

# Merchant's House Museum

Newsletter

Fall/Winter 1997

## Schubertiad Concerts Recreate Musical Soirées

In the cities of 19th-century Europe, the most important venue for musical performances was the salon. In New York City, it was the parlor.

On November 17, 18, and 19, at 8 p.m., the Greek Revival parlors of the Merchant's House Museum will be the setting for a Schubertiad, a recreation of the intimate musical soirées that Franz Schubert held in Vienna's fashionable homes.

The *Schubertiad*, the first in a series of authentic 19th-century concerts planned by the Museum, was designed by Kenneth Hamrick, historic keyboard specialist. He will perform the music of Schubert on a Broadwood grand pianoforte (1840) and conduct The American Virtuosi, who will also perform on period instruments. Tenor Philip Anderson will sing songs by Schubert.

Proceeds from the concerts will benefit the restoration of the Tredwell family's 1840's Nunns & Fischer square grand piano, original to the House. The restored piano will be used in future salon concerts.

The Broadwood grand pianoforte, an artcase piano with gold leaf and exotic wood veneers, will be on generous loan from Klavierhaus, one of New York's City's premier dealers and restorers of fine vintage artcase pianos.

This evening of music by the first great Romantic composer, Franz Schubert, celebrates the 200th anniversary of his birth year, and will include intimate readings from his diary and from the journals of his peers.

Tickets are \$100 for each benefit performance, which includes a champagne reception; reservations are required. Seating in the parlors is limited. Please make your reservations early by calling (212)-777-1089.

## Countdown to Astor \$1 million Challenge Grant Deadline

This past spring, The Vincent Astor Foundation made an unprecedented \$1 million Challenge Grant to the Merchant's House to create our first-ever Endowment Fund. To receive the grant, the Merchant's House must raise \$500,000 from its members and friends by the Challenge Grant deadline: Monday, December 15, 1997. In the critical weeks ahead, every dollar we receive to help meet the Challenge will be matched by two dollars from the Astor Foundation, tripling the value of each and every gift.

Now, for the first time since the House was preserved as a Museum, in 1936, all of us can play a part in making history for the Merchant's House. It is up to us to guarantee, today, that the Merchant's House survives for present and future generations.

Already, hundreds of individuals have made gifts, including each member of the Museum's Board. These gifts, together with grants from a group of dedicated foundations and corporations, have brought us to within \$150,000 of the Challenge Grant goal.

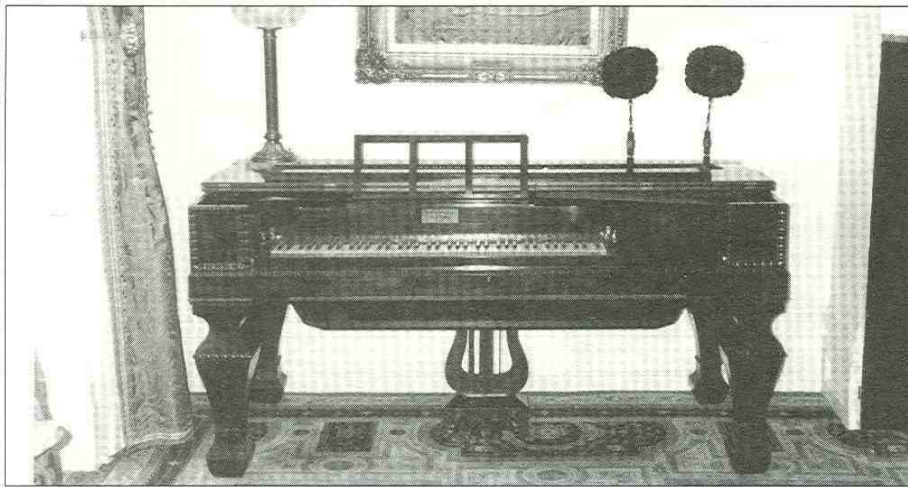
As the 21st century approaches and the manner of 19th-century life fades from living memory, the importance of the Merchant's House grows ever greater. Please help us now, as the deadline approaches, to meet the Astor Foundation Challenge. Your tax-deductible gift, at whatever level you can afford, will make a difference, as never before.

With sincerest thanks,  
Margaret Halsey Gardiner  
Executive Director



Mrs. Vincent Astor, longtime friend and supporter of the Merchant's House Museum, shown here in a 1982 photograph with the actress Lillian Gish at the Museum's 150th anniversary Holiday Party.





