

# Zorah Berry Collection

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library,  
Special Collections Department

Presented by Sally Schaefer



## **Introduction**

The Zorah Berry Collection consists of items related to local performing arts history; specifically items related to classical music, dance, and theatre performances managed by local arts presenter (impresario) Zorah Berry. The items cover the period of the mid 1920s through the mid 1960s. Items in the collection include hundreds of concert programs, some promotional materials, (such as brochures and fliers), five scrapbooks containing copious newspaper clippings related to Zorah Berry performances and other pertinent events, and photographs of artists who appeared in Zorah Berry performances. The collection is housed on a non-public tier of the Buffalo & Erie County Central Library and is maintained by the special collections department.

### **Zorah Berry, impresario**

**Zorah B. Berry (née Brake)**  
**b. 1889 in Toledo, OH**  
**d. 1969 in Buffalo, NY**

**40 year career as concert  
promoter in Buffalo, NY**



Photo: Zorah B. Berry, 1938.

## **Zorah Berry Biography**

Zorah B Berry (maiden name Brake) was born in Toledo, OH in 1889. Her father, the Reverend Mr. Brake, was a well-known Methodist minister and singer, who sang primarily at church affairs. From him, Zorah Berry is said to have inherited a fine soprano voice. She studied singing at Oberlin College in Toledo, intending to make voice her career. Then a throat ailment diverted her plans, and she never finished her degree there. While at Oberlin, she met and eloped with William J Berry, another music student, and together they moved to Detroit, where she spent her time as a housewife. In 1922, they moved to Buffalo, where Mr. Berry became associated with his brother-in-law, Mr. Edward H. Moeller, who worked as an architect, lawyer, and realtor. Mr. Berry died in 1923, and Mrs. Berry needed to look for a job to support herself. She inquired for vacancies through the Masonic Service Bureau in Buffalo. The Bureau connected her with the Buffalo [Masonic] Consistory located at Delaware and West Ferry (now part of Canisius High School), which was sponsoring a series of concerts for which they needed

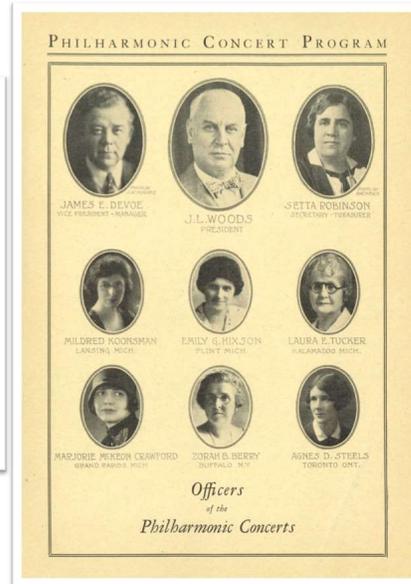
ticket salespeople. The offer was that she could sell concert tickets for a 10% commission. She never had any experience in sales before, but she accepted the job anyway. When the series opened, 2,022 tickets had been sold, and Mrs. Berry accounted for 1,100 of them

## Philharmonic Concert Company, Zorah Berry – Local Manager



Above: Buffalo Consistory Auditorium

Right: Philharmonic Concert Company officers



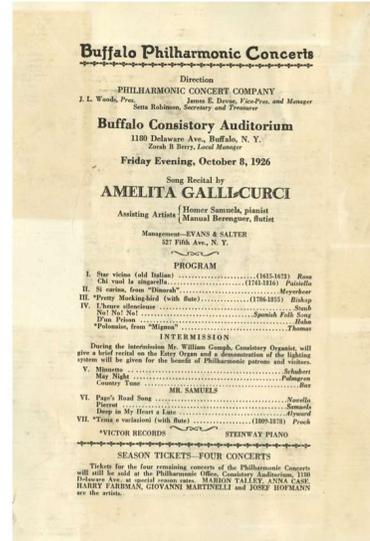
The next fall (1925) she was made the local manager of the same concert series, which was operated by acquaintances of hers from Detroit. The Philharmonic Concert Company asked her to take over its Buffalo representation and although Mrs. Berry was self-admittedly totally inexperienced, she was interested in occupying her time and increasing her income, so she took the job. The Company booked performing artists for short tours through Detroit, Lansing, Flint, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Buffalo, and Toronto. By offering artists several secured dates in a row, the company was able to secure larger artists for lower performance fees than it would be able to by booking individual dates.

Programs from the Philharmonic Concert Company listed J.L. Woods as president, James Devoe as vice president, and Setta Robinson as secretary/treasurer, as well as local managers for the eight cities on the tour, all of which are, notably, women. It is also worth mentioning that Woods and Devoe were officers of the Detroit Hockey Club, which founded the team then known as the Detroit Cougars, but now known as the Detroit Redwings.

# Philharmonic Concert Company,

Zorah Berry – Local Manager

Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano



According to local news sources, Zorah Berry's first artist booking through the Company was for the opening concert in the subsequent 1926-27 series. She booked Amelita Galli-Curci for a performance on October 8, 1926. Galli-Curci was an Italian opera coloratura soprano, and was one of the most popular operatic singers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She performed with both the Chicago Opera and the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, one of few opera singers who was contracted through both companies simultaneously. Galli-Curci's 1926 concert in Buffalo, like all other Philharmonic Concert Company performances, was held at the Buffalo Consistory Auditorium.

# Philharmonic Concert Company, Zorah Berry – Local Manager 1926-27 series

*Buffalo Philharmonic Concerts*

To be presented at  
**BUFFALO CONSISTORY AUDITORIUM**  
1108 Delaware Avenue

*America's Most Beautiful Concert Room*

**FIVE OUTSTANDING CONCERT EVENTS**

PHILHARMONIC CONCERT COMPANY

OPENING CONCERT—FRIDAY EVENING—OCTOBER 8, 1926  
MADAME  
**AMELITA GALLI-CURCI**  
FAVORITE of the Concert and Operatic World

(This concert will be a notable event in the musical history of New York State inasmuch as many important records in the world of music will be set and new records established.)



