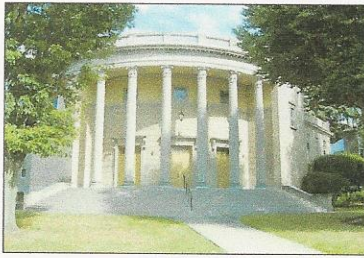


Christian Science church draws admirers of architecture



BILL BUELL/GAZETTE REPORTER

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, was designed by Bernhardt Muller and was built in 1924 at the corner of Brierwood Boulevard and Union Street in Schenectady.

BY BILL BUELL
Gazette Reporter

Bernhardt E. Muller was quite proud of his building, and so are the people using it today.

"It's a very unique building, and it's built solid. I can tell you that," Brad Smith said of the 1924 structure that is home to the First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Schenectady. "Muller designed Christian Science churches all over, and I think he made this one real special."

The building is at the corner of Brierwood Boulevard and Union Street, and is rather an imposing structure, its facade consisting of an extensive curved portico and six columns, each 28 feet high. There are 10 steps leading up to the grand entrance of the building, which was made of cast gran-

LANDMARKS

ite, terra cotta and buff tapestry brick. In his own description of the building provided by Muller to the church for its opening 88 years ago, he said it was a combination of the "Adamesque style," from the reign of King George III of England, and American Colonial.

STRENGTH AND SIMPLICITY

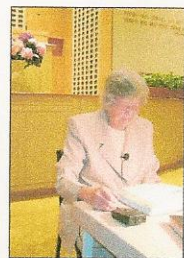
"This Adam style of architecture is eminently suitable to a Christian Science Church by reason of its grace, dignity and refinement," wrote Muller, himself a Christian Scientist. "It is characterized by purity, strength and simplicity of ornamentation."

Muller, who often worshipped at the Maplewood, N.J. branch, designed Christian Science churches

throughout New York, including Brooklyn (1918), Hempstead (1924), Forest Hills (1925), Bronxville (1929) and Flushing (1930).

"I get people stopping by because they read about the church in some architectural digest and they want to see it," said Smith, who is referred to by his friends and fellow church members as the "facilities manager." "I approach them because I see them looking at our building, we start talking and they ask me if they can see the inside. That's probably happened a dozen times in the past few years."

T.H. McHale and Sons of Syracuse constructed the building, and on March 1, 1925, the first service was held in the large basement downstairs. The building is 92



M. Jean Place prepares for her reading during the Wednesday night program at the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

See LANDMARKS, page E3

Personal buyers add cachet to thrift shopping

BY JOHN EWOLDT
Minneapolis Star Tribune

Margie O'Dell decided it was time to treat herself to a fashion perk — a personal shopper.

She had a 75-minute in-store appointment with Michelle Dustin, who asked O'Dell about her lifestyle, personal style and favorite colors. Then Dunn picked out some ensembles for O'Dell to wear to work, a formal dress for a wedding and a couple of casual outfits, plus accessories.

Not so surprising, until you consider two things: O'Dell wasn't at Macy's or Nordstrom. She was in a thrift store, Arc's Value Village, and her bill for the 25 pieces she bought came to \$110.

'We still need the customer who won't pay more than \$2 for a shirt. But we also want to attract the middle-class person who can find a polo shirt here for \$5.'

TOM CANFIELD
District manager,
Twin Cities area
Salvation Army stores

When the recession started, middle-class shoppers such as O'Dell flocked to thrift stores, many for the first time. New Value Village, Salvation Army, Goodwill and others are getting creative to keep those customers coming back.

In addition to offering personal shoppers, some secondhand stores are bringing in new merchandise, stepping up their advertising and adding loyalty programs. And all of them have literally cleaned up their acts, by remodeling their stores and raising the bar on the used merchandise they sell.

"We still need the customer who won't pay more than \$2 for a shirt," said Tom Canfield, district manager of the Twin Cities area Salvation Army stores. "But we also want to attract the middle-class person who can find a polo shirt here for \$5."

DONATIONS DROPPING

The change comes at a time when donations to secondhand stores are dropping.

The Salvation Army has kept shoppers from walking away empty-handed by aggressively trolling for more donations. They added more drop boxes in the metro area and tripled the number of trucks collecting merchandise. Value Village extended hours at its donation centers. Goodwill streamlined the drop-off process to make donations faster and more efficient.

While the bulk of their business is still selling used goods, most lo-

See THRIFT, page E3

MUSIC



CATHY SHERIDAN

A view of the orchestra in the pit during a performance of "Miss Saigon" at Proctors. Many of the touring theater shows and musical performers use local union musicians along with their own musicians.

