

THIS is a chapter from Mr. Sherman's forthcoming book, "Music and Maestros: The Story of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra," which will be published by the University of Minnesota Press on November 3.

## *The BIRTH of a* SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

JOHN K. SHERMAN

THE MINNEAPOLIS Symphony Orchestra, which marks its fiftieth season in 1952-1953, can count among its ancestors numerous local musical organizations, notably Frank Danz's orchestra. That group, which flourished during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, may be called the mother of the symphony-to-be. By the same token, a choral club organized in 1892 by some giddy but progressive young men who gave themselves the awful name of Filharmonix can rightly be called its father.

The Filharmonix began with a membership of twenty, entirely male and amateur, and its purpose was social-musical fun in the homes of its members. In hardly any time at all it spawned the Filharmonix Glee Club, the Filharmonix Mandolin Club, the Filharmonix String Orchestra, a male quartet, and a corps of eager banjo players. Its first two public concerts were invitation affairs and attracted many listeners to a new type of musical variety program. Impressed by their success, the members strengthened their organization, made as-

sociate memberships available to those interested, and in a few months augmented the string group with reeds and brasses to make a "symphony orchestra," so-called, under the direction of B. A. Rose.

This little orchestra, composed mostly of amateurs, performed for four years under Rose's direction and then expired. Changes were afoot; a new orientation was in the wind. From the status of musical playboys who thought that "Filharmonix" was an amusing name, the club, headed by Clarence Strachauer, gradually grew into a solid and serious institution. Its early concerts had been catch-all programs of miscellaneous character. But its glee club, originally directed by Willard Patton, carried the seed of true growth. After the founding in 1895 of a rival group, the Apollo Club (which restricted itself to male voices), Patton's glee club blossomed into a large mixed chorus.

The change to the more dignified name of the Philharmonic Club came in 1897, and the emphasis then shifted almost entirely to choral projects of a substantial nature. The organization was in the process of becoming a new and aggressive force in the city's cultural life. Some talk of merging the two singing clubs—the male Apollo

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*EMIL Oberhoffer  
on the  
conductor's stand  
about 1903*

and the mixed Philharmonic—led to nothing. Each, apparently, was eager for dominance.

Patton carried on with the Philharmonic's chorus until the fateful year 1900, when the possessive eye of the directorate fell on the dynamic and ambitious leader of the rival Apollo Club. His name was Emil Ober-Hoffer.

This tawny-haired young Bavarian had arrived without fanfare in St. Paul in the early 1890's. A kind of musical jack-of-all-trades, he had been a prodigy violinist in his native Munich and later a peripatetic student and teacher of music. He was born in 1867, the son of Johann Ober Hoffer, a musician and composer who had directed opera at Munich and served as court organist in Luxembourg. (The name Ober Hoffer became Ober-Hoffer in the 1890's and Oberhoffer after the turn of the century.)

Reared in a musical household, Emil proved himself an eager listener and learner from the earliest age, with an extreme sensitivity to musical tone. Herr Ober Hoffer gave the boy his first lessons in violin and organ, which were avidly learned. Then Emil went on to instruction at the Munich Conservatory, studying under Josef Rheinberger and Cyrill Kistler. It was during these years that he learned much of the Catholic service, in which, in later life, he was well versed.

His travels began with his removal from Munich and Luxembourg to Paris, where he studied piano under Isidore Philipp, who was much impressed with his pupil's skill and taste and promise. In the meantime, the Ober Hoffer family had broken up, so young Emil came to America in 1885, becoming musical director at Manhattan College in New York City, playing organ at St.

Cecilia's Church there, and serving for a time under Conductor Anton Seidl.

It was one of the many Gilbert and Sullivan troupes then plying the countryside that took Oberhoffer and his young English wife, a singer, to the Twin Cities for the first time. Legend has it that the company limped into town and halted there because of financial embarrassment. Whatever the cause, the musical couple remained, and for a while their fortunes were at an extremely low ebb.

One night a worried and out-of-funds Oberhoffer called at the Frank Danz home in St. Paul, borrowed ten dollars, and got a job playing viola the next day in Danz's West Hotel orchestra in Minneapolis. Old-timers recollect that the future symphony conductor played in restaurants and saloons during the first impoverished months after his arrival in the Twin Cities, obtaining these temporary musical jobs from Danz in Minneapolis and George Seibert in St. Paul.

