

Collection #
M 0614
OMB 0045

INDIANA STATE SYMPHONY SOCIETY RECORDS, 1931-1988

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Processed by
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	4 manuscript boxes, 11 oversize boxes, 1 photograph folder, 1 cassette tape
COLLECTION DATES:	1931-1988
PROVENANCE:	Marion County-Indianapolis Public Library, 16 February 1990; Charles Latham, Jr., Indianapolis IN, 1 March 1992
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Other programs of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, stored in Print Collections
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1990.0216; 1992.0301
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (there were two unsuccessful predecessors with the same name) began in 1930 when a group of musicians, led by violin teacher Ferdinand Schaefer, organized to hire Caleb Mills Hall at Shortridge High School, give four concerts, and split whatever was cleared from ticket sales. (This amounted to \$80 for each musician the first year, and \$18 the second.) In 1931 a group of people interested in music organized to help this orchestra; they formed the Indiana State Symphony Society, and worked mainly to improve attendance at concerts. The orchestra soon moved most of its concerts to the Murat Theatre.

In 1936-1937 the Society decided to expand its efforts, to have a larger orchestra, a longer concert season, and a well-known conductor. The two leading candidates were Werner Janssen of Baltimore, and Fabien Sevitzy, nephew of Serge Koussevitzky of the Boston Symphony. Sevitzy was then conducting a theater orchestra in Boston and the Philadelphia Sinfonietta. He came to Indianapolis in the summer of 1936, was guest conductor on 17 November, and was engaged as conductor for the following year.

To back these expanded operations, the symphony board was reorganized to consist mainly of wealthy businessmen who were willing to support a greatly increased budget. The first two presidents of this new board were William H. Ball, of the Ball Jar firm of Muncie, and Dr. G. H. A. Clowes, research director of Eli Lilly and Company. At Sevitzy's request a separate Women's Committee was set up, to help sell tickets, to raise money, and to promote the orchestra in other ways. The first two presidents of the Women's Committee were Mrs. Frederic M. Ayres (1937-1940) and Mrs. Charles Latham (1940-1946). The Committee made a great effort to spread news of the orchestra through the whole state, and had units in a number of Indiana cities.

Sevitzy remained as conductor until 1954. After an interim year during which several guest conductors were "tried out," Izler Solomon was chosen music director, and remained until 1975. His tenure spanned several important landmarks in the orchestra's history. In 1962, Clowes Memorial Hall at Butler University, built in memory of Dr. G. H. A. Clowes, was offered to the orchestra as a permanent home. Like other musical organizations, the orchestra paid only a portion of its expenses by ticket sales, and balancing the budget from year to year was a recurring suspense story. At the same time, the musicians found themselves earning minimal salaries for a concert season which covered only a part of the year. The result was two bitter strikes, in 1966 and 1971. During one of these the orchestra office operated from a moving van.

The next music director was John Nelson (1976-1988), who had a special interest in choral music and in the compositions of Hector Berlioz. The orchestra's position at Clowes Hall became increasingly difficult. It was hard to find office space for an increasing staff, and there were problems in scheduling rehearsals. When Butler University proposed to quadruple the rent, the symphony board began to look for space elsewhere. A combination of circumstances made it possible to obtain and remodel the Circle Theater downtown and to find office space in the Washington Hotel building next

door. The orchestra moved to its new home at the beginning of the 1984-1985 season. The acoustics of the new hall were widely acclaimed, but a smaller seating capacity meant that even more funds would have to be raised in addition to ticket sales. Raymond Leppard became music director in 1988.

The scrapbooks in this collection came from the Marion County Indianapolis Public Library. The rest of this collection comes from the papers of Mrs. Charles Latham (1892-1988). She was born in Indianapolis and educated in private schools. She studied piano for many years, notably with Charles Anthony and Rudolf Reuter. She was among the group which formed the Indiana State Symphony Society in 1931, and was secretary for the first three years. She and her husband happened to entertain Fabien Sevitzy on his first trip to Indianapolis in 1936. She remained a close friend of the Sevitzyks during their stay in Indianapolis, and helped entertain many soloists. In 1940-1946 she was the second president of the Women's Committee, and after that headed the committee to encourage development in the state. About 1955 she was elected to the main symphony board, and remained until becoming an honorary trustee in 1972. She was a close friend of Harry V. Wade, who headed the board negotiating team during the 1966 strike.

Sources: Materials in collection
Personal knowledge of processor

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection, filling four manuscript boxes and eleven oversize boxes, contains correspondence, minutes, brochures, concert programs, clippings, and scrapbooks covering the period 1931-1988. It is arranged by function, and chronologically within function.

Box 1 contains historical material, and material from the first decades of the Women's Committee, 1937-1965. The historical material includes written accounts (Folder 1), early programs (Folders 2-7), three photographs (of Fabien Sevitzy and an early Women's Committee board, Folder 8), and some early correspondence (Folders 12-15). The correspondence in Folders 13-14 deals with Sevitzy's first visits to Indianapolis in 1936-1937.

The rest of Box 1 deals with the Women's Committee. In Folder 16 are the first statements of the committee's purpose. In Folder 18 is correspondence concerning the committee's membership, with long letters from board chairman Clowes maintaining that wealth and potential gifts should be the criterion for appointing women to the Committee board, while Committee heads Ayres and Latham held that work and potential service should be the guidelines. Minutes of the Women's Committee continue through Folders 21-23 of Box 1 and Folders 1-15 of Box 2.

Box 3 contains minutes and other material from the Board of the Society (after about ten years as a "men's board," it began to include women about 1948), 1962-1987. Notable are Folder 1, containing the invitation to the orchestra to move to newly constructed Clowes Hall; and Folders 4-5, with minutes, clippings, and correspondence from the 1966 musicians' strike.

Box 4 begins with four reports from consultants in the 1980s. Of particular interest in the report in Folder 4 about the expected effects of a move to the Circle Theater, including the need of a greatly expanded endowment to offset smaller ticket sales. Material on marketing and fund-raising is in Folders 8-17.

Eleven scrapbooks in OMB 0045 contain clippings from the early Sevitzy years, 1937-1948. They deal not only with the orchestra itself but with Sevitzy's activities. In the middle of World War II, for example, he proclaimed that Germany's warlike attitude was caused by her music, and that any attempt to reform German after the war would need to wean the Germans from warlike music to something more calming.

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