

CHAPTER IV

STORY OF THE NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

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The New England Chapter of the Guild was established in 1905. It was the second chapter organized, preceded only by Pennsylvania three years earlier. Representative organists of the New England region, including the local group of Guild founders (charter members), met formally in Boston on Dec. 28, 1905, and organized proudly, secure in a confidence that the fraternal Guild project had a destiny and that a New England Chapter could give as well as receive.

Musically, New England was proud of Boston. There were local admirers who regarded Boston as a national center of musical culture and standards, and its organists were credited with ability to set an enviable quality-pace. A prominent leader in musical advancements of those days was Professor J. K. Paine of Harvard, first incumbent of a chair of music in an American university. He and other organists of the region had studied with Haupt, and Haupt had studied with A. W. Bach; thus the local and stout Bach adherents were not unconscious of a mantle of lineage and representation.

Boston's Music Hall had its famed, imported Walcker organ; a proud possession, of example and stimulus. In this same auditorium (until Symphony Hall arrived) the city's accredited Symphony Orchestra had its being and exerted its benign influence upon musical standards of the region. The Harvard Musical Association, in its own spacious building on Beacon

Hill, took—and takes—worthy part in the promotion of musical health and advance. Musical nurture was a community instinct. Paths led to correlated identities—such as to inclusive music schools of stiff requirements. Churches were ardent advocates of musical values. In short, the air was ripe for a formal grouping of organists in commonweal, and the Guild became a recognition, an opportunity.

The local chapter's first dean was the versatile George A. Burdett. At Harvard he had been under the wing of "J. K." (Paine), graduating *summa cum laude* in music. He had been an editor of *The Harvard Crimson* and had helped to revive interest in Greek plays. Following college he had spent several years in postgraduate study, a portion of the time with Haupt in Berlin, continuing the outline he had begun with Fischer in Dresden during an interim between "prep" school and college.

Mr. Burdett was an acknowledged leader, and the new chapter began operations auspiciously. The chapter's early roster included organists such as Arthur Foote, George Chadwick, Horatio Parker, John D. Buckingham and George E. Whiting. Hamilton C. Macdougall was at Wellesley, Sumner Salter at Williams, William Churchill Hammond at Mount Holyoke and Charles H. Morse at Dartmouth.

Here perhaps could be mentioned the debt of gratitude due to the tact, commonsense and selflessness of Arthur Foote, he who was of marked influence in everything that had to do with the chapter during those first years. He, too, had been an honor student under Professor Paine at Harvard. A year after graduation he received the degree of A.M., the first ever given in music at Harvard.

Another prominent organist and choral leader in those days was Benjamin J. Lang. "B. J." was of ceaseless vigor, with a record of successful endeavors. It has been said that when a public fund was in process toward erection of the opera house at Bayreuth, Mr. Lang solicited and raised one of

the largest of American contributions. J. C. D. Parker and Samuel Carr, although of retirement age when the Guild was organized, had been leaders among Boston organists.

In the parallel of composition there were neighbors such as Charles Loeffler and Edward MacDowell, with Edward Burlingame Hill, Frederick Converse, Henry Hadley, Arthur Whiting and others following somewhat later.

In another parallel, the choral, there was solidity as represented by the Handel and Haydn and the Cecilia Society, the former a sterling disciple of oratorio which today is youthful and active after more than a century of uninterrupted devotion to community expression.

The esteemed Charles H. Doersam, Arthur Hyde and Lynnwood Farnam were, in their time, members of the Boston group of organists. And who could make mention of the St. Botolph Club of musical congenialities without recognition of Benjamin L. Whelpley, contemporary, who has been a pillar among Boston organists these many years!