Round out the sound

Local unions supply musicians for touring shows

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY
Gazette Reporter

As a percussionist, Kathy Lowery can be called upon to play some unconventional instruments when big touring productions come through Proctors.

Over the 27 years that the Schenectady native has worked shows at Proctors through the Schenectady-Amsterdam Musical Union, Local 88-133, she has had to go to local businesses to acquire items ranging from brake drums to large metal thunder sheets to a cricket — a small, hand-held instrument that reproduces the sound of its namesake insect. When the Broadway show "Wicked" came to Proctors in 2009, Lowery was given a list of 59 instruments to perform on.

"The conductors usually know what sound they want, and my job is to truck a bunch of stuff in," she said. "And as a percussionist, it's kind of hard to hold your head high when you're asked to play shapes, like a triangle — other musicians are coming in with violins, and I have a shape to play. I'm asked to beat on things with different forms of wood; I have instruments that most people have hanging on their front porch, wind chimes... For 'Wicked,' I

was hanging things over my head, I had things around my neck. When I finished the setup, every crevice was just filled with some instrument."

Lowery is one of many local musicians who are regularly called upon to perform with big touring productions — everything from Broadway shows to rock and pop musicians — that come through the Capital Region. These shows often do not travel with every musician they need for the show, and will contract musicians through local unions in the American Federation of Musicians — around here, that includes the Schenectady-Amsterdam chapter, the Albany Musicians' Association (Local 14) and the Saratoga Musical Union (Local 306).

NOT COMMON KNOWLEDGE

"I think the public doesn't realize that — even though they put it in the print in the show bulletins they put out — the music is played by local musicians," said Mark Anthony, president of the Schenectady-Amsterdam Musical Union, which currently has a three-year contract for Proctors shows. "It's not an easy job; it requires a lot of skill. We're really proud of the guys who are able to do it — we do such a good job on it."

For musicians, playing with myriad groups requires an ability to be able to



Local musicians, including trumpet player Cathy Sheridan, second from left, top row, perform onstage during "Hair" in its run last year at Proctors.

quickly sight-read and perform music. Although in recent years, touring productions have been sending out more advance music and even DVDs or CDs of the music more often, it's still a fast turnaround — often local musicians are only rehearsing with the productions on the day of the show.

"In the old days, or what I call the old days, maybe 20 years ago or 15 years ago, you were expected to sight-read

— meaning, look at the music at first sight, and play it pretty perfectly," said Nat Fossner, the union musical contractor for Proctors, and also a woodwind player.

"Then in rehearsal, you figure out the ensemble issues, but you're expected to pretty much play the music at sight. In recent years, big touring shows will send

See UNION, page E3



FLURRY OF FLUTE

Yvonne Chavez Hansbrough to play baroque flute and more during October concerts around the region. E4

DINING IN LENOX

Restaurant reviewer Irv Dean finds tempting entrees and expert service at Alta Restaurant & Wine Bar in the Berkshires. E5

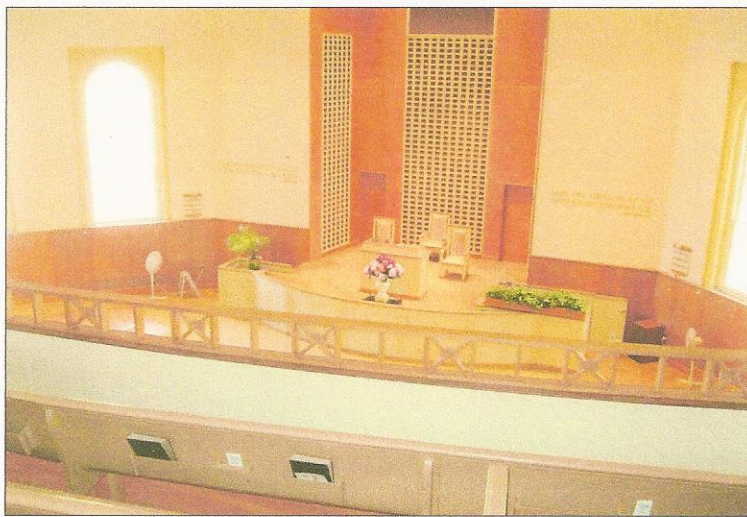
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The main sanctuary of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, on the corner of Brierwood Boulevard and Union Street, viewed from the upstairs balcony. BILL BUELL/GAZETTE REPORTER

Landmarks: Simple dignity inside church

Continued from page E1

feet square, and the main sanctuary was built to seat 418 people, although some of the pews have been removed. The project wasn't completed until 1949 under the direction of architect J.M. Ryder of Jay Street, and in 1959 a balcony was added by another architect, William Cooper of Amsterdam.

