

“The ‘City of Champions’ is also the host of one of its most precious and enduring cultural jewels, the Brockton Symphony Orchestra. This well-deserved history of the BrSO is the brainchild of the American Professor Dr. Lisa Redpath. After countless hours of tenacious, diligent, and meticulous research, this well-documented book brings to light not only the history, but also the *soul* of what we all call ***“The Brockton Symphony Orchestra FAMILY”!*** Thank you very much Dr. Redpath.”

—Dr. Emilian Badea

“Extensively researched, this book tells a comprehensive and very engaging story of the Brockton and Sharon orchestras from their inception to the present time. Lisa Redpath is a skilled storyteller and reveals her great passion for community ensembles. As a member of the Brockton Symphony for the past 25 years, I was fascinated to learn the colorful history, cast of characters, and trajectory of my beloved orchestra. Kudos to Dr. Redpath for demonstrating the continued vital importance of community orchestras to the arts in the U.S.”

—Dr. Mark Finklestein

In Harmony

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The Complementary Musical Tales of the
Brockton Symphony Orchestra,
Sharon Civic Orchestra, and
Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra

Dr. Lisa Redpath



Universal-Publishers
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*In Harmony: The Complementary Musical Tales of the Brockton Symphony Orchestra,
Sharon Civic Orchestra, and Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra*

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Universal Publishers, Inc.
Irvine • Boca Raton
USA • 2022
www.Universal-Publishers.com

ISBN: 978-1-62734-383-1 (pbk.)
ISBN: 978-1-62734-384-8 (ebk.)

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Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India
Cover design by Ivan Popov

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Redpath, Lisa M., author.

Title: In harmony : the complementary musical tales of the Brockton Symphony Orchestra, Sharon Civic Orchestra, and Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra / Dr. Lisa Redpath.

Description: Irvine : Universal Publishers, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022013214 (print) | LCCN 2022013215 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781627343831 (paperback) | ISBN 9781627343848 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Orchestra--Massachusetts--Brockton. | Orchestra--Massachusetts--Sharon. | Brockton Symphony Orchestra. | Sharon Civic Orchestra. | Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra. | Musicians--Massachusetts.

Classification: LCC ML1211.7.M4 R43 2022 (print) | LCC ML1211.7.M4 (ebook) |

DDC 784.209744--dc23/eng/20220328

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022013214>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022013215>

To Gary

*You put the light in my life,
the spring in my step,
and the song in my heart.*

To James and Lizzy

With endless love.

For Community Musicians Worldwide

*Your musical spirit sings through the pages of this book and
through the orchestras that you grace.*

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Acknowledgements

The Concerto Grosso

Words cannot express the depth of gratitude that is owed to scores of individuals who made this book possible. Their facilitations and contributions, both large and larger as no detail is small, brought this concerto grosso to life. Thank you, sincerely, to all of the players in this program.

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Introduction

I believe, you see, that an artist should be part of his community, should work for it, and be used by it.

—Benjamin Britten, *Freedom of Borough of Aldeburgh Award Speech*.¹

Benjamin Britten's words are just as relevant today as when he spoke them in 1962. Artists of all types should play an active role in the community as the arts are needed to sustain and uplift the human soul.² Orchestral musicians, as artists, have been contributing to America's society for three centuries. Although recreational habits and listening preferences have changed during the 60 years since Britten delivered his speech, orchestras nonetheless continue to hold their places in the community patchwork. They are part of the community, work for the community, and are used by the community.

