

Mini-History:
Music in the First
UU Congregation of
Ann Arbor:
1865-2015



Presented by Cindy Krueger, March 15, 2015

Even in the earliest years of our church, the pursuit of music was alive, as evidenced by old programs for “Musicales”, “Song Sundays”, and Unity Club concerts collected in our archives at the University of Michigan’s Bentley Library.

The [Reverend Henry Wilder Foote II](#), who was the minister of our congregation from 1906-1910, was a “hymnologist”. He earned a Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from Harvard Divinity School. According to Marjorie Reade’s history of our congregation, “his greatest gift to the church was the development of its music program”. He spurred creation of a “strong choir and excellent musical services...”. Later in his career he chaired committees that compiled “Hymns of the Spirit for Use in the Free Churches of America,” published in 1937 and used by both Unitarians and Universalists. It reportedly contained hymns “that congregations could actually sing” (!) and remained in use into the 1960s.

Music was also a high priority for Reverend Sidney S. Robins, our minister from 1919- 1928, whose Sunday services featured soloists every week.

Our UUAA History Detectives group has a valuable human resource for the history of our music programs– Eppie Potts. Eppie was a member of this congregation’s choir for 45 years, from 1955-2000, and she has many fond memories of musical events involving the choir.

The first choir director Eppie recalls was Jim Berg, a choir teacher in the public schools. The choir at that time was small, but earnest – 10-15 singers. Next came [Jerry Bilik](#), who composed music for our Affirmation – “Love is the Spirit of this Church...”, in 3-4 parts, which the choir sang in every service

for years. One of Eppie's fondest memories is the [1974 installation of a Holtkamp organ](#). The Ragtime Bashes, which Sarah Albright spoke to us about in February, began as a means of raising money for this "baroque" organ that became "dear to the hearts of the many music lovers in our congregation at the time". It was the only organ of its kind in town, and the church rented the sanctuary out for many U of M student and faculty recitals.

In the 1970's and early 80's our music director was Dr. William Albright, a professor of composition, as well as an organist and pianist who performed throughout Europe and North America. He was a prolific composer, authoring three hymns that appear in our current UU hymnal. He was well known for his role in the revival of ragtime music. Under his direction the choir performed challenging works, like Bach and Mozart masses....in Latin, no less. One whole service was devoted to a performance of Purcell's "Ode to St. Cecilia".

Bill's successor, Sarah Albright, in 1985, continued the building our music program. She grew and directed a children's choir, as well as a bell choir, which initially performed using borrowed bells. Soon after, members Sara Mathews and Laurie McLean bought a set of bells for the music program. Also during Sarah's tenure annual church musicals were produced, typically popular musicals which were rewritten to express UU principles. Jane Phifer and Kerry Graves made significant contributions to these, which featured singing, dancing, costumes, props, and a solo at the end for Rev. Ken Phifer to proclaim the moral of the story! One person I spoke with recalled the title "Alice in Americaland".

Since 2007, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, also trained at U of M Music School, has made music more participatory and physical in our services, teaching the congregation to both sing AND move, at the same time! He has coached the adult choir with ever more marvelous undertakings, which appears to be paying dividends because, as you may have noticed, the current "choir loft" no longer really holds all of them! Brianne Boyd leads a newly reorganized Chalice Sparks (childrens' choir), with help from Rick Witten. We have fine piano music and accompaniment by Allison Halerz, as well as percussion, drum circles, and folk singing led by Lori Fithian and Jean Chorazyczewski.

It's been my pleasure bringing you this short tour of our 150 year history of Reason, Compassion, and **MUSIC in action.**

** I want to give special thanks to several people for their major contributions to this presentation: Sandy Simon (my editor), Eppie Potts, Sarah Albright, and Tim Richards.*

* Copies of older music concert programs from the late 1800's from the Bentley archive

THIRD SONG SERVICE

AT THE

UNITARIAN CHURCH!

Sunday Evening, March 9, 1879.