Season Tickets, \$15, \$12, \$10, \$8, \$6—Box Seats, \$17 (Plus War Tax)

Other Concerts of The Series Include

MARION TALLEY (Metropolitan Opera Company) JOSEF HOFMANN (Pianist)  
GIOVANNI MARTINELLI (Great Italian Tenor) ANNA CASE (Charming American Soprano)

SEASON TICKETS—\$15, \$12, \$10, \$8, \$6 (Plus War Tax)—Box Seats—\$17 (Plus War Tax)

PHILHARMONIC CONCERT COMPANY  
BUFFALO CONSISTORY AUDITORIUM  
BUFFALO, N. Y.

Please reserve season tickets for me at \$ ..... each  
for season 1926-1927. Enclosed is check for \$ ..... same being  
regarding the fine of Two Dollars for each season ticket, balance payable in two  
equal installments, September 1st and November 1st, 1926.

Name .....  
Phone ..... Address .....

**BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS**

to be presented at  
**BUFFALO CONSISTORY AUDITORIUM**  
will be inaugurated  
**FRIDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1926**  
BY  
**AMELITA GALLI-CURCI**  
FAVORITE of the Concert and Operatic World

*Other Concerts of the Series Include*

MARION TALLEY (Metropolitan Opera Company) HARRY FARBMAN (Famous Violinist) JOSEF HOFMANN (Pianist)  
GIOVANNI MARTINELLI (Great Italian Tenor) ANNA CASE (Charming American Soprano)

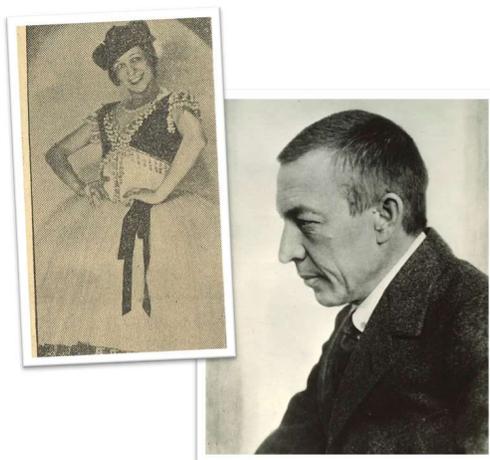


"AMERICA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CONCERT ROOM"

**BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC CONCERT COMPANY**  
J. L. WOODS (President) JAMES E. DEVOE (First Vice-President) SETTA ROBINSON (Secretary-Treasurer)

News reviews of the series attested that “social Buffalo turned out en masse” for the Galli-Curci concert and that “the ensuing series was a huge success.” Other performers on the 1926-27 season included pianist Josef Hofmann, Metropolitan Opera tenor Giovanni Martinelli, a joint recital with violinist Harry Farberman and soprano Anna Case, Feodor Chaliapin and his Company in the Barber of Seville, and soprano Marion Talley.

# Philharmonic Concert Company, Zorah Berry – Local Manager 1929-30 series



PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS  
present  
RECITAL OF SPANISH DANCES MUSIC, BUFFALO, N. Y.  
by  
**LA ARGENTINA**  
With the Assistance of  
MIGUEL BERDION, Pianist  
CONSISTORY AUDITORIUM  
Thursday Evening, October 17th, 1929  
Local Management—ZORAH BERRY

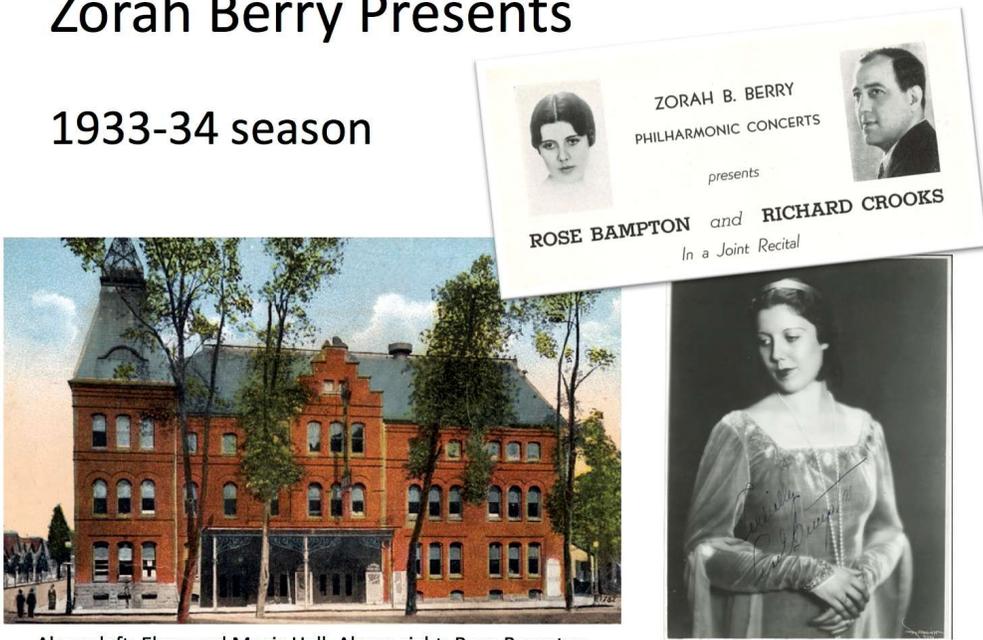
PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS  
Present  
**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**  
Russian Pianist  
Thursday Evening, March 27, 1930  
CONSISTORY AUDITORIUM  
Local Management . . . . . ZORAH B. BERRY

The 1929-30 season was notable for two reasons (or three, if we include that Zorah Berry married her second husband, William D Logan, who later died in 1945). In 1929, she booked her first dance performer, La Argentina, also known as Antonia Mercé y Luque, an Argentine-born Spanish style dancer. Second, she booked internationally renowned Russian composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff. He appeared in Buffalo under the auspices of Zorah Berry's concerts six times from 1929 to 1941. He generally performed other classic piano works on his programs (ex. Bach, Schubert, Chopin), as well as his own works, and some of his piano, violin, and vocal compositions were also performed by other artists visiting the area both during his lifetime and after his death in March 1943.

This series, which eventually became known as the "Buffalo" Philharmonic Concert Company series, with Zorah Berry as a booking agent and local manager, continued at the Consistory Auditorium through the 1932-33 season.

