

A word about the Musical Club logo

Below is the original emblem, selected in a competition in 1961. It was designed by Janet Kline, and recently discovered in the archives. The version used in our publications had been distorted by over-copying.



This is the 125th Anniversary Seal, updated by designer John Alves in 2014.



WELCOME to the Musical Club's 125th Anniversary, a year-long salute to the Club's history.

This Souvenir Program the Musical Club's 125th Anniversary comes to you as an invitation to share in this milestone. Included is advanced information about the full series of Concerts, Musical Explorations, Member Programs, and additional events scheduled for the year, together with interesting information discovered in the Musical Club's archives at the Connecticut Historical Society.

As an added feature, *Connecticut Explored* magazine has given us permission to reproduce the article on Musical Club from its Fall 2015 issue, written by Jennifer LaRue Huget. This booklet is being mailed to you courtesy of the publisher of that magazine. Please see the inside back cover for an invitation to subscribe to that publication.

Inside:

- Concerts
- Musical Explorations, Other Events
- Member Programs for September 13, 2015 to April 28, 2016
- Report by Viola Vanderbeek: A captivating look back into the Early Years of the Club, originally presented in 1961 for the club's 70th Anniversary. Viola joined the club in 1893, soon after its founding, and was a member for over 70 years. For her hundredth birthday she was given a heart-shaped gold pin inscribed "To Viola With Love Htfd Musical Club 4-11-70". Ever since, this pin has been conferred on each President in turn, a tangible connection to the past and to the future.
- *Connecticut Explored* magazine article (Fall 2015 issue)
- Past Presidents page.

Mark your calendars with this year's exciting events and plan to join us often. We look forward to welcoming you!



Steering Committee, 125th Anniversary: Claudia Gwardyak,
Anne and Walter Mayo

Committee Members: Virginia Allen, Robert Connell, Joan Fine, Laura Mazza-Dixon, David Schonfeld, Margaret Walker

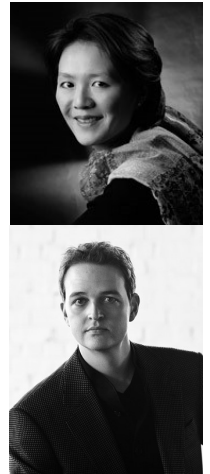


This publication has been printed as a supplement to the Musical Club Yearbook for 2015-2016. It was edited and assembled by Anne Mayo with the help of many Musical Club members.

125th Anniversary Season Concerts

Sunday, September 13, 2015, 3:00 p.m. at Millard Auditorium, University of Hartford

Our first event of the season, co-sponsored with Hartt School, is a concert in memory of **Anne Koscielny**, pianist and former Hartt faculty member, who passed away in February of 2015. Ms. Koscielny performed for Musical Club in 1990 to open its 100th Anniversary season and also presented a Musical Exploration lecture/recital on Beethoven in April 2006 during the Club's 115th season. Internationally renowned pianists Mia Chung and Robert Henry, both former students of Ms. Koscielny, will perform. Co-sponsored with The Hartt School. Admission is free.



Wednesday, October 28, 2015, 10:00 a.m. at Conard High School, West Hartford



www.sipesphoto.com

Musical Club, in cooperation with the West Hartford Schools Arts Department, presents a concert by the NEW ENGLAND JAZZ ENSEMBLE, a sixteen-piece big band directed by Walter Gwardyak. The concert at Conard High School will include the premiere of Gwardyak's jazz version of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, narrated by jazz singer Giacomo Gates. The band will also perform other jazz tunes inspired by the Prokofiev melodies. The NEJE has received accolades for their earlier interpretation and presentation of the Duke Ellington Jazz Nutcracker, and other recordings of original jazz ar-

rangements and compositions. After the concert you are invited to stay for performances by Hall and Conard Concert Jazz Bands, and also by a high school jazz band from Schorndorf, Germany, visiting town on an exchange program. As a special service to the community, all programs are free and open to the public.

Thursday, April 14, 2016, 10:00 a.m., St. John's Church, West Hartford

Musical Club has invited **Mariangela Vacatello**, internationally renowned pianist, and her husband, noted organist **Adriano Falcioni**, to return to Musical Club this year to celebrate our anniversary with us. Their dual recital program will include duets for piano and organ, along with solo pieces. Mariangela soloed with the Hartford Symphony, and gave a thrilling performance for Musical Club in 2011; Adriano presented a brilliant organ recital in 2012. Don't miss their sensational dual performance!



Musical Exploration

Thursday, November 12, 2015, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Musical Club of Hartford: A Retrospective

We will see two videos made in 1984 upon the publication of Priscilla Rose's *Pursuit of Music*, her history of the club's first 90 years. The 1/2 hour videos, first shown on West Hartford Public TV, include a panel led by Sylvia Goldstein discussing the club's history with several members; and then a half hour recital by club members. A number of the original participants will be on hand to take your questions.

Thursday, February 18, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Presentation on Charter Oak Cultural Center's Outreach to Inner-City Children: *El Sistema* in Hartford

El Sistema is a music teaching method that has been developed in South America to reach out to children living below the poverty level, leading them to success in music that spills over into their own lives and that of their communities. Music teachers nationwide, including some in Connecticut, are drawing inspiration from this exciting music teaching method to reach local music students. We will see a film about *El Sistema*'s founder, Jose Antonio Abreu, and its dynamic conductor Gustavo Dudamel, who has led the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra in performances on world tours. Susan Mazer, director of the program at Charter Oak Cultural Center, will discuss the program in Hartford and ways members of the Musical Club can become involved.