Music by the Choir and Congregation of the Church, assisted by the College Glee Club of Sixteen Voices, and the Weber Quintette.

ORDER OF SERVICES.

1. Marche Religieuse, *Gluck.*
WEBER QUINTETTE.
2. Responsive Service—Pastor and Choir.
3. Hymn 520—Tune "Ortonville."
Choir, Glee Club, Quintette and Congregation.
4. Scripture Reading.
5. Intiger Vitæ, *Fleming.*
GLEE CLUB.
6. Solo. "And He shall feed His Flock."
Miss Avery and Weber Quintette. *Handel.*
7. Prayer.
8. Hymn 304—Tune "Manoah."
Choir, Glee Club, Quintette and Congregation.
9. "No Evil shall befall Thee."
WEBER QUINTETTE. *Costa.*
10. Responsive Service.
Reading of Scripture Selections by Pastor and Singing by Glee Club.
11. Hymn 259—Tune "Floyd."
Choir, Glee Club, Quintette and Congregation.
12. Short Address by the Pastor, Rev. Mr. Sunderland.
13. Song of Hope. *German.*
GLEE CLUB.
14. Anthem—"Softly now the Light of Day."
CHOIR. *Gould.*
15. Hymn 410—Tune "Coronation."
Choir, Glee Club, Quintette and Congregation.
16. Benediction.

Admission 10 Cents.

Services begin at 7:30.



UNITY CLUB.

MUSICALE

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

MR. EDWARD BILBIE,

AT THE

Unitarian Church, Monday, Dec. 12.

A 7 30 P. M.



PROGRAM.

- I. Overture—The King of the Gnomes, *T. H. Rollinson*
CHEQUAMEGON ORCHESTRA.
- II. Aria, Deserto in Terra, - - - *Donizetti*
MISS CAROLINE BALL.
- III. Sonata, - - - - *Mozart*
Allegro. Assai.
MISS FALCONER.
- IV. a. Awakening of Spring, - - - *E. Bach*
b. Polonaise, - - - - *R. Claraux*
ORCHESTRA.
- V. Duo for two violins, Op. 28, No. 4, - *Viotti*
Moderato con Espression. Andante.
Allegretto. Agitato Assai.
PROF. LUDERER and E. BILBIE.
- VI. Emeralds, - - - - *Levy*
MISS KATE JACOB.
- VII. Turkish March, - - - - *Mozart*
ORCHESTRA.

The piano used is Haines Bros. Celebrated Upright, kindly
loaned by LEW H. CLEMENT.



MUSICALE PROGRAM

Song Service at Unitarian Church.

At the Unitarian church next Sunday the choir assisted by Miss Marion Parks, Miss Ruth Durham, Mr. Warren, Mr. Miller, violinist and the Arion quartet will render the following program:

1. "The strife is o'er."—Mendelssohn.
2. "Resting by and by."—Haven.
3. "Eye hath not seen."—Gaul, Miss Marion Parks.
4. "Hark! Hark! my soul."—Shelley.
5. Nocturne from "Midsummer Night's Dream."—Mendelssohn. Miss Smith and Mr. Miller.
6. "Crossing the bar."—Woodward.
7. "Lead, kindly light."—Buck. Arion Quartet.
8. "Lord, when my raptured thought."—Beethoven.
9. "The Lord is my light."—Buck. Miss George and Mr. Dickie
10. "Peace to the earth."—Pinsuti-Neviro. Mr. Warren.

Bibliography

- 1 Reade, Marjorie. *The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Ann Arbor – The Story of Our First One Hundred Years* (May 1990; Committee of the First UU Church of AA, MI)
- 2 Richards, Tim. *Music in the Church History from 150th Anniversary Commemorative Program* (May 2015; First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI)
- 3 Albright, Sarah. *UUAA Music History from 1970's-2007* (Non-published. Personal recollection.)
- 4 Potts, Eppie. *UUAA History of the Choir from 1955-2000* (Non-published. Personal recollection.)