## Zorah Berry Presents

### 1933-34 season



Above left: Elmwood Music Hall. Above right: Rose Bampton.

Then in 1933-34, the series underwent several changes, the most significant of which was the rebranding of the series under Zorah Berry's own name as "Zorah Berry Philharmonic Concerts," and later simply "Zorah Berry concerts" or, more famously, "Zorah Berry Presents." This rebranding indicates that her name as a promoter was becoming recognized as synonymous with quality concert programming in Buffalo. Programs began to mention that Mrs. Berry's office could be found at 32 Court Street in Buffalo, just above the historic Denton, Cottier, and Daniels shop, which was a well-known retailer of pianos, band and orchestra instruments, and sheet music since its establishment in 1827. It was from this Court Street office that Zorah Berry coordinated

artist engagements and sold series tickets via mail and phone. In 1933, the cost of a single Zorah Berry concert ticket was between \$1.10 and \$2.75 depending on seat location, and the cost of a Zorah Berry season ticket, which included eight concerts, was between \$6 and \$15, again depending on auditorium seat location. Box seats were \$17.00 (plus 10% tax).

At this time, Mrs. Berry also moved her concerts to Elmwood Music Hall, which was located at the corner of Elmwood and Virginia (no longer extant). The series included concerts by soprano Lucrezia Bori, tenor Richard Crooks, pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch, violinist Fritz Kreisler, soprano Lotte Lehmann, Rachmaninoff, the Vienna Choir Boys (now known as the Vienna Boys' Choir), and the Ballet Russe (which was her first major dance company booking). The series also featured Rose Bampton, an opera soprano who grew up in Buffalo and attended South Park High School. Bampton was an internationally renowned opera soprano who was active with the Metropolitan Opera and on her own concert tours in the 1930s and 40s. She was well regarded as a Wagnerian opera soprano, and was also known for her performances of works by Berg, Schoenberg, and Barber.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## Tuesday and Sunday series

### THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT SERIES



**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**  
Sunday Afternoon, October 24, 1937

While very much a Russian, in this concert, we shall be hearing more the composer as international composer. In the first place, the great composer and still living, and in America that the full force of his art was recognized. His music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm, and his music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Sunday Afternoon" series.



**FRITZ KREISLER**  
Sunday Afternoon, November 7, 1937

The violinist of our time has reached Fritz Kreisler in his field, and the world. Attention is all drawn to him, and his music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Sunday Afternoon" series.



**LOTTE LEHMANN**  
Sunday Afternoon, January 9, 1938

Lotte Lehmann's only complete opera performance and appearance since 1914 in the United States. She will be heard in the concert series for the first time in 24 years. Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Sunday Afternoon" series.



**LILY PONS**  
Sunday Afternoon, February 6, 1938

Lily Pons is the New French "Patti". Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Sunday Afternoon" series.



*Zorah B. Berry*  
PRESENTS  
**SEASON 1937-1938**

Evening Concert Series  
FLAEGSTAD  
ROSBARR  
BAMPTON & BENTONELL  
BOSTON SYMPHONY  
SLEZINGERSKI  
MERUHN  
ENESCO & SALMOND  
TIBBETT

Sunday Afternoon Series  
RACHMANINOFF  
KREISLER  
LEHMANN  
PONS

### THE EVENING CONCERT SERIES



**LUCREZIA BORI**  
Tuesday Evening, October 12, 1937

Lucrezia Bori is the greatest Italian opera singer of our time. Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".



**RICHARD CROOKS**  
Tuesday Evening, November 9, 1937

Richard Crooks is the greatest American tenor of our time. His music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".



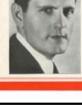
**ROSE BAMPTON**  
Tuesday Evening, January 4, 1938

Rose Bampton is the greatest American opera singer of our time. Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".



**LOTTE LEHMANN**  
Tuesday Evening, November 20, 1937

Lotte Lehmann is the greatest German opera singer of our time. Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".



**FRITZ KREISLER**  
Tuesday Evening, January 25, 1938

Fritz Kreisler is the greatest violinist of our time. His music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".



**LILY PONS**  
Tuesday Evening, February 12, 1938

Lily Pons is the greatest French opera singer of our time. Her music is a masterpiece of melody and rhythm. This is the first time that the world of melody and rhythm has been so fully represented in the "Evening Concert Series".

8:00 P.M. **ELMWOOD MUSIC HALL** 1:00 P.M.

The 1933-34 series was also the first Zorah Berry series to feature a regular day-of-the-week booking. Whereas Philharmonic Concert Company bookings in Buffalo occurred on all different nights of the week, likely dependent on tour direction and pricing, the Zorah Berry Presents series were regularly hosted on Tuesday evenings. Zorah Berry also added a Sunday afternoon series in addition to a Tuesday evening series in the 1937-38 and 1938-39 seasons, which meant that her total bookings for those seasons increased from an average of eight concerts per season to twelve.

# Zorah Berry Presents

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, 1935-36

**Zorah B. Berry Philharmonic Concerts**



**JOHN CHARLES THOMAS**  
Baritone



**FRITZ KREISLER**  
Violinist



**LOTTE LEHMANN**  
Soprano



**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**  
Pianist



**DON COSSACK CHORUS**

Presents  
Season  
**1935-1936**

**John Charles Thomas**  
Tuesday Evening October 8, 1935

**Don Cossacks**  
Tuesday Evening October 22, 1935

**Fritz Kreisler**  
Tuesday Evening November 5, 1935

**Lotte Lehmann**  
Tuesday Evening November 19, 1935

**Sergei Rachmaninoff**  
Tuesday Evening December 3, 1935

*Metropolitan Opera* **Tito Schipa** *Teatro*  
Tuesday Evening January 14, 1936

**Jascha Heifetz**  
Tuesday Evening February 11, 1936

**Helen Jepson and Dalies Frantz**  
Soprano and Pianist  
Tuesday Evening March 10, 1936

MAKE RESERVATIONS  
**NOW!**  
FOR CHOICE LOCATION



**TITO SCHIPA**  
Tenor  
*Assisted by Metropolitan Opera*



**JASCHA HEIFETZ**  
Violinist



**HELEN JEPSON**  
Soprano



**DALIES FRANTZ**  
Pianist

Each individual subscriber plays a most important part in making it possible for Buffalo Music Lovers to enjoy these fine concerts.

