

In general popular concerts differ from those of the regular season in that they have a somewhat lighter program, feature fewer and less well-known soloists, and are presented under more informal conditions at lower prices. Though most popular concerts follow this general pattern, those in Boston add the highly successful feature of setting up tables and serving refreshments during the concerts. Prices for concerts of this type usually range from 25 to 75 cents, but in a few cases some seats may be sold for as high as \$1. Most popular concerts are given on Saturday night, Sunday afternoon, and Sunday night, and the series vary from 3 a season, in Kansas City, to 56 in Boston. While in most cities the "pops" are interspersed with the regular concerts, those in Boston are concentrated in a special ten-week series at the end of the symphony season.

Since the use of popular concerts varies so greatly among individual orchestras, it is impossible to generalize for any group, as a whole, as to the proportion of operating income derived from this source. However, the percentage of operating income secured from "pops" ranges from 3 per cent to 7 per cent for most orchestras, but may reach 15 per cent or 16 per cent for the few orchestras that give a large number of these concerts.

Chicago provides an interesting example of the conventional type of popular concert. These concerts have been an important part of the orchestra's activities for twenty-six years and are so well established that no special publicity is used to promote them beyond a simple line on the regular concert announcements. The concerts are popular in both type and price. They do not

present expensive artists but frequently use members of the orchestra or relatively unknown local talent as soloists. Encores are allowed and the conductor frequently addresses informal remarks to the audience. An interesting feature of the Chicago popular series is that the sale of tickets is promoted by making it possible for institutions such as schools, banks, settlements, industrial and commercial organizations to distribute tickets at reduced rates. The only requirement is that they sell thirty or more tickets. At the present time about 50 institutions are co-operating in this plan. If an organization does not sell the specified number of tickets, it is not required to make up the difference in price, but, after repeated failures, is taken off the list.

Public interest in popular concerts has tended to decline in a number of cities and the audiences have demanded more and more the same general type of program as is presented in a regular symphony series. Indeed, in many cases the distinction between the "pop" and regular programs has faded to such an extent that the former have remained popular in price only and have come to compete increasingly with the regular series. Managers in a few cities have either discontinued popular concerts during the regular season, or are seriously contemplating doing so.

The Boston "Pop" concerts were established in 1885 and for many years about 5 out of every 6 of these concerts have been sold out. A number of factors have contributed to the unique and lasting success of these concerts. In the first place, they were begun at a time when few other forms of public recreation were available and

a tradition was firmly established before the advent of motion pictures and other competing leisure-time activities. Furthermore, they are given during a ten-week period beginning the first Wednesday in May and after the close of the regular symphony season. Symphony Hall possesses unusual facilities for the creation of a pleasant and informal atmosphere. The slanting floor upon which the seats for regular concerts are placed can be removed with comparatively little effort, leaving a flat surface upon which tables can be set up for serving refreshments. The entire interior is redecorated in a style appropriate for a summer garden. The service features food which requires no knives and forks and a well-selected and reasonably priced wine list. The hall has a further advantage in that the kitchen facilities are sufficiently far away from the stage so that the noise cannot interfere with the concert.

The highest order of showmanship is demonstrated in both the programming and promotion of the concerts. The repertoire of the "Pops" includes about 400 works, not only the best symphonies, but also some of the finest examples of shorter and lighter compositions, including the works of popular composers such as Gershwin, Porter, Grofé, and Alec Templeton. There has been a consistent policy of developing feature programs—"Gay Nineties Nights," Wagner Nights, Gilbert and Sullivan programs. One of the most successful of the last season was a "Candid Camera Night." Camera enthusiasts could take shots of the audience and orchestra throughout the program, but flashlights were permitted only during the last number—Strauss' *Thunder and Lightning Polka*.

An effective promotional device has been the sponsorship of special nights by schools, universities, and other organizations. The Harvard, M. I. T., and Roxbury Latin School nights are among the traditions of long standing. Customs have changed, however, since the days when Harvard Night required an extra force of ushers and police and when M. I. T. students snake-danced in a body to the concert. Today the undergraduates bring their girls and demand such music as Brahms' *Akademische Fest Overture*. Conditions are varied to meet the demands of different sponsors, and wines and liquors are not served if the organization prefers to omit this feature. All kinds of newspaper publicity and other promotion are also used for the "Pops." Each week about 20,000 folders are distributed in schools and stores, and an actual demand has grown up for them on the part of many of these institutions. The price of the concerts ranges from 25 cents to \$1. The "Pop" concerts are practically self-sustaining in that the total receipts just about cover the total costs, except management overhead, and the refreshment service pays for itself.⁷

Imitation of the Boston type of popular concert has been limited by lack of adequate hall facilities. Recently attempts have been made with some success in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Cleveland. In St. Paul a huge indoor ice-skating rink has been converted into a concert hall where performances are given by members of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in conjunction with

⁷ The relative profitability of these "Pops," as of the summer series of several orchestras, is due partly to the lower orchestra salaries paid.