

McLean County Historical Society

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, 1950-1997

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Processed by
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	Six boxes.
COLLECTION DATES:	1950-1997.
PROVENANCE:	Gift
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History.
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives annex.
NOTES:	See also scrapbook collection O-B-3, audio recordings of select concerts, Symphony Guild cookbooks, and <i>An index to the programs of the Bloomington-Normal symphony orchestra, 1944-1974</i> by Glenn Patton (located in Milner Library).

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The origins of the Bloomington-Normal Symphony Orchestra are in the Philharmonic Society. It was formed in the late 1920s, and directed by Dean Alfred Hiles Bergen of Illinois Wesleyan University. This group was made up of people from Illinois Wesleyan and the surrounding community and consisted of a chorus and an orchestra to accompany it. Most notable was the group's annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*. Also preceding the Symphony was the Bloomington Band, directed by Frederick Ashton. This group was made up of community members as well.

In 1944, efforts to form the B-N Symphony began. Leading these efforts were Louis Williams, organizer of the group's first fund drive; Frances Elfstrand, first B-N Symphony Society president; and James Bichett, overseer of organizational matters. Dr. Robert Hargraves of IWU became the group's first conductor. Members of the Symphony were made up of Illinois Wesleyan and Illinois State Normal University faculty, community members, and a few high school students. The premiere concert was on Thursday, December 7, 1944, in the Scottish Rite Auditorium in Bloomington.

Throughout the years, many exciting things happened to the B-N Symphony. Several notable guest artists performed with the Symphony, including Jack Benny, Felicia Montealegre, Benno and Sylvia Rainoff, Howard Hanson, and Peter Schickele. Along with the big-name performers, the Symphony often featured contest winners. The Young Artist's Auditions was created in 1960, with the winner featured as a soloist the Symphony. The winner of the first Van Cliburn International Piano Competition also played with the B-N Symphony, a tradition that continues to this day with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. A women's symphony guild was formed in 1961; this group presented children's concerts, raised money, and increased interest in the Symphony. It is also interesting to note that the Symphony Guild published two cookbooks: "Symphony in Food" (1962) and "Coda" (1972).

In 1984, the Boards of the Bloomington-Normal Symphony and the Springfield Symphony formed a cooperative alliance after the B-N Symphony Music Director resigned suddenly. The two groups already shared musicians, so the alliance was natural. In the following years, the Illinois Chamber Orchestra and the Springfield Symphony Chorus were formed to provide audiences and musicians with more performances and a broader repertoire.

On July 1, 1993, after two years of planning, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra was formed. This group took the place of the Bloomington-Normal and Springfield Symphonies and still performs several concerts a year in Normal and Springfield.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 7, 1944	The Bloomington-Normal Symphony Orchestra performs its first concert.
1949	Guest artists begin to perform with the Symphony.
1954	The Symphony celebrates its first ten years.
1962	The “Symphony in Food” cookbook is published by the Symphony Guild.
1964	The first Van Cliburn International Piano Competition winner performs with the Symphony.
October 8-14, 1971	The mayors of Bloomington and Normal name this week the Bloomington-Normal Symphony Week.
1972	The “Coda” cookbook is published by the Symphony Guild.
1974-75 Season	The Symphony moves performances to Illinois State University’s Union Auditorium.
1975-76 Season	The Symphony celebrates the nation’s bicentennial by featuring an American piece in each concert.
1978	The position of General Manager is created.
1983-84 Season	The Symphony celebrates its 40 th season.
July 1, 1993	The Illinois Symphony Orchestra is formed; the group performs dual concerts in Normal and Springfield.

Conductors

1944-45	Robert Hargreaves
1945-46	Bethuel Gross
1946-47	R. Dwight Drexler
1947-48	Spencer Green
1948-51	Kenneth Cuthbert
1951-53	George Schick
1953-58	Desiré Defauw
1958-62	Henry Denecke

1962-70	Laurent Torno
1971-74	Bernard Goodman
1975-79	Dr. Paul Vermel
1979-83	Julian Dawson, Robert Luke
1983-84	Julian Dawson
1984-2000	Kenneth Kiesler
2000-	Karen Lynne Deal
	Alastair Willis
2017-	Ken Lam

Board Presidents

1944-45	Frances Elfstrand Rodwell
1945-46	
1946-47	Walter Colton
1947-49	
1949-51	
1951-52	Dorothy Burritt
1952-53	Dean F. Hilfinger
1953-56	James H. Bicket
1956-58	Dr. Carl M. Neumeyer
1958-60	Robert Randall
1960-61	Dr. Howard Rye
1961-63	Joanne Burrell
1963-66	Ewald Schlenker
1966-68	D. Hodge Fuller

1968-70	Frank Warber
1970-72	Arden K. Nowers
1972-74	Jean C. Hiestand
1974-76	Patricia Yoder
1976-78	Carole M. Ringer
1978-82	John K. Boaz, Ph.D.
1982-84	Patricia Grogg
1984-85	Charles W. Bolen
1985-86	Jack B. Hanks
1986-89	Mark Sherman
1989-90	Franklin G. Matsler
1990-92	Paul Packard
1992-?	Susan A. Smart

Guild Presidents

1961-63	Mrs. Bobbie Rust/ Mrs. Robert Bowen
1963-64	Mrs. Royal J. Bartrum
1964-65	Mrs. Kenneth Carpenter
1965-66	Mrs. Keith Middleton
1966-67	Mrs. Glenn E. Miller
1967-68	Mrs. Allen McKinley
1968-70	Mrs. James Meek
1970-71	Mrs. Martin Compton
1971-72	Mrs. Robert Gipson

