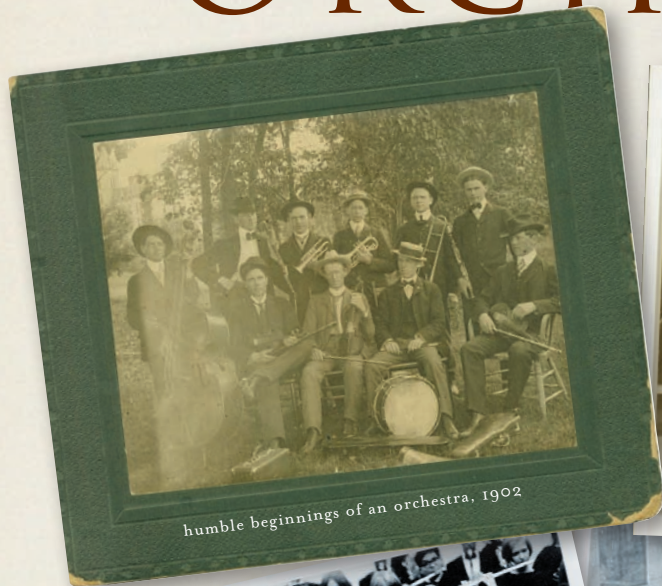


A brief history of THE ST. OLAF ORCHESTRA



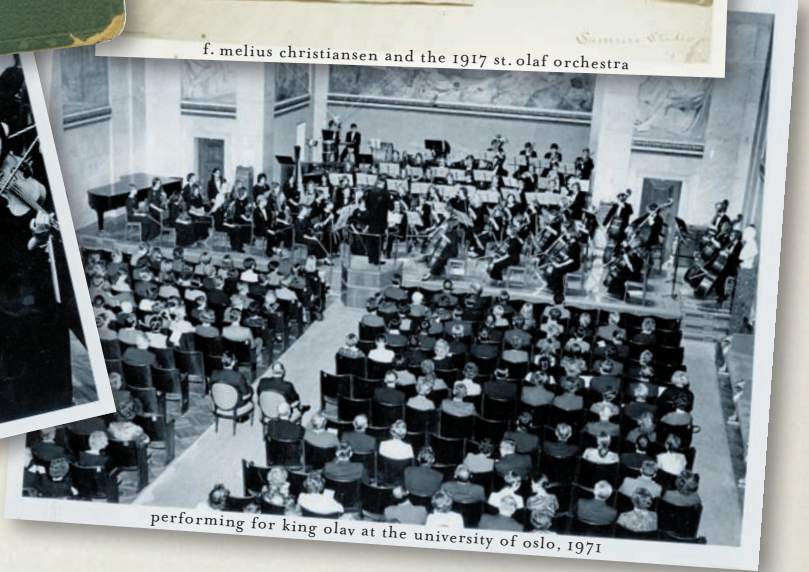
humble beginnings of an orchestra, 1902



f. melius christiansen and the 1917 st. olaf orchestra



the orchestra in concert, 1969



performing for king olav at the university of oslo, 1971

“**Y**OU CANNOT MAKE A SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS,” declared F. Melius Christiansen in 1906. The renowned founder of the St. Olaf Orchestra and St. Olaf Choir was referring to the reality, back then, that few string players came to college with formal training.

A little more than 100 years later, expectations for college and university orchestras have soared. And the St. Olaf Orchestra has exceeded them, becoming what Conductor Steven Amundson calls “a professional-level orchestra with a big heart.”

The 97-member ensemble has been featured at national and regional conventions, and *Time* magazine’s Richard Ostling has called it “one of the best college orchestras in the nation.” Author Garrison Keillor, host of the radio program *A Prairie Home Companion*, has compared the ensemble to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

“This imposing orchestra impressed us with its discipline and enthusiasm. The musicians provided fabulous solo performances, a balanced sound, and extraordinary rhythmic brilliance ... and mastered everything with compelling elegance and precision.”

— FROM A REVIEW FOLLOWING A PERFORMANCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL IN KOSICE, SLOVAKIA



steven amundson and the st. olaf orchestra in norway's 13th-century hamar cathedral ruins, 2005

GUIDED IN ITS EARLY DAYS by Christiansen, a European-trained violinist who emigrated from Norway, the St. Olaf Orchestra has long been an ensemble that is rich in international artistry and tradition. In the mid-1940s Conductor Donald Berglund and string teacher Beatrix Lien joined forces to lift the orchestra to heightened levels of proficiency. Lien, who also served as the orchestra's concertmistress, was a skilled pedagogue, and Berglund supplemented the training she and others at the college provided by hiring members of the Minnesota Orchestra to support their efforts.

The St. Olaf Orchestra went on its first tour in 1949, traveling through Minnesota and Iowa to encourage the development of high school string programs. Over the next few decades, the orchestra program grew and flourished, establishing a second orchestral group in 1975. This group, now called the Philharmonia, has developed into a fine symphony chiefly through the steadfast leadership of music faculty members Andrea Een, JoAnn Polley, and, more recently, Martin Hodel.

The St. Olaf Orchestra has been under the direction of Steven Amundson since 1981. The ensemble has become known for its enthusiasm and youthful passion while

striving for the highest professional standards. Under Amundson's direction, the orchestra has pursued a more demanding repertoire featuring works rarely performed by undergraduate orchestras, such as Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Strauss' *Don Juan* and Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Although most members of the orchestra are pursuing careers in music, many of the students are majoring in other disciplines such as mathematics, chemistry, biology, religion, political science, art, and a variety of foreign languages.

The ensemble has toured throughout the United States, Scandinavia, and Europe. It has appeared in some of Europe's finest concert halls and performed with some of the world's most noted conductors and artists. Annual tours of the United States have taken the orchestra to prestigious concert halls, including Alice Tully Hall in New York City and Chicago's Orchestra Hall.

The orchestra has received acclaim for its performances at regional and national music conventions and, in November of 2001, the orchestra was featured on *A Prairie Home Companion*. The ensemble also participates in the annual St. Olaf Christmas Festival, which is broadcast on PBS and public radio stations nationwide. 🦁