The Early History of Orchestras in Massachusetts

Symphony orchestras have been part of what is now Massachusetts' history for over 300 years. Orchestral instruments were imported into Boston as early as 1716, and orchestral ensembles were active throughout the developing colonies.³ These ensembles accompanied performances of *The Beggar's Opera* in New York City (1750) and Upper Marlboro, Maryland (1752), portions of *The Messiah* in Boston (1786), and the singing of hymns by the Moravians in Pennsylvania (1740s and 1750s). A fifty-piece orchestra accompanied a chorus in Philadelphia (1786), and orchestral musicians were hired to play in Charleston, South Carolina, during the mid-eighteenth century.⁴

Orchestral ensembles also could be found in theaters and pleasure gardens all over the colonies.⁵ Throughout the eighteenth century, orchestras performed in Boston and Salem, Massachusetts. Most of these Massachusetts orchestras were comprised of a mixture of volunteer and professional musicians and, like other early American orchestras, tended to be smaller and less

polished than their European counterparts. Nevertheless, by the 1770s the repertoire of orchestras from Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston included symphonies, overtures, and other orchestral works.⁶

At the turn of the nineteenth century immigrants with extensive classical music experience and interest contributed to the growth of orchestras by becoming performers or audience members.⁷ The public's increasing interest in orchestral and theatre music enabled musicians to earn a living by playing in concerts and productions that charged admission. This trend continued, as audiences were attracted to new subscription series sponsored by societies and academies. In Massachusetts, for instance, the Boston Academy of Music, the Musical Fund Society of Boston, and the Philharmonic Society of Boston⁸ established multi-concert series that provided opportunities for musicians to perform, often for payment, and for the public to hear orchestral music.⁹

Concurrently, other factors began to influence performance standards. In 1809 Gottlieb Graupner organized the aforementioned Philharmonic Society of Boston.¹⁰ In 1815 Graupner helped found Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, a musical organization that made a distinction between its volunteer and professional players by paying the latter for rehearsals and concerts.¹¹ These actions foreshadowed the establishment of separate professional ensembles.

Later in the century, the high levels at which touring orchestras were performing raised the public's expectations. Tours by the Germania Musical Society Orchestra (1848–54), which had close ties to Boston,¹² the Louis Antoine Jullien Orchestra (1853–54), the Theodore Thomas Orchestra (from 1869), and similar ensembles contributed to the growing popularity of orchestras throughout the United States while simultaneously increasing performance standards. These rising standards led to new interest in developing permanent, professionally staffed orchestras.

The founding of the Philharmonic Symphony Society of New York in 1842 commenced the practice of establishing permanent orchestras in locations that could provide the requisite support, typically urban areas. In Boston, the Harvard Musical Association's focused promotion of professional-level orchestral performances contributed to the founding of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1881.¹³ Other permanent orchestras were established in St. Louis (1880), Chicago (1891), Cincinnati (1894), and Philadelphia (1900).

Running parallel to the development of professionally seated orchestras were community orchestras, ensembles which provided performance opportunities for skilled instrumentalists to play the classical music that they loved. By the mid-twentieth century community orchestras were flourishing

in the United States. These orchestras typically were founded by their first conductors or groups of local musicians, used school buildings for rehearsals and concerts, and featured professional guest artists.¹⁴ They were established to enrich the cultural lives of their respective communities and to enable local musicians to play together for enjoyment.¹⁵

In Massachusetts, the orchestra experience remains vibrant. As of this writing, there are over 40 active orchestras in Massachusetts, ranging from strictly volunteer to fully professional participants. The orchestras are spread throughout the state, serving multiple communities in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

In community orchestra organizations, members are central to their operations. Musicians, support staff, and donors, all of whom are typically volunteers, keep the orchestras running. Their abundance of love for the groups coupled with a deep feeling of commitment reflect a sense of calling and purpose. Their individual and collective stories play significant roles in the histories of these orchestras, both past and present, and likely future.

As a French hornist, music educator, and classical music supporter I have come to know several of these orchestras quite well. This monograph documents and tells the story of three Massachusetts community orchestras that have made lasting contributions to this rich orchestral heritage: The Brockton Symphony Orchestra, Sharon Civic Orchestra, and The Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra. These orchestras, based in suburban communities south of Boston, have influenced each other and their respective communities since the mid-20th century. It is my hope and intention to document their histories and to illuminate the myriad contributions that each ensemble has made so that current and future generations can enjoy and appreciate their collective importance.

