

Preface

During the 2000-2001 season, the Madison Symphony Orchestra celebrated its 75th season. It is the oldest continuously-existing organization of its kind in Wisconsin. The orchestra was founded in 1926 by the Madison Civic Music Association (MCMA). In 1927, a chorus was created under the auspices of the MCMA. Eventually MCMA's groups included the Madison Civic Band, and from the early 1960s onwards, the Madison Opera. Part of the orchestra's successful growth may be attributed to the consistency of its leadership. To date, the MSO has had only four Music Directors: Dr. Sigfrid Prager (1926-1948), Walter Heermann (1948-1961), Roland Johnson (1961-1994), and John DeMain (1994-).

My own association with the MSO dates from the early 1980s, when I first performed with the orchestra as a trombonist (I have been the orchestra's bass trombonist since 1990.), and began writing program notes for the MSO's program booklets. I began to be interested in the orchestra as a historical subject when I was asked to provide a repertoire list to be published in 1994, in the program booklet for Maestro Johnson's final concert as Music Director. For the 75th Anniversary season, I was commissioned to provide a series of short historical articles that were published in the program booklets that season. This chronicle is an outgrowth of that research.

This book is laid out in several sections. **Part I** is a complete chronicle of concerts by the orchestra and/or chorus from 1926-2001. This listing includes staged opera performances performed under the auspices of the MCMA, and later operas performed with the Madison Opera. The chronicle does not include chamber music concerts sponsored by the MCMA and concerts by the Madison Civic Band. It was commonplace in the early years of the MCMA to include chamber works and art songs on the orchestra's concerts. These works (marked by an asterisk) are listed in the chronicle, but are not indexed in the repertoire list. **Part II** is a complete listing of repertoire, excluding staged opera performances, and chamber works performed on MCMA concerts. The repertoire list is organized by composer and cued to the dates of performance. **Part III** is an annotated list of works premiered by the orchestra and/or chorus. **Part IV** lists staged opera performances. "Concert" (unstaged) opera performances are indexed in Part II, but will also be noted here. **Part V** is a complete listing of soloists, guest ensembles, and guest conductors for the same repertoire covered in Part II. All material presented here has been managed as a large HyperCard™ database.

I have relied on several types of information in collecting this information. The primary source has of course been printed programs, but the MSO's archives, particularly for the 1930s and early 1940s, are rather incomplete. An anonymously-compiled (ca.1961) typescript chronicle held in the MSO archives was useful in filling in some *lacunae*. Other programs have been reconstructed from coverage in back issues of Madison's daily newspapers, the *Wisconsin State Journal* and *Capital Times*—this coverage has also been used as secondary confirmation of programs listed in the 1961 chronicle. Finally, I have consulted additional material held in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archives,

most notably the papers of Alexius Baas, who was a prominent figure in the early history of the MCMA.

I acknowledge several people who assisted in this research. Many members of the Madison Symphony Orchestra's staff—past and present—have been supportive throughout this long process. I thank in particular the MSO's multitalented Orchestra Librarian, Kathryn Taylor, and staff members Sandra Madden, Rick Mackie, Ann Healey, and Sherri Trent. The Madison Opera's Ann Stanke has been a tremendous resource, and has given me free access to the Madison Opera's Archives. Finally, Roland Johnson, to whom this volume is respectfully and affectionately dedicated, has been enormously helpful in clarifying repertoire and even in proofreading this work.

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Postscript on organizational names.

The orchestra has undergone name changes in its history, though the organizational structure itself remained constant through these changes. From 1925-1994 the umbrella organization for all of the groups listed here was the Madison Civic Music Association. MCMA's orchestra was originally known as the Madison Civic Symphony Orchestra, but this was routinely shortened to the Madison Civic Symphony by the late 1920s. In 1966, in recognition of the orchestra's changing status in the community, and its increasingly professionalized ranks, it became the Madison Symphony Orchestra. The chorus remained the Madison Civic Chorus from 1927 until 1983, when it was renamed the Madison Symphony Chorus. When the MCMA was dissolved in 1994, its two successor organizations were officially known as Madison Symphony Orchestra Inc. (which includes both the Madison Symphony Orchestra and the Madison Symphony Chorus) and Madison Opera. The opera, founded as the Madison Civic Opera Workshop in 1961, went through several name changes: Madison Civic Opera Guild (1962-1976), Madison Civic Opera (1977-1983) and eventually Madison Opera (1984-present)

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