*The 1840's rosewood piano that belonged to the Tredwell family. The proceeds of the Schubertiad concerts will go towards the restoration of the piano to its original playing condition.*

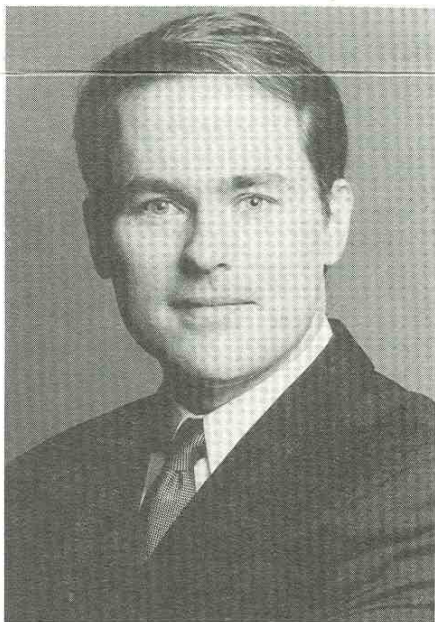
## 19th-century Music as It Was Meant to Be Heard

by Kenneth Hamrick

When members of The American Virtuosi and I present the music of Franz Schubert in the period rooms of the Merchant's House, we will be creating not just a concert, but a 19th-century musical experience.

It is difficult to think of another New York City setting that would provide a more authentic environment for the appreciation of a musical performance on period instruments.

This is the way that this music was originally heard, at a small gathering of music lovers in an elegant home through an intimate encounter of the audience, performers, and the music.



The 19th century instruments we will be using are quite different from their modern counterparts, especially the 1840 Broadwood grand pianoforte. Rather than focusing on force of tone and speed of execution, players explore a wide variety of tone colors. These instruments offer a range of expressive or dramatic sonorities and enlightened interpretive possibilities. By approaching the music authentically with instruments of the period and employing appropriate historic playing styles, we can interpret the music with a fresh vitality, impact, and freedom.

We are looking forward to being with you at the Merchant's House where the sights and sounds of the 19th century will surround us.

*The program of The Schubertiad will include*

*Piano Trio in E-flat, Opus 100*

*Notturmo in B-flat, Opus 148*

*Songs from Die Schone Mullerin*

*Kenneth Hamrick, music researcher, keyboard soloist, and conductor, has performed in concert halls throughout the world. His innovative approach to music in socio-historic perspective has won critical acclaim, and has made possible significant revivals of music previously unknown to modern audiences.*

*He is the founder of The American Virtuosi, a group that explores music of the past, using historical interpretation, instruments, and techniques. The group consistently wins the praise of critics for its impeccable precision and musicianship.*

## The Museum's Piano Proves To Be A Rare Treasure

Of course we always knew it was old; the Tredwell's square grand piano manufactured by the New York firm of Nunns & Fischer dates from the mid-1840's. But recent examination by experts in piano restoration revealed a surprising fact. The piano has all of its original parts, including all of its stringing, hammers with their original leathers, and even the parchment bushings that align each note to its action. We are assured that the piano can be restored using these original parts.

This a virtually unheard of phenomenon. Most instruments of this vintage that have been restored, including similar pianos in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, have had to be fitted with replacement parts. An interesting feature of this rare piano is a reed organ (harmonium) which can be combined with the keyboard action, creating a musical effect unknown to 20th-century listeners.

Square grand pianos with their six-and-a-half octave keyboards, sometimes with a harmonium, were the most common form of domestic piano until the end of the 19th century. They were the status symbol of the time; every well-to-do family had one, and refined young ladies learned to play them as well as they could. In each issue of Godey's Lady's Book, a popular 19th-century women's magazine, one finds a simple piano arrangement of a sentimental song — tunes which may well have been played on the Tredwell piano, for numerous issues of the magazine exist in the collection of the Tredwell's personal effects.

When the restoration is complete, the Tredwell's 19th-century piano, essentially in its original condition, will be used to present salon concerts in the parlors.

We look forward to the day when we can hear the sound of the instrument that was part of the daily life of the Tredwell family.

*"Who is there who is not fond of music? When we hear a lively tune we are immediately animated; it makes us feel lively and cheerful. Soft music, on the other hand, soothes and softens our passions; we associate with all that is lovely and beautiful."*

From the copybook of Sarah Tredwell, March 16, 1853.  
Written when Sarah was 17 years old.