As impressive as Muller's facade is, the interior of the building is not elaborate or ornate, but instead simple and dignified. Along with the sanctuary, there is a large lobby area and several smaller rooms used for committee meetings and various other purposes. The building wasn't dedicated until Nov. 19, 1964, which coincidentally was the same year that Muller died at the age of 85.

Christian Science churches aren't dedicated until they are debt-free," said Charlton resident David Stafford, who heads up the church's board of directors.

NO MAJOR RENOVATIONS

"But the building is in pretty good shape. There is plenty of normal upkeep, and we did have to put a new roof on about five years ago, and we've painted some over the years. There were also some rafters in the roof we had to fix, but there's been nothing major."

The first Christian Scientists in Schenectady were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Richardson, who held the initial gathering in their home at 927 Albany St. on Nov. 28, 1897. A legal charter was issued on March 6, 1899, and the group became a recognized branch of the mother church in Boston. As more people joined, the church's meeting place was moved to Schubert Hall at 228 State St., the Knights of Pythias Hall at 436 State St., and the public library at Seward Place and Union Street.

In September of 1908 the church bought some property at the corner of Parkwood Boulevard and Rugby Road, and moved into their new structure in 1910. The group remained in that building, now occupied by the Little Ones Nursery and Daycare Center, until the current building was ready for use.

At the time there was a large bluestone quarry in that area of Union Street between Wendell Avenue and Glenwood Boulevard.

The city had been expanding eastward for some time, with Parkwood Boulevard and Glenwood Boulevard being built in 1902.

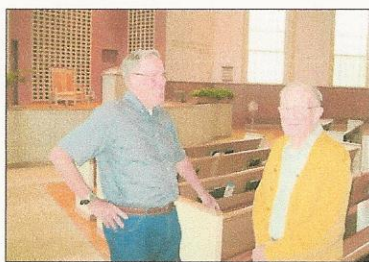
But, because of the quarry, the section where Brierwood and Maryland Avenue are located had been initially bypassed. Those two streets don't show up in the city directory until 1924.

"The population of the city increased by 40,000 from 1900 to 1910, and there was an awful lot of development in that area," said former Schenectady County Historical Society president Frank Taormina, who has closely studied the city's history and its population growth.

The Christian Science denomination was founded in 1829 by Mary Baker Eddy, a native of Dow, N.H., who lived most of her life in the Boston area. Sickly as a child and ill throughout much of her early adult life, Eddy became convinced that illness could be healed through prayer and an awakened thought process brought about by a clearer perception of God. A major aspect of that process was a rejection of drugs, hygiene and medicine based upon the observation that Jesus did not use these methods for healing.

While Eddy reportedly had healing powers as a child and young woman, it wasn't until 1866, at the age of 45, that she developed an understanding and appreciation for God's role in healing. Her "revelation" came following a fall that left her bedridden for three days. After she called for her Bible, Eddy read Matthew, Chapter 9, Verse 2, and according to her own account, "As I read, the healing Truth dawned upon my sense; and the result was that I arose, dressed myself, and ever after was in better health than I had before enjoyed."

A Congregationalist growing up, Eddy devoted the next three years of her life to biblical study and began writing the papers that would be the basis for her new faith she



Board of Directors Chairman David Stafford, left, talks with localities manager Brad Smith at the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

called Church of Christ, Scientist. Eddy also produced a book, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," that became the companion to the Bible among her followers. Both continue to be read at the group's Wednesday and Sunday meetings.

While Eddy often referred to herself and others in the faith as pastors, these days each congregation goes about its business without an ordained leader to provide sermons. Instead, readers are elected for three-year terms, and during each Sunday and Wednesday meeting one reader reads from the Bible and the other reads from Eddy's "Science and Health."

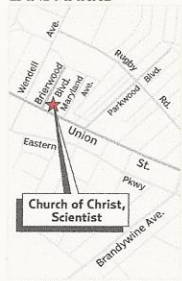
"The readers are elected among the membership, and when they're done with their readings we then have testimonials of healing that people have experienced," said Stafford, who has been attending the Schenectady branch for more than 50 years. "Our meetings usually run about an hour."