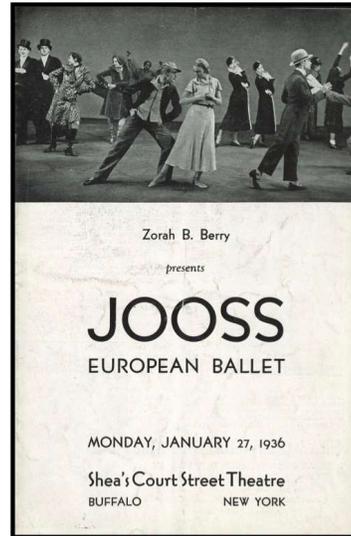
Eight Concerts . . . \$15.00, \$12.00, \$10.00, \$8.00, \$6.00, Plus 10% Tax . . . Box Seats \$17.00, Plus 10% Tax

Zorah Berry celebrated her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary series in the 1935-36 season. Examining an array of concert bookings from the first ten years of her career as a concert promoter, there are a few trends emerge. Nearly all of her early bookings were solo performers, the majority of which were vocalists, specifically Metropolitan opera vocalists, and especially sopranos, though sometimes basses or tenors. She also booked several solo pianists, including Sergei Rachmaninoff, Vladimir Horowitz, and Alexander Brailowsky, as well as solo violinists, including Jascha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler, and Joseph Szigeti. Occasionally, she booked duos, trios, or quartets, including the Metropolitan Opera Quartet (she was actually the first promoter to book that ensemble). The only larger ensemble bookings were the Don Cossacks Chorus of Russia and the Vienna Choir Boys of Austria, both of which she booked several times over the course of her career. She also booked two dance performances during this time - solo dancer La Argentina and large dance company the Ballet Russe.

# Zorah Berry Presents

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, 1935-36

Dance series



During her 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, she also introduced a small dance series featuring three different companies: the Ballet Russe, Jooss European Ballet, and Trudi Schoop comedic dance troupe. All three of these acts were booked in several subsequent Zorah Berry presents dance series. The dance series only lasted a few seasons (through 1938), after which her dance company bookings became more sporadic, with only one or two dance company engagements per season. In her own words, in a 1950 news article clipped for her scrapbooks, “her judgment has been right far more often than it has been wrong, but she admits that she was ‘a little ahead of the times’ when she tried to sell a dance series.” These dance company performances were often held at Shea’s Court Street Theatre (no longer extant), though some were also held at the Erlanger Theatre, formerly located at Delaware and Mohawk.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## Dance series, 1936-37

**ZORAH B. BERRY PRESENTS**

**THE BALLET Russe**

**THE JOOSS BALLET**

**TRUDI SCHOOP & HER COMIC BALLET**

**MIRIAM WINSLOW & HER DANCERS**

**THEATRE SHEA'S COURT STREET**



**THE MONTE CARLO BALLET Russe**

Under the patronage of the Princess de Monaco, Count W. de Bardi, young dancers, most of them from the provinces, have been selected for the ballet, have received the most thorough instruction in technique and dancing, and have been trained in the art of the ballet. The ballet is probably the most artistic and beautiful ever seen in this country. It is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.

**THE JOOSS BALLET**



After the Jooss Ballet? Because of the artistic and technical excellence of the Jooss Ballet, it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The Jooss Ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The Jooss Ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.

**TRUDI SCHOOP and HER COMIC BALLET**



The comic art has been compared to the French, German, and Italian. It is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The comic art is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The comic art is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.

**MIRIAM WINSLOW and HER DANCERS**



From Delicate to Dainty, the grace of Miriam Winslow, most fitting of the younger American dancers, has been compared to the French, German, and Italian. It is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The grace of Miriam Winslow is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## Dance series, 1937-38

**Zorah B. Berry PRESENTS SEASON 1937-1938**

*These Four Stellar Dances - Attractions*

**HUMPHREY & WEIDMAN AND COMPANY**

**TRUDI SCHOOP AND HER COMIC BALLET**

**CATHARINE LITTLEFIELD AND HER PHILADELPHIANS**

**SHAN-KAR AND HIS HINDU BALLET**

**THEATRE SHEA'S COURT STREET**



**SHAN-KAR and His Hindu Ballet**

The Hindu ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The Hindu ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The Hindu ballet is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.



**HUMPHREY & WEIDMAN and Company**

Humphrey and Weidman are a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. Humphrey and Weidman are a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. Humphrey and Weidman are a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.



**TRUDI SCHOOP and HER COMIC BALLET**

The comic art has been compared to the French, German, and Italian. It is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The comic art is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. The comic art is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.



**CATHARINE LITTLEFIELD and Her Philadelphians**

Catharine Littlefield is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. Catharine Littlefield is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country. Catharine Littlefield is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it performed in this country.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## Kleinhans Music Hall



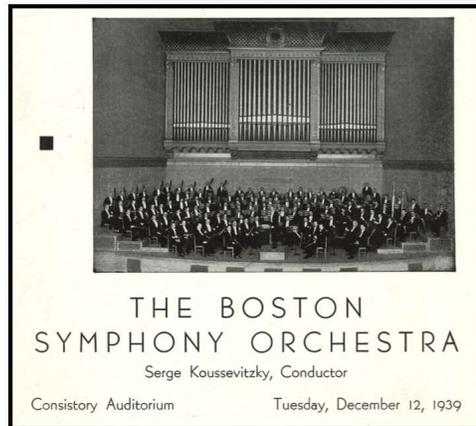
Her later bookings, from 1935 on, still featured many solo artists and duos, but she also increasingly booked large performing groups, including theatre productions, dance companies, and major symphony orchestras. This was most likely due to a change in venue from Elmwood Music Hall to the better suited Kleinhans Music Hall. Elmwood Music Hall, originally built as an armory, left much to be desired as a concert venue, and many patrons regretted its “abominable acoustics.” Zorah Berry lamented that even though she knew “the seats were hard, that the place looked like a barn, and [it] was inappropriate for evening clothes...aside from the fact that the acoustics were fine, there was a sentimental feeling about the old hall...many artists tell me they loved to work there.” However, in addition to its acoustical issues, the hall also presented structural issues, was deemed unsafe, and was eventually torn down in 1938. Incidentally, the final concert held in the Elmwood Music Hall before it was condemned was Zorah Berry’s presentation of popular concert and theatre star Nelson Eddy. In a later news article, Zorah Berry quipped that there was “no connection, of course” between Nelson Eddy’s concert and the building’s subsequent condemnation the very next day. Zorah Berry moved the remainder of that season’s concerts and the following season back to the Consistory Auditorium until Kleinhans Music Hall, which had begun construction in the late 1930s, was officially opened in October of 1940. (The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, which was founded in 1934, and played its first season in 1935-36, opened the first concert at Kleinhans on October 12, 1940.)

