providing this initiative belongs to Hermann Dossenbach. One of four brothers, all musically gifted, Dossenbach was a violinist, teacher, and conductor who began his endeavor by assembling a group of thirty players and presenting a program of "popular classics" in Powers Hall on February 5, 1900. The event was the first of three such concerts planned for the season, and Dossenbach had the important support of a group of "patronesses" representing Rochester's social elite. During the ensuing years, the Dossenbach Orchestra grew in size until it numbered sixty to seventy players and was able to do more ambitious symphonic programming. In the meanwhile, however, another orchestra made its appearance on the local scene. On June 13, 1901, the Rochester Symphony Orchestra gave its first concert under the direction of Ludwig Schenck. Like Dossenbach,

Schenck was a violinist and came from a musical family. His father was a flutist of considerable ability and his brother a member of the New York Philharmonic Society. Dossenbach and Schenck continued on rather parallel tracks for a number of years until, in 1907, Schenck's ensemble began to devote itself to the concept of free educational concerts, leaving the Dossenbach Orchestra as the "professional" symphony in Rochester.

The development of this professional orchestra was considerably enhanced when, in 1911, Dossenbach's supporters provided the appropriate financial resources to allow him to spend a year studying and observing music in the great cultural centers of Europe. Upon his return, his orchestra was re-organized as the Rochester Orchestra and provided with a broader financial backing. The improved financial situation permitted Dossenbach to engage some very notable soloists for his concerts, including the American violinist Efrem Zimbalist, the great Fritz Kreisler, Russian piano virtuoso Josef Hofmann, soprano Alma Gluck, and many others.

Dossenbach's orchestral concerts were normally held in either the Lyceum Theatre or Convention Hall. The Lyceum was one of the most important structures in Rochester at the time. Erected in 1887 on South Clinton just off Main Street, it was built in Moorish style and seated 2000. Its use as a concert hall was somewhat limited because it served principally as a drama theater, over the years presenting a rich selection of the best plays produced in America. Convention Hall, on the other hand, emerged in the opening years of the twentieth century as the principal concert hall in Rochester. Originally built as the State Armory, it provided facilities for the 54th Regiment from 1870 to 1907 when such activities

were transferred to the new Armory on East Main Street. Although not an ideal concert facility, Convention Hall served for many years as the principal musical auditorium in Rochester, Corinthian Hall having passed into the twilight of its career in this regard. It not only served as the location for Rochester Orchestra concerts and other local events, but was the site for recitals by a growing number of international artists. In addition to the Tuesday Musicale, other local impresarios were active at the time, the pre-eminent one being James Furlong who brought to the city an impressive array of international stars such as the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, pianist Ignaz Paderewski, and the young Jascha Heifetz. In actuality, few periods in the history of Rochester can match the richness of concert life during the opening decades of the twentieth century.

In addition to visiting artists, local musicians continued to appear in concert, the most important of which was violinist David Hochstein. Hochstein was born on February 16, 1892, the third child of Jacob and Helena Hochstein. Showing an unusual talent at an early age, he was sent to Ludwig Schenck for violin lessons. He later continued his training with Aloys Trnka, a gifted violinist who resided in Rochester quite briefly, but under whose guidance Hochstein developed into a major talent. In 1909 the young Rochesterian left for Vienna to continue his studies with the European master, Otakar Sevcik, and in 1913 went to St. Petersburg to study with Leopold Auer, perhaps the greatest violin teacher of all time. His career began in earnest with an official New York debut on January 15, 1915 which was followed by critically acclaimed performances in many American cities during the next few years. In the fall of 1917, however, David Hochstein enlisted in the army. He made his

final Rochester appearance on December 17, 1917, performing the Mendelssohn Concerto with the Rochester Orchestra in Convention Hall. The following April he was shipped off to France. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on October 1, and was killed in action fifteen days later, one of 512 young men from Rochester who went off to war never to return.

