

CALENDAR
MUSIC



JAYNE KAMIN / Los Angeles Times

MUSIC GUILD:
40 YEARS AT
THE CENTER

By DANIEL CARIAGA

Musical Los Angeles, it has often been remarked, has no real center. If a stranger to this city wants to see our musical community, it is difficult to know where to send that visitor.

It is true that a sense of our musical community sometimes does surface. It can be seen on certain winter-season Thursday nights when the Los Angeles Philharmonic is playing at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Or at the Pierre Boulez concerts that reopened Royce Hall last May. But only on special occasions.

Along with the Philharmonic, Music Guild, our longtime purveyor of first-rank chamber music ensembles, may be the closest this community gets to having a musical core. Attending a Music Guild event at the Wilshire Ebell, its home for most of the past 30 years, one often feels in the center of things. Interesting music is made there; important musicians perform there. And the loyal and dedicated Music Guild audience recognizes the distinctions.

□ Celebrating its 40th anniversary this week (its 1984-85 season opens Wednesday night with a performance by the Prague Quartet), Music Guild seems as viable, as vigorous, as ever.

"Well, dearie," the Guild's longtime manager, Dorothy Huttenback, replies to that statement, "it's not so easy. Our costs are going up. Artists' fees keep rising. And we have to do it all ourselves."

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Huttenback, who has run the chamber-music operation since 1952, is talking about the organization's complete independence from government grants, foundation monies, large donors and deficit spending. And about what has been, in these four decades, essentially a one-person operation.

The first operator was Alfred Leonard, record-shop owner and radio personality, who founded, with a number of others, Music Guild in 1944. Huttenback succeeded Leonard eight years later.

Over the years, the now-87-year-old impresario has chosen the ensembles, selected the programs, entertained the artists, handled the publicity, re-sold the subscriptions, and, apparently, solved all problems.

Recently, she has had a willing helper-as-

Dorothy Huttenback has managed Music Guild's fortunes and future since 1952.

Our list is getting smaller. We must bring it up again by finding more and more young people."

One critic has called Music Guild the best-kept secret in musical Los Angeles. "We have to turn that around," says Golden. "If we can sell every seat (there are 1,200) in Wilshire Ebell, we can then afford even the highest-price quartets."

He reveals that the two most celebrated chamber ensembles, the Julliard and Guarneri Quartets, are no longer within the budget limitations of Music Guild—this year reaching \$38,000—an irony that has not escaped Huttenback's clear vision; at one

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sociate in Eugene Golden, an attorney by day and a full-time music-lover who volunteers time and energy to this organization as well as to others. In programming, Huttenback has long had the assistance and expertise of conductor Mehl Mehta, for many years before his arrival here, two decades ago, a chamber-music professional.

□ "But mostly, it's Dorothy," says Golden, noting that Huttenback still gets on the telephone at the end of each Music Guild season and personally talks to each subscriber—and there are nearly 1,000 of them—about renewing their subscription for the following year.

"We still lose them," Huttenback complains. "People disappear between one year and the next. They move away. They die.

time, bi-annual visits by those ensembles were a Guild tradition.

□ "It's a crazy business," Huttenback explains, expressing an opinion formed over a period of 55 years in that business.

Born in San Francisco on Oct. 30, 1896, Dorothy Alice Marcuse was a prodigious child, a pianist from the age of 5, and a young musician with a clear future.

Her mother took her to Berlin in 1907 to study, first with Xaver Scharwenka, later with Casimir Hofmann (father of Josef). Only her youth disqualified her from entry into the Hochschule fuer Musik; a jury on which sat both Ernst von Dohnanyi and Engelbert Humperdinck decided, as Huttenback says today, "that they couldn't have a 12-year-old person wandering around

there."

But the head of the school, Heinrich Barth (one of the teachers of Artur Schnabel), took the young Dorothy as his private pupil. After further study with Conrad Anzorge, the budding pianist returned to the United States during World War I and attended UC Berkeley (where she assisted Edgar Stillman Kelley in his piano classes). In 1920, she returned to Germany for further study and concertizing.

"The height of my ambition," Huttenback recalls today, "was a successful concert at the Bechstein Hall in Berlin. I got nine good reviews. I thought I had achieved everything I wanted to achieve."

Her marriage to Otto Huttenback of Frankfurt in 1922 proved to be a turning point.

"When I had my children," Huttenback remembers, "I was so devoted to them that I had no interest in sitting for hours playing the piano. The last time I played in public was in 1929. Then I buried it. And I never looked in the coffin again. I just didn't have the interest to practice as much as you need to practice to keep in concert pitch. When you've been there, and you know what it is, you can't settle for less.

"But then, as I had all of these musical connections, having wine and dined musicians internationally, I began to use them for other people, to build up their careers."

□ Through her uncle, San Francisco arts patron J.B. Levison, Huttenback had already been instrumental in placing an unknown Russian conductor, Issay Dobrowen, at the helm of the San Francisco Symphony. Now, she began to use her taste and connections in earnest, helping other musicians.

"I saw that I had a certain talent for getting people together," Huttenback recalls. "And, knowing music from being a musician, I could recommend the right people. It wasn't just a question of wanting to earn money. I actually got pleasure out of putting people together that I knew fit together."

With the rise of Hitler, the Huttenbacks moved to London in 1933, and Mrs. Huttenback became connected with a number of established theatrical managers—Sir Oswald Stoll, Wilfrid Van Wyck and others. Among the musical artists with whom she worked at that time were soprano Marita Farel and conductors George Szell and Erich Kleiber. In 1939, seeing the approach of war, the Huttenbacks set off for California.

□ In Los Angeles, long-term and successful collaborations with impresario L.E. Behymer and conductor Franz Waxman, among many others, prepared Huttenback for the rigors of chamber-music management. And, beginning in the 1950s, her encouragement of young artists like Marilyn Horne and Mary Costa gave extra satisfaction to a life already devoted to others.

"People talk about having it all," Huttenback muses, today. "I'm here to tell you, dearie, no one has it all.

"I've proven that you can be in business and have a very happy family life. But you have to think very little of yourself. You can't think of three people—the business and yourself and your family. You can think of business and your family, that you can do. More than that, it's not always possible." □

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