Fortieth High School Competition Winners Recital

Sunday, January 24, 2016, 2:00 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Join us to applaud the winners of the January 2016 High School Scholarship Competition in Piano, Strings, Voice and Winds. The Winners Concert is a highlight of the season. Bring your friends — admission is free!

Evelyn Bonar Storrs Scholars Recital

Thursday, March 17, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Evelyn Bonar Storrs established a fund through Musical Club to support "talented and advanced students of piano." Applicants for these scholarships come from area colleges and are chosen on the basis of audition tapes and teacher recommendations. Each year a number of these wonderful musicians present a Piano Recital that is free and open to the public. Come and hear the stars of tomorrow!

Special Theme This Season for Musical Club Member Performances:

“Autographs”

A search of the Musical Club Archives at the Connecticut Historical Society this summer yielded a number of programs autographed by the famous musicians who have performed for the Club. Some of these programs will be the inspiration for the performers in this year's “Music by Members” programs. For your anticipation, we include here some images and information from those original concerts. We will find out how each Committee has chosen to interpret its complementary program when performers' program details are listed in the Bulletins. Stay tuned!

September 24, 2015, 9:45 a.m., Members Opening Program followed by Open House Reception. Admission is free to this event. Westminster Presbyterian Church

The program attached to the opening Member Concert comes from Musical Club's 10th anniversary in 1901. That year Frances Johnson, President of Musical Club, entered into correspondence with Maurice Grau of the Metropolitan Opera House to arrange for this recital by Madame Schumann-Heink. The celebrated contralto, accompanied by Mr. Louis V. Saar, performed music of Handel, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner and Liszt.



Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1937)

Chair: Virginia Allen; Michelle Duffy, David Garrido-Cid, Alice Matteson



Marian Anderson

October 1, 2015, 10:00 a.m. Westminster Presbyterian Church

This concert is a salute to Marian Anderson, who performed in Hartford under the auspices of the Bushnell Memorial and the Musical Club on Thursday May 6, 1937. Her program included music of Handel, Schubert, Verdi, Sibelius, and a selection of Negro Spirituals. There is a note in the original program thanking the Travelers Choral Club for relinquishing its option on the use of the hall that date. Two years later, Marian Anderson catapulted to fame and sang in Washington D.C. before a throng of 75,000 people.

Chair: Patrice Fitzgerald; Walter Gwardyak, Richard Leslie, Linda MacGougan, Mo Tian

Thursday, October 15, 2015, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

The original program took place in 1910, and featured Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Dolmetsch playing music from the 16th to the 18th centuries on the incredible Dolmetsch collection of early instruments: viols, lute, viola d'amore, viola da gamba and harpsichord. They were joined by soprano Emma Noyes. The program included music by Morley, Caccini, Couperin, Rameau, Marcello, Scarlatti and Bach.

Chair: Laura Mazza-Dixon; Anne Mayo, Karen Robinson, Harriet Wetstone



Arnold and Mabel Dolmetsch in 1909, playing a Testore Viola d'Amore and a Taskin harpsichord.

Thursday, November 5, 2015, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

This program honors Pablo Casals, who performed for Musical Club in chamber groups or as part of the Flonzaley Quartet on a number of occasions. The "Autograph" program took place on Tuesday evening, March 14, 1916, at Foot Guard Hall in Hartford, and featured Danish soprano Mme Povla Frijsch (right), Mr. Casals, cellist, and Mr. Jean Verd, pianist. Mme Frijsch, a noted interpreter of art songs in the early 20th century, sang pieces by Saint-Saens, Schubert, Gounod and Chausson. Mr. Casals' cello pieces included music of Handel, Boccherini and Bach.

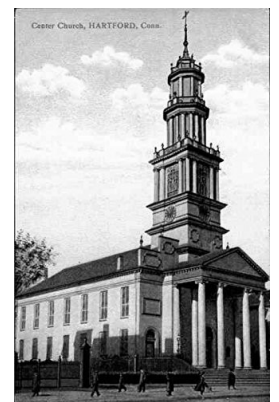


Chair: Lisa Kugelman; Fran Bard, Benita Rose, Mia Kang, David Schonfeld

Thursday, December 10, 2015, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

December's program is a salute to the long history of church music in Hartford. On January 18, 1934, at Center Church in Hartford, Musical Club produced "An Evening of Church Music," featuring organists Josephine Kendrick and Esther Nelson Ellison, with soloists Eleanor Willard, soprano, Watson Woodford, tenor and Robert Gordon, baritone. The Choir came from South Methodist Episcopal Church of Manchester, CT, George Huntington Byles, Organist-Choirmaster. They performed music of Franck, Vaughan Williams and Mrs. H.H.A. Beach

Chair: Sandra Ann Craig; Bridget Gilchrist, Diane Day, Rita Henderson and the Vocal Ensemble

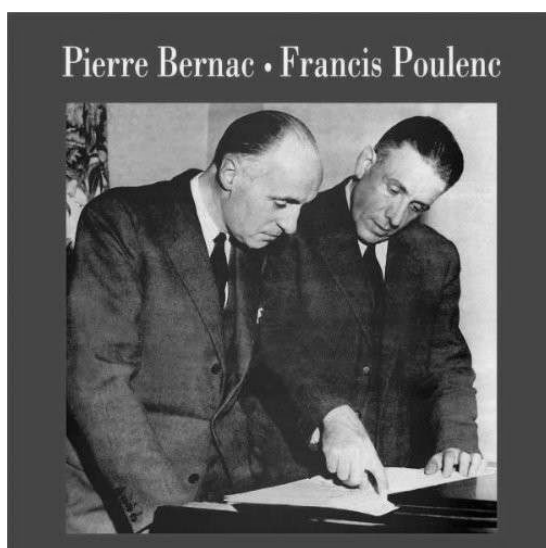


"Autographs," continued

Thursday, January 14, 2016, 10:00 a.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church

In 1975, on October 30, Musical Club members presented "A Salute to Heritage of the United States." Music of Copland, Barber, Dinerstein, Ives, John Duke, and MacDowell was performed, with a narration by Priscilla Rose. Our 2016 salute will celebrate our musical heritage.