I learned about symphonic playing through my participation in community orchestras in western Pennsylvania as a teenager. The lush sounds of these ensembles and the literature that they played utterly fascinated me and drew me into this musical world. The intergenerational participation coupled with the mixture of paid and volunteer membership enabled me to understand that the word “amateur” derives from the concept of doing something for love. The common thread amongst players was their unwavering passion for making orchestral music.

During my college years I had the privilege of joining several community orchestras as a paid professional, quietly mixing in with the steadfast, core members during the final preparations for concerts. These experiences shaped

my life in musical and professional ways and stayed with me as I later spent nearly 40 years in Massachusetts. In esteemed recognition for these venerable ensembles, I share the histories of the Brockton Symphony Orchestra, the Sharon Civic Orchestra, and the Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra. It is my great pleasure to share their stories and I hope that you will admire and appreciate them as I do.

Dr. Lisa M. Redpath

December 2021

An Important Note about Photographs and Images

Every effort was made to acquire original photographs and images and to present clear reproductions in this printed history. While these pictures and replications tell an important part of the orchestras' stories, they also reflect the technology of the times they represent. The best possible visual depictions of persons and events were included in all instances.

Endnotes

1. Benjamin Britten, *Freedom of Borough of Aldeburgh Award Speech* in *Britten on Music*, ed. Paul Kildea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 217. The speech was delivered on October 22, 1962.
2. It is interesting to note that Albert Einstein, in recognition of the importance of a multi-faceted life, said, "all religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree."
3. Samuel S. Fain, "A Study of the Community Symphony Orchestra in the United States, 1750–1955" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1956), pp. 2–20.
4. Ibid.; and Cyrus Paul Harper, "The Early Development of Instrumental Music in Selected Public High Schools of Seven North Central States" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1953), pp. 9–11.
5. Howard Shanet and John Spitzer, *Oxford Music Online/Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Orchestra," accessed May 2, 2021, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
6. Shanet and Spitzer, "Orchestra"; and Fain, "A Study of the Community Symphony Orchestra," pp. 2–7.

7. Shanet and Spitzer, "Orchestra"; and Jere T. Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education: In Service of Many Masters," in *The Ithaca Conference on American Music Education: Centennial Profiles*, ed. Mark Fonder (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca College, 1992); reprint in *Journal of Band Research* 30, no. 2 (spring 1995): p. 39.
8. Also called the Boston Philharmonic Society and Philo-Harmonic Society.
9. Shanet and Spitzer, "Orchestra"; and Fain, "A Study of the Community Symphony Orchestra," pp. 5–7.
10. Douglas A. Lee and Debra L. Hess, *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd edition, *Oxford Music Online/Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Gottlieb Graupner," accessed May 2, 2021, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
11. Fain, "A Study of the Community Symphony Orchestra," p. 6; Charles C. Perkins *History of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Massachusetts*, vol. I (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), p. 116; and H. Earle Johnson, *Hallelujah, Amen! The Story of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston* (Boston: Bruce Humphries Publishers, 1965), p. 57.
12. William D. Fitch, "Backgrounds in the Development of Instrumental Music in the Public Schools," *The Instrumentalist* 12, no. 11 (August 1958), p. 78; and John H. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: A Social History of Musical Taste* (Bloomington: IN: Indiana University Press, 1951), p. 79.
13. Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra*, pp. 78–80; and Fain, "A Study of the Community Symphony Orchestra," pp. 30–31.
14. Samuel W. Peck, "Community Symphony Orchestras: Their Organization, Operation, and Maintenance" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1953), pp. 123–25.
15. Peck, "Community Symphony Orchestras," p. 8; and Blaine Davies Coolbaugh, "A Study of Civic Orchestras in Communities of Not Over 25,000 Population" (MA thesis, University of Wyoming, 1952), p. 16.

