

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSIC PROGRAM, 1922-1947

Many changes had come about in the small community of Rosedale prior to 1922. From a spot on the map beside a railroad line, Rosedale grew to a thriving economical center boasting a large manufacturing plant and a progressive new hospital. The growth of the schools paralleled the growth of the community; Rosedale had entered the new century with an optimistic outlook for continuing expansion.

The year 1922 was a very significant one in the history of Rosedale and the schools. Rosedale was consolidated with the first class city of Kansas City, Kansas. Consequently, the schools of Rosedale became part of the larger, well established city school system. Along with joining the larger school system came the reorganization of the high school to a junior-senior high school.

Also in the year 1922, the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education employed Sarah Howard as vocal music teacher at Rosedale High School. Howard's duties also included the teaching of English. She had received a degree from Fort Hays Teachers College and would later go on to receive another degree in music from the American University in Chicago.¹ A solid approach to music education was already established in the Kansas City, Kansas schools by Bessie Miller, supervisor of music. Miller and Howard developed a lasting working relationship that would continue for many years.

This must have been an exciting time for the music department at Rosedale Junior-Senior High. The department grew tremendously under Howard's leadership. Enrollment in boys' and girls' glee clubs continued to increase. The orchestra which was still an extra-curricular activity participated in school assemblies and concerts. An article that appeared in the November 7, 1924 issue of the Rosedalian, the high school newspaper, noted such activities:

The assembly today was furnished by the music department in charge of Mrs. Howard. The assembly opened with several fine selection by the orchestra. These were followed by a violin solo, Elfrieda Carrol; violin and flute duet, Thelma Martin and Pauline Longnecker; selections by the orchestra completed the program.²

Luther Leavengood commented on the subject of music in the high school at this time:

We had an orchestra in high school conducted by Sarah Howard. I sang in the boys' glee club and the male quartet and played violin in the orchestra. I think the orchestra numbered twenty to twenty-five players. Sarah Howard was a singer and short on know-how in instrumental music, but she was eager and organized the orchestra and kept it going.³

Vocal music, Howard's specialty, continued to receive the most emphasis for the next several years until an instrumental music teacher was hired.

Besides her teaching duties at the high school, Howard made what appears to be the first attempt at instrumental music instruction in the elementary schools. An elementary orchestra, composed of children from the four Rosedale elementary schools, was formed; it rehearsed at the high school once a week after school hours. This orchestra begun in the fall of 1924, consisted of sixteen violin students. They performed for the fall

¹ Sarah Howard, Teachers Personal Record, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, Form 5, Library Building, Kansas City, Kansas.

² Rosedalian, 7 November 1924, 1.

³ Leavengood, personal letter.

P.T.A. meeting at each elementary school.⁴ The orchestra seemed to be short lived as no further mention of it can be found until many years later.

This orchestra must have been Howard's only contact with the elementary school music program since music in the grade school was the responsibility of the classroom teacher. The children were offered training in rhythmic patterns, tone matching, music history, literature, and singing. Bessie Miller would visit each classroom on a monthly basis to supervise the teaching.

Miller instituted a district-wide music memory contest for the elementary school children. Each school would enter four or five students who would compete in a district contest at Kansas City high school. Records would be played and students would have to identify the music by title and composer.⁵

The music memory contests were not a unique idea. They had much popularity nationwide during this time. On the subject of such contests Keene noted:

Contests designed to test the student's memory of certain selected compositions became enormously popular after the First World War to about 1930. By 1920 the music memory contests had become a popular musical feature in many cities. Usually six to eight weeks were set aside for special training in memorizing the pieces. In the larger cities, preliminary contests were held in the schools with the winners competing on a district level.⁶

There were many educational developments that had a great effect on the evolution of school music programs and seemingly influenced music education at Rosedale. John Dewey's philosophy that a child learns by doing developed child-centered classrooms across the nation. Music seemed to fit well into this philosophy. W. Otto Meissner's president's address before the 1924 Music Supervisors' National Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, entitled "Music for Every Child," had many lasting effects on the development of music across the nation as well as in Kansas City, Kansas. Meissner stated in that address: "We, as Music Educators, must accept our obligation and take a definite stand to the end that, in Music also, every child shall have a fair and equal chance."⁷ Bessie Miller and Sarah Howard traveled to Cincinnati that year to attend the conference.⁸ As the music programs in Rosedale and all of Kansas City, Kansas grew, it was obvious that these two music educators carried home with them the message of Meissner and the Conference.