Chair: Sharon Girard; Lillie Gardner, David Kennedy, Walter Mayo, Margaret Walker



Thursday, January 28, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

The original 1950 program was autographed by Francis Poulenc, composer-pianist, and Pierre Bernac, baritone, when they performed in the 60th anniversary season of the Musical Club. In addition to a number of solo piano compositions by M. Poulenc, the duo presented songs of Campian, Dowland, Gounod, Schubert, Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and others, and concluded with *Chansons Villageoises* by Poulenc.

Chair: Susanne Shrader; Tony Gibbs, Betty Knorr, Ami Montstream, Joan Niiler, Lean-Cheng Tan

Thursday, March 3, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Musical Club's 75th Anniversary Celebration, took place April 21, 1966, with a concert and dinner at the Hartford Club. Karen Wolfe Shaw, pianist (at right), played music of Haydn, Scriabin, Stravinsky and Chopin, followed by the Beethoven Trio in E-flat Major performed by Isaac Hurwitz, violin, Jane Hurwitz Rabin, 'cello, and Ruth Hurwitz, piano.

Chair: Stacy Cahoon; Laura Cook, Bridget deMoura Castro, Susan DeWolf, Maryjane Peluso





Sunday, March 20, 2016, 3:00 p.m., Piano Ensemble Program, Millard Auditorium, University of Hartford

A program autographed by Josef and Rosina Lhevinne, star duo-pianists of the early 20th century, led us to this duo-piano event, which celebrated Musical Club's 50th Anniversary. It was held in the Bushnell Memorial on January 21, 1941, a few months before the United States entered WWII in December of that year. The Lhevinnes played music of Bach, Mozart, Debussy, and Rachmaninoff, and Mr. Lhevinne performed Chopin's Twelve Etudes, Op. 25. They finished with a sparkling version of The Blue Danube arranged for two pianos by A. Chasins.

Chair: Diane Day

Thursday, April 7, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church

Viola Vanderbeek, one of the Musical Club's earliest members, wrote an account of early years in Musical Club that we have reprinted in this Souvenir Program. Upon her death, in 1974, the Musical Club sponsored the Vanderbeek Memorial Concert, which featured Syoko Aki, violinist, and Ward Davenny, pianist, in a recital of music by Bach, Stravinsky and Beethoven, with a program printed in imitation of late-19th-century style.



In honor of the 125th Anniversary Celebration, the Musical Club has invited member-composer Elizabeth Austin to write a commemorative piece, to have its premiere on this occasion.

Chair: Elizabeth Austin; Mattie Banzhaf, Deborah Robin, Miriam Kennedy

Thursday, April 28, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church



Edward A. MacDowell, who was the first guest recitalist presented in concert by the Musical Club of Hartford, appeared on Friday March 11, 1898, at Unity Hall on Pratt Street. (Unity Hall, the locale for many early Musical Club programs, is depicted in an engraving on the cover of this program.) MacDowell's performance included music by Mozart, Rameau, Schubert, and Grieg and two sets of his own piano compositions. Fittingly we have here linked the first concert to the last program in our 125th year.

Chair: Carolyn Woodard; Judy Handler, Mark Levesque, Annette Shapiro

Report by

Viola Vanderbeek

1961 (70th Anniversary)



Madam President and Members,

When I feel tempted to reminisce I remind myself of the advice given in a book I read not long ago—the subject “How not to be a bore.” This is the advice. When you hear yourself saying, “I remember when ...” – don’t continue — stop — for what you were going to tell might be thrilling to you, but is probably of little interest to your listener!

Of course, this is just a preamble to my memories of seventy years in the Musical Club which I have been asked to tell you about – which begins with –

I remember when, soon after we moved to Hartford in 1891, I was asked to join a group of girls, all studying music, who met to play and sing for each other in their respective homes. Frances Johnson, who taught piano, was the leader – the rest were very amateurish, but enthusiastic and serious about their music.

As there were no records at first, the identity of these pioneers has always been shrouded in mystery. It seems after seventy years of oblivion that they deserve honorable mention in the annals of the club – so here they are:

Virginia Brown
Sarah and Alice Goodwin
Mary Bulkeley – twice
Mary Robinson, president
Grace and Mollie Plimpton
Sue Twichell
Lucy Taintor

all friends of Fanny Johnson, living “on the Hill.”

It was the day of the “parlor musician” – so the little band soon grew into a sizeable club, but still without records until 1893, when Sarah Goodwin was appointed secretary and a simple set of rules adopted – concerning time of meeting, admission of new members, and this admonition “It is desired that the Club be as formal as possible, in order that strict attention be given to the music.”

This school girl phase passed, however, as more mature musicians and teachers came into the club. Soon we find the names of

Lillian Bissell
Maida Miner (now the indispensable Mrs. Bryant)
Mabel Wainwright
Marion Williams
Mrs. James Andrews
Mrs. Ansel Cook
recorded as members.