The death of this talented young man came as a shock to Rochesterians. Emily Sibley Watson, who had been his patron and long-time supporter, soon began to rally support for a suitable memorial. She purchased the Hochstein home on Joseph Avenue and, with the assistance of others, made the necessary arrangements to open a music school there for the education of the community. The David Hochstein Music School Settlement opened its doors in October 1920 and continues to this day as a memorial to the gifted young Rochesterian.

The Hochstein School was not Rochester's first music school, although the history of educational institutions devoted to music doesn't begin until the early years of the twentieth century. The first attempts to establish a music school occurred in 1906 when John D. Beall, a well-known voice teacher from the Ithaca Conservatory, started commuting to Rochester to give lessons with some other teachers in the Cornwall Building on Main Street. Evidence suggests that Mr. Beall's school quickly ran into financial difficulties. In the meanwhile, however, another new school had been established locally with the incorporation of the Rochester Conservatory in December 1907. On March 1, 1908 it purchased the assets of the Beall School and soon developed a faculty of eighteen instructors and a fairly large student body.

Competition soon arose, however, from one of the Conservatory's own

faculty members. Alf Klingenberg, a Norwegian pianist of note, came to Rochester to teach at the Conservatory during the 1912-13 school year. The following year, however, he left to open his own school in partnership with Hermann Dossenbach. As a location for his school, Klingenberg chose a building at 47 Prince Street, situated adjacent to the University of Rochester and diagonally across the street from Sibley Hall which housed the Sibley Music Library, a valuable musical resource given to the University in 1904 by Hiram W. Sibley. After only one year of operation, the Dossenbach-Klingenberg School was re-organized by bringing in a new partner, a voice teacher whose name was Oscar Gareissen. To reflect the new partnership, the name of the school was changed to the D.K.G. Institute of Musical Art, the initials reflecting the surnames of the three directors. Two years later, the Institute absorbed the older Rochester Conservatory which apparently could not survive in competition with Klingenberg's school.

In the summer of 1917 a further change took place. Klingenberg became the sole owner of both the property and corporate rights by purchasing the capital stock held by both Dossenbach and Gareissen as well as Dossenbach's share of the property rights. Becoming the sole director, Klingenberg was faced with a substantial long-term debt as well as having to deal with the regular operational expenses of the school. As an institution it had achieved commendable success during its brief existence by developing a surprisingly fine faculty and cultivating the active support of many prominent Rochesterians, not the least of whom was Rush Rhees, President of the University of Rochester. Nonetheless, the school was on a very precarious financial footing, and its future was somewhat in doubt. Early in 1918, George Eastman presented a dramatic

solution to the school's many financial problems by offering to buy it for the University of Rochester. With Rush Rhees in agreement, Eastman purchased the Institute for \$28,000.00 on July 19, 1918. Revision of the University's charter, however, delayed transfer of the corporate and property rights, and for the next 315 days Eastman was the sole owner of the music school. When its charter was amended, the University of Rochester acquired the Institute from George Eastman for a price of \$1.00 on June 12, 1919. At the time George Eastman purchased the Institute from Alf Klingenberg, there is no real evidence to suggest any long-range plans for a new music school. Apparently, the plan was simply to affiliate the existing Institute with the University for the purpose of offering a music degree. Within a short time, however, a grandiose plan began to unfold. In February of 1919 the local newspapers announced that Mr. Eastman had committed himself to providing the music school with new facilities "surpassed by no other in the world". The plan called for a new music school building, to be known as the Eastman School of Music, plus an adjoining theater with seating for more than 3,000 people. George Eastman's vision was for the theater to provide a means of broad educational benefit for the community-at-large by using the popular medium of motion pictures as a vehicle for promoting the enjoyment of music. Therefore, he planned on using his theater six days a week for movies, reserving only Wednesday evenings for concerts and recitals. The large theaters of the day, of course, maintained orchestras for the accompaniment of silent films, and the presentation of films was often supplemented by instrumental or organ music, vocal entertainment, and by dance, all of which was planned on a grand scale for Mr. Eastman's theater.

