He Serenades the Campus

Jean Bunge
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation
Bunge, Jean (1945) "He Serenades the Campus," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 25 : No. 3 , Article 9.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol25/iss3/9
Prof. Ira Schroeder now has the world’s record for hours of carillon playing, says Jean Bunge

The record of having played more hours than any other carillonneur in the world belongs to Ira Schroeder, professor in the Department of Music, who plays Iowa State’s Stanton Memorial Carillon. The carillon, dedicated to Margaret McDonald Stanton, wife of one of the members of the first graduating class, consists of 36 bells, the first 10 of which were installed in 1899. They were imported from Loughborough, England, and were the first scientifically tuned bells to leave that country.

A native Iowan, Schroeder was born and reared in Blairsburg. As a boy he received no music training because his father was determined that he would become a lawyer.

After 3 years in the Ellsworth Conservatory at Iowa Falls, his father decided to send him to the University of Iowa to study law. Rebelling at the thought of law school, Mr. Schroeder went to Chicago where he earned his way through Bush Conservatory, receiving a bachelor of music degree in 1927. He remained there on the faculty for 4 years until he was appointed carillonneur and piano instructor at Iowa State.

A carillonneur for more than 16 years, Schroeder first became interested in the carillon when he heard the instrument at St. Chrysostoms Episcopal Church, Chicago, one Sunday afternoon. After visiting the player’s cabin, he decided to compose music for the instrument.

Learning to play the carillon requires time and effort, partly because of the physical exertion involved. Schroeder’s first teachers were Harold Simonds, of St. Chrysostoms Episcopal Church and the University of Chicago, and Percival Price, Dominion carillonneur at the Peace Tower, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, Canada. A Pulitzer Prize winner, Mr. Price wrote a sonata especially for the Iowa State Carillon and dedicated it to his pupil.

Later he attended L’Ecole du Carillon, Malines, Belgium, studying with the eminent carillonneurs Victor van Geyseghem, Jef Denyn and Staf Nees. While studying with Nees a photographer from National Geographic magazine took his picture with his teacher for an issue of that magazine portraying life in Belgium.

When he was in Belgium, Schroeder started his library which now contains more than 500 pieces especially arranged for the Iowa State Carillon. Even music written for the carillon must be arranged for the Stanton Memorial Carillon because the instrument is comparatively small. If kept in strict rotation during his two daily programs of morning hymns and evening selections, a single piece in his library would not be heard more than 3 or 4 times a year.

Schroeder has appeared in recitals in Europe, Canada and the United States. In Europe most of his concerts were played in Belgium and Holland. These two countries have more carillons than the rest of the world combined. A carillon must have at least 25 chromatically tuned bells to be called a carillon. Any instrument smaller than that is called chimes.

Although he has taught students on a practice instrument of the carillon in Music Hall, no one is studying carilloning now. Amateur playing of the instrument is impractical because there are so few carillons.

He took lessons on the piano from Dr. A. E. Bullock at Ellsworth Conservatory. In Chicago he studied with Julie Rive-King, pupil of Franz Liszt; with Harold von Mickwitz, from Finland; with Howard Wells and with Serge Tarnowski, one of the teachers of Vladimir Horowitz and Alexander Uninsky, two of the most outstanding Russian pianists in the United States today. A teacher of piano for 26 years, Schroeder has had students ranging in age from 7 to 70 years.