The Ossian Everett Mills Music Mission

A Guide to Community Music Outreach for Chapters of Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia
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Front Cover:
CHRISTMAS AT CITY HOSPITAL:
In the large group in Ward K is Mr. O. E. Mills of the New England Conservatory of Music, who arranged for the musical programme; the players and singers are in the rear, and in the front row are Miss Agnes Carlson and Miss Amy and Miss Eunice Allbright, whose solos were a feature of the afternoon. In the smaller photo little 5-year-old Frankie Higgins, a surgical case, is getting some Christmas gifts from Miss Carlson, while pretty Nurse Condon is carefully watching to see that her little patient is safe from harm.
“Each one must make a supreme personal endeavor to elevate others to the place where they may enjoy all that is true, beautiful, and abiding. Our rights, our duties, our responsibilities, our interests, and our thoughts must be mutually helpful. This was the spirit of thoughtfulness to others even at the expense of his own time, effort, and strength, which found expression in our beloved first president.”


Contributors to this Guide:
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INTRODUCTION

Over a century ago, the Sinfonia’s founder, Ossian Everett Mills, gave selflessly of his own time and effort to uplift his fellow man with music. This guide to the Ossian Everett Mills Music Mission (MMM) presents Mills’ own musical charity as the basis for chapter musical outreach.

A detailed project overview helps guide the chapter every step of the way in organizing its own community outreach projects. Written samples of communication make it easy for the chapter to ensure that the details of the project are well planned, and the enclosed report form gives the chapter a guideline for recording the success of its activities.

It is the hope of the Collegiate Province Representatives’ Council that chapters will embrace this project as a way to continue the work of the Fraternity’s founder, and reach out to those less fortunate with the beauty and power of song. At its January 1, 1999 meeting, the council approved the following resolution:

Whereas, Ossian Everett Mills, founder and first national president of the Sinfonia, established the practice of taking music to residents of the Boston city hospitals in the 1880's and continued this charity for nearly three decades afterward; and

Whereas, The Sinfonia seeks to instill in its members an appreciation of music’s power as a tool for elevating others; and

Whereas, Such an appreciation is best instilled when men demonstrate the virtue of sacrifice by giving of their time, effort, and strength to take music to those less fortunate; and

Whereas, The collegiate province representatives’ council seeks to provide chapters of Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia with a project that will facilitate members in their efforts to uplift their fellow man and continue the beneficent work of the Sinfonia’s founder; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the collegiate province representatives’ council embraces the Ossian Everett Mills Music Mission as a worthwhile project; and

Further, That members of the council will actively encourage chapters in their respective provinces to take part in the project; and

Further, That the council encourages all Sinfonians to be missionaries of song in the name of the Sinfonia’s founder and first national president, Ossian Everett Mills.

By providing the opportunity for every chapter to become involved in musical outreach, the MMM hopes to create generations of Sinfonians who have experienced the personal fulfillment that comes from sacrificing one’s own time for the uplift of others and who understand their art as a means toward the betterment of humankind.

John A. Mongiovi
Chairman, Collegiate Province Representatives’ Council (1997-2000)
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The *Mills Music Mission* has its origin in the work of the Sinfonia’s founder, Ossian Everett Mills. Mills and other early members of the Fraternity understood the true purpose of their art as the enrichment of the human spirit. They also recognized that music in America can be advanced only when men in the field of music have a true appreciation for the power of their art. Music lacks its power when the musician regards it not as a tool for the uplift of others, but instead as a means to his personal success and happiness. To help Sinfonians in the attainment of this goal, the Fraternity teaches sacrifice. For a man to focus on uplifting others, he must first understand that it is others who are important. Otherwise, he will view his art solely as a means of enriching himself. Burrell described how man’s perfection of his art is not an end in itself but rather a means to a greater end—elevating the spirits of others:

The principle that the development of manly qualities need not be stunted in the enthusiasm for one’s art has found a fine exemplification in the progress of the Sinfonia. It is a truism that as long as man loves but himself and his art he can never attain to the full measure of manhood or reach the sublimest heights of his art. He must seek to love men as brothers and art, not for the sake of art itself, but art as a means toward bringing all men up to that verdant plateau where their souls may be fed in very rejoicing in all that is true, beautiful, abiding.

