

CHAPTER 4

THE STOSKOPF ERA, 1947-1967

The year 1947 marked the beginning of new leadership and, if one word might be used, expansion for the instrumental music department at Rosedale Junior-Senior High School. The hiring of a new instrumental music teacher who would stay for the next twenty years would be the biggest single factor in the success of the program.

A change in district music supervisors occurred in Kansas City, Kansas in 1946. J. Milford Crabb replaced Bessie Miller, becoming the third music supervisor in the history of the school district. Mr. Crabb received his initial degree from Emporia State Teachers College and his masters degree from the University of Michigan. He would later receive his Doctorate from the University of Missouri at Kansas City.¹

The instrumental music department at Rosedale was at an all-time low following the war. The band numbered twenty-three students, while orchestra enrollment was at thirty.² Crabb and Superintendent Schlagle were looking for an energetic young instrumental director who would stay to build the program. William (Bill) Stoskopf fit that description and took over the department in the fall of 1947. When he arrived in Rosedale, Stoskopf found a small community with a strong musical heritage. Although the music program had been shattered by the effects of the war, Stoskopf realized from the start the great potential of the students and the community.

Bill Stoskopf was born in the small rural community of Baxter Springs, Kansas. He began playing trombone at the age of 8. Since there was no school band program in Baxter Springs, he studied privately with Mrs. Youngman, a teacher in Joplin, Missouri. He performed in the local community band. Stoskopf went on to receive his Bachelor of Science degree in music education from Pittsburg State Teachers College in 1939. He continued his education at Northwestern where he received a Master of Music degree in 1940. While at Northwestern he studied trombone with Jaroslov Cimerá. (NOTE: Jaroslov Cimerá was a SOUSA Band Trombonist.)

<http://www.dws.org/sousa/band.htm>

After completing his education, Stoskopf returned to Kansas to teach in the small community of McCune. After a successful first year, Stoskopf, like so many other educators during this time period, was drafted into the army. He entered the army in 1941 where he played trombone with army bands. After his discharge, he taught for a short time at Fort Scott and at Bonner Springs, Kansas.³

Many people wanted to see the Rosedale instrumental program compare to the one Raymond Samuelson had established at Wyandotte High School. That program had blossomed during the war. Wyandotte was housed in a large, impressive school built by a W.P.A. project. It was situated in a wealthy community that had plenty of money for school finance. The Rosedale community was made up of mostly class, blue collar workers. At that time district financing for school music programs was not available. Any monies for the program either had to be provided by the individual school or raised by the students themselves.⁴ Stoskopf had the challenge of building a program in spite of few financial resources.

Because of the deterioration the war years had brought, Stoskopf felt an even greater responsibility to build a strong instrumental program. He presented several concerts that first year, took his band to the University of Kansas Band Day, and hosted the Eastern Kansas Music Festival on April 9, 1948.⁵ The five

¹ Crabb, "A History of Music in Kansas City."

² Rosedalian, 26 September 1947, 2.

³ Stoskopf, interview.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rosedalian, 27 February 1948, 1.

schools that took part in that festival included Rosedale, Bonner Springs, Olathe, Turner, and Washington Rural.⁶

Stoskopf knew that if the program was going to succeed he would have to find a way to instill student pride in the musical organizations. During that first year, Stoskopf devised a system where students could earn music letters. “Not every member will receive a letter. The only students who will receive a letter are those who serve faithfully and are able to pass a test on their instrument and a test on general musical knowledge.”⁷ Thirty-two students received a letter than year.⁸ That first year was a struggle, but the program seemed to be on the upswing.

Knowing that the Rosedale community had a strong musical background and realizing that the parents of the Rosedale children were very supportive of school activities, Stoskopf created a plan to activate a parents’ club. The club took on the name ROBO (Rosedale Orchestra and Band Organization). An article found in The Rosedalian commented on the newly formed group: “The purpose of the club is to secure funds and establish a permanent treasury to be used to buy equipment for the band and orchestra. A club of this sort is necessary in any school with a band and orchestra the size of Rosedale’s, because the Board of Education gives very little financial assistance to instrumental groups.”⁹

The ROBO club was very active for several years, sponsoring magazine sales, stunt nights and various other fund raising activities. Mrs. Elsie Leighton, a former member of that organization gave these comments on the club: “We had an active TOBO. Most parents of the music department belonged and attended the meetings, helping with fund raising functions. The Rosedale community and merchants were also very supportive.”¹⁰ For several years the club financially supported the instrumental department, buying instruments, music and new uniforms.

Over the next several years, the instrumental department at Rosedale saw continued growth. The classes not only increased in size, but also in activities. The band had its normal concert and marching commitments and added more parades and other away-from-school trips to its already heavy schedule. A highlight for the 1950-51 school year for the band was an invitation to be the feature band on Kansas Day at the American Royal.¹¹ Appreciation of music and being a community and school service organization were the goals of the instrumental department listed in the school yearbook.¹² Through Stoskopf’s influence, these goals became a reality.