In the days of chapter beginnings, as previously, the Peters edition of Bach was like unto the law of the Medes and Persians and in certain neighborhoods omissions or mistakes in that edition, if any, were of law just the same. Boston took its codfish and baked beans seriously, its music similarly, and woe betided an obstreperous organist who would indulge in the temerity of venturing into violation of generally-accepted interpretations! Rheinberger and Merkel, perchance Widor, were of accepted worthiness, but it isn't within the province of this present story to attempt a chronicle for what might have happened in Boston of those days if Hindemith or de Maleingreau had suddenly put in an appearance! Like Rheinberger, Reinecke was a highly approved authority, and with unsteady permission the progressively-minded student could supplement his Richter, Jadassohn or Prout with cautious glances at Faisst and Goetschius. Goetschius had arrived at the outer horizon with his rather revolutionary "Tone Relations" and with his masterly "Materials Used in Musical Com-

position," the latter based on Faisst theories and teachings which Goetschius had absorbed as a student of Faisst at Stuttgart. Staid Boston shook with consciousness of a marked change in theory taking place. There were misgivings, but eventually Boston acknowledged and made way.

In other words, Boston's music had standard boundaries which could be altered or widened only by the approved authentic in extension of wise and comprehensive scope. There must be no rudeness toward the past, whatever was ahead. Boston was a Mecca for earnest music students, and it was considered obligatory, in vigilant observance, to train them in the fundamentals as handed down, after which consideration could be granted to a recognition of "modern innovations." It was a sanction of music that was to come, but also an insistence upon music that had been.

This was music, please note, in a region dotted with colleges and "prep" schools. Standards were adamant, controlling. It was ambitious music of an epoch, and this epoch was not unrelated to an educational era with a background in which had appeared the poetry of Lowell, the essays of Emerson and the psychology of William James. There could be no shadow of instability, inaccuracy or self-aggrandizement; there could be only a genuine participation in public weal.

Such music recognized its responsibilities, and without much effort we can discern these New England organists cogitating, discussing the new A.G.O. as promulgated in New York, commending the project.

Following the grant of the Guild charter in 1896, nine years of conservative deliberations ensued before local organization in New England took shape. Local founders were energetically optimistic and, as said, formal organization of the New England Chapter was effected in December, 1905, Warden Brewer and Registrar Day present. Paving the way, Founders George Burdett, Henry Dunham and S. B. Whitney had provided representative musical services in their own churches, illustrating chorally with quartet, adult chorus and

boy choir respectively, and the twentieth century series of recitals was still fresh in mind.

These organists were confident that their New England was equipped to do its part and would fulfill it. Yet there was no prediction, no prophecy, anywhere, that the Guild's public endeavors, from beginnings in New York, would in time reach across the entire country unto the present 6,000 members and into so many cities and towns—indeed into furtherance of public worship in countless churches. The Guild simply had to be. One need only wonder what church music might have been, in lack, without it!

During the first year (1906) the New England Chapter was of sprouts and buds, but a 1907 tabulation reveals the new chapter in full flower—with George A. Burdett as dean, Everett E. Truette and Arthur S. Hyde as secretaries, Warren A. Locke as treasurer. The executive committee consisted of Alfred Brinkler, Walter J. Clemson, Henry M. Dunham, Arthur Foote, Wallace Goodrich, William C. Hammond, B. J. Lang, H. C. Macdougall and S. B. Whitney.

The first chapter recital was given by William C. Hammond, the second by John Hermann Loud. This tabulation of 1907 records sixty-nine active members and seventy-seven subscribing members. The proportion of subscribers might recklessly suggest that the budding chapter had organized with an eye to thrift and an aroused public. By the autumn of 1910 the roster had increased substantially—112 active members, sixteen of whom were founders, twenty honorary associates and 132 subscribers. At this time the deanship of Walter J. Clemson (M.A., Cantab.) had begun—nine illustrious years.

Such growth—which doubled in subsequent years—was of characteristic groundwork in evidence and promise. Individual alertness might be illustrated by the story of an enthusiastic member who, in an agility of dynamic fervor and disregard for his chances of escaping judgment, described a certain contemporary as an "unmitigated organist." This shred

of descriptive information is a congealed brevity, of sparse elucidation, but an educated or short-winded brevity is ever generous in providing free channels of diversion through which its possible implications may be traversed and explored. There is no vouchsafing evidence of a judiciary on hand to clear the guilty or to reduce the proud in such exuding pride; neither is there a condemnation of an oral gesture which begins in such scintillating aplomb but which may end in utter defeat. The human element in Chapter life! It is a worthwhile pause while we are contemplating the years ago of resolves in fulgent dedications.

