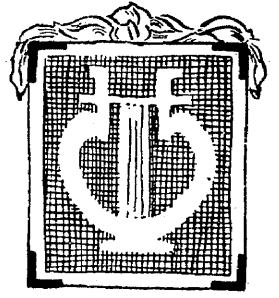


There Was No Beginning of An Era of Music in El Paso for We Started In With the Mouth Organ and the Jews Harp as an Adjunct to Ranching; We Fandangoed to the Strains of a Guitar and Violin; and Now We Sit Around With Metropolitan Air Listening to Our Own Symphony Orchestra.



By
Constance Pateman.

Music sings in the hearts of all, but it did not take on collective form in El Paso until 1884 when a chorus of male voices took the pseudonym of "The Howlers." Judge F. E. Hunter was president during the life of the club. The club was formed to raise funds to buy a town clock for the Court House when the county seat was moved from Ysleta, but lived long after the clock was in place. A G. Foster was Secretary-Treasurer, and among others the members of the organization were; J. T. Brinck, Ben S. Roberts, W. T. Stevenson, Geo. H. Higgins, Waters Davis and Charles Rokahr.

Soon after the organization of "The Howlers," the same individuals helped organize the McGinty band and the McGinty orchestra (auxiliary of the famous McGinty Club of 150 members), which for many years were the only organizations of the kind in existence here.

D. W. Reckhart was one of the moving figures in the formation of the band, in 1890, and succeeded in gathering about him forty players. Concerts were given in the Plaza twice a week. A big yearly feature was the concert given by the band at the annual opening each Fall of the old Myer Opera House. Prominent among the band members were: W. R. Brown, leader for many years; William Watts, cornet; J. D. Ponder, clarinet; A. S. J. Eylar, clarinet; Herbert Ward, saxophone; and D. W. Reckhart.

These organizations furnished the greater part of the musical entertainment for the citizens of El Paso for ten years or more.

In 1907 a group of music lovers led by J. G. McNary were brought together as the El Paso Choral Society, the officers and directors being J. A. Dick, president; W. W. Rose, vice-president; F. M. Hodge, secretary-treasurer; J. G. McNary, conductor; J. Krakauer, W. Cooley, E. E. Nold, J. G. McNary, F. M. Hodge, M. H. MacCallum, D. W. Tucker, E. V. Berrien, J. A. Dick and W. W. Rose.

In the fall of 1907 the first public appearance of the Society was made in a concert at the Texas Grand Theater. For this performance the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was engaged. The Choral Society, numbering 100 voices, gave a fine rendition of Rossini's "Stabat Mater," J. G. McNary, conducting. One of the noteworthy features of this first attempt to place before the El Paso public a musical program of importance was the free concert given for the El Paso school children.

The second annual music festival of the El Paso Choral Society was held in 1908, when Hayden's oratorio, "The Creation" was given by 150 singers, accompanied by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The officers and directors of the Choral Society for 1908 were: H. S. Beach, president; W. W. Rose, vice-president; D. W. Tucker, secretary-treasurer; J. Krakauer, business manager; J. G. McNary, director; E. E. Nold, W. Cooley, J. G. McNary, J. A. Dick, R. J. Carson and J. E. Rhein.

In 1909, it was found impossible to secure the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the task of bringing together local musicians was undertaken. An orchestra of 40, under Prof. J. B. Kendig, was provided to assist the Choral Society in the presentation of Mendelssohn's "Elijah." The artistic success of this concert was beyond all expectations, although the attendance was far from encouraging. The officers and directors for 1909 were: W. W. Rose, president; H. S. Beach, vice-president; D. W.

Tucker, secretary; M. H. MacCallum, treasurer; J. Krakauer, manager; J. G. McNary, conductor; E. V. Berrien, R. J. Carson, W. Cooley and J. A. Dick. The accompanists for rehearsals during the three years mentioned were Mrs. J. G. McNary. Mr. W. R. Brown and Mrs. Helen Roberts.

In November, 1909, the El Paso Choral Society made its last appearance, in conjunction with a concert given by Liberatti's Band at the Texas Grand Theater. The following numbers were rendered by the Society: "Hail Bright Abode," (Tannhauser)—Wagner and "Hallelujah Chorus," (Messiah)—Handel.