Oberhoffer was not long to be cornered in such humble occupations, and he soon established himself in more dignified and rewarding roles worthy of his talents. He became organist at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in St. Paul, and not long afterward he was making himself valuable to that city's leading musical organization, the Schubert Club. He lectured on musical subjects, played in string quartets, gave recitals, and before long formed a choir and orchestra for the club. In the meantime he employed his conducting gifts in performances of such fare as "The Mikado" and "The Chimes of Normandy," the latter bringing him for the first time to general public attention in October, 1893.

In 1895 he moved to Minneapolis as organist of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, and then his abilities began to thrust him into prominence. He acquired numerous voice and piano students and was active in programs of the Ladies' Thursday Musicales and its chorus. He assumed the organist's post at the Church of the Redeemer. In late 1896 he was appointed di-

rector of the Apollo Club—his first really important post. There he was able gradually to take on more formidable assignments prompted not so much by others' suggestions as by his own desires and ambitions. By 1900 he was causing much grumbling and headshaking among the conservatives for his rashness in presenting long oratorios and concertized operas.

IN 1900 the Philharmonic Club succeeded in luring Oberhoffer away from its competitor, the Apollo Club. Some of the Apollo men were bitter and regarded the maneuver as theft. They felt they had raised their leader from obscurity and by giving him his first important conducting post had earned the right to retain him exclusively. If he had expected to fill both positions, he was disappointed. He resigned the Apollo Club post under fire.

The Philharmonic was now at a high tide of ambition and achievement. Its days of mandolin and banjo twanging and other kinds of musical dabbling were far behind. In December, 1900, Oberhoffer conducted his new chorus in a performance of Mendelssohn's "Elijah" which marked "a distinct advance musically for Minneapolis." A letter to the conductor from W. L. Harris, a Philharmonic Club director, expressed the hope that "Minneapolis will have such facilities in the way of a proper hall and efficient orchestra as to relieve the director of some of his handicaps." Harris' reference to an "efficient orchestra" was the opening gun in a we-want-an-orchestra campaign.

The orchestra for the club was still an improvised, pro tem support for the choral performances. Orchestral musicians were engaged on a haphazard basis—the professionals were paid for piecework; others played for pleasure. The arrangement was neither satisfactory nor businesslike, and it was hardly efficient. As often as not, musicians who had played at rehearsals were among those missing on nights of performances, lured away by more remunerative assignments. Those who played for the fun

of it were hardly more reliable; enjoyment could be a vague and fluctuating compensation.

But Oberhoffer knew how important the orchestral adjunct was to the success of the chorus, and from the time he took over the Philharmonic baton he began to talk, to plead, to persuade. A full-fledged symphony orchestra became his dream and his goal. He visioned the greater possibilities—the wider and more dramatic scope of musical literature—which a symphony orchestra could bring to the people of the city. For the time being, though, he had to make do with what he had.

THE PHILHARMONIC'S next season, 1901–02, was more than ever ambitious, for it offered two oratorios, "The Messiah" of Handel and "The Creation" of Haydn, and an evening of short cantatas and part songs. At the season's close Frederick Fayram, president, announced that the orchestra was to be a regular feature of each of the ensuing season's concerts and that the past season had created a deficit, though not a large one. The fact that businessmen were not only facing deficits as a penalty for their cultural enthusiasm, but paying them, was a significant orientation to the problem of financing musical enterprises of civic worth.

The club embarked on its most pretentious effort the following season, and there was portent in the fact that for its performance of "Samson and Delilah" it authorized its conductor to engage needed instrumentalists from the Chicago orchestra of Theodore Thomas. The Saint-Saëns opera was to be given in concert version, and Oberhoffer spent the summer of 1902 arranging parts so that it could be played with a maximum of forty-five instruments.

The opera was presented on November 2 in the Swedish Tabernacle. The outcome of Oberhoffer's long labors and the club's expenditure of an unprecedented sum of sixteen hundred dollars was impressive not only to the city's concertgoers but to the

Philharmonic directors, who now glimpsed what might be done with Oberhoffer's organizing and conducting abilities. For many, the performance clinched the argument on the need and desirability of a permanent orchestra, and Oberhoffer gained valuable recruits for the cause.