DECREASING NUMBERS

All of the major decisions regarding the Schenectady church are determined by a five-person board of directors. The directors, like the readers, serve three-year terms. Like many churches in recent times, the Christian Scientists in Schenectady have seen a decrease in their numbers.

"We could use some new members, and we try to encourage people to come to one of our meetings," said Stafford. "We believe in

LANDMARKS



ANDREA COSTANZO/THE SUNDAY GAZETTE

the healing power of the Christ, and we like to stress that many of our problems today can be helped by the spiritual message we get from the Bible."

Eddy's original church building in Boston was completed in 1894, and in 1908, just two years before her death at the age of 89, she oversaw the creation of a daily newspaper, The Christian Science Monitor, which is still run and operated by the church today.

Reach Gazette reporter Bill Buell at 395-3190 or www.bbuell@dailygazette.com.

Union: Big shows call for skilled musicians

Continued from page E1

advance books, which we'll usually get at least two weeks in advance, sometimes more. Our particular Capital District — I say surprisingly, it might be surprising to outsiders — has a lot of really skilled musicians who are able to play this music at a very high level."

Fossner has been the musical contractor for Proctors for about six years now, and has been a member of the union for 40 years. He has also contracted shows for the old Starlite Music Theatre in Latham, and the Palace Theatre in Albany.

The process begins when the theater contracts a show to perform at the venue. The show will provide a music rider, which details what the production will need from local musicians, specifying instruments to be played — trumpet, trombone, woodwinds and percussion are among the most commonly needed instruments.

MULTIPLE INSTRUMENTS

More often than not, a musician is expected to perform multiple instruments in any one given show.

"I play woodwinds, and the interesting thing about the kind of shows that I'm talking about require what's called doubling — musicians have to play more than one instrument," Fossner said.

"Brass players, like trumpet players, don't have to double too much. String players are hired for just violin, viola, cello or bass. Woodwinds, when you're hired, you're expected to play, depending on which chair you're in, flutes, clarinets, saxophones or double reed [instruments], and the lead woodwind part ... We have a lot of players in the area who can do all those certain things, and I've gone through all those seats. Depending on what the particular need of the show is, we hire accordingly."

Scotia musician Tom Gerbino, the principal clarinetist with the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra, has been playing touring productions at venues such as Proctors, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and the Palace Theatre for more than 20 years, and has been a member of the union since he was a teenager. Although clarinet is his main instrument, he can play anything from piccolo to bassoon to all kinds of saxophones — he's even played recorder at some shows.

"When I was in high school, I became more and more curious about other instruments than the clarinet — my school had an oboe, and then I just started buying saxophones," he said.

"I guess it was just intellectual curiosity — I probably had a knack for it, like speaking languages. The first one you learn is a bit difficult, but the others you get sort of drawn into how to learn to speak languages, and that's really what playing instruments is."

Gerbino has performed in productions of "A Chorus Line" and "West Side Story," and will be in a number of upcoming Proctors shows, including "Mary Poppins" from Oct. 2-7, and "Wicked," Nov. 7-25. He's also worked in backing bands for George Burns, Sammy Davis Jr., Johnny Mathis and Red Skelton, among others. And although these contracts are usually settled in advance, Gerbino has been called at the last minute to step in for someone at a show.

"One evening I was home, quite a while ago, and the flutist or piccolo player with the New York City Opera became ill," Gerbino said. "The theater [Proctors] knew I could play five minutes away, so they called me and said, 'Grab your instrument.' And I had to sight-read 'La Boheme.'"

But in most instances, good preparation before the show is key — and with more shows sending advance music, this is possible now.

MORE COMPLICATED

"The shows are getting more complicated," said Cathy Sheridan, who has been playing trumpet in touring productions for more than 15 years — she's done everything from "Wicked" to Aretha Franklin. "I don't think it was the case with [musicals] in the past, but the newer ones are pretty complicated. I think some of it is because of the reduced orchestra — each person is responsible for playing so much more now. Instead of 20 people playing in the orchestra, now it may be reduced to 10 with synthesizers filling in the gaps."

Lowery, a native of Schenectady, first became involved with music, and eventually performing for union contracted shows, through her father, jazz vibist Tom Brown, who also worked with touring acts — Lowery's mother, her father bringing Johnny Mathis' musicians home for dinner after a show. Over the years, she has found an increasing demand for more and more unusual instruments in shows.

"I've seen through 27 years the



CATHY SHERIDAN

Local musicians Tom Gerbino, left, and Nat Fossner get ready to perform in the orchestra pit at Proctors for "Addams Family," which ran this past winter.



