

# THE PALIMPSEST

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Hope Glenn

The "Grand Closing Concert" of the Iowa State Normal Academy of Music was always an important occasion in Iowa City. During the five sessions that the Academy flourished from 1867 to 1871, it afforded unique social diversion for the young people who attended, as well as excellent musical training. But the public concert at the end of the six-weeks term was the climax upon which the efforts of the Academy and the interest of the community were concentrated. The Grand Concert on September 16, 1870, was no exception.

Long before the hour for the entertainment to begin, people were crowding into Market Hall on the southeast corner of Dubuque Street and Iowa Avenue. Their punctuality was generously rewarded. A varied program of choral selections, piano and violin solos, arias, cavatinas, and fanta-

sias was concluded with a rollicking "Laughing Trio" which sent the audience home in the best of spirits though the concert had lasted nearly three hours. But the principal feature of the long recital was Mozart's *Twelfth Mass*, "finely performed by a splendid chorus" of more than seventy voices. The most prominent parts of the oratorio were sung by instructors in the Academy, but two students — Miss Ida M. Kimball and Miss Hattie Glenn — were also honored with solo assignments.

In defiance of orders from Professor H. S. Perkins, head of the Academy, not to eat just before the concert, Hattie Glenn insisted on having her supper. Moreover, she wore a tight basque waist with bone stays and a corset similarly reinforced, contrary to the professor's injunctions. Nevertheless she seems to have acquitted herself with a very creditable performance. Indeed, she confirmed local opinion that with good training and experience she would some day be a prima donna.

To the boys and girls living in Iowa City sixty-five years ago, Harriet Hope Glenn was a jolly, carefree girl who participated in the normal exploits of youth. In her earlier years she had gone wading in Ralston Creek down by the railroad track near the old first ward schoolhouse. Later she joined her schoolmates in games of croquet on

the University campus and sometimes went boating on the Iowa River with the University boys. On one occasion, during music academy days, while riding her sorrel pony named Peanuts, she tore a big hole in her dress. And in that plight she appeared at the Academy quite unconcerned.

Hattie Glenn, as she was generally known, lived in Glenn Row, a group of two-story apartment houses owned by her father. Glenn Row, painted white and adorned with green shutters, was on the east side of Linn Street between Burlington and Court streets. But Mr. Glenn was not primarily a realtor. He had a hardware store on the northeast corner of Clinton and Washington streets.

Hattie was the second of four children: Adelaide, Harriet Hope, Carrie, and Robert. "They were a lovely, hospitable family — lively and full of fun. All of the children, with the exception of Carrie, were musically inclined. Both Addie and Hattie sang in the choir of the Presbyterian Church," when A. B. Cree was director. Hattie "was tall, rather plump, had light brown hair and rather small gray eyes", writes Mrs. Harriet A. Reno, a friend of schoolgirl days. "She was vivacious in manner and quite stunning in appearance." When she was "a very young girl she had a new brown suit and it was her desire to have a

pair of brown kid gloves to match that suit. At that time kid gloves were luxuries but I remember my joy in being able to give her a pair to match that wonderful suit and her joy in receiving them."

H. S. Perkins of the Music Academy lived in a Glenn Row apartment. That is how he happened to hear Hattie practicing her music lessons. Convinced that she had a voice worth developing, he invited her to enroll in his school. Her local success was so encouraging that her father was readily persuaded to send her first to Chicago for special instruction, then to Boston, and eventually abroad.

"The winter of 1875 found her in Paris, a hard working student who had come to succeed." Thence she went to Italy "where a new tongue and its vocalization must be acquired." She was introduced to Wartel by Marie Roze in 1875, with whom she studied about a year, as she did also with Mme. Viardot-Garcia. Then she went to Milan and finished with Lamperti.

In Europe, it is said, she thought she would rather be a pianist because she did not want to spend the time learning to sing. So she took piano lessons, until the instructor rapped her on the knuckles and she began to cry so hard she could not see to play. Her first impulse was to return

home, but she finally decided to remain in Europe and continue her vocal lessons.

Hope Glenn, as she was known in professional circles, made her operatic debut, her first appearance "beyond the guidance of teacher's hand", in Malta in 1879 when she sang as Pierotto in *Linda*. After singing in Milan, Florence, Paris, London, Dublin, and Edinburgh, she was chosen by Christine Nilsson, the Swedish opera singer, to tour with her as her principal support in England and America.

"She sang in 1882 with Mme. Nilsson in the principal cities between the two oceans, meeting her family for the first time in Pittsburgh, there crowning the laurel of fame with a father's blessing and the outpouring of a mother's boundless love."