Thus, the Sinfonia teaches a man to sacrifice so that he may perfect his art, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to elevating others. It is important, however, to not simply talk of uplifting others with music. Sinfonians must put these words into action in order to realize the true mission of our Brotherhood: the uplift of mankind. Ossian E. Mills wrote of this need to put our thoughts and words into practice:

This it is to be a man of the highest type. To be and not seem; to do and not simply to talk; to have the right ideal, the true motive and patiently to transform conduct in accordance with it.

Mills himself devoted significant amounts of his time to uplifting the souls of the less fortunate with the beauty and power of music. By 1881 he had originated the idea of visiting the residents of the Boston hospitals on Easter and Christmas day, and he carried on this charity for many years (near his death in 1920). Mills’ “Flower Mission,” as it came to be known, was awaited by the patients in the wards with much expectancy. As one of nurses commented, “What would Easter be without Mr. Mills, the music and the flowers?”

Mills was usually accompanied on his Mission by ten to twenty conservatory students who would provide vocal solos and quartets, strolling mandolin and guitar players, a small orchestra (usually the Euterpe Club of Boston which consisted of two mandolins, violin, cello and bells), and readers who would give recitations. The many hours spent at the bedside of the unfortunates brought returning hope and confidence to all. As the singers walked through the wards singing carols and hymns, each room which was the scene of silent suffering so many weary days of the year was changed into a place of good cheer and happiness.
Mills was also joined by assistants who gathered flowers used in the morning Easter and Christmas church services and distributed them throughout the hospitals. A report in the *New England Conservatory Quarterly* (May 1898) describes their work:

Easter Sunday witnessed again the beautiful charity that a favored few of the Conservatory students are privileged to dispense, in the annual visit to the city hospitals with flowers and music. About 50,000 flowers were given away, or some fifteen bushels, - enough to supply each patient with a generous cluster. There were pathetic scenes as the flower girls went from cot to cot, for many of the patients were from the streets, poor and discouraged as well as sick, and a kind word, except from their attendants, or a gift of anything so suggestive of beautiful sentiment as a flower, was almost a faded memory with them.

Newspaper reports tell of Mills’ efforts to take his Flower Mission to “nearly every hospital cot in the city.” He was sometimes aided in this effort by his brother, Clinton James Mills (who also worked in the administration of the conservatory). Each would visit different hospitals at the same time in order to spread the good cheer to as many patients as possible. As Mills’ Sinfonian Brothers, let us continue to assist him in spreading the message of music and good cheer. May we reawaken the muted song of the Sinfonia’s revered founder by carrying on his selfless work for the uplift of our fellow man.
SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT HOSPITALS

MUSICIANS TAKEN THERE BY O. E. MILLS

Help Cheer City and Homeopathic Patients — Day Observed at Other Institutions.

“’The Merry Christmas Bells Are Ringing.’ For many a day to come the patients of the city and homeopathic hospitals will remember with pleasure the lilting melody of the sweet Christmas carols which were given yesterday for their benefit.

For many years it has been the custom of O. E. Mills on Christmas morn Easter to visit the city and homeopathic hospitals with a party of vocal and instrumental musicians, who, by their selections, have very materially aided to make the day memorable in the lives of those who are unable to be out and enjoy the blessings of the gladdest season of the year.

Mills made his customary visit to the hospitals yesterday, and was accompanied by a quartette, consisting of Miss Stella B. Crane, soprano; Miss Mary E. Williams, alto; Mr. J. R. Meredith, tenor, and Mr. Garlow F. Dean, basso.

The instrumental music was furnished by the Bacterie club, H. E. Odell, first mandolin; W. H. Rice, second mandolin; Walter Loud, violin; L. M. Wakefield, ’cello, and Frank Dodge, bass.

Carols and recitations were given by Misses Amy Allbright, Agnes Carlson and Emily Ordway. The violin solos of Miss Eunice Allbright formed a particularly pleasing part of the programme.

Reaching the city hospital at 3 p.m., the party devoted two hours or more to the entertainment of those whose Christmas lay must otherwise have been a dreary one. Under the direction of the kind­matron, Lucy L. Brown, the visitors entered each ward, and while the sweet

Christmas carols were sung, the Misses Al­bright, Carlson and Ordway left freshly cut flowers, booklets and pretty Christmas cards on each cot, and had a pleasant word for each sufferer.

The music and the little gifts brought gladness to all hearts, smiles to many faces, and heartiest thanks. It was good to see the smiles on their faces as they realized that they had been remembered, and remembered, too, when they had perhaps been forgotten by others.

