

Living Arts

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BSO recording from 1906 will air tomorrow

By Geoff Edgers
GLOBE STAFF

For a century, the moment was nothing more than a scribbled entry on a long forgotten studio ledger. Four trombonists, billed as the Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Quartet, gathered in Camden, N.J., in the winter of 1906. Huddled over a large, metal horn, they recorded a short pop ditty, "The Kerry Dance."

Tomorrow, thanks to a Florida record collector and a serendipitous turn of events, that song — believed to be the earliest known recording featuring members of the BSO — will be played on the radio for the first time. After WGBH found out about it earlier this week, the station included "The Kerry Dance" as part of its Sunday broadcast, which takes place exactly 125 years, to the day, after the BSO's first concert in 1881.

"Even if it sounded bad, I'd still be thrilled," said Brian Bell, who produces the BSO broadcasts. "But I think it sounds great."

Little is known about the recording sessions that led to "The Kerry Dance." Three of the players, Carl Hampe, August Mausebach, and Leroy Kenfield, were longtime members of the BSO. The fourth trombonist remains unknown.

Together, they went to Victor's studios in Camden for a pair of sessions in January 1906. The single-sided record issued in April sold for 60 cents, about \$14 in today's dollars.

"The Kerry Dance" is likely named for the county in Ireland. The BSO quartet version is an instrumental, with a gloomy middle passage played in a minor key before the trombonists revert to the faster tempo of the first sections. (The song has such melancholy lyrics as "Time goes by and the happy years are dead.")

"You can hear the rich bass, you can hear the dynamics, you can hear that this is clearly a group that plays together a lot," said Douglas Yeo, the BSO's veteran trombonist.

He spoke from the living room of his home in Lexington after showing off the

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Carl Hampe, August Mausebach, and Leroy Kenfield recorded "The Kerry Dance" (top) with an unknown player.

