

85 Cleveland Women Playing In Orchestra

By ROSEMARY CURTIN HITE

The story of the Cleveland Women's Orchestra is the story of a man. Hyman Schandler, conductor, founder, organizer, and diplomat extraordinaire, is that man. Latvian born, but Ohio educated, he has been the chief inspiration and guiding spirit behind this remarkable organization since its beginning twenty-six years ago.

ROSEMARY CURTIN HITE is a bassoonist, formerly with the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. A graduate of the Ohio State University, she is a member of the faculty of Capital University and assistant music critic of the *Columbus Dispatch*.

Under his skillful baton, hundreds of women in Northeastern Ohio have, over the years, performed the greatest works of the standard and modern symphonic repertoire. His rare talent for coordinating the efforts of the musicians, advisory boards, dozens of committees, and a multitude of friends, has resulted in the success of this almost unique symphony orchestra.

But let's take a look at the orchestra itself, say, on a typical rehearsal night. From 7:30 on, eighty-five women musicians hurry in to the hall and breathlessly set about the tuning and warming-up that precede the eight o'clock downbeat. The hurry and breathlessness are with good cause; almost without exception they come from a day of full-time work. Whether housewife, teacher, business woman, student, or professional musician (and most fall into these categories) their days are crowded. Whether high school girl or grandmother—ages range from teens on up—practicing and committee work are only part of already full schedules.

This particular rehearsal finds the early-comers arriving from the greatest distances; Willoughby, Painesville, Bay Village and many other nearby communities are or have been represented in the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. Eight o'clock and the full complement is as-



Hyman Schandler

Photo: Geoffrey Landesman, Cleveland

sembled. A few empty seats are noted. Ah yes, that violinist's baby is due, and that trombonist's husband has been transferred suddenly (such are the problems, unique in symphony circles, that Maestro Schandler faces); and that 'cellist has been switched to night duty at the hospital. But the conductor is undisturbed; he has weathered worse problems. And the rehearsal is under way. The orchestra sounds very good, it *is* good, for these women have one trait in common: they are all excellent musicians, trained, for the most part, in the excellent schools of Cleveland and northeastern Ohio.

Annual Formal Concert

This rehearsal is in preparation for the annual formal concert at Cleveland's Severance Hall, the major fund-raising

project of the year. In addition, the Orchestra receives grants from the Cleveland Foundation, the Beaumont Fund and the Kulas Foundation in recognition of the contribution it makes to the cultural life of the community, both through the regular concerts and the concerts presented in hospitals, homes for the aged, and mental institutions. Although the musicians are not paid, such income is necessary for the maintenance of the group.

But it is now ten o'clock, and Conductor Schandler makes the final cut-off for the evening. Our eighty-five musicians—well, eighty-one—begin to pack up. They're a bit weary, but it's a pleasant kind of weariness, full of the satisfaction of once again having had a part in the making of great music.

The Summer People

(Memories of a Maine Resort)

I think I remember best the summer people.
 They were very tall and they came in touring cars.
 One of the men knew Calvin Coolidge, really!
 And I remember the sound of the wicker chairs—
 The squish. The squeak. And the ladies' laughter coiling
 Along the porch in the sweet hot afternoon.
 It was the sound of the beautiful summer people
 And I waited for it through my childhood years.

—Betty Jane Balch

Betty Jane Balch (Mrs. Terrence Scherrer) of Columbus and Coshocton has contributed verse to many magazines, including the first issue of this one.