

Excerpt from  
Trustees' Confidential Monthly Report  
May 1, 1950

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Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Berkshire Music Center 27

Grant from the Foundation:

\$60,000 to Boston Symphony Orchestra

#### THE BERKSHIRE MUSIC CENTER

Ten years have passed since a grant helped the Boston Symphony Orchestra to establish the Berkshire Music Center at Lenox, Massachusetts. It was then predicted that the Center would have "an unusual influence on the development of American culture," and a review of its contributions over the decade provides rich evidence of the prophetic insight of the founders. Both in the production of music, through the annual Berkshire Music Festival, and in the production of musicians, through its training courses for orchestra conductors, composers, and singers, the Center has abundantly vindicated the wisdom of its founders. The original proponent of the undertaking to the Foundation was Jerome D. Greene, and we are glad to share with the Trustees the following letter which President Barnard recently received from Mr. Greene:

As a retired Trustee of The Rockefeller Foundation, I have had the privilege of receiving regularly the Confidential Monthly Reports, and I have enjoyed reading the useful and interesting results flowing from the Foundation's past donations. Among these is one in which I take special satisfaction, as I proposed it and have until recently been actively connected with the beneficiary institution. I refer to the establishment of the Berkshire Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts, as a summer activity of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The Music Center, in close connection with the annual Berkshire Festival, was conceived and for several years has been administered by Serge Koussevitzky, who, since his retirement from the conductorship of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is still the active Director, though the three-weeks' series of nine Festival concerts are under the direction of Dr. Koussevitzky's successor, Charles Munch.

The first session of the Berkshire Music Center in the summer of 1940 was made possible only by a contribution of \$60,000 from The Rockefeller Foundation. To this the Carnegie Corporation added \$12,000 for the purchase of an organ. I had asked for a tapering five-year contribution, but this my colleagues sternly refused on what seemed to me the too sanguine expectation that general public support would be given after the first experimental session. Perhaps the Trustees were right and I was wrong; for the support did come, though not without some pretty hard sledding.

The Festival and the Music Center are closely connected. The faculty consists mainly of the first desk players of the Boston Orchestra. The six weeks' session of the Center includes, at the end, the three weeks of the Festival, attendance at which is a privilege of all the pupils of the Center. Practice in ensemble playing and singing, including opera, in groups graded according to musical experience and capacity, and not teaching of instrumental playing, is the characteristic of the Music Center, though instruction is given in conducting, solfege, and composition. Three excellent young conductors, Thor Johnson, Leonard Bernstein, and the Brazilian, Carvalho, now successfully launched in their profession, are already the fruit of Dr. Koussevitzky's teaching. The advanced orchestra of the Music Center, at the close of the six weeks' session, give concerts that meet high professional standards.

Berkshire has now become established as an internationally recognized musical center of the highest importance, its inception made possible by The Rockefeller Foundation's support at the beginning. I feel especially gratified by the success of the Music Center because I suspected, not without some reason, that a friendly desire to back up my enthusiasm, rather than conviction that I was right, induced the Trustees to make the initial grant.