Among early events was an address by Horatio Parker on "Lasting Qualities in Music," with durability or survival defined as a test of quality. Horatio Parker, by the way, was at a later time elected honorary president of the American Guild of Organists. This honor was to come also, in turn, to Arthur Foote. The chapter was proud of such distinction.

The first public service was held at Emmanuel Church, Arthur Hyde directing. A current issue of the *New Music Review* published a list of active members in attendance. The second public service was held at the First Baptist Church, organist James D. D. Comey, assisted by Henry Dunham, Ephraim Cutter and Alfred Brinkler. Organists in neighboring cities were taking hold. The third public service was held at Taunton, Walter J. Clemson in charge; the fourth at Providence, organist Arthur H. Ryder, assisted by F. E. Streeter, Henry Clough-Leighter and N. L. Wilbur; the seventh at New Bedford, Allen Swan (A.G.O.); the ninth at Holyoke, William C. Hammond; the tenth at Springfield, Harry Kellogg.

A series of recitals arranged by H. J. Storer was climaxed by Samuel A. Baldwin's recital, the first at the Christian Science Church, attendance estimated at 4,500. Guest recitals by R. Huntington Woodman of New York and Lynnwood Far-nam of Montreal were early events, seating capacities all taken. Local organists were identified with a People's Choral

Union program in 1907, President Eliot of Harvard and Frank Damrosch the speakers. At the chapter's annual dinner of that year the speakers were Mrs. H. H. A. Beach and Louis C. Elson. The 1908 events included a smoke-talk by Robert Hope-Jones and the regretted departure of Arthur Hyde to New York.

Standard events continued, the chapter's occupations now in a productive status. But a salutary attribute, unseen by outsiders, was the chapter life itself; the *esprit de corps*, the confreres, the lifting contacts, the response to distinguished leaderships. There was this continuity of sterling occasions, but a survey of the background would disclose a glowing chapter life, with respect for high principles and an integrity of purpose.

This retrospect is like a visit at the old family home after an extended absence of years. The house is still there, but the surging vision is of the former home life, the in-and-out of dear people who had attained, but who also had sowed and planted that others, following, might be better equipped. The yard's brick walk isn't of brick; it is of footsteps. New occupants of the house, strangers, may have made large strides in their own directions, but they are apart from the home life of hallowed history which nowadays must be emulated—else failure, else nothing for history.

Afar back in pre-Revolution days Boston had its King's Chapel. As time went on this church aided in the lifting of music to a new level. At the time of chapter beginnings the organist there was B. J. Lang. In recent years it was the late Raymond C. Robinson who carried on so creditably. At the First Church Arthur Foote served as organist thirty-two years and here William E. Zeuch now sets a sturdy pattern for those who are to follow.

It seems as if New England organists at the chapter's beginnings accepted and regarded the Guild as a personal belonging, as part of the local structure. How far it all was, indeed, from any semblance of the commercial!

Withal, in energetic health, naturally, there could but be a semi-occasional earthquake or headache or case of adenoids—such as the “unmitigated organist.” The story is told of a local organist and composer, nationally known, who was prevailed upon to serve as one of the speakers at an annual dinner of the Chapter. These dinners were stately, highly-starched occasions, attendance from distances. Now and then it was but one speaker—such as Thomas Surette in an analysis of the Franck Quintette—but usually “we have with us this evening” several speakers. Enthusiasm among purveyors of oral delectables, however, had been rampant, over-length of speech a malady, and at last resort a bell of converting snares was instituted with which to terminate abruptly any speech trespassing beyond the stipulated five minutes. But this speaker in point would have none of it. The insistent bell functioned on and on, as did the speech. It became a spirited contest, one which lasted thirty minutes. The speaker had been asked to speak—and he spoke! From this distance, so cheery, it looks as if he may have interpreted the biting bell as exasperated summons for a missing porter or waiter. Whatever, apparently he resolved to climb over all bell obstacles and persevere with his speech—in evident assurance that, at least, his audience was in good humor, even jovial!