# Zorah Berry Presents

## Major Orchestras



*Boston Symphony Delights  
Packed House at Music Hall*



Zorah Berry's first major orchestra booking was the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the 1936-37 season. This particular concert was held in Elmwood Music Hall. However, Berry booked an increasing number of major orchestras after the series moved into Kleinhans, likely because the hall was deemed far more suitable for large scale performances. She booked the Boston Symphony Orchestra every season from 1936 to 1944, as well as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra several times through the latter half of her career. She also booked the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London in 1950 (a sold out performance), the Boston Pops in 1953, the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam in 1954, and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in 1956.

Some concerts of interest during the later years of the Zorah Berry Presents series include the following acts:

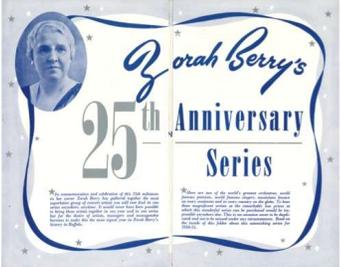
- 1940 Alec Templeton – a blind pianist from Cardiff, Wales who arranged and played interesting takes on the classics, incorporated humor into his set, and was noted to be an excellent performer of traditional style classics as well.
- 1941-42 Music appreciation lecture series at Kleinhans and a regular lecture series.
- 1942-43 Von Trapp family for a December, Christmas folk carol concert. She also booked them in subsequent years.
- 1943-44 Paul Draper and Larry Adler - an improvisatory tap dancer and virtuoso harmonic duo.
- 1945-46 Eddie Condon conducting a Jazz Concert program including pieces by Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Fats Waller.

- 1947-48 Burl Ives “America’s Mightiest Ballad Singer” – Sang classic American folk songs while accompanying himself on acoustic guitar. He is also the voice of Sam the Snowman, the narrator of the 1964 Rudolph Christmas special.
- 1948-49 Whittimore and Lowe piano duo – Arranged and performed two-piano duets of popular and classical music. Lowe attended Eastman School of Music in Rochester.
- 1955-56 Harry Belafonte in a musical called “Sing, Man, Sing!”

Even though Berry’s artist bookings were largely from the classical realm, she did book a variety of performers.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season (1950-51)



**Concert Hall of Famous Artists ★ ★ ★ for the 1950-1951 Season**

**Ljuba WEITICH**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*Photo Studio Magazine*  
*Illustrated Opera*, New York  
*Solo Performer*  
*Connoisseur Opera*, London  
 “It is fortunate to examine the opportunity to hear this great artist. Last season she appeared in New York with a singing performance which she repeated in New York, Philadelphia and Boston and in other cities.”

**Gregor PIATIGORSKY**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*Wall Street Journal*  
*Associated Press*  
 “The appearance of the illustrious violinist in an event of extraordinary magnitude in this city.”

**Pierre LUBOSHUTZ, and  
Cecile NEMENOFF**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*World Famous P.F.A. 1951*  
 “The most beautiful two pianists in the world.”



**Royal PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF LONDON**  
*Times Evening Mirror*, 12/1/50  
 “The first time in England. This world famous orchestra will be heard by 1000 fortunate citizens of Worcester New York, by Thomas Bookham himself, in one of the most official and important places in the world of music. The appearance of the illustrious British orchestra is an event of extraordinary magnitude in this city.”

**Kirsten FLAGSTAD**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*World Famous P.F.A. 1951*  
*Associated Press*  
 “The N. Y. Herald Tribune said: ‘It is a pleasure to announce that Kirsten Flagstad is undoubtedly the most distinguished of artists, whose appearance will be an event of extraordinary magnitude.’”

**de PAUR’S INFANTRY CHORUS**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
 “The de Paur Infantry Chorus is the most successful vocal organization in the American musical field. Some 400 chorists, drawn from the best voices in the world, sing in the very best of vocal singing of the century. It has been said that they have the most beautiful voices of any group appearing before the public.”

**Jussi BJOERLING**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*World Famous P.F.A. 1951*  
 “The song in German used to sing long ago in the days of the great tenors, and it is a pleasure to hear it sung through the voice of Jussi Bjoerling.”

**Yehudi MENUHIN**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*World Famous P.F.A. 1951*  
 “The appearance of the illustrious violinist in an event of extraordinary magnitude in this city.”

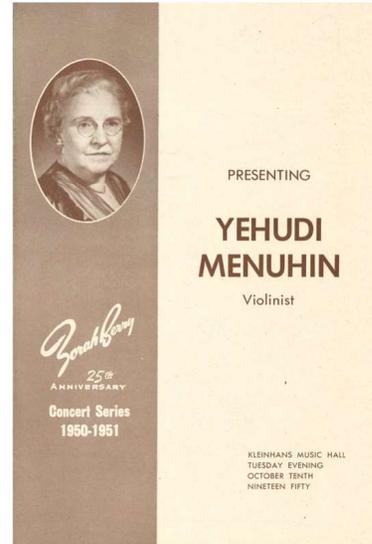
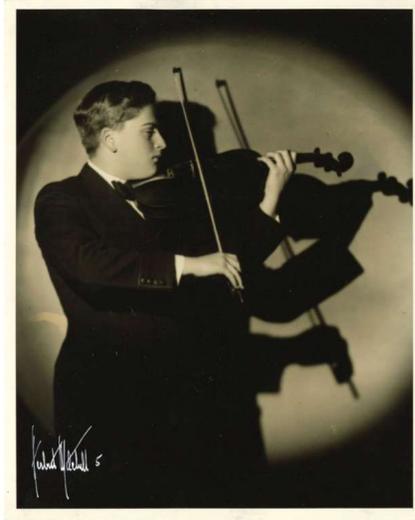
**Arthur RUBINSTEIN**  
*Times Evening Mirror* 12/1/50  
*World Famous P.F.A. 1951*  
 “The appearance of the illustrious pianist in an event of extraordinary magnitude in this city.”