## Museum Calendar

**Friday, October 31, at 8 p.m.**

### **Halloween Reading**

Gregory St. John spooks the audience in his annual reading of Charles Dickens's *Sikes and Nancy* and *Captain Murderer*. \$10, members \$7, ghosts free. Reservations.

**Sunday, November 9, at 4 p.m.**

### **Reading from Vanity Fair**

Pam Garelick returns to read from William Thackeray's novel. Enjoy mulled wine after the reading. \$10, members \$7. Reservations.

**Friday, November 14, and Saturday, November 15, at 8 p.m.**

**Sunday, November 16, at 4 p.m.**

### **Consuming Passions**

A comedic musical take on 19th-century health reformers Sylvester Graham and Lydia Pinkham. Performed by Margery Cohen and Joseph Neal. \$12, members \$9. Reservations.

**Monday, November 17, Tuesday, November 18, and Wednesday, November 19, at 8 p.m.**

### **Schubertiad**

Kenneth Hamrick and The American Virtuosi perform the music of Franz Schubert on period instruments. Champagne reception. \$100. Proceeds will benefit our piano restoration. Reservations.

**Monday, December 1, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

### **Symposium**

A symposium celebrating the 100th anniversary of the publication of Edith

Wharton's and Ogden Codman's *The Decoration of Houses*, in conjunction with The Beaux Arts Alliance and Classical America. H. Stafford Bryant, Jr., co-editor of the new edition of the book; Eleanor Dwight, biographer of Edith Wharton; Richard Slavin, archivist, F. Schumacher & Co.; and architectural historian David Garrard Lowe. 115 East 74th Street. A reception will follow. \$20, members \$10. Reservations.

**Wednesday, December 10, 6 to 8 p.m.**

### **Annual 19th-century Holiday Party**

Continuing a grand and colorful tradition in the neighborhood, the House is alive with music, refreshments, and holiday spirit. Tour the Museum and enjoy "the best 19th-century holiday party in town" (*The New York Times*). \$20, members free. Reservations.

**Sunday, December 14, at 4 p.m.**

### **A Christmas Carol**

Another in our series of annual holiday events is Charles Dickens's classic story, "A Christmas Carol," read by Gregory St. John in the parlor by the decorated tree. \$10, members \$7. Reservations.

**Sunday, December 21, at 2 & 3 p.m.**

### **"A Visit from St. Nicholas"**

Curator Mimi Sherman gathers the children around the tree for her annual reading of Clement Clark Moore's 19th-century classic. Refreshments. \$6, members \$3.

**Thursday, January 1, 1 to 4 p.m.**

### **New Year's Day Reception**

Our celebration of New Year's Day continues the 19th-century tradition of "calling" on family and friends on January 1. Refreshments. \$6.

### **Palladio and the Palladians**

Four illustrated lectures by architectural historian David Garrard Lowe.

Thursdays at 4 p.m. The first three lectures will take place at 119 East 74th Street, the fourth at the Merchant's House Museum.

**January 15**

The Venetian Background

**January 22**

The Early Palladians

**February 5**

Villas, Palaces, and Churches

**February 12**

*The Palladians in England, Ireland, and America.* A reception will follow.

\$100 for the series, \$30 each lecture.

For reservations, call (212)-639-9120.

*The Merchant's House Museum is New York City's only family home preserved intact from the 19th century and Greenwich Village's only historic house museum. A rowhouse built in 1832, it is among the finest surviving examples of late-Federal and Greek Revival architecture of the period. Home to prosperous merchant Seabury Tredwell and family from 1835 to 1993, the National Historic and New York City landmark house, which has been a museum open to the public since 1936, reflects in its original textiles, furniture, and decorative arts the lifestyle of a typical New York City upper-middle-class family of the last century. Open Sunday through Thursday, 1 to 4 p.m.. Admission is \$3, members free. Group tours by appointment.*

## \$1 MILLION ASTOR CHALLENGE DEADLINE DEC. 15

The Vincent Astor Foundation will contribute \$2 for every \$1 you give to the Merchant's House Endowment Fund Campaign. We urgently need your help to meet the Grant's \$500,000 matching requirement by December 15.