It was at one of these early dinners that William Hammond told Warren Locke of a minister who announced to the congregation the mysterious disappearance of an umbrella which he himself had brought to church on the previous, rainy Sunday. The following morning this minister found that nineteen umbrellas had arrived over his back fence! Such stories may seem to transgress in a formal chronicle of history, but surely they picture and describe an abundant Chapter life, hence are relevant.

The chapter grew in stature and accomplishment, won local acclaim and became one of the Guild’s largest chapters. The list of deans has been tabulated as follows:

*George A. Burdett 1906-1908

*H. C. Macdougall	1908-1909
*Walter J. Clemson	1909-1918
*Everett E. Truette	1918-1920
*George A. Burdett	1920-1922
†John Hermann Loud	1922-1926
John P. Marshall	1926-1930
†Raymond C. Robinson	1930-1933
†Frederick H. Johnson	1933-1935
William E. Zeuch	1935-1936
†Homer P. Whitford	1936-1939
Homer C. Humphrey	1939-1942
William B. Burbank	1942-1944
‡Harris S. Shaw	1944-

*A.G.O. †F.A.G.O. ‡A.A.G.O.

Organists in other New England cities were becoming Guild-conscious, in cities such as Worcester, Hartford and Providence, and fraternal activities developed into local groupings which led instinctively toward Guild embodiments. A striking illustration is Portland, where, as far back as the 1870’s, oratorio had been of high standard and enjoyed fine public patronage. The time came when Cyrus H. K. Curtis of the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia, himself of Portland boyhood, gave to the new civic auditorium a large organ in memory of Organist Hermann Kotzschar, a personal friend. For a period of years Will C. Macfarlane, through municipal appointment, presided at this organ.

Under the leadership of Alfred Brinkler, F.A.G.O., a Portland branch of the New England Chapter was organized. In 1935, maturing, it became the Maine Chapter. Soon afterward, Bangor established a branch chapter of its own.

Vermont and New Hampshire are now together as a Guild unit, active, progressing. Rhode Island, tracing back to the leadership of men such as George Lomas, A.G.O., and J. Sebastian Matthews, showed zeal. In 1933 it organized its own

chapter, with a branch at Westerly. Connecticut followed in 1938 by the formation of a chapter at New Haven; now there is a strong chapter also at Hartford.

Mention should be made of the kindred choral organizations in numerous New England cities. For example, the annual Worcester festival, a more recent conductor of which was the late Albert Stoessel. Also the Fitchburg and Keene festivals, the Salem Oratorio, the Chapman festivals in Maine. Organists of Connecticut were becoming increasingly enterprising and Wesleyan was winning national distinction in contests among college glee clubs. Everywhere, regardless of state or regional boundaries, the river bank had had its demonstrative population of bullfrogs, the last cigar and insecure banisters had escaped from white bosoms and starched collars, and glee clubs, defying mal de mer, had bounded considerably o'er the ocean wave, but a gradual transformation swayed repertoires into alternates and a need of high tenors.

Larger compositions came to the fore as creative ability was discovered, major music became a goal. Archibald Davison's superb glee club at Harvard has revealed classic possibilities in such organizations. High school choirs are growing in attainment and choral societies combining with orchestras. The influence of men such as Christiansen, Dickinson and Williamson is widespread. More and more we see the Guild as it is, in all its diversified elements, on a high plane.

New England chapters declare with pride their loyalty to Guild objectives. Presentday organists in Boston, as throughout the region, are proud of local history. They strive to uphold standards which have animated the Guild since its inception. Academic honors are sought and cherished. The list of New England deans is one of men who have led.

Now the New England Chapter is no more. Thus this story concludes. One chapter has become a family of chapters. The parent group is the Massachusetts Chapter and all New England is within the Guild!