The high school music contest movement in Kansas was growing in momentum during this period. Frank A. Beach was credited with initiating the first high school contest at Emporia State Teachers College. "Beach's original idea was to promote interest in public school music, and it succeeded. By 1920, 40 schools were entered in the contest . . ."⁹ Sarah Howard saw the importance of this growing movement and sent performers to the Emporia contest. The proceeds from the boys' and girls' operettas in December of 1924 were used to finance the trip to Emporia for members of the glee clubs.¹⁰ As a young innovative teacher, Howard, in the period of just two years, initiated participation in the contest movement, began an elementary orchestra, and continued to build a solid vocal music program presenting three operettas per year.

Although the supervisor of music still strongly urged an aesthetic approach to music education in the Kansas City schools, the evidence of the importance of the performance was becoming quite clear. A tradition

⁴ Rosedalian, 7 November 1924, 2.

⁵ Margaret Landis, former student at Columbian Elementary School, interview by author, 30 January 1989, notes in possession of author.

⁶ Keene, History of Music Education, 263-264.

⁷ Music Superfisors Journal, 5, (May 1924): 11.

⁸ Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, Journal of Proceedings, 6 April 1924, 670, Library Building, Kansas City, Kansas.

⁹ Larry Williams, A History of the High School Orchestra Movement in Kansas," (masters thesis, University of Kansas, 1968), 38.

¹⁰ Rosedalian, 19 December 1924, 3.

which began in the fall of 1925 permitted all music students to participate in a musical program. The plans for the first Music Week festivities were made by Bessie Miller and a committee which was chaired by Sarah Howard. Rosedale music students participated in that first Music Week festival. An article in the school newspaper gave an account of the week long activities:

A spring festival, consisting of a week of music provided by the music departments of the schools and the choral club, will be celebrated in Kansas City, Kansas, April 5 to 11. The week of festivities, which has been set aside by the city to show its appreciation of good music is under the direction of Miss Bessie Miller, music supervisor of the city. The program for the week consists of a concert by the fifth and sixth grades of all Kansas City schools; an entertainment by the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades; a program by the colored schools; a concert by the senior high schools; an entertainment by the primary and kindergarten; and "The Messiah, given by the choral club, will conclude the program on Saturday night.¹¹

After that first successful music week, the Board of Education let it be known that they wanted this to become an annual tradition.

Be it resolved, by the Board of Education, that they express their hearty approval and appreciation of the establishment of a Music Week, that in their opinion the first Music Week was, in every way, a great success, and that the interest and enthusiasm manifested during Music Week warrants the Board of Education in encouraging and approving the proposition to have Music Week each year and that the Board of Education wishes to express its commendation of Miss Bessie Miller, Music Supervisor for the high class programs and the excellent renditions of all meetings.¹²

Music week continued to be an annual tradition for the students of Rosedale for many years. Many other cities and towns in Kansas and across the nation had similar Music Week activities.

Several additions to the Rosedale curriculum occurred during this time period. A junior high chorus was added to the regular school day in 1925.¹³ Orchestra was added to the curriculum and offered for credit in 1926.¹⁴ A separate seventh grade chorus was added in 1928.¹⁵ Sarah Howard's duties no longer included the teaching of English as she was needed to be a full-time music teacher.

A new high school building was first occupied by students during the spring of 1927. For the first time in the history of the school, the music department occupied its own room. A newly completed auditorium was the site of the 1928 operetta, "Tulip Time." In the school newspaper, Rosedale principal L. D. Kruger gave this account of the production: "The auditorium was filled to capacity. 256 of our students and 18 faculty members took part in this great production."¹⁶ Nineteen twenty-eight also saw three Rosedale students, along with Mrs. Howard, participating in the National Chorus at the Music Supervisors' National Convention in Chicago, and the implementation of the Northeast League Contest that was held at Wyandotte High School.