Yes! I/We want to help the Museum meet the Astor Foundation Challenge with a gift at the following level:

☐ \$50   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$250   ☐ \$500   ☐ \$1,000   ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: Gifts may be pledged and paid over two years. Please check here ☐ to receive a pledge form.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form and your check to Merchant's House Museum, 29 East Fourth Street, New York, NY 10003.

Gifts and pledges must be received by December 15. Contributions are tax deductible.



## The World Was Our Oyster

Throughout the afternoon and evening of October 4, they came to East Fourth Street — by the thousands — to take part in the first New York City Oyster Festival ever. By all counts — pints, pearls, people — it was a resounding success!

So many helped in so many ways . . .

Many thanks — to our founding sponsors Guinness Import Company, Gotham Seafood, the Irish-Georgian Society, the Village Voice, and Draw the Line.

To the Historic House Trust of New York City and the City of New York/Parks and Recreation.

To the Goldman family and the Estate of Sol Goldman, for generously donating the use of the lot next to the Museum.

To volunteers Fran Bernstein, Adrienne Booth, Maryanne Bottini, Beau Brendler, Christine Colarusso, Michael Connors, Anne Fairfax, Hugh Fremantle, Jeffrey Griffin, Christina Grinnell, Lindsay Hearn, Jane Hickey, Dave Kappes, Megan Keiler, Ashley Kineon, Mary Knapp, Cynthia Lambert, Jennifer and Darryl Lang, Ariane Maclean, Beth Martin, Carolyn Marshall, Stephen Nahley, Richard Sammons, Kerry Stickweh, and Jerl Surratt.

To our T-shirt salespersons extraordinaire, Gardiner Anderson, DJ Edgerton and his mother, Ezra Kahn, Nick Louras, and Gabe Stein.

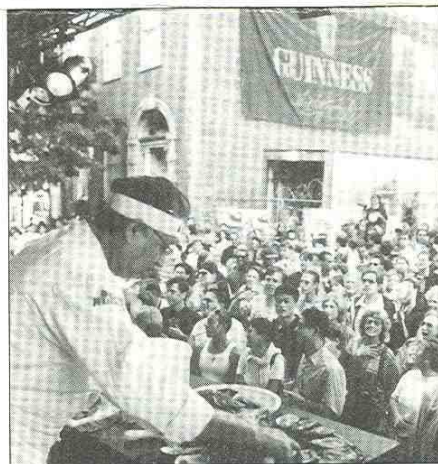
To all who made generous contributions to the Festival: About Time, Aer Lingus, BBar and Grill, Michael Connors Antiques, Ed Sullivan's, Evergreen Studios, Fairfax and Sammons Architects, Noel Ford of Dublin, Frank Horan Liquors, Mark Fahrer

Caterer, Globe, the Harlem Globetrotters, Hard Rock Cafe, IMAX Theater, Katy Kane Antiques, The Library of America, Jennifer and Darryl Lang, Marion's Continental Lounge and Restaurant, Mexican Radio, Neuman and Bogdonoff, Joanna Pessa, Potted Gardens, The Public Theater, Revlon, Rhubarb Home, Studio Sofield, Time Cafe, Travel Holiday, and Tower Books.

To all East 4th Street residents, and our friends at Art and Industrial Design, BBar and Grill, Naked Ape, Plantworks, Cafe la Fontaine, and Tower Books.

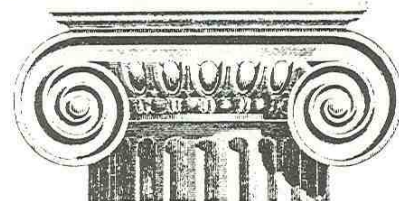
To Swift Hibernian Lounge and the "bold man who first ate an oyster".

To the thousands of Festival goers — and to the 16,000 oysters that generously donated their lives.



*Alanzo Almedia competes in the Oyster Shucking Championship as the crowd looks on.*

Photo by Stephanie King Cantor



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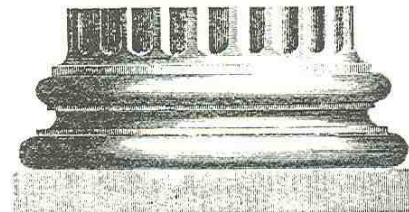
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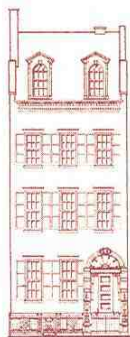
THE HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST OF NEW YORK CITY

*Merchant's House Museum is the bi-annual newsletter of the museum.  
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