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Archives of American Art

Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: Holmes, Mrs. Christian R. (Bettie), 1926-1938

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 1934.

THE PHILHARMONIC'S APPEAL.

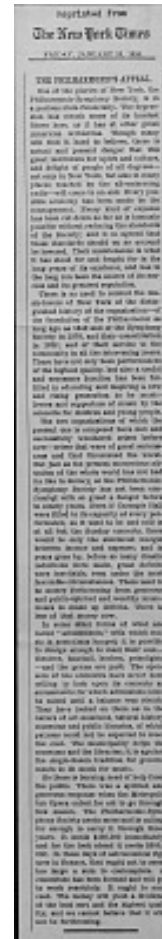
One of the glories of New York, the Philharmonic-Symphony Society, is in a parlous state financially. The depression has struck some of its hardest blows here, as it has at other great American orchestras. Though many will find it hard to believe, there is actual and present danger that this great institution for uplift and culture, and delight of people of all degrees—not only in New York, but also in many places reached by the all-embracing radio—will come to an end. Every possible economy has been made by the management. Every kind of expense has been cut down as far as is humanly possible without reducing the standards of the Society; and it is agreed that these standards should on no account be lowered. Their maintenance is what it has stood for and fought for in the long years of its existence, and has in the long run been the source of its success and its greatest reputation.

There is no need to remind the music-lovers of New York of the distinguished history of the organization—of the foundation of the Philharmonic as long ago as 1842 and of the Symphony Society in 1878, and their consolidation in 1928; and of their service to the community in all the intervening years. There have not only been performances of the highest quality, but also useful and necessary function has been fulfilled in educating and inspiring a new and rising generation to be music-lovers and supporters of music by the concerts for children and young people.

The two organization of which the present one is composed have met and successfully weathered crises before now—crises that were of great seriousness and that threatened the worst. But just as the present momentous situation of the whole world has not had its like in history, so the Philharmonic-Symphony Society has not been confront with so great a danger before in ninety years. Even if Carnegie Hall were filled to its capacity at every performance, as it used to be and still is at all but the Sunday concerts, there would be only the slenderest margin between income and expense; and in years gone by, before so many drastic reductions were made, great deficits were inevitable, even under the most favorable circumstances. There used to be money forthcoming from generous and public-spirited and wealthy music-lovers to make up deficits. There is less of that money now.

In some other forms of what are called "amusements", with which music is sometimes lumped, it is possible to charge enough to meet their cost—theatres, baseball, hockey, prizefights—and the prices are paid. The sponsors of the orchestra have never been willing to look upon its concerts as amusements for which admissions could be raised until a balance was struck. They have looked on them as in the nature of art museums, natural history museums and public libraries, of which patrons could not be expected to meet the cost. The municipality helps the museums and the libraries; it is against the Anglo-Saxon tradition for governments to do much for music.

So there is burning need of help from the public. There was a spirited and generous response when the Metropolitan Opera called for aid to



go through this season. The Philharmonic-Symphony Society need more and is calling for enough to carry it through three years. It needs \$150,000 immediately and for the look ahead it needs \$500,000. In these days of astronomical figures in finance, that ought not to seem too large a sum to contemplate. A committee has been formed and will go to work resolutely. It ought to succeed. The money will yield a dividend of the best sort and the highest quality; and we cannot believe that it will not be forthcoming.

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