I remember when Mrs. Cook (who had come to Hartford as a bride) was elected President in 1895. Being a most resourceful and enthusiastic person who had had experience as a member of a club in Boston, she instituted many reforms – voting by ballot was adopted and a schedule of work for the entire season was prepared, which included a paper each week on the subject of the day. An important change during her regime was our move from the parlors to Room D in the Theological Seminary on Broad Street (now the Hartt School). Room D, having been designed as a class room for the budding clergy, certainly helped to give the desired formality to our meetings! But it was not until 1897, with Mrs. Andrews as President, that the Club became fully organized with a complete Executive Committee and the first Constitution and By-laws – in which the purpose of the Club was given as “The Study and Performance of the Best Music.” Later revised constitutions have enlarged upon this, but the fundamental principle has remained the same.

On special occasions fond relatives and indulgent friends had been invited to an evening meeting in the parlors and, later, in Hosmer Hall, also, and with this interested group as a nucleus the Associate Membership was founded – became very popular – and, as someone said, “The list sounded like the social register of the day.”

About this time it occurred to Miss Johnson that, with the support and financial backing of this larger group, the Club could venture to bring an Artist’s Recital and, after much discussion,

Edward MacDowell was decided upon.

An amusing incident happened at this recital. The Committee with much thought and considerable expense, had decorated the stage with palms and flowers – only to have Mr. MacDowell refuse to play until every leaf had been removed. We never knew if it was an allergy or temperament!

Encouraged by the success of the MacDowell recitals, the Club went a step further and, in 1900, brought Schumann-Heinck and later in the same season David Bispham. These artists drew capacity audiences in Unity Hall – so the policy of sponsoring the great musicians of the time was established and for many years Musical Club concerts were THE musical and social events of the season.

It is hard to realize, with the wealth of good music offered us now, how little there was in Hartford in the early years of this century and how few places were available for concerts – only Unity Hall on Pratt Street and Foot Guard Hall on high, both inaccessible and unattractive.

As time passed many of the great musicians and orchestras came to Hartford under other auspices – so it seemed that our mission in that field was accomplished.

But very little chamber music had been heard previously – so the Club confined its concerts to that type of music instead of the stellar attractions. Over the years, most of the famous quartets, trios, and intimate ensembles have been presented – to the gratification of members, press and public.

It is impossible, of course, to follow the Club's activities fully through seventy years, so I have tried to give a picture of the formative years – when ideals and policies were established – and to summarize briefly on the middle period, when changes were not so fundamental. Much could be said of the steady development of the Club during this time under able and dedicated leadership and a large active membership capable of carrying through the most ambitious programs. This is a sample program that was presented for the season about 1910:

1. Emphasis on the large Rhythmic Unit
2. Emphasis on the Melodic Theme – treated contrapuntally
3. Emphasis on the Melodic Theme – treated discursively

It would be a brave chairman who would dare suggest that today! Programs now are not so profound and prepared papers have long been abandoned – and it seemed the “study” of music had been lost.

So a Study Group (now called Musical Explorations)

was started by Miss Rose and Mrs. Ellison – for the analysis and discussion of special compositions and the study of the modern trends in music, including electronics. This group, though small, contributes a great deal to the serious purpose of the Club.

In the revised Constitution of 1949, these additions were made to the purposes of the Club:

“To give assistance to worthy young musicians and to aid musical projects of an educational nature.”

These larger objectives have broadened the interests and activities of the Club, which no longer lives to itself alone but has become part of community projects by contributions to the Symphony Society, to the Instrumental Foundation, and to the Connecticut Opera association.

Also, it has been possible to assist young artists and students with small loans and gifts – and part scholarships.

This has been made possible by the expansion of the Fund for Gifts and Scholarships. This Fund started modestly with gifts in memory of friends in the Club, but has been increased by proceeds from special Musicales to which members have so generously contributed.

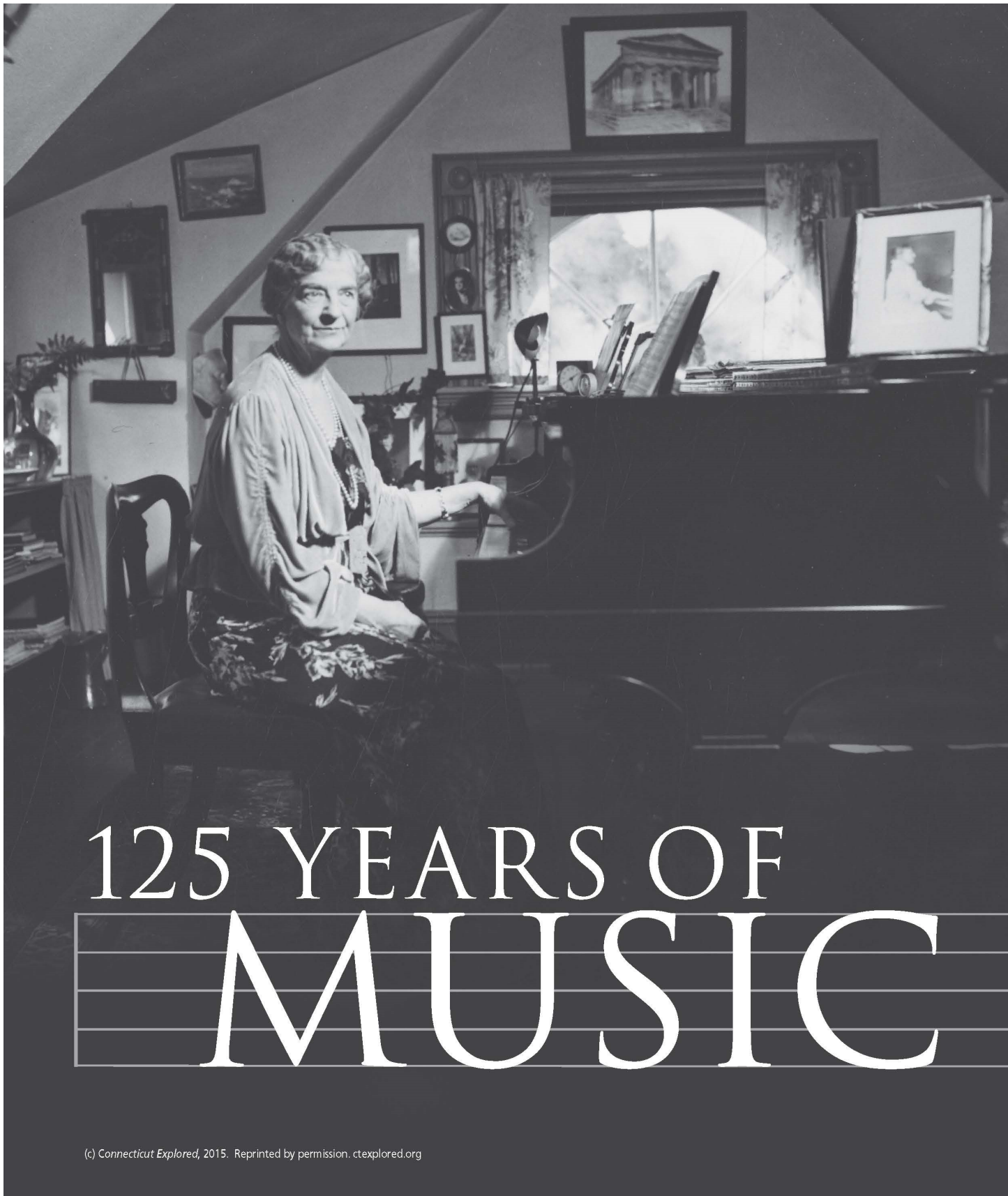
These interests and efforts beyond our own group have given the Club a new dimension – and an enviable position in the community.