In most cases the musicians went into the wards and gave the music so that the patients could enjoy it most, but in some cases this was not practicable, and the songs and carols were rendered at the door, while the younger ladies of the party visited each cot and left some little reminder of the day in the hands of the patient, whose heart was made glad.

Now and then the party would come to a ward where a patient was very sick. For a moment the musicians would pause at the door, and then in a low tone would give one of the beautiful carols, and then pass on in silence to carry sunshine to the next ward.

The women patients were pleased with the little reminders of the day, and they invariably received them with smiles, and a gentle “Thank you,” accompanied by a look that spoke volumes.

Here and there, a strong man would be melted to tears by the memories caused by the music, a reminder, perhaps, of other Christmas days, when he was more happy.

To the patients, it was a season of rare enjoyment. Many things had been done by the hospital attendants, to make the day as pleasant for them as it could be made. The wards were decorated with Christmas emblems, and the attendants were kind and considerate. In many cases friends called, or sent in Christmas gifts, but the thing that touched their hearts most was the visit of Mills, and his party, the musical selections that they gave and the little gifts that were left on each cot.

In some cases a foreigner, unused to our customs, at first would look at the visitors with a cynical stare, then as he heard the melody of the carols, saw the gifts that were placed on his cot, felt the grasp of the hand of a visitor and heard the cordial “Merry Christmas,” he would realize that this was the true spirit of the season of gladness, and before the party left the room he would be looking at the visitors with the warmest admiration.

Newspaper clipping from the Boston Evening Record (April 12, 1909).
“Music exalts each Joy,
allays each Grief,
expels Diseases,
softens every Pain,
subdues the rage of
Poison and the Plague.”

-From *The Art of Preserving Health*
by John Armstrong (1709-1779).
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Planning the Event

Presenting the Idea

The Mills Music Mission begins in the chapter meeting. Review the historical background of the project. If possible, make copies of this guide for distribution to each member. This guide can also be found at http://www.sinfonia.org. Discussing the project’s historical beginnings will serve the dual purpose of presenting the project concept to the chapter and also introducing the chapter members to an aspect of Ossian Mills about which they may be unaware. Learning about the selfless activities of the Fraternity’s founder will be of great educational benefit to any chapter.

Determining the Scope of the Project

Determine the specific details of the project. Will the participants be Sinfonians only, or will other organizations be invited to participate? Will it involve singing only, or will there be an instrumental performance as well? Will the chapter be distributing flowers, cards, toys, etc. to the audience?

Approve several performance dates and locations. If the chapter does not have any ideas of where to take this project, appoint one or more individuals to investigate potential locations and report back to the chapter.

Some Suggested Locations for Musical Outreach:
- Nursing Home
- Retirement Village
- Hospital
- Children’s Ward/Orphanage

Setting it Up

Contact the locations that have been proposed by the chapter by phone or mail. Present the project idea, and give them the dates and times proposed by the chapter. Determine which of these dates will work for them. Try to arrange performances at several locations on the same day.

Finalizing the Details

Report to the chapter on the results of the conversations with the various locations. If you have contacted several different locations, have the chapter determine dates and times at which they all can be visited. Make a final determination of date(s) and time(s), who will attend, who will be approached for involvement, who will be approached for contributions of flowers, cards and toys, etc. Discuss the selection of music. To encourage participation, select music with which the audience will be familiar. Determine who will be responsible for selecting, distributing and rehearsing music (the chapter music director, or possibly a faculty Sinfonian). Set a rehearsal schedule. Appoint individuals to be responsible for contacting other organizations, contacting the locations to confirm the dates and times, contacting the media, and securing donations of items for distribution at the project site.

Contacting other Organizations

Participation in this project does not have to be limited to Sinfonians only. Try to involve faculty, prospective members, and members of other campus or community organizations. This is a great way to solidify relations with other music organizations such as Sigma Alpha Iota, Delta Omicron, Kappa Kappa Psi, Mu Phi Epsilon and CMENC. Also, many non-music fraternities and sororities have community service requirements that might be fulfilled by such a project. Inviting these organizations to participate in this project can be a great way to increase Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia’s visibility on your campus and to let others know of the great work being done by Sinfonia.
Contacting the Media
When the details of the project have been finalized, notify the media of the event. Try sending a sample press release to community and campus newspapers, television stations, radio stations, etc. (a sample press release is attached). Again, this is a great way to bring more visibility to Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia on campus and in the community and will help spread the word of the Fraternity’s charitable work.

