



Stefano R. Ceo - *Education and Religion*

Stefano R. Ceo, the oldest of ten children, was born in 1899 in Rutigliano, Italy and studied at the music conservatory in Bari. Drafted into the Italian Army, he saw front line duty against Austria and also played in the band. After three years of service, he came to New York City where he attended City College of New York, paying for his education by copying music for a penny a page and playing clarinet in pit orchestras for Broadway shows.

In 1924 he came to Wheeling where he was hired to play in the pit orchestra of Earl Summers, Sr. He became Music Director at then Triadelphia District High School, where during his service of 35 years the band he directed won first place 10 years in a row in the West Virginia State Band Championship competition. He also formed an orchestra at Mount de Chantal Academy, where he met his future wife, musician and music teacher Clara Little.

The greatest triumph he and his young musicians enjoyed took place in 1933 when they walked off with first place national honors in Evanston, Illinois, beating out some of the finest bands from some of the largest cities in the country. His dedication to his students was manifested in his determination toward excellence. He consistently pushed them to high levels of performance and challenged them with music not attempted by comparable organizations. The quality of the bands and orchestras he produced and the awards they won, plus the accomplishments of so many of his students in the field of music attest to his outstanding dedication.

He also founded the Wheeling Junior Symphony Orchestra and an excellent summer music camp at Oglebay Park. Respected in musical circles around the country, he spent a number of summers teaching music camp at the highly-regarded Interlochen Academy in Michigan. A deeply religious person, he taught music at St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage in Elm Grove and directed the parish choir.

His contributions to the wider community included directing the Triadelphia band in the Wheeling Christmas Parade every year and having them play for draftees leaving for service in WWII and for employees at Wheeling Foundry when they were cited for excellence in war production.

A former student has praised him for his “love of music second to no other man I have ever known and a love for passing on his knowledge, especially to the young people he taught and directed in band and orchestra.”