On this happy-note, I have brought the “Memories” up to the present and shall refrain from prophesying the future. So for this report, I realize that I have left much unsaid and much could have been said better, but it has been a labor of love. May I be personal? Many of you know how much the Club has meant to me these many years. So I can think of no better way to conclude than to express my deepest gratitude to the members whose confidence and friendship have made the Club such a rewarding part of my life.

I thank you –

Viola
Vanderbeek





(c) Connecticut Explored, 2015. Reprinted by permission. ctexplored.org

Reprinted with permission of the Publisher from the Fall 2015 issue of Connecticut Explored

By Jennifer LaRue Huget

In the late 19th century,

even as great classical music was being composed in Europe and the United States and parlor music was popular in American homes, hearing music required being there in person. After all, the radio wasn't invented until the late 1890s, and radio broadcasting didn't begin until the 1920s. In a small city such as Hartford, band, and choral music concerts were more readily available than those featuring classical music.

In 1891, the year Thomas Edison received his patent for wireless telegraphy (a key step in the development of radio), six young women—Frances “Fanny” Hall Johnson, Elizabeth “Bessie” Davis, Sarah Goodwin, and sisters Mary “Molly” and Grace Plimpton—gathered on a springtime Saturday morning in Johnson’s Gillett-street home. All friends and neighbors from the tony Asylum Hill neighborhood (Goodwin was the daughter of Rev. Francis Goodwin, parks commissioner of Hartford and former rector of the neighborhood’s Trinity Episcopal Church), they wished to form a group within which they could explore and share their love of music. Johnson, a 28-year-old pianist and piano teacher who lived with her widowed mother and would write *Musical Memories of Hartford* (Finlay Brothers, 1931), a history of the city’s musical life, would become the club’s first president upon its formal founding, with constitution and bylaws, in 1893.

The Musical Club of Hartford celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. As a function of its mission and the personalities of its members, the club has from its founding focused on cultivating the Hartford area’s musical life through sharing time, talent, and treasure.

The late 1800s were a club-happy time in Hartford and in other American cities. Women had long formed temperance societies and other social reform associations. But women with leisure time and resources sought to pursue practice of the arts as well. The Saturday Morning Club, a young women’s literary group, was founded in 1876; the Hartford Decorative Art Society—a women-led art school that later formed the nucleus of the University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School—was founded the following year. [See “An Art School Forged in the Gilded Age,” Summer 2003.]

Those were also lively musical times. As Johnson writes in *Musical Memories*, Hartford residents could hear classical music such as pianist Anton Rubinstein performing with Theodore Thomas’s New York-based orchestra at the Roberts Opera House in 1873; *Aida* was performed there in 1874 and Bizet’s *Carmen* in 1879. People could hear the local 200-voice Hosmer Hall Choral Union, founded in 1880. The Hartford School of Music was founded in 1890, and Hartford was soon to be home to the 36-member instrumental group that would become the Hartford Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in

1899. (Frances Johnson was the organization’s secretary.) In 1890, 75 music teachers advertised their services in *Geer’s City Directory*, and in 1902, 8 of the School of Music’s 10 instructors were women, according to *Geer’s City Directory*.

The amateur singers and pianists—most of them in their 20s—who founded The Musical Club wanted more than just to listen as passive audience members. They sought a forum wherein they could develop their musical skill by providing opportunities to perform for others, exchange constructive criticism, and undertake serious study of music, music theory, and the musical realm worldwide—and thus to enhance their own skills, knowledge, and appreciation. They also hoped to “give assistance to promising young artists,” as their by-laws stated, and “to aid musical projects.”

