

1940
to
1949

RESILIENCE
& REBIRTH

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 continue in this Playbill with the 1940's, a decade of trials and tribulations that threatened to close the Hartford Symphony.

1940



FRANCIS GOODWIN
1895-1976

EVER SINCE THE DECISION was made to forgo Federal funding in 1938, the Hartford Symphony had been struggling to keep its doors open. Board member Francis Goodwin, considered to be the "Father of the Hartford Symphony," even put up \$11,000 in personal collateral to finance a loan for the Symphony. (The Symphony was later unable to pay back the loan, and Goodwin's personal collateral was confiscated.) Despite this financial distress, the Hartford Symphony presented five concerts in the Bushnell which featured all-Beethoven programming. These concerts marked the highest attendance the orchestra had experienced in its six year history.

1941-
1945

THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY played the last of its successful Beethoven concerts on May 14, 1941. By this time, World War II had swept through Europe, and by the fall of 1941 nearly all of the Hartford Symphony's musicians had taken leave to join the armed forces. With crippled finances and no musicians, the orchestra only existed as a corporate entity and it did not seem likely that



Connecticut would ever hear the Hartford Symphony again.

Salute to the Marines Rally, 1942.
William H. Mortensen on stage at the Horace Bushnell Memorial Hall with men and women in uniform.

PHOTOGRAPH: THE CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, GRAPHICS COLLECTION

1946



IN A FINAL EFFORT to save the Hartford Symphony, Francis Goodwin pulled together a new Board of Directors comprised of prominent Hartford businessmen, including Willard B. Rogers, the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, as President of the Hartford Symphony Board.

WILLARD B. ROGERS
President of the Symphony Society
1946-1949

1947

IN AN UNPRECEDENTED ACTION, Hartford's musicians' union agreed to perform for free for one year in an effort to get the Symphony up and running again. The Hartford Symphony was then free to use what little funds they had to pay for technical costs. They hired two alternating co-conductors: George Heck, Dean of what is now the Hartford Conservatory, and Moshe Paranov, Dean of the Hartt School.



GEORGE HECK
Hartford Symphony
Co-Conductor
1947-1953

1948

THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY'S first concert back was held on January 25, 1948 in Mortensen Hall. For the first time, patrons could buy subscriptions (\$6 for seats at four concerts in either the Orchestra or Front Balcony section) or pay \$1 per concert for a seat in the rest of the house. The audiences were much larger than the Symphony had seen in the past, with more than 1,000 paid admissions at every concert.



MOICHE PARANOV
Hartford Symphony
Co-Conductor
1947-1953

After observing this heartfelt struggle to revive the Hartford Symphony, Travelers Insurance Company, in conjunction with radio station WTIC, offered up a generous gift of \$30,000 over the course of three years to the Hartford Symphony. After the first \$10,000 installment in 1948, the HSO was finally able to open official administrative offices in the first floor of the Old State House, and, more importantly, was able to pay the musicians scale wages.

1949

THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY'S concert season expanded to six concerts in the Bushnell instead of four. In addition, Arthur Fiedler guest conducted the first Hartford Symphony POPS! concerts at The Bushnell and the Trinity Field House, where audience members sat at cabaret-style tables and were served food and drink by white-coated Trinity Students. It was noted this year that the orchestra played better than ever before; it seemed that musicians and audience members alike had a renewed interest in keeping the Hartford Symphony in business.

MARY DAVENPORT
Guest Contralto Soloist
November 1949