The school portion of the building project was completed to an extent which allowed the first students to enter in September 1921. The formal opening of the school and its lovely recital facility, Kilbourn Hall, occurred in March of the following year. Then, in September of 1922, the Eastman Theatre opened with a dress rehearsal performance on September 4 and the first public showing two days later. Dossenbach's Rochester Orchestra had fallen victim to the grandeur of Eastman's project in that it was felt that the new theater would need a new orchestra. In fact, it would need two orchestras: a smaller, fifty-member ensemble for the showing of movies, and a larger, ninety-member symphony. Sometime during the planning stages, the decision was reached that Dossenbach was not the man to conduct the new symphony. Arthur Alexander, a young musician from Michigan, was brought in as conductor in his place. Alexander arrived in Rochester while the theater was still under construction, and it was not until March 28, 1923 that the new Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra gave its first performance under his leadership. Ironically, it was not only Alexander's first Philharmonic concert; it was also his last. Nine days earlier he had been dismissed from his post. Eugene Goossens and Albert Coates succeeded him in the leadership of the Rochester Philharmonic for the 1923-24 season.

The scope of the Eastman Theatre undertaking included a ballet company originally directed by Enid Knapp Botsford and also an opera company headed by Russian tenor, Vladimir Rosing. Concert activities in the theater included the best artists in the world. The 1925-26 concert series, for example, included tenor Tito Schipa with pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch, violinist Mischa

Elman, contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink, pianist Josef Hofmann, tenor John McCormack, contralto Sigrid Onegin, baritone Reinald Werrenrath, soprano Amelita Galli-Curci, and tenor Roland Hayes.

But despite the grand showing of movies, the ballet, opera, and Philharmonic, and the visiting artists - all of which produced a yearly attendance of 2,000,000 - the Eastman Theatre enterprise collapsed, apparently under the weight of its own ambitions. In December of 1928 it was announced that the University of Rochester was going to lease the theater operation to Paramount Picture Corporation since it had suffered a \$75,000 loss on the theater during the previous year. Three years later the financial realities of the situation forced Paramount to abandon the project and the history of the Eastman Theatre as a movie palace came to an end.

When the University reached its decision to lease the Eastman Theatre to Paramount, the future of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra was threatened because a majority of its personnel had found adequate employment only through being members of the Eastman Theatre Orchestra. Since no commercial theater could support such an orchestra, this employment came to an end. The Civic Music Association was founded to address this problem. It grew out of an existing organization known as the Eastman Theatre Subscribers Association whose members contributed to offset losses on the symphony orchestra season. The new association was an attempt to derive greater local support. It operated a newly formed Rochester Civic Orchestra of fifty performers, personnel coming from the disbanded theatre orchestra. This new orchestra first had a primarily educational mission, playing Sunday and Tuesday afternoon concerts in city



high schools. The great advantage to this group was that it preserved a nucleus of professional players. The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra was thus able to continue by augmenting the Civic Orchestra with about forty additional musicians for its concerts. The Civic Music Association, furthermore, took responsibility for maintaining an Eastman Theatre concert series of visiting artists.

As Rochester approached its Centennial in 1934, its citizens could view with justifiable pride the musical accomplishments which had been recorded since the Semi-Centennial of 1884. The Civic Music Association was responsible for providing a very rich concert life, while the Eastman School's influence was ever-present, both as an educational resource for the community as well as for the concerts and programs it offered to the public. Music in the public schools also thrived, supported by a large and varied assortment of musical instruments purchased by George Eastman and loaned, without cost, to the Rochester Board of Education for use by pupils in high school, junior high school and upper elementary grades. Music in Rochester churches also continued to be of note, and choral activities in general were plentiful. Perhaps reflecting much of this was "Music Week" during the celebration of the Centennial which featured performances by the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra and Eastman Chorus; by bands, orchestras and choirs from the city's public and parochial schools; and performances by the Rochester Philharmonic and the Rochester Civic Chorus. In all, there were six consecutive evenings of music presented for "Music Week", all giving ample evidence of Rochester's considerable musical achievements.