1978-79	Mrs. John Yoder
1977-78	Mrs. Hal C. Adelman
1979-80	Mrs. Wayne Townley
1980-81	Mrs. Norton Crowell
1981-82	Mrs. Mary Alice Pinkerton
1982-83	Mrs. Manuel Mendoza
1983-84	Mrs. John Yoder
1984-85	Iva Gibson, Suzanne Kohl
1985-86	Patricia Marcum-Grogg
1986-88	Cheryl Denslow

1972-74	Mrs. R. Bedford Watkins	1988-89	Patricia A. Yoder
1974-75	Mrs. William R. Dunbar	1989-90	Debbie Olsen
1975-77	Mrs. Cecil E. Petty	1990-?	Carol Greene

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Bloomington-Normal Symphony Orchestra collection consists of six boxes. The material dates from 1950 to 1997. The B-N Symphony ceased to exist in 1993 when it merged with the Springfield Symphony to form the Illinois Symphony. The two boxes hold a wide range of material. **Box 1** has newspaper clippings ranging from 1954 to 1997. **Box 2** has a miscellaneous assortment of concert programs, photographs and biographies of guest artists, photographs of Symphony members, concert tickets, concert advertisements, Symphony mailings, and promotional items. The programs are an incomplete set from the years 1950 to 1993. The programs from the 1983-84 season, the group's 40th anniversary, give summaries of the Symphony's first 40 years. Some of the artist photographs are autographed. **Box 3** contains minutes and financial records dating from 1961 to 1998. **Box 4** and **Box 5** contain season information, from 1952 to 1967 and 1967 to 1978, respectively. **Box 6** contains a miscellaneous assortment of newsletters, reports, correspondence, Symphony Guild information, etc.

BOX AND FOLDER INVENTORY

Box 1

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Newspaper clippings, 1954-69
2	Newspaper clippings, 1970-72
3	Newspaper clippings, 1973-74
4	Newspaper clippings, 1975
5	Newspaper clippings, 1976-77
6	Newspaper clippings, 1978-79
7	Newspaper clippings, 1980-88
8	Newspaper clippings, 1989
9	Newspaper clippings, 1990

10	Newspaper clippings, 1991
11	Newspaper clippings, 1992
12	Newspaper clippings, 1993-97
13	Newspaper clippings, exact dates unknown.

Box 2

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Photos of Symphony and Members
2	Guest Artist Photos and Biographies (A-E)
3	Guest Artist Photos and Biographies (F-He)
4	Guest Artist Photos and Biographies (Ho-K)
5	Guest Artist Photos and Biographies (M-W)
6	Blank Certificates
7	Invitations
8	Letters and Mailings
9	Concert and Function Advertisements
10	Ticket Information and Order Forms
11	Investment Literature
12	Miscellaneous and Unknown Materials
13	Tickets
14	Tickets
Loose materials	Programs, Symphony Guild Books

Box 3

B-N Symphony Board Minutes

1961-62, 1962-63, 1963-64 Seasons

1964-65, 1965-66, 1966-67 Seasons

May 31, 1967 – April 15, 1970

May 1970 – May 1972

May 1972 – May 1974

June 1974 – May 1976

June 1976 – May 1978

June 1978 – May 1980

June 1980 – May 1982

June 1982 – May 1983

June 1983 – May 1984

June 1 – December 31, 1984

January 1 – May 31, 1985

July 1985 – June 1986

June 23, 1986 – June 15, 1987

July 1987 – May 1988

June 1988 – May 1989

June 1989 – June 1990

June 1990 – June 1991

June 1991 – June 1992

Box 3 (continued)

ISO Board Minutes

March 26, 1996 – June 22, 1998

B-N Symphony Financial Records

June 1, 1957 – May 31, 1969

Financial Statements and Auditors' Reports

May 31, 1987 and 1986

May 31, 1989 and 1986

May 31, 1989 and 1988

May 31, 1990 and 1989

May 31, 1992 and 1991 (2)

May 31, 1993 and 1992

June 30, 1993

Box 4

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Season Information 1952-54
2	Season Information 1954-55
3	Season Information 1955-56
4	Season Information 1956-57
5	Season Information 1957-58
6	Season Information 1958-59
7	Season Information 1959-60
8	Season Information 1960-61
9	Season Information 1961-62
10	Season Information 1962-63
11	Season Information 1963-64
12	Season Information 1964-65
13	Season Information 1965-66
14	Season Information 1966-67

Box 5

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Season Information 1967-68
2	Season Information 1968-69
3	Season Information 1969-70
4	Season Information 1970-71
5	Season Information 1971-72
6	Season Information 1972-73
7	Season Information 1973-74
8	Season Information 1974-75
9	Season Information 1975-76
10	Season Information 1976-77
11	Season Information 1977-78

Box 6

<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	Correspondence, Guest List, Planning Committee Information
2	Correspondence, Scholarship Proposal, Docent Information
3	Correspondence
4	Correspondence
5	Correspondence
6	Correspondence
7	Correspondence
8	Correspondence
9	Correspondence
10	Correspondence
11	Correspondence
12	Correspondence
13	Correspondence
14	Correspondence
15	Correspondence
16	Correspondence
17	Correspondence
18	Correspondence