Securing Donations
To add a special touch to your performance, try securing donations of flowers, toys, and cards for distribution. Flowers are appropriate for most older audiences, and toys make a great impact on young children. Inexpensive CD’s are also a great gift for children. You can purchase or even make your own personalized cards for distribution (a sample card is attached). Be sure to verify with the location of your performance that these are appropriate additions to the project.

Following Up
As the performance date approaches, confirm the event with the various locations by telephone or letter. Report regularly to the chapter on the status of the project. Who will be participating? What media has been contacted? Have donations of flowers, toys, etc. been secured? REHEARSE!!

The Event
At the event itself, it is important to be well organized and efficient. At some point during the performance, introduce the participants and say a few words about the Fraternity. It may be appropriate, depending on the audience, to talk about the project itself and how it is a continuation of the work of the Fraternity’s founder (a sample script for reading at the event is attached). Remember to smile and to HAVE FUN while singing and socializing with the individuals in the audience after your performance. Document the event with photographs and carefully record all positive comments by audience members so that they can be placed in the final report of the project as an indication of the chapter’s good work. Designate someone to count the audience members for inclusion in the project report.

Follow-up
Review the event in the chapter meeting and give each individual a chance to give his ideas on the event, how it made him feel, the presumed impact it had on others, and how it can be improved. Report the event with the enclosed report form or in a format of your choice. Send a copy to the National Headquarters, including any photographs or comments. Submit a report for print in a Fraternity publication.
SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia

[CHAPTER NAME] Chapter

For Immediate Release

[DAY, DATE]

Contact:  [NAME]
          [ADDRESS]
          [PHONE]

[CITY]—The [CHAPTER NAME] Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia, the national men’s music Fraternity, will be helping to brighten the day of the residents of [HOSPITAL, RETIREMENT HOME, ETC.] by presenting a program of music on [DAY, DATE]. The day’s events are part of the Ossian Everett Mills Music Mission, a national program honoring Sinfonia’s founder by reenacting his own charity in the hospitals of Boston, Massachusetts over a century ago. In addition to taking the gift of music to the residents, the chapter members will also be distributing [FLOWERS, TOYS, ETC.] to the residents. [INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOCAL CHAPTER]

** NOTE: The information about the Mills Music Mission can be easily expanded using material from the Introduction and Background of the project guide.
SAMPLE SCRIPT

If it is appropriate to the setting, this sample script may be used as an optional reading during a musical performance. This narrative may be shared between several speakers.

**Narrator:** Good morning/afternoon/evening ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for listening to our performance. My name is *name*, and we are the *chapter name* of Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia, the national men’s music fraternity, from *name of sheltering institution*.

Founded in Boston in October 1898, the only requirement of eligibility for inclusion into our brotherhood is a love of music. Today, we are sharing our love and gift for music with you in honor of the founding father of our Fraternity, Ossian Everett Mills. In the 1880’s, Father Mills began taking music to residents of the Boston hospitals on Easter and Christmas day with a small group of young men and women. Continuing his Mission for nearly thirty years, Mills was the embodiment of the Fraternity’s philosophy that we must seek to develop our art, not for the sake of art itself, but as a means toward elevating others. It is this belief that music is a tool for uplifting our fellow man that brings us here today. We hope that our gifts of music and cheerfulness today have served this purpose and have been a blessing in your lives.
Ossian Everett Mills Music Mission Report Form

Please submit this form or a written narrative of your project for publication.

Date(s) of Performance(s):

Location(s) of performance(s) (include location name, city and state, etc.):

How many participants were present? What chapter(s) and/or province(s) were involved? What other organizations, if any, participated?

Describe the music performed. Was it vocal and/or instrumental? Was music other than Sinfonia songs included?

How many audience members were present?

Describe the general atmosphere of the event:

Was the sample script used?

Were any items distributed as part of the project? If so, please describe.

Was the media contacted? Include copies and/or recordings and describe any coverage.

Attach any supporting documents that describe your project. Please include any “thank you” letters, photographs, audience comments, and recollections of participants.

Send this report form to: Mills Music Mission
c/o Phi Mu Alpha, Sinfonia
10600 Old State Road
Evansville, IN 47711-1399