

**Music**

**Music Guild: 25 Years Old and Going Strong, Quietly**

BY MARTIN BERNHEIMER

• Nobody makes much fuss about the Music Guild. The series attracts an audience which seems more interested in music than glamor. The concerts take place at the Wilshire Ebell, a medium-size hall more concerned with being functional than elegant. The list of subscribing "Members" and "Patrons" is no Who's Who of Los Angeles society, and it takes very little cash to be on the list. The staff that runs the series can be counted on one hand—one finger, in fact.

But the contribution of the Guild to music in Los Angeles is extraordinary. Without this unpretentious organization, our immediate community might be bereft of a regular opportunity to hear the leading chamber-music ensembles of America and Europe. There is an older, similar series in Pasadena (the Coleman Concerts), and there are occasional one-night stands for chamber-music in other nearby locales. Still, no other organization offers Los Angeles small-scale music-making of quality and quantity to match what the Music Guild provides.

Tomorrow night the Guild begins its 25th year of activity. Chances are, there will be no self-conscious speeches, no puffy parties, no pompous intra-congratulation. Just business as usual—civilized, imaginative business.

**Worthy Introduction**

The Melos Ensemble of London will play the Horn Trio in E-flat of Brahms, the Divertissement for bassoon and string quartet by Jean Francaix and the Piano Quintet in G minor of Shostakovich. It sounds like a beautifully balanced program, and a worthy introduction to a silver-anniversary season which will also embrace performances by the Deller Consort (Nov. 5), Marilyn Horne (Jan. 19), the Trio di Trieste (Jan. 28), the Juilliard Quartet (Feb. 7), the Toulouse Chamber Orchestra (making its debut here on March 5), the New York Brass Quintet (a "bonus" debut-concert on March 19) and the Amadeus Quartet (April 27).

The Music Guild began in 1944 when a group of devoted amateurs got together with Alfred Leonard, a record-store owner and chamber-music fanatic, to arrange some concerts. In those early years, one was as likely to hear a recitalist—say Schnabel, Teyte, Lehmann, or Bernac—as an ensemble. And, for the "big" events, the concert locale might have been the old Philharmonic instead of the Ebell.

The turning point in Guild history occurred 14 years ago, when Leonard moved to New York and the reins fell to a socio-musical dynamo named Dorothy Huttenback. The reins are still in her able hands, gripped with characteristically tight security but without frenzy.

In the Huttenback era, subscriptions have risen to the point where all but 200 of the 1,200 seats available are sold before the season starts. Los Angeles owes its first (and in some cases, only)

impressions of Glenn Gould, Maureen Forrester, the Solisti di Zagreb, I Musici, the Solisti di Veneti and the Quartetto di Roma to the ubiquitous Mrs. Huttenback.

The selection of each season's roster is made by the persevering lady-manager herself, then submitted to a committee which invariably bestows approval. Mrs. Huttenback works cheerfully with all the major artists agencies, plays no favorites, juggles dates and dollars deftly, and minds the "store" like the formidable materfamilias she is.

Since the Guild survives without the benevolence of large-scale angels, without the image-fabrication of a publicity machine, Mrs. Huttenback also has to perform some feats of extraordinary muscular-persuasion. At the end of every season, she stoically succumbs to a disease called telephonicitis and calls as many as 600 subscribers personally. Like Amanda selling magazines in "The Glass Menagerie," the Music Guild impresaria nudges and cajoles her public into oaths of fidelity. It must be difficult to say no.

Her biggest problem in maintaining an audience involves the fact that Southern California seems intent on constantly shuffling its population. "Some of our best customers," she says, "simply disappear between seasons. Still, the subscription turnover is less than 15%."

For some reason, the majority of the Music Guild clientele—about 60%—represents doctors and their families. "The medical profession seems to be made up primarily of frustrated musicians. It's lovely."

In "the old days," the crowds at the Ebell were dominated by solid middle-class citizens of middle age. This seems to be changing. "We are getting more and more young people," says the professional head counter. "It's lovely."

One of the best inducements to generation gapping via chamber music is the \$1 student ticket, available either in advance or at the door on concert nights. "In a way," says Mrs. Huttenback, "I am glad we have those couple of hundred unsold seats. They keep us accessible to people who don't want to commit themselves, or can't, to a whole season."

Ticket prices are modest in any case. A full set of eight concerts costs as little as \$12 or, at the other range extreme, no more than \$24. The secret behind the noninflammatory rates is simple. "Low-overhead, dearie," explains Mrs. Huttenback. "Strictly low overhead."

"We pay \$350 to rent the hall, a small amount to print our programs and flyer, \$25 a month for office space. The rest of our intake goes directly into artists fees. Expenses are rising all the time, but the basic formula still seems to function."

With a less persuasive force at the helm, the Music Guild formula might not function quite so well. Marilyn Horne, for instance, now commands a



DOROTHY HUTTENBACK

fee that would burst the ordinary Guild budget. But the diva and the impresaria are old friends, and old friends like, upon occasion, to do each other favors . . .