The string department in all of the Kansas City, Kansas elementary schools involved many young instrumentalists. Much of that program was still being taught by members of the Kansas City Philharmonic. Stoskopf, however, insisted on doing the teaching of strings in the elementary schools of Rosedale. He saw the need to begin and maintain his own feeder system. The Philharmonic teachers were hourly workers whose teaching schedules were often sporadic due to their other commitments. Stoskopf strongly believed that in order to have a solid program in the high school, he had to have control over his own beginning program.¹³

The main performance of the year for the elementary string students was an annual program presented by the mass violin classes at Wyandotte High School. All of the Kansas City, Kansas elementary school violin players participated in these programs. One program, presented May 15, 1952, featured 392 violin students.¹⁴ Other performances for the elementary instrumentalists included individual school functions, P.T.A. meetings and church activities.

⁶ Rosedalian, 9 April 1948, 2.

⁷ Rosedalian, 30 January 1948, 3.

⁸ Rosedalian, 9 April 1948, 1.

⁹ Rosedalian, 5 November 1951, 2.

¹⁰ Elsie Leighton, former ROBO member, Kansas City, Kansas, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 7 March 1989.

¹¹ Rosedalian, 6 October 1950, 1.

¹² Mt. Marty Annual, 1951, 13.

¹³ Stoskopf, interview.

¹⁴ Kansas Music Review 4 (September 1952): 28.

A major highlight in the elementary school music classes was the annual children's concert given by the Kansas City Philharmonic. This was clearly made an educational event and not just another field trip outing. An article appearing in the March 1952 Kansas Music Review reaffirmed that purpose:

In preparation for the annual concert by the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra for elementary school children of Kansas City, Milford Crabb sent out carefully annotated program notes to all his elementary schools. Themes of compositions were reproduced so classroom teachers could acquaint children with tunes they would hear; recordings were listed for pre-concert listening. Selections included Dvorak's "Carnival Overture," the "Ballet Music from Rosamunde," Dukas' "Sorcerer's Apprentice," and the second movement from Beethoven's Eighth.¹⁵

The contribution of Blacks in the Rosedale community was covered extremely well in Reginald Buckner's "A History of Music Education in the Black Community of Kansas City, Kansas 1905-1954." It is important to state that Rosedale had an elementary school for its black students. The music curriculum at Attucks Elementary School was taught by teachers in that building. "In 1945, pupils of Attucks Elementary School presented the operetta, 'Hansel and Gretel' at the Rosedale High School. Although the chorus numbered fifty, the production total involved 100 children . . ."¹⁶ After leaving elementary school, these students would attend Northeast Junior High and Sumner High School. For several years after desegregation in 1954, the students had the option of going to either Sumner or Rosedale High School.

The black community of Rosedale provided some private study for their residents. On that subject Buckner noted: "For the blacks who lived in the black community of Rosedale, there was Edith Maddox Kelley available for services in piano instruction. Her first recital was presented in 1933. After a brief period of not teaching, she reopened her studio in 1941. Recitals were presented to the public."¹⁷ Because of the extensive coverage in the Buckner paper, no further mention of the black community will be made.

Although the instrumental department was now flourishing, the high school vocal department was experiencing a grim decline. Enrollment continued to drop following the war. Activities during this time period were limited to two concerts and an operetta. The 1951-52 school year saw a further drop in enrollment which led to the discontinuation of the annual operetta.¹⁸ The vocal music department at Rosedale had been presenting operettas since 1913. The peak period of the 1920s and 1930s saw as many as three operettas per year.



Fig. 3. Sarah Howard, 1950.

The decline of the vocal music department following the war signaled the end of an era. Sarah Howard had been teaching at Rosedale for many years. During her years there, she constructed a progressive and thriving program. The large numbers of students participating in vocal music every year showed her firm belief in involving all children. She had implemented and maintained an innovative curriculum. Howard retired at the end of the 1955 school year, having taught at Rosedale for thirty-three years. The vocal music department had lost a solid educator.

The opening of the 1955-56 school year brought many changes to the music department at Rosedale high School. Construction for an addition to the current building was begun. An annex building that was used for classroom space was torn down to make room for the addition. Classes operated on a half-day schedule for this entire year. Band and orchestra classes had to be held on the auditorium stage. No assemblies for students were held that year due to

¹⁵ Kansas Music Review 2 (March 1952): 27.

¹⁶ Buckner, "Music Education in the Black Community," 163.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁸ Rosedalian, 1 February 1952, 4.

the stage being used as a classroom. However, the enthusiastic young music teachers anxiously awaited the new music facilities in the addition, and continued to direct a thriving program.