**Make Your Reservations NOW... 3 Big Concerts - Prices \$8, \$10, \$12, \$14, \$17, \$19, \$21**

Zorah Berry celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season as a promoter in 1950-51 with an array of artists, including soprano Lujba Welitch, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, another piano duet team of Luboshutz and Nemenoff, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, pianist Artur Rubinstein, soprano Kirsten Flagstad, the de Paur Infantry Chorus, tenor Jussi Boerling, and violinist Yehudi Menuhin.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season



The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary brochure and several news articles about the series pointed out that while Zorah Berry was celebrating her 25<sup>th</sup> season as a promoter, Yehudi Menuhin, who opened the series, was celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> year as a professional musician. He was a child prodigy that remained a respected soloist in his adult years. His first public appearance was at the age of seven as a solo violinist with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra in 1923. Zorah Berry first booked him on her series in 1926, when he was ten years old. She booked him every few years after that until this 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, at the age of 34, which was his last appearance on a Zorah Berry series. Articles included in Zorah Berry's scrapbooks reported that he played a \$60,000 Stradivarius violin and had three other violins worth \$30,000 each.

# Zorah Berry Presents

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season

### (1955-56)

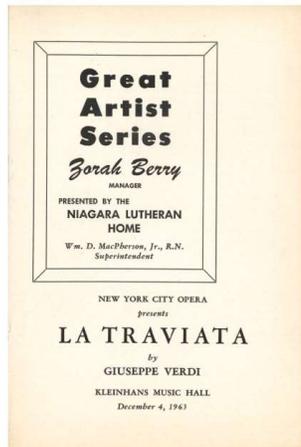
Zorah Berry's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary series in 1955-56 featured soprano Eileen Farrell, tenor Jussi Boerling, tenor Brian Sullivan, and several large ensembles, including the de Paur Infantry Chorus, Mantovani and his orchestra, the Robert Shaw Chorale and Orchestra, the Virtuosi di Roma chamber orchestra, the Ballet Russe, and the Azuma Kabuki Dancers and musicians. An article published during Berry's 30<sup>th</sup> season read:

“The woman whose 30-year career has earned her the title of ‘Mrs. Music’ in Buffalo...She is one of a handful of concert managers in this country who have been continuously successful for more than a quarter century in a business that has brought financial disaster to scores of others. Mrs. Edna W. Saunders of Houston alone holds rank over Mrs. Berry in the length of her managerial career, having weathered 36 years of promoting. Why do some have the golden touch? Even Mrs. Berry isn't quite sure, but she suspects that she has been able to sell out so many houses, even in the late 20s [after the Stock Market Crash and ensuing Great Depression] because she has always tried to give the public its money's worth...I choose an artist because I feel he will satisfy our group. It means so much to have an artist of sincere ability. I have tried to obtain the best talent, and I give a great deal of time and thought to building a program.” She also noted that in selecting artists she had tried “to be guided by real ability, not just reputation...Buffalonian's don't like the hackneyed, they want a good serious program.”



# Great Artist Series, 1963 – 1965/66

Sponsored by  
Niagara Lutheran Home  
William D. MacPherson, Superintendent



Instead, Zorah Berry's friend, William D. MacPherson, who was medical director and supervisor of the Niagara Lutheran Home, a rehabilitation center on the city's East Side, approached her regarding a new series. He explained, "I didn't think the series should die. Buffalo needs this concert program." The performing arts series, which was named the Great Artist Series, would be sponsored by the home, and the proceeds would be "used by the Home in furthering its services to patients and the community."

In November of the inaugural season (1963-64), news reports stated that Mrs. Berry, age 74, fell and broke her hip. After being hospitalized for a short time, she went to the Niagara Lutheran Home to recuperate. Though Mrs. Berry was still confined to her bedroom recovering during that year's series, news articles assured readers that she was still conducting concert business, including concert booking, managing, and ticket sales, via a phone Mr. MacPherson installed in her room. She said of Mr. MacPherson, "He understands this business and is so enthusiastic about our enterprise. But best of all, he won't let me retire." Following her recovery, Mrs. Berry returned to her home at 328 Summer Street in Buffalo to continue conducting concert business.

All concerts in the Great Artist Series were presented in Kleinhans Music Hall. The series continued through at least the 1964-65 season, which is the last year for which we have programs in the Zorah Berry collection, though some news articles indicate that she was still serving the series in an advisory capacity as recently as February 1966. The last program we have in the collection is for a Great Artist Series concert featuring the San Francisco Ballet in Kleinhans on Saturday, March 2, 1965. An ad in the program also

indicates that the last concert for that season was on April 5, 1965 and that it featured Marian Anderson, renowned African American vocalist and an important artistic figure in the civil rights movement, on her farewell tour.



Zorah Berry died on March 3, 1969 at the age of 80, at the Niagara Lutheran Home in Buffalo, NY, following a 40 year career as a concert promoter in the region. In the previous year, she had decided the time had come to “take life easy.” But characteristically, she could not be inactive. She attended series performances with a cane or in a wheelchair, and continued to visit Kleinhans Music Hall on other stellar occasions until very recent months before her death.

At the end of her career, her accolades included the following:

- In 1953, she was named one of nine women of the year in Buffalo.
- During her 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary season in 1955, she was presented a citation of honor from Kleinhans Music Hall by Kleinhans Vice President George F. Rand, Jr. There was a standing ovation by the large and enthusiastic audience.
- In 1963, The Buffalo Evening News named her an Outstanding Citizen and called her “a brilliant force in the cultural development of the Niagara Frontier.”
- After a performance on the series, the Danish Symphony Orchestra presented her a silver medal in token of its esteem.
- The Interclub Council of WNY awarded her a Citation of Merit “in grateful recognition of the honor, respect and stature that she has given to all women through the accomplishment and success she has earned in her chosen profession.”

Funeral services were held at Forest Lawn Chapel and burial was in Forest Lawn Cemetery. Her headstone is still located there.