Some champions of the unsung local hero claim that the Guild is unfair because it concentrates exclusively on "big names from the outside world." The accusation does not trouble Dorothy Huttenback. "We have the Monday Evening Concerts and the universities to sponsor local ensembles. More power to them. Our purposes just happen to lie in other areas."

On the surface, this may sound a bit callous. In truth, however, Mrs. Huttenback has proven herself a tremendous champion of unproven talent. She was influential and helpful in establishing the careers of Mary Costa, Henry Lewis, and Marilyn Horne. She also can take some of the credit for transplanting the careers of such musicians as William Steinberg, George Szell and Carl Ebert from one continent to another.

**No Time Wasted**

In one case, her talent-scouting even brought about the conversion of a Polies Bergeres ingenue into an operatic soubrette. In 1937 Mrs. Huttenback encountered a pretty-voiced singing lady in Paris' most celebrated pretty-lady emporium. She wasted no time telling Ebert and Fritz Busch about her find. Ditto Arthur Bodanzky. Within three months, Marita Farell turned in her Gallic feathers in return for Zerlina's peasant skirt in a Glydebourne "Don Giovanni" and Sophia's hoop in a Met "Rosenkavaller."

Despite her activities, Dorothy Huttenback does not look like a dynamo. She resembles a youngish, rosy-cheeked grandmother who knows how to enjoy life. And little in her easygoing manner suggests the sort of dramatic life she has enjoyed.

Her professional activities began in her native San Francisco when, at eight, she played her first piano recital. This was followed by study in Berlin with none less than Xavier Scharwenka and Casimir (father of Josef) Hofmann. At 12, she was rejected by the Berlin Conservatory (too young), but her audition attracted the attention of Heinrich Barth (Rubinstein's teacher), Engelbert Humperdinck (the first one) and Ernst von Dohnanyi.

A most promising keyboard career gave way to a happy domestic existence when the pianist married Dr. Otto Huttenback in Frankfurt in 1922. Active participation in music became permanently passive when her first child was born in 1928, and the

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**Classical LPs:  
Alla Breve**

**Toru Takemitsu: "Asterisms" for Piano and Orchestra; "Requiem" for String Orchestra; "Green"; "The Dorian Horizon" for 17 Strings.** Seiji Ozawa conducting the Toronto Symphony Orchestra; Yuji Takahashi, piano. RCA 3059. The last time Ozawa recorded music by Takemitsu ("November Steps"), he coupled it with Messiaen's enormous "Turangalila" Symphony (RCA 7051). This time Takemitsu stands alone with four pieces which, except for the conservatively chromatic "Requiem" (for strings), confirm his indebtedness to Messiaen and establish ties to Penderecki ("Hiroshima") and, in a wider sense, Debussy. They also prove the Japanese composer to be an acutely sensitive transmitter of an aesthetic encompassing much that is typical of the Far East. That he has the know-how to achieve this with the Occidental symphony orchestra marks him a canny craftsman as well.

—WALTER ARLEN

**Honegger: Symphony No. 2; Ravel: Piano Concerto in G.** Nicole Henriot-Schweitzer, piano; Charles Munch conducting the Orchestre de Paris. Angel 36585. These two sides represent Munch's final recording sessions. The Honegger side is magnificent—a fitting valedictory; the Ravel is something like a disaster. Honegger's Second is surely one of the most intensely moving works to have come out of the World War II years, and Munch was for over a quarter century its most dedicated interpreter. In this fiercely exciting performance Munch draws rich, impassioned playing from the Orchestre de Paris strings and that magical moment in the finale when the string tone is pierced by the solo trumpet is achieved with even more poignancy than in the conductor's previous recording with the Boston Symphony. In the Ravel, conductor and soloist are seldom in agreement in matters of tempo and phrasing and orchestral execution is painfully sloppy.

—FRED PLEIBEL

**Mozart: Piano Concertos No. 20 & 6.** Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano; Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt conducting the London Symphony. London 6579. This strikes me as about as close to ideal a D-minor Concerto (No. 20) as we have on records. It combines solo playing of flowing strength and commitment with first-rate conducting and orchestral execution. There is enough of the Romantic virtuoso in Ashkenazy to prevent him from indulging in the kind of staccato pecking some contemporary pianists feel is "Mozart style," but he does not inflate the music with excessive dynamic contrasts or rubato.

—F. P.

**Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5; Dvorak: Symphony No. 7, D Minor (old No. 2).** Zubin Mehta conducting the Israel Philharmonic. London 2224, 2-record set. A possible motive for this issue may involve the presentation of Mehta with the Israel Philharmonic, of which he became official "music adviser" some time ago. Strangely enough, no mention of this appears anywhere in the album. Otherwise, there is little need to augment the already bulging rubric (19 entries) of Tchaikovsky's Fifth in the catalog. Dvorak's Seventh (formerly No. 2) is no rarity either. The playing by the Israelis under their newly appointed master is lordly.

—W. A.