To that end, the first members of the club set out an ambitious agenda: The group would meet every Saturday afternoon at a member’s home, November through May; once a month an evening musicale would be held with refreshments such as coffee, sandwiches, and cake. Eight or nine members typically performed—a vocal performance followed by piano repertoire. On November 4, 1893, Alice Bulkeley played a challenging prelude by Bach after Molly Plimpton sang “Sunset” by Edvard Grieg. Initially works were performed on piano, organ, or voice, but string instruments soon entered the mix, and performances were organized according to set themes. Most performances featured small ensembles, such as solos, duets, and trios. Once a month the program included the reading of a paper by one of the members or a lecture by an outside guest.

Jennifer LaRue Huget is the editor of *Connecticut Explored*.

Priscilla Rose’s history, along with a second volume, compiled by Jane Bartlett and Betty Ohlheiser and published in 1991 and a third, by Bartlett, Ohlheiser, and Laura Holleran and published in 2001, is the source of much of the material included here. Readers interested in full lists of Musical Club performances, presidents, and charitable gifts will find that information fully documented in those three volumes.

Except where noted, photos courtesy of the Musical Club of Hartford.

left: Frances Hall Johnson, the founding president of the Musical Club, c. 1931-1932.
Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut

Viola Vanderbeek, on the 70th anniversary of her membership, provided a sense of what the early club was about. "I remember when, soon after we moved to Hartford in 1891, I was asked to join a group of girls, all studying music, who met to play and sing for each other in their respective homes. ... It was the day of the 'parlor musician.' ... The school girl phase passed, however, as more mature musicians and teachers came into the club."

One of the "musical projects" that The Musical Club supported was the nascent Hartford Philharmonic Society, founded in 1899. Among the 20 violinists were 7 women; 1 of the 6 viola and 1 of the 3 cello players were women. Johnson recalled in *Musical Memories of Hartford*, "I can well remember the afternoon, the look of the small band of players, and can recall the music. They were practicing on Beethoven's First Symphony. The thought of having an orchestra that belonged to our own city acted like a tonic. The next step was to have Mr. [Richard P.] Paine [conductor] give a lecture to the Musical Club about the instruments." That lecture had to wait, however, for the arrival of the orchestra's first bassoon—underwritten by prominent Hartford citizen Susan Warner (Asylum Hill resident and associate member of the Musical Club). When the event occurred, Paine brought members of the orchestra with him to play each instrument. "The new bassoon made a decided impression," Johnson notes. Many Musical Club members were among the patrons of the Philharmonic Society's first concert, in April 1900, at Parson's Theatre.

Marian Anderson, 1940. photo: Carl Van Vechten, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Anderson performed at The Bushnell Memorial in 1937 under the auspices of the Musical Club just two years before her famous concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. that was attended by 75,000 people.

The active membership was limited to women (until 1983, when men became eligible). Those wishing to join the club were put through a rigorous vetting process. Candidates had to perform before the club, and their nominations had to be made and seconded, approved by two separate committees, and voted on by the entire membership, which judged them on their overall eligibility and their musical qualifications. An associate membership allowed others, including men, to listen in on certain public sessions. By 1900-1901, 79 men were associate members.

As Vanderbeek noted, "the list sounded like the social register of the day." Despite this rigorous and exclusive selection process, the membership rose to a peak of 525 members in 1930.

Viola Vanderbeek, c. 1895, was a Musical Club member for more than 70 years.



In planning the year's schedule, the members aimed for a mix of familiar favorites and more challenging choices of music, with opportunities for delving deeper into well-known works and exposure to newer material or that outside the classical, mostly European, canon. The club met at the homes of members for two years before, Johnson notes, "We became rather dissatisfied with meeting in private homes and moved to our new quarters in the music room at Hosmer Hall on Broad Street where we had two pianos, access to the Musical Library and facilities better in every way to carry on the work of the Club." The club's meetings have since moved from time to time, including to a room at the Hartford School of Music and the Colonial Room at the Bushnell.

Over the years The Musical Club has brought many marquee names to Hartford, including, for its first concert, in 1898, pianist and composer Edward MacDowell (the American composer

(c) Connecticut Explored, 2015. Reprinted by permission. cteexplored.org

and pianist of the romantic period whose wife founded the MacDowell Colony in his memory and who was then at the height of his fame). Johnson called his playing "electric, rapid.... This first concert was a landmark in the Club's history." Pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch and his wife Clara Clemens, a soprano and daughter of Samuel, performed a joint recital for the club in February 1915. And in 1937, the Musical Club joined with The Bushnell Memorial to bring a soon-to-be world-famous Marian Anderson to Hartford. In a 90th-anniversary history of the club, *The Pursuit of Music*, author Priscilla Rose reported:

The Bushnell Memorial management approached the Musical Club and suggested joint concerts by artists whom neither group could afford to sponsor alone. We agreed to that plan, and on May 6, 1937, Marian Anderson, contralto, fresh from her European triumphs, sang under these joint auspices. Because she was more or less unknown to local music lovers, the seat sale was almost a disaster. By noon we had decided to "paper the house." This was done and a respectable audience greeted the great singer whose artistry was appreciated for its quality. The concert was a great musical success and shortly thereafter Miss Anderson's New York debut placed her in the top rank of concert artists, far beyond local financial reach.

Maintaining sufficient funds to cover costs has often posed a challenge, as the club has juggled the desire to keep annual dues low (at first, the 18 active members paid just \$2—only \$53 in today's dollars!) with the realities of

waxing and waning membership numbers. Beginning in the 1930s, as middle-class women began to enter the workplace, fewer found time to devote to such activities as participation in a club that makes substantial demands on its members. Today the membership remains fairly stable at 300 members.