The first mention of a high school band at Rosedale is found in 1927. In the fall of that year, Howard recruited sixteen volunteers to play at football games, school assemblies, and basketball games. The instrumentation of that first band consisted of six cornets, two clarinets, four also saxophones, one trombone,

¹¹ Rosedalian, 26 March 1926, 3.

¹² Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, Journal of Proceedings, 19 April 1926, 459, Library Building, Kansas City, Kansas.

¹³ Rosedalian, 23 December 1925, 2.

¹⁴ Rosedalian, 23 April 1926, 2.

¹⁵ Rosedalian, 28 September 1928, 1.

¹⁶ Rosedalian, 23 March 1928, 1.

one baritone, one tuba, and one drummer.¹⁷ The band was regularly mentioned as a supporter of athletic functions and continued as a volunteer group for several years before being added to the school curriculum.

The next several years seemed to be ones of continued growth for the community, schools, and the music department despite the oncoming depression. The school enrollment in 1929 was at its highest in history, second in the city only to Wyandotte High School.¹⁸ This growth in the schools seemed to have a direct relationship to the growth of the Bell Memorial Hospital and the Kansas Medical School. “During the 1930’s the Medical Center began to dominate the Rosedale community.”¹⁹ The hospital complex at this time occupied 13 acres in Rosedale. Many hospital workers and their families now lived in the Rosedale area contributing to the increase in school enrollment.

Community musical activities had greatly decreased since the turn of the century. With the age of radio and recorded music, the need for live performances diminished. The growth of the community and schools did not parallel the growth of adult musical activities. During the late 1930s the Kansas City, Kansas Recreation Department formed the Kansas City, Kansas Symphony directed by Leopold Shopmaker. Some of the better high school musicians and community adults did take part in this organization. During this time Shopmaker also conducted a WPA band that held performances in the Rosedale schools and community.²⁰

The depression and war had a disastrous effect on community musical life in the entire metropolitan area.

The stock market crash in October of 1929 brought an end to prosperity for several years. The depression struck the musicians by closing concert halls, theaters and many night clubs. Music in the schools absorbed few musicians as teachers in an era of lowered school budgets. WPA orchestras and bands were organized to save musicians from idleness and to furnish live entertainment.²¹

The medical professionals seemingly had little influence on community musical life in Rosedale.

The medical students were young and busy during the war. Time and money were limited for community events. Blue collar laborers from the Medical Center added more to musical life in Rosedale by moving their families to the community and becoming leaders in the schools. Rosedale has always been a blue collar community. These were the people who led community activities. Community musical events during this time were pretty well limited to the schools and church.²²

Later, during the 1950s, community activities did increase with the formation of the Medical Arts Symphony directed by Shopmaker.

The music department continued with many of the activities initiated by Sarah Howard. Operettas, concerts, Music Week, and participation in the Emporia and Northeast League contests were still performance requirements. Howard and selected students from the glee clubs traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1932 to participate in the National Chorus at the Music Supervisors’ National Conference.²³

Rosedale, and all of Kansas City, Kansas, lost a leader and long time supporter of musical activities in the fall of 1932 with the resignation of Superintendent of Schools, Mathew E. Pearson. Pearson had been superintendent of the Kansas City, Kansas schools for thirty years. He was succeeded by Mr. Frank L. Schlagle who had very strong opinions about music education that would influence the course of the music program for

¹⁷ Rosedalian, 30 September 1927, 2.

¹⁸ Rosedalian, 27 September 1929, 2.

¹⁹ Kansas City, Kansas, 15 June 1968, 3.

²⁰ Bill Stoskopf, interview by author, 28 January 1989, notes in possession of author.

²¹ Crabb, “A History of Music in Kansas City,” 170.

²² Stoskopf, interview.

²³ Rosedalian, 24 March 1932, 1.

many years. One of the major changes that he instituted was the abolition of large group contests. “Mr. Schlagle did not believe in contests. So no large group contests were permitted in any of the schools while he was superintendent. Small ensembles and solo competitions were allowed”²⁴

²⁴ Stoskopf, interview.