The general response to "Samson and Delilah" was reflected in the review of Florence Bosard in the *Tribune* the next day: "It is impossible to say what the production of this tremendous work means to Minneapolis. It shows hitherto undreamed-of possibilities. It shows that there are the voices, the intelligence, the executive ability, and most necessary of all, the director. The orchestra was splendid. . . . [Oberhoffer] directed at once with a subtlety and force . . . magnetic in his influence."

This comment obviously was not routine praise, but arose from excitement and conviction. It was also recognition of the increased mastery Oberhoffer had gained over the sometimes reluctant and doughy vocal forces he was trying to shape. At rehearsals he was both a witty wooer and despotic taskmaster. He could make sly asides, once alluding to a suave passage from a French composer's work: "Catch a Frenchman writing anything hard." Then, with the suddenness of a thunderclap, he would break out in a blistering tirade against his erring and perspiring singers. A trembling Philharmonic alto one night returned to her home and wrote in her diary: "At rehearsal Mr. Oberhoffer maligned, browbeat, ridiculed and all but bodily attacked the basses and tenors. He got more quiet about 10 o'clock and let us all leave in safety."

The weekly Philharmonic rehearsals were held Mondays in the guildhall of St. Mark's Church on Sixth Street between Hennepin and Nicollet avenues. They were often turbulent sessions, seasoned with sarcastic humor. Once Oberhoffer rapped a rehearsal to a stop with his baton and furiously snatched his score off the stand, burying his face in it so that only his reddish hair

was visible—a ludicrous caricature of a singer with his nose in his music. Then he shouted: “What do you think I am waving this stick for? For exercise? I don’t need this exercise. I have an exerciser at home!”

The choristers rallied for new and keener effort after such attacks; they accepted the scathing rebukes as part of their training from a man who intensely wished them to be as good as they could be, and they relished his wit, which was as often playful as destructive. After rehearsals they were wont to crowd around his stand for what further insights and suggestions he might offer. He offered much, and not all of it was technical instruction. His learning and interests leaped musical boundaries; by the time the choristers had mastered “Samson and Delilah,” most of them felt they had taken a course of instruction in Biblical history.

After its triumph with Saint-Saëns Bible story in evening clothes, the Philharmonic continued its season with another performance of “The Messiah” on Christmas night, 1902, of Verdi’s “Requiem” on February 13, 1903, and of Mendelssohn’s “Saint Paul” on March 27.

MEN WHO HAD PLAYED under Danz, and Danz himself as concertmaster, were vital aids in some of these productions, including the “Samson and Delilah” success. Their functioning under Oberhoffer foreshadowed their role as the heart of the orchestra to come. But the Danz orchestra, as a self-sustaining institution giving its own series of Minneapolis concerts, was being lost in the shuffle in these days of change.

In 1901–02 it had enjoyed a last flicker of glory, but there had been a note of desperation in its promotional appeals. Minneapolis was promised a “new venture,” a “mammoth undertaking,” a “grand symphony orchestra” which would give eight concerts at the Metropolitan Opera House. Concertgoers were urged to buy season tickets in quantities large enough to defray



COVER of an early Filharmonix program

at least a good portion of the expense involved.

The prospectus pledged that some part of a symphony would be given at each and every concert, as well as “overtures of the highest importance.” It gave assurance that there was no necessity for music lovers “paying high prices to attend concerts given by visiting organizations, for in Minneapolis was an organization that would give as good as the best.” A ceilinged shell was built for the Metropolitan stage and new men appeared in the ensemble. Danz, who had been known at times to throw things together in routine fashion, took unusual pains in rehearsal, coaching his reed and brass sections separately before blending them with the full orchestra.

But the reception at the opening concert was cool, and the faithful scowled and made strained excuses for Minneapolis audiences that by nature were undemonstrative. In



early 1902 Danz postponed his sixth concert two weeks to give the concertgoing public a chance to "catch its breath" after a crowded calendar of performances by visiting stars and by bands conducted by Creature and Innes. The disparaged "visiting organizations" were taking their toll. The postponed concert offered the Mozart Concertante for violin and viola, a choice that indicates the frequently high caliber of Danz's programming.

But the concert that followed on February 16 was more an outright bid for mass support, for it brandished as a lure Signor Liberati, noted cornetist, who promised each lady attending an autographed copy of one of his march compositions arranged for piano, "the same as is sold in music stores." This was an echo of a provincialism that was becoming dated in a city where musical tastes were growing more sophisticated and where ambitions were not satisfied by such bait.