For its first 32 years, the club benefited from a benefactor: Merritt Alfred of the Hartford music store Gallup and Alfred helped fund the group's activities and even went so far as to absorb any annual losses. A key event in the club's development was its decision, in the 1921-1922 season, to become financially self-sufficient. That move proved successful, with membership dues supporting increasingly ambitious programs.

Of course, no organization lasts 125 years without hitting some rough patches. The club's leadership pulled no punches in addressing one program that apparently went miserably awry. Norma Allen Haine, the only member to serve five terms as president, reported in her account of the 1941 50th-anniversary dinner:

The Entertainment Committee consulted Mr. A. Everett Austin, Curator of the Avery Memorial [of the Wadsworth Atheneum, of which Austin was in fact the director], and asked that he present an entertainment. All of you, I know, were disappointed in this feature of the program because apparently, Mr. Austin lost complete sight of what we would really like, and produced poorly a Noel Coward bedroom farce of little merit. The Committee and I

can only apologize. When we celebrate our 100th Anniversary we will feel more confident that Musical Club talent is far superior to art society talent and we will insist on our members providing the entertainment, this lesson having been learned by bitter experience, the greatest of all teachers.

By the time of the club's 100th anniversary, fences had in fact long been mended. President Audrey Lindner reports in her summary of her tenure that, "In 1983 a happy agreement with the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford made it possible to begin a pattern of holding one program a year there, in conjunction with an art exhibit, on a Sunday afternoon. This accommodated our working members, performers and listeners alike, and the program was well received by the public."

Two world wars and the Great Depression took their toll on the club. But the group persisted, taking the nation's challenges as its own. As Rose reports, during World War I, "Some members of the Musical Club worked in factories on Capitol Avenue while their menfolk were at the Front. Attendance at meetings and concerts suffered somewhat. Many knitted as they listened, but Musical Club tried bravely to 'keep going.'"



Norma Allen Haine was president of the Musical Club (1936 – 1941) when Wadsworth Atheneum director "Chick" Austin presented a disappointing performance for the club's 50th anniversary in 1941.



above: The Musical Club's 60th-anniversary concert featured members performing in vintage garb. November 2, 1950, Colonial Room, The Bushnell. Shown (l to r) Louise Means, Florence Atkins, Sarah Swett, Muriel Crewe Ainley, Priscilla Allen, Irene Kahn, Marguerite McKown.

right: Priscilla Rose was the club's historian and author of the 90th-anniversary history of the club, *The Pursuit of Music*.



In her address to the group in May 1918, as the war raged in Europe, club President Lillian Bissell said, "It is only just to our better selves that we keep alive our interest and intimate association with music and let it do for us all that it is capable of doing in the otherwise material life which we are obliged to live at this particular time. The inestimable value of the quiet hour of music [the club provides] in these days of constant strain should be treasured."

World War II brought similar challenges to the membership, with many participants devoting time to war-related volunteer activities or factory work.

Still, with active membership having dipped below 300, the club rallied to raise funds to purchase, as part of a nationwide effort, music recordings and listening equipment for those serving abroad. Rose writes, "It was especially meaningful for submarine crews who were away from civilization for months at a time and who, for reasons of safety, could not use the radio."

Rose notes that the club continued over the years to enhance its support for young music students in the area,

assisting with the purchase of instruments for high-school students, paying for young musicians to attend music camps, and providing scholarships for promising young performers.

The Musical Club Today

The group has continued to update and modernize its operations. In 1983, the club opened its active membership to men. And in 1990, after years of pursuing this goal, the club was afforded federal tax-exempt status, which provided financial benefits that have helped keep the operation in the black. By 2000, facing a waning membership, the club did away with the distinction between active and associate memberships; from then on, membership, as their annual yearbook states, is "open to all those who share a love of music, including performers, listeners and composers," although those who wish to perform must audition. Today, approximately half of the 300 members are performing members. Members are also invited to help organize concerts and programs and serve on the scholarship committee.

Funds are raised annually to provide scholarships to high-school and local music students. In January 2015 the club presented \$3,600 in scholarships to high-school students who had competed for prizes in piano, strings, vocal, and woodwinds divisions. In addition, a generous bequest by former longtime member Evelyn Bonar Storrs provides approximately \$30,000 each year in scholarships to 12 to 14 advanced pianists attending area colleges. After Storrs died in 1989, a pleasantly surprised club learned through her will that she had created the endowed scholarship fund "to express my appreciation for the enjoyment and pleasure in having been a member of the Musical Club of Hartford." The winners

(c) Connecticut Explored, 2015. Reprinted by permission. cteexplored.org

in both scholarship programs perform in two free concerts each year. In 2012 former club president Marjorie Jolidon left \$200,000 to The Musical Club to support yearly concerts by invited guest artists; the program was renamed the "Jolidon Concert Series" in her honor.

Today The Musical Club of Hartford continues its long-standing traditions of gathering to explore and celebrate music with meetings during which members perform, hear lectures, and enjoy concerts by professional performers. The Musical Club of Hartford has remained true to its mission and to its 125-year history of connecting people with live music, supporting, cultivating, and nourishing that relationship that brings so much pleasure and value to modern life. 🎵

A 1947 graduate of the Hartford School of Music, Betty Allen received a \$100 Musical Club scholarship in 1951 to attend the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. Rose reported in *Pursuit of Music*, "This experience for Miss Allen came at an opportune time in her musical life. While there ... her vocal skill was recognized by Leonard Bernstein. ... She sang for the Club in January 1952, and was voted an Active member in 1953." Allen went on to be among the first black opera singers to achieve international success.



above: A Musical Club "Musical Exploration" program about the double bass, led by University of Hartford professor Robert Black (left), February 2015.

below: Winners of the Musical Club's high school-scholarship contest, January 2015.