Schlagle remained superintendent for the next thirty years. To the rest of the music educators in Kansas, it might have looked as if there was little musical activity happening in Kansas City, Kansas, as much historical documentation is gathered through contest ratings. Larry Williams, in “A History of the High School Orchestra Movement in Kansas,” reaffirmed the belief: “The history of the orchestra in Kansas City has been very difficult to follow through the years because very few of the orchestras have entered music contests.”²⁵

Evidence of the contest change occurred in 1934 with the formation of the first annual Fine Arts Festival of the Northeast League that was held in Atchison. The festival took the place of the contests that were formerly held by the Northeast League. A combined orchestra of 150, directed by Joseph E. Maddy, and a mixed chorus of 300, made up of seven schools including Rosedale, presented a mass concert on April 21.²⁶ Rosedale musicians participated in these festivals for many years. The music department grew despite the lack of contest participation that seemed to be a mainstay in many schools throughout the nation.

As the Rosedale music department progressed, the only thing that it really seemed to be lacking was a strong band program. The hiring of Arthur Joliff as the first instrumental music director in January of 1934 promised to change the direction of the band program. Band classes were still held after school, but a half credit was now offered to students who were enrolled in the program. Free music stands, instruction books, and lessons were offered by the King Company to students who would sign up for band.²⁷ The P.T.A. joined the effort to build the school band by having card party fund raisers. The start of the 1934 school year showed the success of the combined recruitment efforts when a band class was added to the school day with an enrollment of 83 members.²⁸

Building a band was not Joliff’s only accomplishment. He also instituted a beginning orchestra which met two nights a week after school. These musicians would be added to the advanced orchestra as soon as they passed a playing and musical knowledge test. The 1934 high school orchestra, for the first time in the history, had an almost complete orchestral instrumentation.²⁹ Combined efforts by Joliff and Sarah Howard brought many outside musical groups for student assemblies. Concerts by members of the Kansas City Philharmonic, Baker University A Capella Choir, Washburn College Men’s Glee Club, and the White Hussars brass ensemble educated and entertained the Rosedale student body.³⁰

Joliff left Rosedale at the end of the 1935 school year. Mr. Alfred L. Triggs was hired by the Board of Education in the fall of that year. He had previously taught in schools in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. John Margrave, an orchestra student of Triggs made these comments about him and the orchestra program:

The orchestra was excellent. I felt then and now that it offered a real opportunity to participate in a quality organization. We played concerts, participated in league festivals, and provided music for the operettas. Many of us also performed as soloists. Mr. Triggs was a well-educated and versatile musician. He was very busy with the band and other musical activities, but he created an environment in which all students could learn and be a part of musical performance.³¹

Enrollment in the glee clubs seemed to remain steady during this time. Activities included one operetta a year, minstrels presented at family night, participation in the Northeast League festival, and winter and spring concerts.

²⁵ Williams, “Orchestra Movement in Kansas,” 56.

²⁶ Mt. Marty Annual, 1934, 23.

²⁷ Rosedalian, 9 February 1934, 1.

²⁸ Rosedalian, 11 October 1934, 2.

²⁹ Mt. Marty Annual, 1934, 21.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ John Margrave, former student of A. L. Triggs, Houston, Texas, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 22 March 1989.

The size of both the band and orchestra continued to increase. New band uniforms were purchased. The band was now marching at all home football games. The instrumental ensembles such as the spring quartet and trios were in great demand to play at school, clubs and churches. Beginning band and orchestra were added to the school day and offered for credit in 1936.³²

The next several years brought steady improvement to the band program. Like many schools in the nation during this time period, much emphasis was placed on the marching band. The first attempt at a band boosters club came in 1938. The school newspaper gave this account of the newly formed club: "Latest attempts to provide funds to finance needed improvements in the Rosedale high school band have taken the form of a band boosters club, composed of mothers of band members. This club will function as a group to attempt to raise money by various methods for instruments and uniforms."³³ The club became active in fund raising by sponsoring dances, stunt nights and carnivals.³⁴ It continued to be a source of funding for the next few years but ended around the start of World War II.