Danz himself was about ready to call it quits as a symphonic leader. He was comfortably ensconced as theater orchestra director at the Metropolitan, and the years were teaching him that he loved his violin more than his baton. So the Danz orchestra finally gave up the ghost in the 1902-03 season, and by becoming Oberhoffer's concertmaster for the "Samson and Delilah" performance in late 1902, Danz gravitated to the key position he would hold in his last years.

AT THE SAME TIME the Philharmonic officers saw more clearly the handwriting on the wall. It formed a question: "Why not a permanent orchestra? Why not an orchestra we can depend upon for both rehearsals and performances?"

Oberhoffer's insistent pleas were being reinforced by developments. As the choral undertakings grew larger and more ambitious, the handicap of the makeshift orchestra became more obvious. The situation finally was no longer tolerable; the time had grown ripe for a bold decision. In the spring of 1903, after the Philharmonic's most successful and brilliant season, the decision was made: An orchestra would be organized for the following fall, and it would be named the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

In arriving at that decision, Philharmonic officers had to reconcile cross-purposes and iron out objections. It was a delicate operation in which the enthusiasm engendered by a big and thrilling idea had to be tempered by diplomacy.

For one thing, the attitude of Frank Danz and his seasoned players could not be ignored. Rumbblings had come from the Danz camp, which claimed, with considerable justice, that an old and proven organization deserved civic support rather than one new and untried. When the new one seemed a probability, the Danz men favored their own experienced maestro as its head, reasoning that Danz knew orchestral technique, while Oberhoffer had more

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COVER of a Danz program

experience in choral directing. But Danz counseled against any opposition to Oberhoffer, pointing out that the men behind the young conductor were citizens of means whose support meant a surer guarantee of weekly pay. His argument prevailed, and there was no further resistance in the Danz ranks.

Nothing in the record, or in the memories of those who knew him, indicates that Danz pined for the exalted position of Minneapolis Symphony leader. The symphony was Oberhoffer's dream, which became also the Philharmonic's dream and eventual reality. Oberhoffer would have preferred to form his own orchestra and pick his own players, without recourse to Danz and his musicians, but the simple fact was that Danz and his men were needed.

There were misgiving and opposition, too, within the bosom of the Philharmonic Club itself. Among many members there was more than a doubt that Oberhoffer's new project, and his whole-souled zeal for it, boded well for the health and morale of the choral organization.

But objections were overcome and conciliation and persuasion won the day. The club called a meeting of leading citizens, and the plan was laid before them and threshed out. The outcome was a comprehensive blueprint of the orchestral venture, with Oberhoffer engaged for three years as conductor in complete charge of programming and performance.

TO TAKE CARE of the additional responsibilities of the new orchestra, the Philharmonic's board of directors was increased to twenty-five members. Among the new appointees was a young lumberman who had once dreamed of being an opera singer, Elbert L. Carpenter.

Nine committees were named by President Fayram, and a season of six concerts by the orchestra, plus the regular concerts by the club, was announced. Artists of international reputation were promised. Season ticket prices were established: for

the orchestral series, \$5.00 and \$7.50; for the choral concerts, \$2.50 and \$3.75; for the combined series, \$6.00 and \$10.00. And a campaign to raise a guaranty fund of \$10,000.00 a year for three years was successfully consummated.

This was something new to Minneapolis — a new concept and a new procedure. The first fund-raising campaign involved an unprecedented marshaling of civic forces and moneyed men and interests, all in behalf of a cultural enterprise of hoped-for community value. The drive signified a revolutionary shift from private to civic enterprise in support of a musical organization. It instituted, for the first time, committee promotion and control of an orchestral venture in place of one-man management.

The Danz orchestra had been a private venture, striving for profit or at least solvency against fluctuating odds. It had pleaded but never campaigned for support. It had made no attempt to organize a city-wide patronage as insurance against calamity, and it had little power to do so.

The new plan had its roots in the growth of a large and influential organization, and one of the keys to its success lay, quite simply, in numbers. An all-city chorus had sprung up and flourished during the last decade of the Danz regime. The chorus in time needed a permanent orchestra, and through sheer numbers and the prestige and influence of its guiding spirits, it could reach out into the community as could no thirty-man orchestra and no individual leader.