Anacrusis

Brockton
Not Just “The Shoe City” But the City of the Orchestra

Brockton, Massachusetts was once known as the shoe capital of the world. Dubbed “The Shoe City” or “Shoe Town,” Brockton’s thriving shoe manufacturing industry led to the exportation of millions of shoes from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth century.¹ While the shoe industry ultimately succumbed to changing times, another shoe that fit was the city’s desire to have an orchestra of its own. This yearning persisted and manifested itself from the early 20th century to the present-day Brockton Symphony Orchestra (BrSO). Over the years the desire and appetite for orchestral music motivated numerous city musicians to organize symphonic ensembles. While the path to the current BrSO was circuitous, it was resolute and ultimately successful.

Brockton Area “Orchestras”

Like Sharon and other Massachusetts communities, Brockton has a documented history of music-making that involved orchestras. Extant reports of a “Brockton Orchestra” date back to the 19th century and reveal the significance that symphonic ensembles have played in the community. However, the nomenclature may have been subject to regional and cultural interpretations.

Nineteenth-century newspapers reported that Brockton “orchestras” provided music at regional events, but the exact instrumentation of the ensembles was not specified. They may have been symphonic, dance, or “society” orchestras, or even “bands” depending on the instrumentation represented. In 1836 a 15-piece orchestra supported performances by the Thespian

Society.² On April 14, 1890, a grand event at the Brockton Lodge of Elks included music by the “Elk’s orchestra of seven pieces” which was supported by members of the City Theatre Orchestra.³ Later that year on September 10, Civil War veterans gathered in Nantasket, Massachusetts, for a contest in which a G.A.R. sword and memorabilia would be given to the “most popular members of the Grand Army of the Republic.” According to the *Boston Globe* newspaper, during the festivities, “selections by the Brockton orchestra met with marked approval, and many of the younger portion of the company devoted a part of the time to dancing.”⁴ In 1926, a “Brockton Orchestra” played a concert and *The Star-Spangled Banner* for a grand flag exercises event held by the Sons of Italy in nearby Braintree.⁵

1st-ANNUAL DANCE

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Musicians' Union

Local No. 138

Monday Evening, Dec. 14th

at

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The Greatest Musical Treat Ever Offered
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Your favorite orchestra will play for you
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Ray Mullin's Orchestra
Elsmore-Nash Orchestra
Bill Riordan's Orchestra
Chet Copp's Orchestra
Fieldston Orchestra
Crystal Palace Orchestra
Art Kendrew's Orchestra
Cliff Edson's Orchestra
Jimmie Coughlin's Orchestra

ADMISSION - - 50c

This ad for a Musicians' Union dance features nine local dance orchestras.⁶ While nine orchestras are listed here, the follow up article described “10 Orchestras in a ‘Battle of Music.’” Dancing was offered until 1 o'clock.⁷

Groups identified as “orchestras” also provided music at Brockton churches. In 1893, for example, an orchestra and choir contributed music to the celebration of expanded facilities at the Church of the Sacred Heart on April 30.⁸ Similarly, an orchestra, choir, and organist provided music for the rededication ceremony for the South Street Methodist Episcopal Church on June 26.⁹

Consistent attempts to weave a bona fide symphonic ensemble into the fabric of Brockton indicated that a love of classical music was present. During the early years of the 20th century the Brockton Philharmonic orchestra had enjoyed a brief tenure as it performed at key events in the city. In November 1915, conductor George Sawyer Dunham led the orchestra at the special dedication concert for the opening of the new Pythian Temple.¹⁰ This performance, filled with challenging repertoire from the classical canon, was so extensive that it received front page billing in the *Brockton Enterprise*. Excerpts from the lengthy and detailed review are worthy of attention:

Delighting an audience of several hundred music lovers from Brockton and surrounding towns the Philharmonic orchestra made its first appearance for the season in a concert programme Monday evening in the first event of the musical festival of dedication week at the new Pythian Temple on West Elm Street. The orchestra of 40 pieces under the direction of Conductor George Sawyer Dunham was given enthusiastic greeting by friends who have enjoyed the previous concerts, and musical organizations of Rockland, Whitman, the Bridgewater, Easton, and Randolph were represented in the audience. Miss Florence Jepperson, contralto ... was the soloist for the evening ... The programme opened with an overture from Weber's 'Der Freischütz'¹¹ A composition by Andres, 'Liebesgefluester,' rendered on the stringed instruments and two flutes, was a fascinating composition in which the instruments seemed to carry on a musical conversation Miss Jepperson was given a warm greeting at her first appearance in Tchaikovsky's beautiful aria 'Farewell, Ye Hills,' from the opera 'Joan of Arc.' ... A feature of the programme was the suite from 'In a Haunted Forest,' written in McDowell's best vein and charmingly rendered by the full orchestra Robert F. Colberg appeared in a violin solo, 'Meditation' from 'Thaïs,' by Massenet A distinct variation of the programme was found in the group of Russian compositions played by the orchestra, the first number being Cady's 'Song of the Volga Boatmen,' ... The second number of the group was the Russian folk dance 'Kamarinskaya' by Glinka Miss Jepperson made her second appearance in 'My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice' from Saint-Saëns' greatest opera, 'Samson and Delilah' ... The orchestra rendered two Hungarian dances by

Brahms ... two Swedish melodies by Svendsen, those being folk songs ... The closing number was Chadwick's 'Melpomene.'¹²

The Philharmonic was held in high regard by those who sought to establish an orchestra for the city¹³ and although it did not flourish, it may have opened the door for the work that came next. A new attempt to found an orchestra came about in 1925 when T. Francis Burke amassed 60 to 70 musicians to launch the Brockton Symphony Orchestra.¹⁴ This initiative was prominently marked in the *Brockton Enterprise* which provided headline announcements about the new ensemble.¹⁵



The enthusiasm for the new orchestra was celebrated in a lead article on December 12 of that year:

With the attendance Sunday afternoon of 60 accomplished musicians, all Brockton talent, at a meeting in Chamber of Commerce Hall, the Shoe City has realized an ambition—the organization of a Brockton Symphony orchestra. Since the passing of the old Philharmonic orchestra, which had attained high standing about 10 years ago in this city, there has been an urge by music lovers for another large orchestra.¹⁶

T. Francis Burke, local orchestra leader William E. McCarthy, and other “public-spirited citizens” moved the idea forward. “Mr. Burke, who unanimously was chosen conductor, stated Sunday that he was exceptionally well pleased with the interest manifested by the musicians ...”¹⁷

The Brockton Symphony Orchestra: 1925 to c.1934

T. Francis Burke was a local musician with a strong reputation and a descendent of a musical family.¹⁸ He graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) in 1908 with a diploma in piano, having studied with

H.S. Wilder.¹⁹ After graduation, Burke continued his studies in composition and counterpoint with NEC faculty members George Whitefield Chadwick, Frederick S. Converse, and F. Stuart Mason. He resided at 382 Montello Street in Brockton²⁰ and was a member of the Music Production Committee for the city's Centennial Celebration.²¹



"The Neume" yearbook photograph, 1908
New England Conservatory of Music.²²

Burke established himself as a teacher, organist, and conductor in the greater Boston area. He opened a music studio at 2 Washington Street in Quincy where he taught lessons in piano, organ, harmony, composition, and voice. He served as organist and choirmaster of St. Patrick's church in Brockton, the Immaculate Conception church in Boston, St. Frances de Sales church in Charlestown, and the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. He also founded a Men's Glee club in Brighton, conducted performances of operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan, directed large works such as Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, and taught at Boston College. Additionally, he served as the assistant director of music in the Boston Public Schools, was the Director of Music at Regis College for Women and held organist posts at other churches. He served as conductor for the orchestra until at least 1929,²³ but his exact tenure is unknown.