### **Statistics**

As mentioned previously in this report, there are hundreds of programs included in the Zorah Berry Collection. So that others interested in the collection can review the spread of performers who appeared on Zorah Berry concerts, I created a spreadsheet of all the performers Zorah Berry presented in Buffalo, according to the programs (and some advertisements) we have. From 1926 (the first series of programs) to 1957 (when her series merged with the BPO series), Berry presented 175 different performing acts representing a total of 352 shows.

After her series merged with the BPO series, because some show programs are absent, it is difficult to accurately determine which performers were specifically booked by Berry and which were booked by other officers in the BPO Society. The collection also does not contain several programs from the years during which Berry's Great Artist Series was presented. However, based on the programs that are contained in the collection, it is possible to state that from 1957 to 1965, Berry booked 20 shows herself, representing 11 new artists that had not been previously booked on one of her series. Therefore, in total, from her first concert booking as local manager of the Philharmonic Concert Company in 1925, through Marian Anderson's farewell tour performance presented via her Great Artists Series in 1965, Zorah Berry booked at least 186 different performing acts, representing 372 concerts over a 40 year career in Buffalo. News reports indicated that fifty Buffalonians were thirty year or more subscribers to the series (some of those subscribers had continued the subscriptions of their parents), and Mrs. Berry estimated that more than one million persons had attended her concerts over the years.

## **Acquisition of Collection**

1975, from William D. MacPherson



### **Acquisition of Collection**

It is noted in several articles that Zorah Berry's Court Street office was full of programs and the office walls literally "papered" with photographs of musicians she booked on concerts here. She also kept copious scrapbooks of news clippings on performances that she booked, thus providing a pictorial and anecdotal history of the concert stage in Buffalo. According to a Buffalo news article published in Feb 1975:

"The Zorah Berry Collection of concert programs, reviews, articles, pictures and publicity from Mrs. Berry's 43 years as a Buffalo impresario were donated to the Buffalo & Erie County Library music department. The scrapbook volumes had been given to William D. MacPherson, longtime friend and business partner of Mrs. Berry. Mr. MacPherson decided the library was the proper place for this rich narrative and pictorial history of Buffalo concert life. The gift was received with great enthusiasm by Martin Lewin of the library."

### **Access to Collection**

The B&ECPL online catalog includes a catalog record for the Zorah Berry programs and scrapbook collection, and also a separate catalog record for the Performing Artists Photograph Collection (which includes photographs that belonged to Zorah Berry). There is a short description of the content and scope of the collection given in the catalog record. There is more detailed information about the collection available in the Grosvenor Room in the Central Library. Although the collection is housed in a non-public tier and is noncirculating, any patrons interested in gaining access to and using the physical collection are encouraged to ask the special collections staff in the Grosvenor Room about access. Patrons may view parts of the collection in the Grosvenor Room, and may photocopy items from the collection using the photocopier in the Grosvenor Room. Patrons may also request permission to scan items or use personal cameras/phones to photograph items in the collection.

### **Further Research**

There are many fields for which aspects of the collection could be useful in a research context, including history, music, anthropology, business, economics, and even fashion. One of the main research disciplines for which this collection could readily provide primary source material is historical musicology. In the field of historical musicology, research is conducted using primary sources, such as the Zorah Berry Collection programs, scrapbooks, and newspaper clippings. Primary sources may also include musical scores, audio recordings, videos of performances, and other ephemera related to the composition, performance, reception, and criticism of music. Musicologists analyze composers' lives and works, developments in musical styles and genres over time, and the social function of music. They may compare local and/or short lived trends with wider trends in classical music, wider trends in vernacular (non-classical) music, or other

types of performing and non-performing arts through the lens of economics, sociology, anthropology, politics, and philosophy, as well as other fields.

## 1. Artist Biographies

All aspects of this collection (the photographs, programs, and scrapbooks) could be significant in conducting research for performer and/or composer biographies. The types of pieces performed by different artists, including their favorite composers, styles, and forms of pieces, could provide useful insight into artists' repertoire. Additionally, many of the articles included in the Zorah Berry Collection scrapbooks act as personal interest stories highlighting the lifestyles of performers traveling to Buffalo to perform.

## 2. Reception History

A major methodological approach to musicological research is to study the reception history of composers, works, and performers over time. Musicologists may also be interested in researching how performers', critics', and scholars' interpretations of a work have changed over time; changes in interpretation are often reflective of wider social and aesthetic trends. Reception history research often involves examining how an individual work was received when it was first premiered compared to how it was received in subsequent performances, especially posthumously. Alternatively, a researcher may examine how specific composers were received during their lifetimes in comparison to after their deaths. An example that is relevant to this collection is the reception of Sergei Rachmaninoff's compositions throughout his lifetime and after his death in 1943. While many composers did not experience popularity during their lifetimes, Rachmaninoff was an exception. From the biographical information included in the Zorah Berry Presents programs, as well as newspaper articles in the Zorah Berry scrapbooks that announce his appearances in Buffalo and provide reviews of his performances, it is clear that he was well-received by regular audience attendees and music critics alike as both a performer and composer during his lifetime. It is also worth noting that many other artists performed Rachmaninoff's works, or arrangements of his works (mainly for piano, violin, or voice), both during his lifetime and after his death.

A subset of reception history involves examining which pieces and/or composers were popular enough to enjoy "canonization" (immense popularity, so as to be considered part of standard repertoire) within the enormous repertoire of Western art music. Canonized works are different for various types of instruments and ensembles, may be different in certain countries, and may change throughout time. Using the Zorah Berry Collection, a researcher might note, for instance, the specific composers and pieces performed by pianists appearing on the Zorah Berry series. According to the programs contained in the collection, solo pianists at that time (such as Brailowsky, Horowitz, Rachmaninoff, and Rubinstein, all of whom appeared on the Zorah Berry series multiple times), tended to structure their concerts very similarly. Many would begin with a piece by Bach, Beethoven, and then Schumann, followed by several pieces by Chopin, and sometimes even Rachmaninoff. (Rachmaninoff himself generally performed some of his own pieces toward the end of his programs, but other pianists sometimes performed his pieces as

well.) In this way, the performers essentially provide an overview of modern music history, including pieces from the Baroque era, Classical period, Romantic era, up to (then) contemporary pieces in each concert. This progression through eras of musical history allows the performers to demonstrate artistic talent with a wide variety of styles.