Minneapolis at last wanted something that no one man or organization could afford. It wanted something that could no more pay for itself or show a profit than could a public library or an art museum. So the device of the guaranty fund, a citizens' subsidy, was adopted, amounting in essence to a self-imposed tax by people who were public-spirited and also wealthy enough to pay the assessment. Minneapolis would maintain its proudest cultural institution through deficit financing, but to the

canny it constituted a civic advertisement well worth the cost.

IN JUNE Oberhoffer with his wife went to Europe on a special mission, to hear concerts in various music centers, but more important to seek out and sign up needed instrumentalists and to procure scores for the orchestra's scanty library. He returned in September, having engaged two French horns (Edward Erck and Franz Baltrusch), an oboe (Paul Hofman), and a bassoon (Henry Cunningham). He brought with him more than a thousand dollars' worth of music, mostly novelties, including several scores by Richard Strauss which at that time could be obtained only through contact with the master himself. He had heard Fremstad, whom he compared favorably with Nordica, and Schumann-Heink, the "idol of Munich" in 1903. He was bubbling over with ambition and high spirits, and came back to Minneapolis with the conviction that in America "the great music of the future is to be developed."

Twenty-five Twin Cities musicians had already been contracted for, and the conductor promptly went about signing up others to make up a complement of nearly fifty. The orchestra's music library, even with Oberhoffer's purchases, was sadly inadequate, and now in addition to Danz and Danz's men, the Danz music was called upon, and freely handed over. Some of it still reposes in the symphony's library.

Sectional rehearsals started within a week or two after Oberhoffer's return, and by mid-October the whole orchestra was practicing three times a week in the old Holcomb Dancing Academy on Fourth Street between the *Tribune* and *Journal* buildings. In all there were nine rehearsals for the opening concert.

At the very start the conductor ran head-on into temperament trouble. Friedrich von Wittmar, the orchestra's titled bass player, discovered when he arrived for the first rehearsal that his stand was number 2, and he refused outright to play in that subor-

dinate position. It was a crisis that good-natured Ed Schugens solved quickly by relinquishing his status of principal to the baron.

It may have been a distinction to play with the new Minneapolis symphony, but it was no road to riches. Musicians were paid \$1.50 per rehearsal and \$6.00 per concert. As time went on a symphony musician could make as much as \$20.00 to \$25.00 a week.

The conductor, who believed in the concert hall proprieties and wanted no Middle Western gaucheries to mar his opening program, was particularly intent on observing all the niceties, all the punctilio, the occasion required. With that in mind he lectured his men on stage deportment at the final rehearsals. He adjured them not to cross their knees or talk among themselves while on the platform, and gave them explicit instructions on how to file to their seats before the concert started.

THE ORCHESTRA'S debut was set for Thursday night, November 5, 1903. On that night the newborn Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and its conductor, Emil Oberhoffer, tremulously faced their first-night audience in a makeshift concert hall.

A huge cluster of chrysanthemums, an exclamatory blob of pink, shared the stage's center with the dark, svelte figure of the conductor on the platform. Above and around the half-hundred seated musicians was festive green that rebuked the November chill outside, with potted palms tracing waxy curves and a festoon of yellow blooms making a blithe border around the stage.

The town had mustered more than a quorum to see and hear its new musical baby, cribbed in the windy expanses of the Exposition Building on the east side. The temperature had dipped to freezing, but raw weather kept only the faintest-hearted away from the exciting première. "Everyone" was there—everyone from society's upper realm, everyone from the circles of the music-wise and music-mad.



Before his first downbeat that Thursday night, Oberhoffer was still a bit breathless on the platform. He had made a tardy arrival at the Exposition Building, delayed by the press of traffic moving over the bridge toward the hall, and blocked at the hall's entrance by a conscientious but confused doorman until he was identified and permitted to go inside.