## MUSIC IN ROCHESTER

### III.

#### FROM THE CENTENNIAL OF 1934 TO THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF 1984

The years following the Centennial of 1934 have seen music in Rochester more and more centered around the Eastman School and Eastman Theatre. The school's emergence as one of the world's major centers for music study has had wide implications for the community in which it is situated. World-renowned musicians have been attracted to the city as members of the faculty, and their appearance in concerts and recitals has been a major contribution to the cultural life of the area. In an indirect sense, the school has also contributed to the musical life of the city through its graduates, many of whom have remained in the area as teachers and performers. The community-at-large has also shared in the educational resources of the Eastman School through instruction offered by the school's Preparatory Department (now part of the Community Education Division). Well over 25,000 Rochesterians, both children and adults, have received instruction at the school from a faculty of highly qualified professionals. National attention has been focused on the city through the school's American Composers concerts, held annually for many years under the direction of Howard Hanson, and through the school's radio broadcasts via the National Broadcasting Company during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's.

The Hochstein Memorial Music School has served as an able partner with Eastman in providing instruction for the community. Originally planned as a "settlement school" to provide instruction in music to children of limited

financial means, its successive directors for many years were appointed from the faculty of the Eastman School which also underwrote the institution's costs in a most generous manner. Somewhat of a "parting-of-the-ways" occurred between Eastman and Hochstein during the 1960's, but the latter school has thrived under a more independent direction and by receiving United Way support to continue its commitment to needy students. At the present time, the Eastman Community Education Division and the Hochstein School provide music instruction to about 1500 students annually, an enviable record for a city of Rochester's size.

The Civic Music Association which, as noted, was established to preserve the nucleus of professional players necessary to sustain the Rochester Philharmonic, was responsible for many years for bringing the best international music talent to Rochester audiences. In addition to the orchestral series of the Rochester Philharmonic and the Rochester Civic orchestras, the Civic Music Association sponsored productions of the Metropolitan Opera, children's plays, performances by various ballet companies, occasional film showings, and an artist series. The 1936-37 artist series, for example, featured appearances by the Jooss European Ballet, baritone John Charles Thomas, violinist Fritz Kreisler, pianist Artur Schnabel, pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Boston Symphony under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky, contralto Marian Anderson, and violinist Jasha Heifetz.

The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra has been, and remains, a major cultural factor in the musical life of the city. Following the departure of Eugene Goossens as permanent conductor in 1931, the orchestra passed through

five seasons with guest conductors until appointing Jose Iturbi as the new permanent conductor. Iturbi, best known to audiences as a celebrated concert pianist, was born in Valencia, Spain in 1895. His concert career was somewhat slow in developing, but beginning in 1923 he soon established himself as a pianist of remarkable gifts. His American debut was in 1928, and following his appointment as permanent conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic he continued his career as a pianist as well as establishing himself as a conductor of note. During his tenure with the Philharmonic, there were twelve Thursday evening concerts annually in the Eastman Theatre, approximately half of which featured soloists.

Iturbi left Rochester in 1944, to be followed in 1947 (after another period of guest conductors) by Erich Leinsdorf under whom the Rochester Philharmonic achieved much deserved attention and praise. Leinsdorf was Viennese born and trained, and had been assistant to both Bruno Walter and Toscanini at the Salzburg Festival. Prior to coming to Rochester, he was assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera where he made his American debut, and also conducted the San Francisco Opera Company, Cleveland Orchestra, and elsewhere. His high achievement in Rochester has been preserved through a series of exceptional recordings which he made with the orchestra for Columbia records. Following his departure as permanent conductor in the mid 1950's, he returned to the Metropolitan Opera before becoming music director of the Boston Symphony. Another conductor of note during this period was Guy Fraser Harrison. He served as Associate Conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic and conductor of the Rochester Civic Orchestra, and achieved much-deserved popularity with Rochester audiences.

