

Music Section
Joyful Sounds: the FWC Music Section
by Evelyn Port, FWC Historian
FWC Newsletter, Fall 2004

The Music Section of the Faculty Women's Club was formed in April of 1923. The group met once a month for music appreciation and to entertain one another. No specific program agenda was necessary. Any member or members who wished to perform would practice a selection of music prior to the meeting. The group encouraged and welcomed attendance of visiting faculty from other countries to enjoy a performance. Once every year, "the men", were invited to a performance. I assume this meant husbands were allowed. The annual dues were high at that time: 25 cents. Once a year local faculty and student groups from the School of Music were invited to present more formal programs.

In the 1930s and 40s the instrumental and choral groups of the Music Section enjoyed an increased membership and performed frequently for Spring Luncheons and other Faculty Women's Club events, as they continue to do. The Music Section members also lent their exceptional talent to the less fortunate by presenting programs in nursing homes and area hospitals. The vocalists were always a great hit and very much appreciated.

By the early 1950s the section flourished providing a broader variety of musical selections for viola, flute, cello, clarinet, recorder, piano and two vocal soloists. A vocal group called The Michigan Dames was formed in 1955 with several members from the Faculty Women's Club, the music section, single students from the Music School and local guests. Eventually, around the 1960s the Dames disappeared and many of their membership rejoined the FWC musical section.

From the 1960s to the present the music section had two groups, vocal and instrumental. Each member is an accomplished musician. Many teach voice or an instrument within the community. Several also play more than one instrument accompanying each other at performances and at their monthly meetings. Interestingly, they combine their talents to present seldom-heard works of old and modern composers. Every year they still entertain those who cannot attend concert theaters. This past August a concert was given at the Brookhaven retirement home. There are many hilarious anecdotes from their experiences playing at different facilities over the years. On one occasion the piano was missing upper and lower keys, while at another performance the piano bench was much too small to play as planned for four hands. Another incident involved a member whose recorder was out of tune. She announced, "Your ears will just have to adjust." Despite the surprising events the performance must go on.

The members of the Music Section are lively, congenial and treasure their fellowship never criticizing one another.

This was apparent when I was invited to attend one of their meetings. The music included rousing piano selections by Chopin and Brahms and a lovely recorder duet by Mozart. Another evening I was treated to a work I had never heard, a sonata by Robert Valentine played on recorder and piano accompaniment. Finally, I lost myself to the selections from Kismet and Puccini, sung so beautifully. I thank the members for their patience with my many inquiries and for supplying missing details to the history of this grand group.

The members of the music section tell me that they would be pleased to welcome Faculty Women's Club members and guest members to join them as performers or listeners for an evening of wonderful entertainment at their monthly musical. The more, the merrier. After all, their group has been performing since 1923 and is celebrating 81 years of the joy of music.