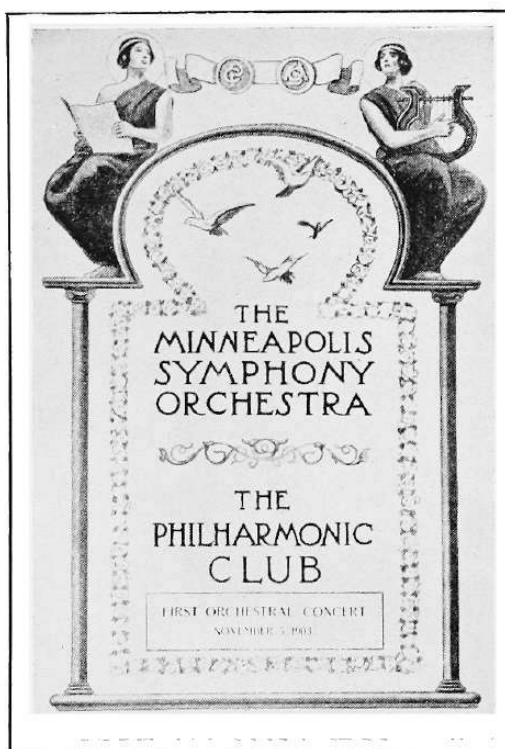
He was a portrait of elegance. Oberhoffer never would be one to neglect the proper and picturesque habiliments of his profession. He laid down his gold-headed cane, doffed his topper, whipped off his silk-lined cape, pulled off his white gloves, and then made his entrance to the welcoming hand-spatter of nearly three thousand concertgoers.

Below at his left sat stout, sleepy-eyed, dependable Frank Danz, concertmaster and principal of the eight-man first violin team. Heading the cello section of four players was Carlo Fischer, brilliant young instrumentalist who had just been signed up by the Cincinnati orchestra for three years, but who was playing this first concert before his departure. He was to return later and take an important role in the orchestra's development.

Among the first violinists were old Fred Will, bearded, aristocratic in bearing, a Danz veteran whose career went back as far as the senior Danz's first concert in 1880; the floridly handsome Claude Madden; and next to Danz in the first stand a skinny stripling, Albert Rudd, who had studied under Danz and taken charge of the Bijou Theater orchestra. In 1935 Rudd was to return to the symphonic fold after a career of many years as the city's best-known theater orchestra leader and violinist.

In the second violins was another promising youngster, William S. MacPhail, a Madden pupil and Danz man whose European studies were still ahead of him, and still farther ahead his founding of the music school bearing his name.

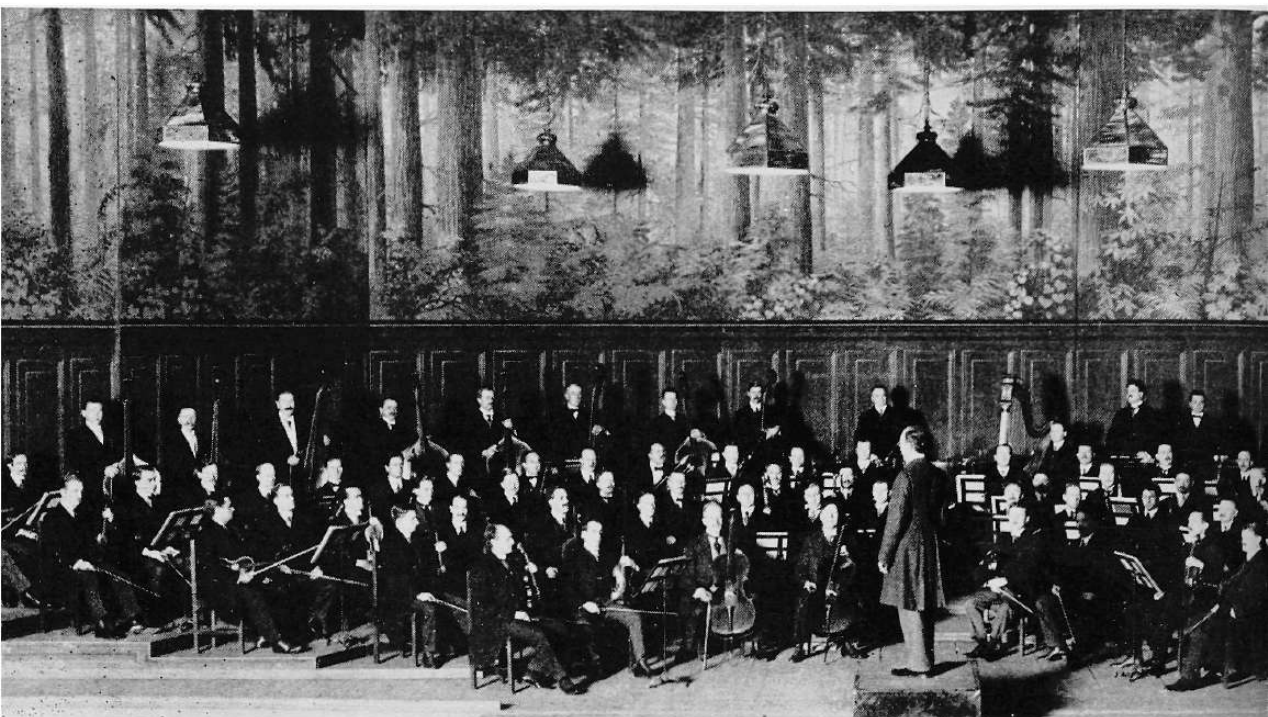
The personnel was reasonably professional, considering the times and the limited