It is rather remarkable to note the very close collaboration and cooperation which existed among the various musical endeavors for so many years. In addition to the previously mentioned close association with the Hochstein School, the Eastman School was a genuine partner with the Civic Music Association and the Philharmonic. First-desk players of both the Philharmonic and Civic Orchestras were, generally, members of the Eastman faculty, and the school was a generous contributor to the Civic Music Association budget, its subscription in 1947 for example being \$50,000.00. The school also had extremely close ties with Rochester's public school music departments. This included the loan of the instruments purchased by George Eastman, in addition to members of the music departments of Rochester public schools being members of the Eastman School music education faculty.

Changes in the local musical scene, however, began to appear during the 1960's due to shifting economic, cultural, and civic tides. Some of these factors unquestionably have been detrimental to the local musical environment. Many Eastman School teachers left their first-desk positions in the Philharmonic , during the 1960's, and the current situation sees far less sharing of talent between the school and the orchestra. The Civic Music Association has been restructured as the "Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra", and the recent history of concerts has seen a lessened commitment to the once prominent artist series. Part of this is economic in that international fees of concert artists have risen to the extent that questions have been raised as to whether Rochester can afford to bring in today's equivalents of the Kreislers, Rachmaninoffs, and Schnabels. Profound changes in international touring have also had their affect on this in that jet travel permits artists to easily by-pass medium-

sized cities such as Rochester.

Urban unrest in the 1960's rapidly followed by an exodus of the population to the suburbs has also influenced the local musical scene in a negative way. Music in many of the churches in Rochester, long so notable, has suffered in this regard. Where once there were three thriving Presbyterian congregations on the west side of the Genesee River, all with exemplary music programs, only one remains today. Where once there were large congregations of German Catholics with strong music traditions, only near-empty churches remain today. Music in the city schools has similarly entered into a difficult period. The once excellent inter-high orchestra has become a thing of the past, and constant budget crises continually threaten to erode the position of music in the public school system.

But each and every period in the city's history has seen changes in local musical institutions, some passing away but with new ones emerging to make their contribution to Rochester cultural life. Despite losses, church music still thrives in the city with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of excellent organists and directors, many from the Eastman School. Some exemplary music programs exist in churches which are consolidations of older congregations. The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, for example, was formed by joining the congregations of Zion and Concordia churches, and rightfully boasts of a music program of high excellence. Downtown United Presbyterian Church, representing the joining together of the three west-side Presbyterian congregations, is similarly noted for the excellence of its music. Other, older surviving city congregations, such as Old St. Mary's, Third Presbyterian, and

St. Paul's Episcopal, similarly maintain music programs of genuine excellence in the wake of all of the social and demographic changes which have taken place.

Many new musical institutions have arisen which had had a marked impact on the musical and cultural life of the city. Some are small, such as "Madrigalia" under the direction of Robert Dwelley. This sixteen-voice chamber choir is now in its ninth performing season and specializes in un-accompanied choral literature from the earliest times through the twentieth century. Of larger size is the Rochester Oratorio Society under the direction of Theodore Hollenbach. This popular and long-standing group annually performs major choral works, maintaining the tradition established by the "Harmonic" of the 1850's and the earlier Oratorio Society of the 1880's. Other relative "new-comers" to the local scene include the Society for Chamber Music, which was founded in 1977 and which presents ten winter-season concerts each year, and Opera Theatre of Rochester which presents major opera productions in the Eastman Theatre. Local musical life is also enhanced and promoted through the activities of Young Audiences which provides excellent music programs to the area schools at comparatively low cost.

Music in Rochester, however, is more and more dominated by the Eastman School and by the Rochester Philharmonic. The Philharmonic has passed under the successive directorships of Theodore Bloomfield, Laszlo Somogyi, Samuel Jones, and David Zinman since the departure of Erich Leinsdorf. The artistic success of the orchestra, particularly under the baton of David Zinman, has never been at a higher level. It currently presents a series of sixteen

Thursday evening and sixteen Saturday evening Eastman Theatre concerts as well as other events for the enjoyment and fulfillment of the Rochester public. Its current financial position is, admittedly, rather precarious, and the recently announced departure of maestro Zinman is a serious loss. One can only expect, however, that the orchestra will overcome its current difficulties and continue as a major cultural factor in Rochester.

