

1930
to
1939

COMMUNITY
BEGINNINGS

To celebrate the Hartford Symphony's 65th Anniversary, each Playbill this season is going to reflect upon one decade of the Symphony's history. We begin with the 1930's, the decade in which the Hartford Symphony performed its first concert.

1934



FRANCIS GOODWIN
1895-1976

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT established the Federal Emergency Relief Corporation, which included a program to help struggling musicians through the economic depression. Amateur musician and businessman Francis Goodwin II, considered today to be the "Father of the Hartford Symphony," seized the opportunity to bring orchestral music to the city of Hartford. His Federal "Orchestra Application" was accepted, resulting in the creation of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, then known as the "Civic Symphony Orchestra of Hartford." Created as a public service, the orchestra gave two free concerts per week, and the musicians rehearsed every day for a weekly salary of \$21. The Civic Symphony Orchestra of Hartford performed its first concert on November 20, 1934 under music director Angelo Coniglione at West Middle School in Hartford. Although this first concert did not bring in a huge audience, it was generally considered to be a promising start to the orchestra's future.

1935



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT disbanded the Federal Emergency Relief Corporation and instead began a larger program called the Federal Music Project (FMP). This project was a subdivision of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the New Deal. Many orchestras in the United States were born out of the funding from this project. To the Hartford Symphony, being a part of the Federal Music Project meant they could pay musicians higher wages and charge a moderate admission of 25¢.

1936



Hartford Symphony in the outdoor bandstand at Bushnell Park.

JACQUES GORDON REPLACED Angelo Coniglione as conductor and music director and the name of the orchestra officially changed to the "Hartford Symphony Orchestra." The Symphony's concerts schedule expanded with performances in The Bushnell, as well as public venues across Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

1937



JACQUES GORDON
Hartford Symphony
Music Director
1936-1938

THE WPA CHANGED its policies so that orchestras could not charge admission. However, the Hartford Symphony continued to bring in revenue by cleverly charging each patron 10¢ to rent a seat for summer concerts. At the final summer concert that year, Francis Goodwin received a telegram in the middle of the first half explaining that the Federal Music Project was changing its policies and that the Hartford Symphony would need to cover half of its own costs or it would lose all Federal funding. Panicked, Mr. Goodwin stood up at intermission and appealed to the audience for its financial support. A box was passed around, and by the end of the concert they had collected \$1,200! The next day the contributions continued to roll in, saving the orchestra from financial disaster and initiating the strong connection between the Hartford Symphony and the Hartford community.

1938



VILYA VRONSKY &
VICTOR BABIN
Guest Artists
February 1938

IN THE PAST THE FMP had always had dictated which guest artists and conductors would be allowed to perform. Looking for complete artistic control over the orchestra, the Hartford Symphony pulled out of the FMP in order to hire conductor Leon Barzin as the new music director. Despite the Symphony's poor financial status from a lack of government funding, the orchestra's four-concert season was the most illustrious the orchestra had ever seen; it featured world famous soloists and a high ticket revenue from \$3 admission prices.



EMMANUEL
FEUERMANN
Guest Artist
November 1938

1939

IN AN EFFORT TO RAISE community spirits, the City of Hartford funded five successful summer concerts with guest conductor George Heck at the podium. Bushnell Park's outdoor bandshell was torn down at the end of this summer series, marking the end of the first decade of the Hartford Symphony's history.