*COVER of the first symphony program*

amount of money available for musicians' salaries. But some of the men were only part-time musicians. Ed Schugens, bass, operated a shop that sold and repaired musical instruments and served as a gathering place for the musical fraternity. Julius Blackstad, cello, was a salesman in his brother's musical instrument store. P. J. Lawrence, flute, was a lawyer. Cragg Walston, second violin, was in the lumber business with his father. As time went on, the orchestra would number in its ranks a mathematics professor who played bassoon, a paperhanger who played bass, and many another who divided his time between music and an outside trade or profession.

Some doubling was necessary, and at least five men in the ensemble were versatile enough to be able to shift from strings to wind instruments—from cello to bass clarinet, from string bass to tuba, from string bass to flute—and back again. Danz in the front chair, plus Danz men strate-



*THE Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra with Oberhoffer on the podium*

gically located in all parts of the ensemble, formed the nucleus of the new organization, without whom Oberhoffer could hardly have mustered a corporal's guard.

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE of the new orchestra needed a big and costly name, preferably a singer's name, as an ace-in-the-hole guarantee of its success and as lure for that sizable portion of the populace that might be more name-conscious than symphony-hungry. The orchestra's backers were willing to spend five hundred dollars for such a name. Minneapolis' own Olive Fremstad, who in the last three years had become the darling of European opera-goers, would have filled all specifications. But she was not available for the opening night and could only be engaged for a later appearance. The choice finally narrowed to the noted Anton van Rooy, Dutch baritone who had sung at Bayreuth, but a week before the concert he canceled his engagement, pleading that his attendance at

Metropolitan Opera rehearsals, held earlier than usual, prevented his coming.

Only two well-known singers were available at that late date — Charlotte Maconda at \$175.00 and Marcella Sembrich at \$1,800.00. The latter was fearfully expensive, but after prolonged discussion by the Philharmonic's board and the guarantors' committee, she was engaged, on the theory that the first concert demanded the best guest artist available, regardless of cost.

Sembrich was being trumpeted as the "successor of Adelina Patti," and she had become the rival of Lillian Nordica as the prima donna then most in the public eye and ear. The imperious Polish coloratura, who had retained so much of girlish spirit and grace, had appeared a year earlier in Minneapolis, but her program, devoted wholly to song, had withheld from her hearers those highly ornamented arias in which she excelled and for which she was famous. This time, with great acclaim, she sang with the orchestra "Ah! fors' e lui"



from Verdi's "Traviata" and the Johann Strauss waltz aria "Frühlingsstimmen," and to Oberhoffer's piano accompaniment three songs by Schumann, Arne, and Richard Strauss.

Without question Sembrich added allure to the orchestra's première, exuding that regal aura that the idols of opera's golden age always carried with them as an almost tangible stage property. One of the chief values of her appearance was the attention it diverted from the obvious flaws of the orchestra's performance.

On the night of the concert, after Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony was performed, Mme. Sembrich was led gallantly from the wings by the maestro himself, the two walking on to the stage with fingertips just touching in a high and elegant handhold. In addition to her vocal numbers and the symphony, the lengthy program included the prelude to Wagner's "Meister-singer," Liszt's "Les Préludes," Moszkowski's "Serenata," a selection from

Massenet's ballet, "Le Cid," and Rossini's overture to "William Tell."

How did the orchestra sound on that far-away November night of its birth? Thin, presumably. By today's standards it certainly must have sounded thin, with the strings, hardly more than half the personnel, drowned out when the brass blasted. This was pointed out in the critical post-mortems. Apparently Oberhoffer's stratagem of bringing the double basses forward, close to the first violins, was not enough to make the strings hold their own in the tutti.

