
Hodgson History and Bio

The University of Georgia School of Music began with the enterprising vision of Hugh Hodgson, who distinguished himself on the UGA campus first as a student and then as professor of music and chair of the newly established Department of Music. Hodgson's enthusiasm for all aspects of his art and his conviction that music was for everyone laid the foundation on which the small though well-conceived department grew into a nationally significant school proud to bear his name.

Hodgson was born in Athens on April 1, 1893, to Joseph Marshall Hodgson and Isabella Turner Hodgson. The Hodgson home was located near the Seney-Stovall Chapel, a popular concert venue, giving the family easy access to the musical life of Athens. Hodgson's early piano study was with his sister, Mabel Hodgson Gamble, an accomplished pianist who had studied in Berlin with Madame Varette Stepanoff. He made remarkable progress; at the age of 15 he won the first statewide music award given by the Georgia High School Association. After graduating from Athens High School in 1908, he followed his sister's lead, studying piano in Berlin with Madame Stepanoff and composition with Ralph Leopold.

Hodgson entered the University of Georgia in 1910, becoming a part of many campus activities. His college musical experience was limited to playing clarinet in the military band, but he remained active as a pianist, traveling to Berlin on two occasions to continue his study and making numerous recital appearances in the Athens and Atlanta areas. A month before his graduation, he presented a joint recital in New York with Belle Gottschalk, niece of the noted pianist and composer Louis Gottschalk. The recital was perhaps the most significant of his early career, establishing a connection with a well-known music personality.

After graduating from the University of Georgia in 1915, he returned to New York to study mathematics at Columbia University, organ at the Guilman Organ School with William Carl, and composition with Rubin Goldmark.

In 1925 Hodgson became musical director of the Lucy Cobb Institute in Athens and accepted a position as organist at the Second Baptist Church in Atlanta. Three years later, he became organist and choir director at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, a position he held for 41 years.

Meanwhile, University of Georgia Chancellor Charles Mercer Snelling had launched a three-year effort to establish a department of fine arts and music, which culminated in Hodgson's appointment as the University's first music professor in 1928. Between 1930 and 1941, four degree programs in music were developed, including



Hugh Hodgson in his studio

the University's first graduate music degree, the Master of Fine Arts. In 1938 the Fine Arts Building was constructed, providing a permanent home and prestige for the relatively new department.

The cultural life of Europe influenced Hodgson's philosophy about the value and place of the arts in society. He was convinced that the fine arts should be an integral part of each student's college education. Through his efforts Lamar Dodd was appointed to teach visual art; together they made art and music available to all University students. One of Hodgson's most enduring and valued contributions to the campus and the community was his Thursday evening series known as "Music Appreciation Hours." For 32 years he presented weekly lectureperformances during which he analyzed, discussed, and demonstrated salient features of the music. As chair of the Fine Arts Division, he established the practice of bringing famous personalities in the arts and humanities to campus, among them Robert Frost, who for many years was a regular visitor.

Over the years Hodgson's contributions to the University were numerous and significant. His teaching load included piano, music theory, music history, and music appreciation. He conducted the Men's Glee Club from 1928 to 1942 and the University Little Symphony Orchestra from 1941 until 1950. In 1938 he initiated a chamber music festival that endured for 22 years and brought many nationally prominent groups to campus. In 1951, in support of statewide music education, Hodgson initiated a high school music festival that brought students to the campus to perform in large groups. He was also instrumental in establishing at the University of Georgia

the first collegiate chapter of the Music Teachers National Association.

Hodgson's leadership in the fine arts extended throughout the state. For several summers he served as a special lecturer at Emory University, and in 1947 he helped establish a music department at the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia, now Georgia State University. In another effort to provide musical offerings to the state, Hodgson organized a series of concerts in 1940, which were presented at the University of Georgia and four other Georgia colleges. The series continued until 1958, with concerts presented on a rotating basis by the fine arts faculties at the five colleges. In a similar endeavor, Hodgson pioneered a series of music appreciation programs over radio station WSB. As a performer, Hodgson participated either as pianist or as conductor in more than 1,200 concerts throughout Georgia. Included were several appearances as guest soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and its predecessor, the Atlanta Youth Symphony. His interest in composition lasted throughout his life. His compositions included choral works, piano pieces, a piano trio, a concerto for piano and orchestra, and a ballet commissioned by the Atlanta Civic Ballet. Nationwide, Hodgson made an impact as both performer and teacher. From 1940 to 1946, he presented concerts and conducted master classes at colleges and universities in 18 states under the auspices of the Association of American Colleges. In 1943 he appeared as pianist in Chicago with the Roth Quartet, presenting the American premiere of the Shostakovich Quintet. The performance was later repeated in New York City. In 1953, Hodgson was featured in an article in Newsweek, evidence of the national recognition he had attained as an educator and musician.

Hodgson retired from the University System of Georgia in 1960, remaining as organist and master of choristers at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Atlanta, and continuing to teach and perform at a reduced level. He died on August 12, 1969, having made "music enjoyable to thousands who might have missed this pleasure and consolation" (Atlanta Constitution editorial, August 19, 1969).



Hugh Hodgson with the Roth Quartet



Annual Children's Concert: Hugh Hodgson with his fans



Hugh Hodgson (right) with Robert Frost