A very qualified young teacher, Miss Mildred Fulhage, came to Rosedale in 1955 replacing Sarah Howard in the vocal music department. Fulhage received her initial degree from Emporia State Teachers College and her masters degree from Columbia University. Before coming to Rosedale, she taught in Cedar Vale, Kansas and at Central Junior High in Kansas City, Kansas.¹⁹ Fulhage had the challenging task of rebuilding the vocal department to its former strength. During that first year, she formed a robed choir of select students from the glee clubs. The robed choir had many performances before community groups which did much to regain student pride. Mary Snyder, a former student of Fulhage gave these comments about her instructor: “She was full of vitality and optimism. She was fair and just – rewarding talent, work and interest.”²⁰

Fulhage’s task was a demanding one. Activities for the mixed chorus, robed choir, and junior high choir included performances for school assemblies, civic clubs, churches, concerts and performances in the annual Eastern Kansas League Festival. Soloists and ensembles also participated in district and state contests.²¹ Stoskopf, her colleague in the instrumental department, gave these comments about Fulhage and the vocal department at this time: “Mildred was an excellent teacher. She had full classes with large numbers of students participating.”²² Fulhage seemed to have succeeded in her goal to rebuild the program to its former strength.

As the years passed and the school population expanded, more and more elementary classroom teachers expressed the desire that music instruction be the responsibility of a music specialist. In the fall of 1980, the Board of Education recognized Fulhage and her strengths as a teacher and curriculum leader by promoting her to the position of music consultant for all the elementary grades. Her duties included supervising and designing a curriculum for the elementary classroom teachers.²³ She would eventually be assigned two additional consultant teachers for the elementary program. As the years passed, more elementary music teachers were hired and less of the responsibility of music teaching was placed on the classroom teacher.

For the next several years, the high school vocal music program seemed to remain steady under a series of short term teachers. Joan Grogan taught vocal music at Rosedale for the 1960-61 school year.²⁴ Mary Jo Smith took over the position in the fall of 1961.²⁵ The school year beginning in the fall of 1962 saw Kaye Kallail as vocal music instructor.²⁶ Kallail was married and became Mrs. Scott and continued teaching for the next two years.

An educator who would have many effects on the growth of music education in Kansas City, Kansas came to teach at Rosedale in the fall of 1965. John Albertson had received his bachelors of music education from the University of Wichita, now Wichita State University, his masters in music education from the same institution, and his Doctorate from the University of Missouri at Kansas City.²⁷ The next three years would see the choral program at Rosedale continue on an upward climb under Albertson’s direction. A former student commented: “I remember tackling songs in foreign languages. We listened and studied recordings for style and technique. Concerts were big productions – stress and hard work – and a feeling of real accomplishment.”²⁸ John Albertson, who later would replace Crabb as music supervisor in Kansas City, Kansas, did much to aid in the growth of vocal music at Rosedale.

¹⁹ Mt. Marty Annual, 1957, 24.

²⁰ Mary Snyder, former student of Mildred Fulhage, Kansas City, Kansas, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 16 March 1989.

²¹ Mt. Marty Annual, 1960, 30.

²² Stoskopf, interview.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rosedalian, 28 September 1960, 3.

²⁵ Mt. Mrty Annual, 1962, 21.

²⁶ Rosedalian, 12 September 1962, 1.

²⁷ John Albertson, interview by author, 27 April 1989, notes in possession of author.

²⁸ Glenda Campbell McLain, former student of John Albertson, Kansas City, Kansas, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 12 April 1989.

The instrumental music department continued to flourish during this time. The number of members in both the band and orchestra more than doubled since Stoskopf began teaching at Rosedale. The Kansas City Board of Education finally agreed to match any money raised by the ROBO club for instruments and uniforms. Many new instruments were added to the inventory. Stoskopf continued to shape the instrumental department into a fine performing organization. He had won the respect and admiration of parents, students and colleagues. Comments by Vincent May, a former student of Stoskopf, confirmed that belief: “Bill was dedicated and hard working. He got the most out of what he had to work with. He was also a fine musician.”²⁹ The year 1959 saw Stoskopf elected president of District I of the Kansas Music Educators Association.³⁰

A great aid to the growth of the instrumental program was a summer school for music students, organized and directed by Stoskopf, in 1957. The program was open to all students, including beginners. Each student was enrolled in a class lesson and either band or orchestra. The classes ran in the summer for a period of six weeks. The program continued until Mr. Stoskopf became the coordinator of the elementary string program in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1967.³¹

The twenty year period from 1947-1967 was significant for the music department of Rosedale. The vocal department flourished under strong leadership. Bill Stoskopf built the instrumental music department into one of the largest and strongest in the city. A man of high ideals, his career was a model to other musicians and educators in the Kansas City area. Stoskopf had made a tremendous impact on the music program at Rosedale. In 1966 he was appointed to the position of coordinator of elementary strings by the Board of Education. Stoskopf continued to be an outstanding educator, teacher, and curriculum leader in Kansas City, Kansas, until his retirement in 1981.

²⁹ Vincent May, former student of Bill Stoskopf, Chicago, Illinois, letter to author, Roeland Park, Kansas, 16 March 1989.

³⁰ Kansas Music Review, 1 February 1959: 4.

³¹ Stoskopf, interview.