It was in Pittsburgh that her family surprised her by their presence. As soon as she stepped on the stage she saw them lining the front seats and the "effect so unnerved her that for the first time in her life she nearly collapsed with stage fright."

In the fall of 1883 she returned to the United States and on this tour sang in Iowa City. Most popular in her repertoire were "The Last Dream", "You'd Better Ask Me", and the Scottish ballad "Caller Herrin". After several encores, to favor the enthusiastic approbation of her audience, she

placed "herself in comparison with the great Nilsson" in "Swanee River". "So sweet, so touching is the delicate pathos of the song", wrote one who heard her, "that we imperiously demand that again her labor shall be our pleasure." The Iowa City *Republican* observed that the character of the audience which greeted her return was best expressed by a thoughtful auditor who said, "if by some chance the Opera House and those who were in it last night had suddenly been blotted out, what would have remained of Iowa City?"

After the concert an informal reception was held at the Glenn home. The house was crowded, yet "without prompting or mistake" she recognized her old friends. For each there was a "cordial word of welcome and a clasp of the hand" from their "Queen of Song". Tom Jones was there — he who in their younger days in Iowa City had been one of a serenading quartet with George Smith, Hattie, and her sister Addie. Tom, who had also studied in Europe, was an ever-ready help in time of trouble. He deftly located mislaid articles as Hope fluttered about asking, "Tom, where's this?" and "Tom, where's that?" with the excitable French mannerisms she had acquired while abroad.

From Iowa City Miss Glenn went to New York City where she sang with Madame Nilsson.

Of the appearance there the New York *Tribune* commented, "The performances of Italian opera last night consisted of a repetition of 'Mignon' at the Metropolitan Opera House, and of 'La Sonnambula' at the Academy of Music. The largest and most brilliant audience was at the first-mentioned place where Madame Nilsson gave her admired impersonation of the stunted character which passes as Goethe's *Mignon*." Of Hope Glenn a New York correspondent said, "Her voice is one of the richest and sweetest of contraltos; so full of pathos one of our critics has rightfully spoken of it as a 'tearful voice.' "

In England she appeared chiefly in concerts and oratorios. When she sang in *The Messiah* at the Festival in Birmingham, the London *Times* declared that the week "has been, in every way, a brilliant success, and the town has been literally packed with people. The solos of Hope Glenn were rendered in grand style. She is our favorite festival singer."

Again the New York correspondent wrote, "Another lady is stirring the very souls of the music-lovers of London . . . During the fashionable season of London, Hope Glenn was the darling of London's most aristocratic and refined circles. A prevailing luxurious elegance demands that the hostess provide the very best of musical

attractions at her evening entertainment, and Miss Glenn became the charm of many a noble and notable gathering."

Hope Glenn married Richard Augustine Heard, son of one of Boston's oldest families, at a ceremony held at St. James Place in London. She was given in marriage by Arthur Seymour Sullivan, who, with his friend Gilbert, the librettist, produced the famous Gilbert and Sullivan light operas,

Her marriage, however, did not prove to be happy. Deserted after some years, she was thrown upon her own resources for support. Her concert days were over. In middle age she began maintaining herself by teaching music.

"Addie told me", said a friend, "that Hope's separation from her husband seemed to have killed her aspiration for the career she had planned. This was, of course, a great disappointment to all her family who had done so much to aid her preparation for that career."

From her home in London, Hope occasionally came to the United States to visit her sisters and brother who for the sake of their father's health had moved to Atlanta, Georgia. There Adelaide and Carrie had purchased a row of apartment houses which they rented to single men only. They called them the "Pickwick Apartments" af-

ter the Pickwick Club in Dickens's novel. But when the World War began, many of the Pickwickians enlisted and left the apartments vacant. Then married soldiers, seeking a place for their wives, applied at the Glenn apartments. And so the male seclusion was invaded. Presently a floor was devoted to married couples, and with them came the inevitable babies. The Pickwick Apartments became an anomaly.

At Atlanta, Hope Glenn liked to sit under the orange trees and pick the blossoms, which she would wind in wreathes about her head, and eat the fruit till she was satisfied. But eventually she always returned to London where her sisters sent her money for support, since she was no longer singing.

After the death of their mother, Addie and Carrie took one of the Pickwick Apartments. There Carrie died in 1921, and Addie two years later. The estate was divided between Hope and her brother in Oakland, California.

Hope Glenn witnessed a musical revolution during her lifetime. Her career went back to the days when queens sought musicians' favor and when Gilbert and Sullivan were crowding the theater with their operas; and forward to the time of jazz tunes over the radio.

LAURA JEPSEN