The contribution which the Eastman School makes to the concert life of the city and surrounding area is enormous. Annually there are hundreds of concerts and recitals presented at the school, a vast majority of them being free to the public. During the first two months of the Sesquicentennial Year, for example, thirty-two programs were offered to the public, only five of which involved an admission charge. These programs ranged from a harpsichord recital by faculty member Arthur Haas to a program of contemporary percussion music, from a recital by mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani to a program presented by the New Jazz Ensemble. And these programs were scheduled in addition to the regularly held student recitals in Kilbourn Hall and Hanson Hall, sometimes numbering as many as three or four per day! Annually, more than 50,000 people attend Eastman-sponsored concerts and recitals, coming to the school for the Kilbourn Concert Series, the Eastman-Ranlet Series, and for performances by the Eastman Wind Ensemble, Musica Nova, Inter-Musica, Eastman Jazz Ensemble, New Jazz Ensemble, Collegium Musicum, Eastman Philharmonia, Eastman School Symphony Orchestra, and Eastman Chorale, as well as productions by the Eastman Opera Theatre. In residence at the school are some of the world's most impressive concert soloists, as well as the Cleveland Quartet, the Eastman Brass, the Eastman Baroque Ensemble, and the New Arts Trio.



Rochester, in its Sesquicentennial Year, can take justifiable pride in its musical resources. Each fifty-year period in its history has been marked by notable musical achievements. Its first fifty years were characterized by a growing awareness of the importance of music in its social and cultural life; the middle fifty years saw the establishment of more permanent musical institutions; and the last fifty years have witnessed the emergence of the Eastman School and the Rochester Philharmonic as institutions whose reputations have extended far beyond the immediate area. Thus, music has been, and will undoubtedly remain, an important factor in the life of Rochester and its surrounding areas. The next fifty-year period in the city's history will presumably see changes, with some of today's institutions passing into history, but with others arising to take their place. And when the city comes to celebrate its Bicentennial in 2034, one can only assume that the musical achievements of the city will form an important part of that story.

## SOURCES

Previous writings concerning the history of music in Rochester can be found in the various publications of the Rochester Historical Society, particularly Volumes I, II, III, and XI which contain relatively lengthy contributions to the subject. "Rochester History", the quarterly which was formerly published by the City Historian's Office, is also a valuable source of information, particularly Volume XVI No.3, Volume XXIX No.1, and Volume XLII No.3. The early story of the Eastman School of Music has been documented by Charles Riker in "The Eastman School of Music: Its First Quarter Century" and his supplementary volume "The Eastman School of Music: 1947-1962".

Of general reference is the commendable four-volume history of Rochester by Blake McKelvey, as well as Carl Ackerman's biography of George Eastman.

Archival sources, such as programs, bulletins, and correspondence can be found in various locations locally. The local history division of the public library contains scrapbooks of Ernestine Klinzing, Hermann Dossenbach and others, and also possesses a collection of 19th century material of genuine importance to the subject. The Sibley Music Library contains many scrapbooks of newsclippings, annual catalogues of the Eastman School and its predecessor (the D.K.G. Institute of Musical Art), and an extensive collection of programs from the Eastman Theatre and Kilbourn Hall. The archives at Rush Rhees Library contain much information of interest concerning George Eastman and the papers of Hermann Dossenbach. The Rochester Historical Society possesses some items of interest, particularly a valuable scrapbook concerning the activities of the Rochester Symphony Orchestra.

Unfortunately, much material has been lost during the passing of the years. Prior to the opening of the Eastman Theatre, no systematic collecting of music programs apparently existed. For example, a complete set of Convention Hall programs does not seem to exist anywhere. Other archival material has presumably been misplaced or discarded, including a scrapbook by the Schenck family which reportedly contained many 19th century items of importance. The greatest loss, however, was the papers of Alf Klingenberg which were deliberately destroyed by his wife shortly before his death.

My own personal collection of programs and other related material, assembled during the past half-dozen years, may represent one of the largest sources now available, particularly for the years immediately preceding the opening of the Eastman School and Eastman Theatre.

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