But the violins, at least the firsts, were a sound and seasoned little body of men who could carry on acceptably even in a crisis, and in the Moszkowski morsel for strings they gave testimony of their finesse and co-ordination. This little serenade, in fact, was the most avidly greeted of the orchestral offerings, and Mr. Oberhoffer, with a raising of eyebrows that plainly said "it can't be helped," was persuaded to play it a second time. The brasses and woodwinds were less secure, their tones sometimes rough, and their phrasing hesitant.

It was Oberhoffer who, after Sembrich, reaped the lion's share of the kudos. Henry B. Curry of the *Minneapolis Journal* alluded to the artistic repression and tasteful thoroughness of "the self-possessed conductor," while the orchestra was credited with precision, dynamic variety, and consistency.

True, there also was fault-picking, but considering the inescapable hazards of a first try in an improvised auditorium, the orchestra's bow was auspicious. Many of course wondered whether the whole project wasn't another flash in the pan; there had always been a high mortality rate in the city's new musical organizations. First-night dazzle had often been followed, in an alarmingly short period, by last-night fizzle.

But the officers of the Philharmonic Club allowed themselves no dark premonitions, no more than did the man who overnight became a full-fledged symphony conductor. A dream had materialized, a comfortable

pot of money had been raised, and a question had been answered—the question of whether a paid and permanent orchestral accomplice of the club could be set up and made to stand on its own feet.

WITH THE TENSIONS and satisfactions of the opening concert behind them, conductor and musicians plunged into preparations for the second concert, to be given December 1, when Harold Bauer, pianist, and Dvorak's "New World" symphony (then just ten years old) were the major attractions.

What seems now an innocuous and amiably sentimental work, the "Rustic Wedding" symphony of Goldmark, was played January 29, 1904, and was termed fantastic, bizarre, and ultramodern by the knowing Caryl B. Storrs in his first signed review in the *Tribune*. The "tremendous difficulties (!) of this work, he wrote, were attacked with courage and evident enjoyment in "an artistic if not perfectly finished interpretation."

By this time the orchestra was uprooted, a wanderer in search of a home. The International Auditorium at the Exposition Building had proved its inadequacies. The first three concerts were played there, but then Oberhoffer and his men found another refuge, though one hardly better suited to their purposes: Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. There the fourth and fifth concerts were played on January 29 and February 16, 1904, and there Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony was given complete for the first time by the orchestra.

The sixth and final concert of the first season, on March 23, 1904, reverted to the International Auditorium. Olive Fremstad, absent from her home city for ten years and now laureled with success, was the soloist, singing "O Don Fatale" from Verdi's "Don Carlos," four Norwegian folksongs of Grieg, Wagner's "Träume," and the "Seguidilla" from Bizet's "Carmen." Frank Danz took a bow for his fine obligato in Handel's "Largo," and everything was in

the best of order until the program's epic finale.

This was the blood-curdling "1812" overture of Tschaikovsky. A special set of chimes had been imported to lend added luster and magnificence to the climax of the work, where the Russian hymn finally quells, in a triumphant din, all opposition from the French "Marseillaise." The chimes were resplendent in gold leaf and elaborately decorated with sportive cupids, and they were given a position of honor and prominence in front of the orchestra. Joseph Frank, who played viola and ran a music store on Sixth Street, was assigned to play them.

At Frank's very first stroke the head of his hammer flew off and rolled under the chairs of the first violins. It was quite irretrievable, particularly at that cataclysmic moment when the Muscovites had Napoleon on the run. The "1812" rolled on to its jubilant finish, without benefit of chimes. Frank, feeling and looking foolish, stood it out with a stick in his hand.

THE FIRST SEASON was over! It had been gratifyingly successful, and the second season was already in preparation.

The Minneapolis Symphony thus became, in 1903, the eighth major orchestra to be established in the United States. Two of them were in New York. This was only three years after the birth of the Philadelphia orchestra, six years before the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra was organized, and fifteen years before the Cleveland orchestra was founded. In four short months the Minneapolis orchestra had established permanency against odds that must have been formidable, considering the fact that a city ranking eighteenth in population was now one of seven in America possessing an orchestra of its own.

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Oberhoffer on page 94 is reproduced from the first symphony program, dated November 5, 1903. This program and the others pictured herewith are in the society's collections, as is the view of the orchestra under Oberhoffer's direction on the stage of the Lyceum.



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