

History of The Wednesday Music Club

The Wednesday Music Club was founded in 1923 by eight young women who wanted to share their love of music. Meeting once a month, all the members were expected to perform for one another. The Club still meets monthly for musical programs, free and open to the public, which are offered by Club members and also by guests. However, today the Club's membership of over one hundred fifty includes active listeners and music lovers, who support the work of the Club as well as performers.

The Wednesday Music Club was an active member of the Virginia Federation of Music Clubs back in the 1930's and 40's, regularly sending delegates to district and state conventions. Choral singing was a strong component at these conventions, and the Club had its own small chorus for many years. During this period the Club had regular radio programs and held benefits for various charitable causes. Educating members through the study of special composers, countries or periods of music was a valuable addition to Club activities.

In the 1940's and 50's there was an emphasis on civic work. The Club provided musical programs for hospitals, nursing homes and other agencies. In 1948 an important project got underway. The Club began lobbying the city school board to include the teaching of stringed instruments in the schools during regular school hours. By 1949 lessons at no charge, taught by assistant music teacher Ruth Freischmann, were taking place at Venable School. Clark and McGuffey were added in the early 1950's. The Club gave or lent instruments and raised funds to recondition others, so that any child who wished to participate could do so. (Instruments were also furnished to some county schools as well.) One could safely say that the successful string program in the Charlottesville city schools

had its start with the efforts of the Wednesday Music Club over fifty years ago.

The history of the Club's service to the young musicians of this community can be traced all the way back to 1931, when a "student loan fund" appears in the treasurer's book. (A deposit of \$10 is recorded!) Not only financial assistance but also "food for the soul" was offered, as evidenced by the hundreds of concerts in the public schools given by Club members during the 1960's and early 70's. As many as forty to sixty free concerts were presented each year during this time, exposing children to music they might never have experienced. And from the 1960's on, the Club has sponsored a number of young musicians recitals each year which are open to all students in the community. They are held at the Kappa Sigma Auditorium on Route 250 West, where the Club owns and maintains a grand piano, available for community use at a modest fee.

In the late 1950's the Club began awarding scholarship assistance to students, with the first recipient being Thomas Warburton. Since then at least over three hundreds young musicians have been helped by the Club in a variety of ways: scholarships to seniors in high school for further music study in college; music camp scholarships to young musicians of all ages; cash prizes to students in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades; and tuition assistance for private lessons, granted to talented students with financial needs. Many of these young musicians have gone on to make names for themselves in the music world. To publicize the Club's support of young musicians and to raise money for its scholarship funds, benefit concerts began to be staged in the 1990's, featuring past winners of Club competitions. Today's concert makes the sixth Annual Wednesday Music Club Benefit Concert in this series.

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