CATHY SHERIDAN

Local union musicians Dan Cordell, left, and Gerbino worked a performance of "Hair" this past spring at Proctors.

way percussionists have gone, and within the last decade even more so, maybe because of the Internet — everybody hears all these sounds from all over the world, and it influences everything in the sound," she said.

"Things have come through asking for Tibetan boat bells, singing bowls, all these different sounds. It's fun; the reason I like it is that the composers are just amazing. ... They're beautiful writers, so it's fun to hear where they put this in."

"Touring shows are a bit simpler for Monica Wilson-Roach, a cello player with the Albany union. When she gets called for gigs at The Egg, the Times Union Center, the Palace Theatre and other venues, she's only asked to play one instrument. But usually that means she's the only cellist in the show, requiring her to be playing almost nonstop.

"Sometimes the parts can be kind of intense, and oftentimes with the older shows, the parts are intended for multiple string players," she said. "Cellists, nowadays, there's usually one per show, or occasionally two. Years and years ago there used to be up to five cellists, but now they can mix you. In some ways it's a tough thing."

Wilson-Roach has been playing these kinds of gigs for almost 20 years now in the Capital Region, but before that she worked Broadway shows in New York City. She prefers the spontaneity of performing for touring musicals and pop musicians.

"What I learned on Broadway was the repetitive nature of the job, which doesn't mix well with my personality," she said. "I like to have something new. ... When you play these shows, especially the ones that come through locally, they're well-paid, which is a big plus for musicians, and it doesn't get boring — you don't have enough time for it to get boring."

SELF-CONTAINED SHOWS

These days there are more and more shows that are self-contained, coming to town with all the musicians they need.

"Nowadays as far as theater music goes at big venues, there may be two to seven weeks of employment that need a local orchestra for a touring company," Fossner said. "The other times our musicians are playing for community theaters, Schenectady Light Opera, high school productions, college productions for this kind of music."

Naturally, with the short preparation times, these gigs can be high-stress, and require a high level of expertise on a particular instrument (or instruments), as well as an ability to blend in with multiple styles of music.

"Musicians enjoy it immensely — performing musicians really see it as a lifelong profession, and something that you're constantly working on even when you're not doing a show," Fossner said. "You're practicing all the time. Playing an instrument is something that you have to keep up, while you're waiting for bands, for shows."

Reach Gazette reporter Brian McElhinney at 395-3111 or mcelhinney@dailygazette.net.

Thrift

Continued from page E1

cal thrift stores also are offering new wares, sometimes by forming relationships with national retail chains.

Goodwill recently sent out a back-to-school glossy newspaper insert advertising Playskool workbooks for 99 cents and backpacks for \$9.99, all of which were purchased new from manufacturers, said Lisa Ritter, director of marketing at Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota.

Salvation Army is buying overstocked items and returns from Target, Wal-Mart, Costco and others. Recently, area Salvation Army stores sold flat-panel TVs (returns from an electronics retailer) for about half the retail price.

"Our customers like to see some higher-back items, too," said Canfield. "We're going after more new product."

Because Arc gets too few donated socks that meet their quality standards, it regularly buys new socks, selling them at a slight

markup. They've proven to be a popular item, said Laurel Hansen, Arc's business director.

"To keep their customer base happy, thrift stores are trying to find out who their shoppers are. Increasingly, that answer is the middle class."

AVERAGE SHOPPER

At Arc, which serve its sales rise 11 percent last year, the average shopper is a 30- to 60-year-old woman with an income of \$30,000 to \$75,000.

Goodwill has identified its average shopper as a 44-year-old woman with an income of \$33,000 and a concern for the environment. So Goodwill, which had a 20 percent bump in sales, is adding parking spaces for electric cars at its new stores, using native plants in landscaping and turning to energy-efficient lighting, said Ritter.

In addition, all of Goodwill's stores have been converted to the same footprint, look and feel. Some have added coffee bars to their book sections, though none yet in the Twin Cities.

All Value Village stores have received a fresh coat of paint and new carpet, but its newest store in



JOEL KOYAMA/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

St. Paul sports a clearly contemporary look, with polished concrete floors, open ceilings and blond wood checkout counters. Business director Laurel Hansen calls it "a freshening of the brand."

"That includes the clothes, too. You're unlikely to see a dress with a tear or a shirt with a collar stain on the sales floor of any of

the secondhand stores. Most are increasing staff training and changing store displays more often to advertise the constantly changing merchandise. Value Village has even added a loyalty rewards program.