Explore!

The Musical Club of Hartford's 125th Anniversary season is called "Autographs" for the many programs in the club's archives signed by the performers. This season's member programs will be a tribute to some of those musicians: opera singer Mme Schumann-Heink, Marian Anderson, Arnold Dolmetsch, Pablo Casals, and Edward MacDowell, among others. Membership, which includes free admission to all events, is open to everyone. For more information visit musical-club-of-hartford.org.

The club will also present two concerts by professional musicians:

October 28, 2015. The New England Jazz Ensemble's world premiere of its version of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*

April 14, 2016. Dual recital by internationally renowned pianist Mariangela Vacatello and her husband, noted organist Adriano Falcioni.

Past Presidents and Benefactors of Musical Club



Top photo, top row: Laura Holleran, 1987-89, Mary Lane, 1985-87, Ruth Dorsey, 1954-55, Marybeth Zimmerman, 1970-72, Jean Schuler, 1968-70, Sarah Swett, 1977-79, Jane Bartlett, 1979-81, Audrey Lindner, 1981-83. Bottom row: Janet Williams, 1955-56, Carol Hunt, 1989-91, Sandra Ann raig, 1993-95, Marjorie Jolidon, 1995-97, Joan Niiler, 1991-93 [Photo 1998]



2012: Anne Mayo and Walter Mayo, 2012-14, Ellen Ma, 2010-12, Barbara Pond, 2008-10



Colette Switaj, 2002-04



2014: Linda MacGougan, 2014-2016, with pianist Claire Huang-ci



2014: Susan Allen, 2004-06, Mimi Kennedy, 1983-85



2006: Betty Ohlheiser, 1975-77, Florence Bowmar, 2000-02, Laura Holleran, 1987-89, Carol Hunt, 1989-91, Joan Niiler, 1991-93, Mimi Kennedy, 1983-85, Sandra Ann Craig, 1993-95, Robert Connell, 2006-08, Patricia Gronbeck, 1997-2000.

Missing from the above photos: Geraldine Douglass Nickerson, 1967-68, and Mrs. Donald H. Burr, 1959-61

The Storrs Fund and the Jolidon Concert Fund are named for two Musical Club benefactors

Marjorie Jolidon was Musical Club President from 1995 to 1997. She received music degrees from NYU and taught high school students for 8 years in Suffield and 30 years in Bloomfield, as well as serving as organist at numerous Baptist churches in the area. She loved dogs (especially Beagles) and served as treasurer of the Farmington Kennel Club. She and her husband bought a much-beloved seaside cottage in the 1950s in Old Saybrook. It was there that she spent her final years after her husband died. With no children and no family members remaining, Marjorie decided to give back to the musical arts in Connecticut and divided her residual estate among Hartford Symphony, Goodspeed Opera House, Musical Club of Hartford, the Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center and the Hartford Guild of Organists. Musical Club has designated her gift to support guest artist concerts given by the club and now entitled the Jolidon Concert Series.

Evelyn Bonar Storrs joined Musical Club in 1918. At her death, in 1989, she was 94 years old and had been a member for over 70 years. She was a gifted pianist who taught briefly before her marriage to Dr. Ralph W. Storrs, of the Storrs, CT family, and head of OB/GYN at Hartford Hospital. After her marriage she rarely attended meetings, but was in contact with members and continued to pay dues for all 70 years. After the death of her only daughter and her husband, she became reclusive and spent most time listening to classical music on the radio and playing the stock market with considerable success. After a brief visit from one of our members with flowers and a certificate given to all 50+ year members that day, she changed her will. Together with four other organizations in Hartford, Musical Club annually receives 1/5 of the interest on her estate to be used exclusively for "Scholarships for talented and advanced students of the piano."

“remarkable old photos and vivid, thoughtful writing....”

The Hartford Courant

Connecticut history, one good story after another.

JOIN TODAY! AND NEVER MISS A GOOD STORY!

4 issues per year:	1 year	2 years
Regular	\$ 25	\$ 45
Discounted* & Seniors (60+).....	\$ 20	\$ 38
Educator's Discount	\$ 15	\$ 28
Friend of <i>Connecticut Explored</i>	\$ 100	

(Includes \$80 tax-deductible gift)

* Discounted rate for members/donors of **Connecticut Explored** organizational partners: *If taking the discount, please check the appropriate box:*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amistad Center for Art & Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon Historical Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Association for the Study of
Connecticut History | <input type="checkbox"/> Litchfield Historical Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bruce Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Lyman Allyn Art Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CCSU (alumni, students, staff) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark Twain House & Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut DAR | <input type="checkbox"/> Mattatuck Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Historical Society | <input type="checkbox"/> Musical Club of Hartford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> Mystic Seaport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Landmarks | <input type="checkbox"/> Noah Webster House |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Society of Genealogists | <input type="checkbox"/> Old State House |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut SAR | <input type="checkbox"/> Presidents' College,
University of Hartford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Trust for
Historic Preservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Slater Memorial Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairfield Museum & History Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Stonington Historical Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Florence Griswold Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Torrington Historical Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Hartford Arts Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Trinity College
(alumni, students, staff) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenwich Historical Society | <input type="checkbox"/> Wadsworth Atheneum
Museum of Art |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harriet Beecher Stowe Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hartford Public Library (cardholders) | <input type="checkbox"/> Wilton Historical Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hill-Stead Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Yale Center for British Art |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kent Historical Society | |

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

E-mail _____

Telephone _____

☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AMEX # _____

Amount \$ _____ Exp. Date _____ Security Code _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Make check payable to: **Connecticut Explored**
and mail to: P. O. Box 271561
West Hartford, CT 06127-1561