Shortly after this concert, on Nov. 26, 1909, at a meeting held at the Chamber of Commerce, by the officers and directors of the El Paso Choral Society, the following stand was taken:

Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the Universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and to all that is good, just and beautiful, of which it is the invisible but nevertheless dazzling, passionate and eternal form.

—Plato

"After considerable discussion a motion was made and carried that it be the sense of the meeting that the Society give up attempting any more music work; that the officers and directors resign and recommend to the members of the organization that it be disbanded, and that this action be communicated to the members by letter. The discouragement which was manifest among the members of the Board of Directors was due in great part to the fact that the public of El Paso has not more heartily encouraged our organization by its support of our music festivals and concerts, and by responding generously to our attempt last year to put the society on a sound financial basis."

It is far from pleasant to record the death of this splendid organization, which, after three years of hard work and splendid results, was forced to disband because of lack of support and appreciation by the public.

An interesting fact of record is that in 1913 it was decided to provide for more music in the public schools of the city. Under a plan outlined by Supt. R. J. Tighe, provisions were made for every school in the city to have at least one teacher especially trained and prepared for work in public school music. This was another progressive move fostered by the city officials and which has done a great deal toward creating a love and desire for the best music among the children who are rapidly growing into the future citizens of El Paso.

In 1915, under the direction of Mrs. Parvin Witte, a Women's Lyric Club was organized, consisting of twenty singers, with Mrs. Chas. Howard accompanist. This club contributed largely to the program of music in El Paso during the year of its organization. On the departure of Mrs. Witte from the city the club disbanded.

Since 1909 when the El Paso Choral Society

and the El Paso Symphony Orchestra were in existence, there has been no attempt to organize a municipal orchestra until during the past few months when, through the efforts of many of the same men who were identified with the movement in 1909, and particularly J. G. McNary, and John H. Regan, assistant manager of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, plans were laid to organize a band for El Paso. The city of El Paso, through the mayor and council, pledged its support to the extent of \$3,000, providing the citizens contributed the same amount. These subscriptions were raised by John H. Regan, business manager of the El Paso Music Association and the El Paso Band gave 24 outdoor concerts during the summer in Cleveland Square. The program for the Orchestra contained an arrangement to give six concerts during the winter at Liberty Hall. Four of these have been given already, and while the number in attendance at all of the concerts has not been as large as might be expected from a city the size of El Paso, still the results have been most gratifying. Much credit is due to the conductor of the orchestra, P. J. Gustat, and his loyal players for the success of these concerts.

The fact that nearly every El Paso moving picture theater now has a well-trained orchestra of from four to ten pieces was a big help in getting together the Symphony Orchestra. The full strength of these orchestras was made available, and all showed hearty co-operation in the arduous days of preparation.

During the past few years El Paso has been fortunate in having such notable artists in concert as Nordica, Alda, Gadske, Schumann-Heink, Rafael Diaz, Oliver Denton, Clarence Eddy, French Symphony Orchestra, Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Anna Case, Alfred Cortot, Fionzaley Quartette, Bonnet, and Julien Paul Blitz. An El Paso audience was the first in the United States to recognize the magical charm of Luisa Tetrazzini.

Partly by reason of the distance to other large cities El Paso has developed very fully the power to provide her own musical entertainment. The eternal passion to go somewhere else or hear some outside musical organization or artist is not always due to fine development of artistic sense and discriminating appreciation, but often to ignorance of El Paso's resources and disregard of the talent we possess.

El Paso now supports loyally the following musical organizations:

Orpheus Club.

The organization of the Orpheus Club was effected in 1915, with Charles J. Andrews, director. This splendid chorus of men's voices has been filling a long felt want in El Paso during the five years of its existence. The concerts given have been of the highest standard, and have been greatly appreciated and enjoyed. There are thirty-six members of the Club and rehearsals are held weekly. Charles J. Andrews is the Director and E. C. Kinckmeyer, Accompanist. The Executive Committee consists of:

J. Malcolm Davis
W. W. Rose
Charles J. Andrews
Leonard Worcester,
R. E. Hines
C. M. Lyman.

MacDowell Club.

The MacDowell Club (first auxiliary of the
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