

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF FRITZ HENLE, 1938

LIFE AT CURTIS

BY HELENE VAN ROSSUM

CURTIS'S WEEKLY RADIO PROGRAM

From 1933 to 1941 the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) broadcast a weekly *Curtis Institute Musicale*. At first the broadcasts took place in the nearby studio of WCAU. From 1937, however, the programs were broadcast directly from Casimir Hall (now Field Concert Hall). They were recorded in the newly established Recording Department in Knapp Hall at 1720 Locust through a cable connected to Casimir Hall.

In the photograph below, students are listening to the radio broadcast through the loudspeakers in the Common Room; the performers are in Casimir Hall. On Wednesday, January 26, 1938, a student group called Trio Classique, shown at right—Eudice Shapiro (Violin '35), Ardelle Hookins Bowers (Flute, '34), and Virginia Majewski (Viola '36)—were featured.



before the war



In January 1938 the photojournalist **Fritz Henle** visited the Curtis Institute of Music to take pictures for the photographic essay “Music: Ten Million Americans Become Musically Literate” in *LIFE Magazine*. When the article was published on December 12, 1938, two of the ten pages pertained to Curtis, including a full-page photo of Gary Graffman, then ten years old, with his piano teacher Isabelle Vengerova.

But Henle took many photos not published in *LIFE*, and they provide a fascinating glimpse of life at the school between the Depression and the Second World War. They also show that Curtis’s essential character has remained constant. In 1938, as now, Curtis embraced

THE LIBRARY IN THE BOK ROOM

Until 1974 the library of the Curtis Institute was located in the basement of the main building, with its reading room in what is now called the Bok Room. A spiral staircase led from this room to the basement, where the library occupied eight more rooms. Seen here through the railing of the staircase is Lela Maki ('40).



FEEDING PIGEONS ON RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

Charles Libove (Violin '40) was one of the two eleven-year-old violin students who came to Curtis in October 1937 to study with Lea Luboschutz. In 1940 he returned home to Brooklyn to go to high school and later attended the Juilliard School.

MUSIC CRITICISM WITH SAMUEL CHOTZINOFF

Music criticism was another novelty in the Curtis curriculum in September 1937. Teaching the subject was the renowned Samuel Chotzinoff (1889-1964), then a music critic at the *New York Post*. In 1937-38 his class included five students, of whom three had chosen Music Criticism as their major. From October 1938 Chotzinoff's students were commentators on the weekly CBS Radio broadcasts from Curtis. Chotzinoff, seen here from the back, taught at Curtis until 1940. The student with the bowtie is Edward O'Gorman (Conducting and Composition '38).



new ideas, learning by doing, and the nurturing of skills that were relevant to the contemporary musical environment.

When Henle visited Curtis, the main building at 1726 Locust Street and the adjacent building at 1720 Locust looked much the same as they do now. Curtis, then led by the legendary pianist Josef Hofmann, could boast a faculty of famous musicians, many of them Europeans, who were teaching a new generation of American performers.

Despite the continuing challenges of the Great Depression, in 1938 Henle saw a Curtis Institute that proudly kept up with its time. A cafeteria, built on the top floor of 1720 Locust Street in 1937, allowed students, faculty, and staff to mingle. New curricular offerings included a major in Music Criticism and a radio class. Students performed live in weekly broadcasts over the CBS Radio network that were simultaneously recorded by Curtis's brand-new Recording Department. Students were encouraged to record themselves in order to study and improve their performance.

Within a year of Henle's visit, new financial constraints forced by the Depression would prompt changes, as student enrollment was reduced, teachers' salaries were cut, and departments were reorganized or dissolved. But for the moment, optimism and innovation prevailed and were captured by Henle's lens. <

Helene van Rossum is the archivist at Curtis.

Fritz Henle

The German-born photographer Fritz Henle (1909-1993), who settled in the United States in 1936, was one of the most famous photographers of his time. During his 60-year career he took over 100,000 photographs in various countries, covering many genres. He was one of the earliest contributors to *LIFE Magazine*, which published more than fifty features based on his images, including the one about music in America for which he visited Curtis in January 1938.

Henle used a Rolleiflex 2.25" twin-lens reflex camera throughout his career. The camera produced square images, which Henle (nicknamed "Mr. Rollei") had to crop to the rectangular format that was required for magazines.



Self-portrait by Fritz Henle, ca. 1938
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE HENLE ESTATE

**LEA LUBOSCHUTZ WITH HER STUDENT
RAFAEL DRUIAN**

Lea Luboschutz, the colorful, world-famous Russian violinist who was known to everybody as “Lubo,” taught at Curtis from 1927 to 1947. Standing next to her in the doorway of 1720 Locust Street is her student, sixteen-year-old Rafael Druian ('42), who already had a solo career by this time. Later, in 1990, he joined the Curtis faculty and remained until 2001.



FELIX SALMOND TEACHES LEONARD ROSE

The London-born Felix Salmond (1888-1952), one of the most distinguished cellists of his time, taught at Curtis from 1925 until 1943. A highly esteemed teacher, Salmond had eight students in 1937-38, including Leonard Rose ('38).



SAMUEL BARBER AND GIAN CARLO MENOTTI

In 1938 Gian Carlo Menotti (Composition '33) and Samuel Barber (Composition '34) were rising stars. Two of Barber's works had already received professional premieres, while Menotti's opera *Amelia Goes to the Ball* had been successfully premiered at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in 1937. Barber and Menotti met as students at Curtis in 1928 and spent most of the remainder of their lives as a couple.



HEALTHY MEALS FOR STUDENTS

During the 1937-38 school year Curtis established a new cafeteria on the fourth floor of 1720 Locust Street (now part of the Rock Resource Center) to provide cheap but healthy meals—a key service during the Depression. The young man with the tray is Richard Purvis (Organ '40). Seated at the table at right are Eleanor Blum Sokoloff ('38) and Eudice Shapiro ('35).

More Online

The complete series of Henle's photographs in the archives is on exhibit on the second floor of Curtis's main building and can be viewed online at www.curtis.edu/Archives.