The second attempt to start an orchestra program in the elementary school started around 1937. The man that was almost solely responsible for starting the elementary string program in all of Kansas City, Kansas was Leopold Shopmaker, a member of the Kansas City Philharmonic. Shopmaker had grown up in Kansas City, Kansas, attending Wyandotte High School. Some local residents had raised funds to send the talented young musician to Berlin for further musical training. After studying abroad, Shopmaker returned to Kansas City to perform with the Philharmonic. Feeling that he was indebted to the residents of his home town for his musical training, he approached superintendent Schlagle about starting an elementary string program. He and several other members of the Philharmonic were hired by the school board to give lessons in the elementary schools.³⁵ The program blossomed and continued under the leadership of Philharmonic members for many years.

Triggs, the band director, was stricken ill in the fall of 1940 and was absent from school the entire school year. His position was filled by Shopmaker, who had agreed with the Board of Education that this would be a temporary position until Triggs was able to return. Triggs was never able to resume his teaching duties. The band program suffered during this year because Shopmaker was a hard taskmaster who interests and talents were geared toward the orchestra. At the end of a very trying year, Shopmaker left Rosedale to resume his position with the Philharmonic and to continue his elementary lesson schedule.

After Shopmaker left, Everett Brown was hired as he instrumental music director. He received his initial degree from Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. He had taught instrumental music in Cheney and Council Grove, Kansas before coming to Rosedale.

The instrumental program at Rosedale was in poor condition when I arrived. The band was down to about 30 students. Beginning classes varied from 10 to 20 students. A very small budget was provided by the school system. This was a very difficult time because of the war. I did what I could to rebuild student interest. It was a tough battle to fight.³⁶

Brown was active in the profession and did much to rebuild the program. During his time at Rosedale, he was very active in state music activities. He was editor of the Kansas Music Review from 1939-1943 and held the position of vice president of the Kansas Music Educators Association from 1941-1944.³⁷

³² Mt. Marty Annual, 1936, 16.

³³ Rosedalian, 22 December 1938, 2.

³⁴ Mt. Marty Annual, 1936, 16.

³⁵ Stoskopf, interview.

³⁶ Everett Brown, Stafford, Kansas, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 4 February 1989.

³⁷ Ibid.

The war took its toll on the music department at Rosedale. School publications carried almost no mention of musical activities during this time. School enrollment dropped to the lowest since 1926.³⁸ School activities seemed to be limited to the selling of war bonds and helping with the rationing program. The few musical activities that were presented were limited to the glee clubs performing at churches and concerts with patriotic themes. The war gave its final blow to the music department in February of 1944. Everett Brown was selected for duty in the army. The school newspaper gave this account: “The annual orchestra concert was presented in the auditorium Thursday evening, February 24, by the members of the orchestra under the direction of Mr. Everett Brown, instrumental music instructor who reports for induction next week . . . Music from many of our allied nations took the spotlight.”³⁹

Frank Leshosky replaced Everett Brown in the fall of 1944. Little is known about his background, and the instrumental program had limited growth during his tenure. Rosedale did join the Eastern Kansas League in 1945. Similar to the old Northeast League which disbanded during the war, this league had annual festivals in which the music departments took part. Other than this new festival and the formation of a dance band, the activities of the music department were limited to one operetta, two concerts by each group, and a small marching band.⁴⁰

Leshosky left the Rosedale music department in the spring of 1946. He was replaced by Robert Hughes, a graduate of Emporia College, who would direct the instrumental music department for only one year.⁴¹ Very few activities were mentioned in school publications during his tenure.

The war and the constant turnover of instrumental music teachers had devastating effects on the music program. Enrollment in all classes had declined, and activities and interest were at an all-time low. The music department was more than ready for new growth. The coming years would bring the stability that the program so desperately needed.

³⁸ Rosedalian, 24 September 1941, 1.

³⁹ Rosedalian, 25 February 1944, 2.

⁴⁰ Mr. Marty Annual, 1945, 16. 1946, 22.

⁴¹ Mt. Marty Annual, 1947, 11.