

History of Wednesday Music Club-1923-1963

Being asked to help mark this anniversary of the founding of the Wednesday Music Club by writing a short history of its forty years was a great compliment, but not until I started some research did I realize that it was also a test of my ability as a sleuth-- for ~~there were no records kept during the first ten years,~~ ^{the} ~~were not to be found.~~ ^{of the}

That wasn't the problem it might have been though, because an unknown person (whom we should like to identify) had written an account of that early period and, also, was able to talk to Mrs. Chapin Jones, one of the charter members, of whom there were eight. These proved to be two rich sources of material and the difficulty now is to condense those first ten years into just a few minutes.

Begun by these eight young women in 1923, the group soon grew into what was first called the Tuesday Morning Music Club, and then, with a change in the time of meeting, the name became the Wednesday Morning Music Club.

All members were expected to take part in programs either as soloists or members of a ~~choirs~~ ^{choir}, under the direction of Mrs. Arthur Fickenscher, another charter member, wife of the head of the University Department of Music, and a fine musician in her own right. This ~~choirs~~ ^{choir} became the backbone of the music club for many years--until in fact 1941, when Mr. Fickenscher retired and they left Charlottesville. This was a loss the Music Club felt keenly.

To be transferred into each new minute book

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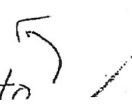
Dues were modest and about the only reason for having them at all was to buy new music for the cho~~rs~~ and soloists.

Everything was going smoothly apparently, when someone decided that the club should join the Virginia Federation of Music Clubs. There was much discussion & argu~~ment~~ pro and con, but the "pro~~s~~" finally won, and at the end of this first ten year~~s~~ period, the Federation is joined, more members are needed to pay federation dues & fulfill federation obligations, and so for the first time, music lovers who are not necessarily musicians are invited to join. Now, because of its size, the club starts meeting in the Rose Room of the Monticello Hotel & parliamentary law, by-laws, minutes, and even a roll call at each meeting all appear on the scene.

1932 to 1943

The period from 1932 to 1943 opens with 68 members at the first meeting, \$24. in the treasury, two delegates to the District Convention and a delightful program & closes with 129 members at the end of 1943, \$159. in the treasury, a large question about the advisability of continuing membership in the Federation, and the usual lovely program at the last meeting of that year.

During the interim we sponsored concerts by at least five out standing artists, including ^{Marjorie Mitchell} John Powell, Norman Frauenheim, and Arthur Fickenscher and supported or assisted (usually both) with a Junior Music Festival, regular radio programs, group singing at play grounds, symphony concerts, & benefits for ~~the~~ our university hospital, ^{work} and the childrens home.

We helped raise money for a piano for the new Lane High School, bought a "radio-victrola" for the Coast Guard. looked into 

assisting the Kiwanis Club with their idea of putting music in the public schools (an idea which had to be shelved at that time) and kept busy in general making music and money.

During this period we made an effort to become a study club again & our early programs included such subjects as the Classical School of Composers, the Romantic School of Composers, Romanticism in France & a Beginning of Romanticism in Russia, and Historical Developements of Music Form---to mention a few. We also developed a quite professional string ensemble under the direction of Mrs. Charles Rich, and between it and the choirs, program participation reached a new high.

Meetings continued at the hotel, then changed to homes, and then changed twice more--all by vote of the membership--finally descending on Misss Rosalie Thornton's home more or less permanently.

We participated in some Federation activities, such as singing Schubert's E Flat Mass with the State Choral Festival in Richmond, hosting a music festival, and entertaining a charming Federation President, but all through the minutes of these ten years there is constant preoccupation with delegates to conventions, and district meetings, requests (usually denied) for an increase in our dues and better cooperation in supporting Federation periodicals and contests. It is easy to see the disenchantment growing.

I should like to end the story of this decade by saying that by far our most outstanding activity was sponsoring and participating in the world premier of Mr. Fickenscher's "The Chamber Blue", written for soloists, choirs, and piano. I hope everyone who remembers those two performances agrees.

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1943 to 1953

For the next ten years-1943 through 1953-the emphasis seems to have been on civic work as well as continuing the fine programs we have always enjoyed throughout the years.

We provided musical programs for Woodrow Wilson Hospital, Davis Ward of the University Hospital, Recreation Center, Blue Ridge Sanatorium, and the Home for the Aged.

After much effort, we were finally successful in placing a stringed instrument program in the three elementary schools. To help support this project, we co-sponsored with the Music Department of the University a concert by the Richmond String Quartet in the University of Virginia Museum of Art.

During the war we helped with U.S.O. music & special arrangements for entertaining servicemen-- all of these projects being supported by musical teas, garden partys with music, and concerts.

By the end of 1953 we were still entirely responsible for the stringed instrument program in the schools. We paid the teacher, and bought, maintained, and insured the instruments of various sizes. Many were donated, but there were not enough of those for the students interested in the program.

Another of our projects was a scholarship fund established for music students at the college level. We sponsored and directed children's concerts and helped with the Tuesday Evening Concert Series each year--our president finally being made ^{an ex-officio} member of that board.

In 1946 we resigned formally from the Virginia Federation of Music Clubs.

The name of our club was changed to Wednesday Music Club--dues were raised to \$150 a year, and it was decided that no more minutes or roll calls would be read at meetings. The first year book was printed during this time.

Our choirs limped along after 1941 under many discouraged directors and the reason may well have been that at that time Charlottesville had a very active Community Choral Society, which we supported individually and as a club.

We were beginning to give Miss Thornton a little relief now by meeting in other homes occasionally, although we still met with her a majority of the time. Life memberships were voted to be given to members who had made outstanding contributions to the club, and Miss Thornton and her sister, Mrs. Thurman, were the first recipients of this honor.

This period ended with an active, vital club, which had made a real place for itself in the community.

Here is one amusing note before we move on. In 1945 the constitution was revised to clear up a point of no small confusion--no one knew whether officers were elected for a one or two year term.

1954 to 1963

Let me touch just briefly on this last ten year period. Briefly, because I am very much afraid I have spent too much of the time allowed me on the thirty previous years and too--because these last years are fresher in our memories.

The regular weekly programs continued to be given in the University Hospital--often in three different wards on the same day--and up at Blue Ridge Sanatorium. However the Blue Ridge project was

given up in 1958, when volunteers were no longer available.

The Music Club collection of music was placed in Alderman Library for safe keeping, but was to remain available to members. Dues were raised to the present \$3.00 and it was decided to accept members only twice a year.

The Madrigals made their appearance during this period-- being mentioned first as a "vocal Quintet", then a "Sextet" and finally, in 1959, by their present name. Another chorus was formed too--that one to be a study group.

In 1958 we had our first annual luncheon to welcome new members and begin our year. This occasion has since become a popular part of our tradition.

The most satisfying event of this period came in 1955 when our long term project of orienting a stringed instrument program in the city and county schools came to a successful conclusion. The strings were taken into the school system on the same basis as the bands, and two instructors for the city & one for the county were provided. After that the club was able to put more emphasis on the scholarship program, which it has done ever since.

Through these forty years we have contributed to numerous "piano funds" and have sponsored concerts of every kind--by member artists, guest artists, visiting groups, symphonies, concert series, (and our own local Light Opera Association.)

Everything we could do to bring worth while music to Charlottesville, we have done with a will and at the same time we have given ourselves immeasurable pleasure. We have a strong, active
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sincere
and we owe a vote of thanks to those eight young women who began it
all-- two of whom are with us today.