Using a similar method, a musicologist might access programs in the collection to identify the types of pieces and/or composers often performed by major orchestras appearing on the Zorah Berry series, such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. The researcher may compare findings from an analysis of pieces performed at that time with pieces that are considered canon in modern major orchestra repertoire. In many ways, the repertoire of orchestras during Zorah Berry's lifetime is very similar to the repertoire of modern orchestras, such as the Buffalo Philharmonic. Masterworks by Beethoven and Brahms were as popular then as they are now, and in both eras, orchestras were amenable to performing some contemporary works, though perhaps the performance of contemporary works was more frequent in Zorah Berry's time than now.

### 3. Music Journalism History

A slightly different perspective one could research is the history of music journalism in Buffalo particularly, and how this relates to the history of music journalism in the United States. The vast majority of concert reviews included in Zorah Berry's scrapbook, for instance, were written by two local female journalists - Isabelle Workman (Evans) and Theolinda C. Boris. Whether the newspaper reviews included in Zorah Berry's scrapbooks are representative of music journalism in Buffalo, or of wider trends in gender and journalism in the United States during that time period, is something that could be researched further using the Zorah Berry Collection in conjunction with other resources.

### 4. Historical Events and Trends

There are many other historical events and trends that could be researched using the Zorah Berry Collection as a primary resource. The newspaper articles contained in the scrapbooks contain a multitude of opinions from various performers on a variety of then contemporary subjects, including the development of concert touring, the advent of radio broadcasting, the burgeoning recording industry, "new" American (classical) music, the dawn of the jazz and swing era, the decline of opera, fashion, and significant political movements. There are also articles focused on aspects of the concert industry during the Great Depression and during World War II. Many articles from the 1940s include commentary from locally appearing artists regarding the events of World War II. These articles are especially poignant when the interviews are with artists from European countries that were engaged in the war. Many articles discussed the immigration of well-known artists to the United States, and those artists' concern for the political climate in Europe. There is a wealth of information recorded in the photographs, programs, and scrapbooks compiled in this collection.

## **Related Collection/Resources**

Aside from the Zorah Berry Collection of concert programs, scrapbooks, and photographs, the Special Collections Department maintains a card catalog containing a list of every piece performed on a Zorah Berry program in Buffalo, indexed by performer, composer, and title of work. The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (Central Library) also houses a Buffalo Concert Programs Collection, which includes concert programs from concert promoters Marian DeForest and Mai Davis Smith, both of whose careers preceded and then slightly overlapped with Zorah Berry's. Additionally, the photos in the Zorah Berry Collection are part of a larger Performing Artists Photograph Collection, to which Marian DeForest and Mai Davis Smith also contributed photos of visiting artists they booked. Photos in the collection are dated from between 1890 and 1976.

There is also a BPO collection containing bound programs and scrapbooks dating from the late 1930s through the 1980s. The library houses Buffalo news articles on microfilm, including every daily paper from the 1920s on, and New York Times newspapers archived on microfilm. The library also has access to a modern online database of New York Times articles. Additionally, the library contains historical issues of three popular music magazines - *Musical Digest*, *Musical Courier*, and *Musical America*, which include articles on performers, orchestras, festivals, and tours. Between these three magazines, the time period of 1881 through 1964 is covered. Finally, the library houses several books related to the music history of Buffalo and Western New York, the United States, and Europe, many of which are available to be checked out.

## **Future Plans**

This paper, along with the original slideshow from the presentation of this paper, and a spreadsheet detailing performers appearing in Zorah Berry concerts are hosted on the Grosvenor Room webpage of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library website.

There are no immediate plans for digitizing the collection, but for preservation purposes, some or all of the collection (especially the scrapbooks), may be earmarked for digitization in the future. The library does have microfilm copies of some similar scrapbook collections, which were digitized in the 1980s; therefore, the same type of process could be applied to the Zorah Berry collection in the future.

## Zorah Berry, Queen Among Managers



1889-1969

### **Conclusion**

Zorah Berry was a major force in the local arts community, beginning with her first concert booking in 1926 until her last years booking the Great Artist Series. During her 40 year career as a concert promoter in Buffalo, she booked more than 180 acts in over 370 concerts, she maintained fifty 30-year or more subscribers, and she entertained upwards of 1 million concert attendees. This excerpt from a 1950 news article written about Zorah Berry perfectly conveys the significance of her career and the respect she received from audiences and artists alike:

“Sometimes when the snow piles high and the wind blows and people want to change their seats, Mrs. Berry goes to a picture hanging on her office wall and stands there a few minutes. The photograph is signed by Helen Traubel, who Zorah Berry booked on numerous occasions here in Buffalo - it bears this inscription: “To Zorah, my great friend – the Queen among Managers.”

## References

All images are from the Zorah Berry Collection of programs and scrapbooks, the Performing Artists Photograph Collection, other collections in the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, or the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library website, except for the following:

Buffalo Consistory Auditorium image on Slide 4. Retrieved from  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM2D5Z\\_Buffalo\\_Masonic\\_Consistory\\_Buffalo\\_NY](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM2D5Z_Buffalo_Masonic_Consistory_Buffalo_NY)

Elmwood Music Hall image on Slide 8. Retrieved from  
[http://www.wnyhistory.org/portfolios/more/elmwood\\_music\\_hall/elmwood\\_music\\_hall.h](http://www.wnyhistory.org/portfolios/more/elmwood_music_hall/elmwood_music_hall.h)

Kleinhans Music Hall images on Slide 14. Photos by Bilyana Dimitrova. Retrieved from  
[https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/revisiting-kleinhans-music-hall\\_o](https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/revisiting-kleinhans-music-hall_o).

Niagara Lutheran Home image on Slide 21. Photo from Green Fields Continuing Care Community “About Us” webpage. Retrieved from  
<https://thegreenfields.org/about-us/>.

Zorah Berry headstone image on Slide 22. Photo added by Phyllis Meyer. Retrieved from  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/114074927/zorah-logan>.

All references are from programs, marketing materials, and newspaper articles included in the Zorah Berry Collection.