



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Handling the job of arranging 70 performances in the upcoming summer series is the job of Stuart C. Hyke (left), managing director. Shown with him is Robert A. Dearth, director of cultural affairs.

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Programming: A finely tuned balancing act

'You'd have to be totally indifferent to music not to find something of interest in the current season. There will be 70 performances, offering a broad spectrum of talent. . . It's a sort of balancing act: If you're perceived to be too innovative, the traditional audience will feel abandoned. At the same time, it's vitally important that we attract newer audiences.'

— Stuart Hyke,
Meadow Brook managing director

Parking is still a

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"There were three natural amphitheatres on the grounds. The present site had the best features of the three: it was isolated from the rest of the campus, there was room for expansion, and accessibility from the road. However, it was near Mrs. Wilson's residence, and we naturally went to her with our plans. She simply said, 'I like music, too,' and we went out together to look at the site. The next day we started dynamiting stumps out of the ground." Karas' admiration for Mrs. Wilson is evident, and his voice softens when he speaks of her.

The site today is little altered from the site that Mrs. Wilson approved. Aside from the trees that have been planted, the hillside next to the pavilion was enlarged, and the front entrance was altered slightly so that the vista would "open up" as you drive up the dirt road that today leads to the ticket office.

"AT FIRST, THE plan was for all spectators to sit on the hillside listening to music being performed on a portable stage. The site is natural for a stage, and finally it was decided to erect the present pavilion for the first festival. The Rochester Community School District lent 1,000 folding chairs for the entire first season. This is just one example of the splendid

community cooperation from the start."

"Parking was, and still is, helter-skelter, and traffic is a recurring problem. The Oakland County Road Commission has been very cooperative. Periodically, someone will suggest VIP parking, but that's contrary to the spirit of the festival. Only symphony members have special parking spaces. For the rest, it's come one, come all," Karas noted.

Parking and traffic aren't the only perennial problem. "At the beginning, we had planned to use porta-johns. Things got so bad, though, that I remember the ladies desperately storming the men's facilities, which weren't as busy as the ladies," he said.

"Originally, we were dependent upon a well for water. One night, the well failed. At the intermission, Varner made the announcement, 'Ladies and gentlemen: there is no water available. However, there are plenty of trees available, so please disperse to the woods.' As he made the announcement, the Rochester Fire Department pulled up with a 1,000 gallon water tank and saved the day."

(Water lines have since been run to Meadow Brook, thanks to federal funds granted during the Carter administration; it had been established that there was insufficient water for adequate fire protection.)



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