Rehearsals for the first concert continued throughout early 1926 and both novice and seasoned musicians were attracted to this initiative. Renowned trombonist Wendell DeLory joined the orchestra for a rehearsal on January 17 in order to play several pieces including one of his own compositions.²⁴

DeLory was a well-established brass player, known mainly for his trombone work but also for trumpet playing. He performed on numerous recordings including *Swingin' Down the Lane*, (Isham Jones, re-released 2005); *Centennial Album* (Isham Jones, re-released 1994); *The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights and Turkish Twilights* (Raymond Scott, re-released 1992); and *Swing Time! The Fabulous Big Band Era: 1925–1955*.²⁵ DeLory is also listed 18 times on trombone or trumpet in Tom Lord's *The Jazz Discography*.²⁶

After nearly four months of rehearsals the Brockton Symphony Orchestra debuted on Monday, March 15, 1926. Over 500 audience members who were “thrilled with local pride” attended the first public performance given at Trinity Shrine, No. 12, White Shrine of Jerusalem. Among the ranks of performers were Walter Smith, conductor of the Boston Municipal Orchestra and Harry Dowd, concertmaster of the Boston Festival Orchestra.²⁷



As featured in the *Brockton Daily Enterprise*, March 16, 1926, p. 11.

Repertoire included Gounod's *Queen of Sheba March*; Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor Overture*; Drigo's *Heart of Harlequin*; “Three Dances” and *Nell Gwyn* by German; Safranek's *Atlantis Suite*; “The Broken-Hearted Sparrow” by Bendix; Herbert's *Princess Pat*; Luigini's *Ballet égyptien*, and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. Violinist Lawrence Parkinson and pianist Lester Marlin collaborated for performances of Wieniawski's *Russian Airs* and *Kujawiak*; Gounod's *Ave Maria*; Auer's *Last Rose of Summer*; and *March héroïque* by Saint-Saëns. Parkinson, Marlin, and all musicians received generous and multiple rounds of applause by an appreciative audience.²⁸

The quality of literature for this debut performance spoke to the high level of commitment that the musicians and founders made to the overall initiative. They continued to rehearse regularly in preparation for the first formal concert which came on Sunday May 2, 1926.²⁹



As featured in the *Brockton Enterprise*, May 3, 1926, p. 11.

The association between orchestra members and community events was meaningful from the beginning. In 1927, Burke led a Palm Sunday evening presentation of Theodore Dubois' *Seven Last Words of Christ* at St. Rocco's Church, complete with 80 singers and 17 members of the Brockton Symphony.³⁰ Burke had other Brockton competition for the performance of this work as it was also produced on Palm Sunday evening at St. Patrick's Church and on Good Friday at the Brockton Theatre with the acclaimed Ethyl Hayden as featured soloist.³¹ Perhaps due to the popularity of Lenten Week performances of this work, Burke differentiated his production at St. Rocco's Church by featuring a large choir and orchestra whereas the rendition at St. Patrick's Church featured the church's senior choir and organ.³² While St. Patrick's Church performance was "heard by a congregation which taxed the entire upper church capacity . . ."³³ the one at St. Rocco's Church drew "a large number of Brocktonians and delegations . . . from the Lithuanian parishes in Lawrence, Cambridge, Norwood and South Boston."³⁴ Burke's strategy of having a grand execution clearly succeeded in drawing audience members to St. Rocco's Church despite the extensive competition by other Brockton performances.

As featured in the *Brockton Enterprise*, April 5, 1927, p. 9.³⁵

Burke's efforts to foster community connections began with the inception of the orchestra. He understood the practical elements of managing an orchestra and emphasized the need for community support for the initiative to be successful. During an interview after the first rehearsal on December 13, 1925, Burke put forth the topic for discussion: