

# The Society of American Archivists / Performing Arts Roundtable News

Issue for April 2002

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*[The Performing Arts Roundtable: Encourages the exchange of information on historical and contemporary documentation of music, dance, theater, motion pictures, and other performance media. (from the SAA Web site)]*

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**Roundtable Chair:**

La Nina Clayton  
Special Collections  
George Washington University  
202/994-7549  
[lanina@gwu.edu](mailto:lanina@gwu.edu)

**Roundtable Newsletter Editor:**

George Bain  
Archives & Special Collections  
Ohio University  
740/593-2713  
[bain@ohio.edu](mailto:bain@ohio.edu)

**Associate Editor**

Ashley Yandle  
Special Collections Branch  
North Carolina State Archives  
919/733-3952, ext. 23  
[ashley.yandle@ncmail.net](mailto:ashley.yandle@ncmail.net)

## *Table of Contents*

- **Message from the Roundtable Chair.....2**
- **News Items.....2**
- **Reports from the Field.....3**
  - **Minnesota Orchestra Archives 4**
  - **Selected Performing Arts Archives Web Sites 6**
- **Editor's Corner.....10**

# *Message from the Roundtable Chair*

## **Words for Spring 2002**

By La Nina Manaigo Clayton

### **Fare thee well**

Thank you for allowing me to serve as chair of the Performing Arts Round Table for the past two years. In such time I've had an opportunity to meet with members, to learn about the interesting collections in your care, and to experience the organization from a different perspective. I hope that each and every one of you takes the opportunity to serve the Society and your colleagues by chairing a roundtable, editing a section newsletter, or, your schedules permitting, serving on a committee! Likewise your support is needed by the Performing Arts Roundtable so keep submitting articles to the newsletter, attending the annual roundtable meeting, and submitting session proposals.

The Society is only as good as its membership. To that end I would like to thank George Bain and Ashley Randle for their continued support of the Roundtable. Also, many thanks are due to Dr. Thomas Battle, Council Liaison, for his sage advice and cooperation. I look forward to seeing you in Birmingham.

## *News Items*

### **NIPAD Conference**

The National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance (NIPAD) is holding a conference in Miami, FL on June 19-20 to discuss the program and the impact it has made. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trust, NIPAD has greatly aided the documentation and preservation of dance in the United States. The NIPAD conference will precede the Dance/USA Roundtable conference. For more information, contact Greg Ruffer, Program manager, at 407-898-8458 or <gruffer@danceusa.org>.

### **Hand New Performing Arts Working Group Is Announced**

Internet2 and the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) are co-sponsoring a working group designed to propose standards and best practices for documenting, archiving, and retrieving the recordings of performances such as live theatre, musical compositions, and dance. According to the proposed charter of the "Performance Archive and Retrieval Working Group," the group will also research existing technologies and practices for recording and archiving events; identify standards for capturing digital audio and video; identify technologies for archiving, searching, delivery, and presentation; and host a workshop to disseminate results of best-practices and standards proposals. Members of the working group will be expected to participate in bi-

monthly conference calls and conduct follow up activities between conference call meetings. Working group meetings will also be held in person at Internet2 member meetings, CNI task force meetings and other appropriate venues.

The new working group is expected to define goals to be met within a one-year period, at which time the group will evaluate its progress and determine whether to set new goals. If you are interested in joining the working group, contact Ann Doyle, the manager of the Internet2 Arts and Humanities Initiatives at [adoyle@internet2.edu](mailto:adoyle@internet2.edu).

### **National Film Preservation Foundation Awards Film Preservation Grants to 26 Archives**

The NFPF announced film preservation grant awards to 26 archival centers in late March. A review of the list shows some of the grants will preserve films that document the performing arts. For more information check the NFPF web site <[http://www.filmpreservation.org/news\\_federalgrants\\_02.html](http://www.filmpreservation.org/news_federalgrants_02.html)> or contact Barbara Gibson (510-531-4521, [barbara@webbnet.com](mailto:barbara@webbnet.com))

### **Two Short Items**

The Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center is sponsoring a series of events April 19-20, 2002. The events will include a slide presentation by artists Dorothea Rockburne and Susan Weil, a tour of the Lake Eden campus in Black Mountain, NC, a screening of the documentary film Black Mountain College: A Thumbnail Sketch and a panel discussion moderated by Robert Neufeld, writer and historian. Participants in the panel discussion will include Black Mountain College alumni Nick Cernovitch (1948–52, theater, lighting designer), Dorothea Rockburne (1950s, artist), Marie Tavroges Stilkind (1951–54, editor), Leslie Paul Symington (1940–42, actress, art researcher), Susan Weil (1948–49, 1951, artist), and Alma Stone Williams (summer 1944, humanities professor). For more information please visit the Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center web site at <http://www.blackmountaincollege.org/bmcmac/news.html>.

The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain will host the exhibition Black Mountain College: Experimenting with Power, October 8, 2002-January 13, 2003. Information about the exhibition will soon be available at <http://museoreinasofia.mcu.es/>.

## ***Reports from the Field***

Editor's Note: This section is intended to be an avenue for the exchange of information to members of the roundtable about collections or other topics of importance on the performing arts. Leslie Czechowski and Helice Koffler volunteered these pieces following publication of the last issue, for which the editors express our deep gratitude. Now as then the mailbox is now open for proposals for the next issue.

Czechkowski discusses the trade-offs—both the opportunities and the challenges--that face an archivist working on an organization’s archives that are housed in an academic-based repository. She points out the trade-offs work both ways (in some cases things might go better were the records back with the organization) but demonstrates the archives of the Minnesota Orchestra and parallel performing arts collections at the University of Minnesota offer researchers a rich trove for use.

Koffler has prepared an annotated bibliography of web sites devoted to the performing arts. The possibilities were numerous but she focused “on sites that provided online directories and/or virtual union catalogs for performing arts repositories in North America and the United Kingdom.” It is to be hoped this bibliography provides a service by identifying a broad cross-section that will prove useful to members of the roundtable and colleagues with whom you may chose to share it.

## **University of Minnesota Manuscripts Division: Performing Arts Archives: Minnesota Orchestra Archives**

*By Leslie Czechkowski*

The Performing Arts Archives contains various collections from arts groups in the state of Minnesota with the purpose of preserving records relating to the history of theatre, music, dance, and associated organizations. Its goal is to document as fully as possible the activities of individuals and groups in both professional and amateur performing arts throughout the state. Among its collection are:

- ***Guthrie Theatre*** records (including production materials, administrative files, and videotapes)
- ***Minnesota Dance Theatre*** archives that document the activities of MDT and its successor, the Pacific Northwest Ballet
- scenic backdrops renderings from ***Twin Cities Scenic Design Studios***, Minneapolis; the ***Great Western Stage Equipment Co.***, Kansas City, Missouri; the ***Holak Collection***.

Images from these collections are available online at the *Scenery Collections Database*  
[<http://digital.lib.umn.edu/scenery/>]

- archives of the ***Minnesota Orchestra***. Included in the collection are the records of the Orchestral Association, audio recordings in various formats, publications (including bound and unbound programs), historical memorabilia, posters, scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from the first 60 years of the Orchestra, and thousands of photographs, negatives, and slides that document the entire 100 years of the Orchestra’s existence.

Having records of such diverse arts organizations in one location provides exciting research opportunities for students, faculty, and researchers. But having an organization’s archives in a

different location, under the aegis of another institution, creates a unique situation with both positive and negative aspects.

The archives of the Minnesota Orchestra were deposited in the Manuscripts Division at the University in the mid 1970s, but staffing issues meant that minimal processing was done with the collection. In 2000 the archives were officially donated to the University, and the Orchestra provided funding for three years to hire an archivist to completely process the collection. Now that I've worked with the collection, the University, and the Orchestra for about one year, I'm not entirely sure whether it's an advantage or disadvantage to have the Orchestra's archives situated in an institution other than the parent organization.

One of the greatest advantages of this situation is being with a group of archivists—being a lone arranger no longer! If there's a question about a procedure, there are colleagues near at hand to ask. We have specialists in all areas of technical services to provide needed expertise with MARC records or training and assistance with most computer software applications. There is a digital collections unit to advise with related issues and to handle technical problems relating to scanning digital objects. These types of support are invaluable.

Space, human resources, and financial resources are always a concern for arts organizations. In tight times, institutions may reduce staff, move the archives to smaller spaces, or eliminate them entirely. The Minnesota Orchestra may not be able to continue funding for this

position, but the archives are safely stored indefinitely; they will always be available for research.

The storage facilities at the University of Minnesota's Elmer L. Andersen Library are state-of-the-art. There is no concern about broken water pipes flooding administrative offices and seriously damaging valuable records – a situation recently encountered by the Guthrie Theatre. [Note: Staff from the Manuscripts Division assisted Guthrie staff to move materials to safer storage before long-term damage was done.] The Orchestra's records (among many others) are housed in an environment that is optimal for preservation.

The final advantage of this situation is that the Minnesota Orchestra archivist is in somewhat of a safe haven from the ins-and-outs of the Orchestra's life. I'm not involved with internal politics of the Orchestra and can maintain an independence that allows me to concentrate on the archives and not get embroiled in the eternal passions and problems of artists and arts administrators.

That safe haven, however, presents a problem for the archives and archivist. This independence from the Orchestra means that I don't have the opportunity to easily become acquainted with the staff, musicians, and trustees of the Orchestra. I am not an integral part of the Orchestra, and thus the archives continue to be perceived as something outside of the Orchestra's operation (which indeed it is). It is more difficult for people at the Orchestra to understand the value of the archives – they do not see it as "ours;" it's "theirs." They don't always remember to call for reference

assistance, relying instead on old patterns of requesting information from the overburdened Orchestra Librarians or Public Affairs staff. It requires extra effort on my part to get to know the staff, to share with them the wealth of information in the archives, and to establish policies for the efficient transfer of records. The archivist is not necessarily seen as a member of the Orchestra staff; she is an outsider.

Ultimately, however, having the Orchestra's archives located at the University is a very good situation. I believe the advantages are more

significant than the disadvantages. Although it takes extra effort, I am able to overcome some of the drawbacks by attending staff meetings, initiating one-on-one interactions with staff, and using the wonderful technologies available to us today – email, fax, digital transfer of images and manuscripts – that make communication much easier. As the months pass and the organized collection becomes more usable, I will be able to inform the Orchestra staff about its value, and perhaps, the value of using the archives for research.

*Leslie Czechowski is Archivist for the Minnesota Orchestra Archives at the Elmer Andersen Special Collections Library, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.*

## **SELECTED PERFORMING ARTS ARCHIVES WEBSITES: Directories & Virtual Union Catalog Projects**

*By Helice Koffler*

### ***ALL PERFORMING ARTS***

**National Register of Archives (NRA): Sources for the History of Film, Television and the Performing Arts (UK)**

[http://www.hmc.gov.uk/sheets/7\\_PERFRM.htm](http://www.hmc.gov.uk/sheets/7_PERFRM.htm)

The staff of the Historical Manuscripts Commission has prepared an information sheet on Sources for the History of Film, Television and the Performing Arts that provides annotated listings that briefly describe the holdings of selected repositories in the United Kingdom.

## **Research Libraries Group (RLG) Cultural Materials Initiative**

<http://www.rlg.org/culturalres/>

The RLG Cultural Materials Initiative has developed the Cultural Materials resource, a multimedia collection of digitized primary materials. Current participants in the alliance include institutions with significant performing arts collections, such as the British Library, Duke University, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and Yale University. Cultural Materials is available through a subscription. Although access to many of the digital collections contained in RLG Cultural Materials is available for free on the websites of individual institutions, the RLG interface allows users to quickly search across and within multiple collections and obtain results in a consistent format.

## **SIBMAS International Directory of Performing Arts Collections**

<http://www.theatrelibrary.org/sibmas/idpac/idpac.html>

New online version of the print directory that had been published periodically by La Société Internationale des Bibliothèques et des Musées des Arts du Spectacle/The International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS). The online directory can be searched by the name of the institution, the name of a collection, or by geographic location. Includes brief descriptions of special collections.

## ***DANCE***

### **Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC)**

<http://www.danceheritage.org>

The Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) has developed numerous projects to enable the dance community to better retain and utilize materials documenting the art form. Among the results of these projects available on the DHC website is a finding aids database that provides coordinated access to the collections of several major North American repositories, including the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Library of Congress, and the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum.

### **Dance Libraries, Archives, and Collections in the United States and Canada**

<http://www.preserve-inc.org/library.html>

During its existence, Preserve, Inc. produced several pioneering programs concerning the documentation and preservation of dance. Among the resources still available on the Preserve, Inc. website is this comprehensive listing that also provides links to websites when available.

## **National Resource Centre for Dance (UK)**

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD/>

The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), which considers itself to be the "national archive and resource provider for dance and movement" in the United Kingdom recently has revamped its website. Among the features now offered are descriptions of many of the NRCD's archival collections, which include the Rudolf Laban Archive as well as the records of numerous British dance companies. The NRCD also has just received funding for a three-year Dance Data On-line Project that will allow the NRCD to enhance its own electronic catalog and make it available on its website. In the more immediate future, the NRCD website will include its own selection of links to other dance sites.

## ***MUSIC***

### **Composer Institutes and Archives**

<http://www.beckmesser.de/news/institute-list.html>

A listing of participants from the First International Symposium of Composer Institutes held at the Carl Orff Zentrum in 2000. Although links are included for most of the institutes cited, not all of the links work. A related effort to set up an International Association of Composer Institutes apparently has been suspended (a website established for the Association [<http://www.composerinstitutes.org/>] is currently non-functional), or it may have been subsumed by the IAML project described below.

### **Directory of Music Collections in Canada**

<http://info.library.yorku.ca/depts/smil/dmcc/dmcc.asp>

The Canadian Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centres (CAML) endeavors to maintain an up-to-date listing of major music collections in Canadian institutions on its website.

### **International Association of Music Libraries (IAML) Working Group on the International Registration of Music Archives**

<http://music.lib.byu.edu/IDMA/idma.html>

The aim of this ambitious project, sponsored by the International Association of Music Libraries Archives and Documentation Centres, is to develop an online directory of music archives worldwide. Descriptions of collections will be achieved through the implementation of the ISAD(G) General International Archive Description.

## **Jazz/Blues Archives, Collections & Museums**

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/cja/jazzarch.html>

The website for the Chicago Jazz Archive includes an extensive listing of jazz and blues collections throughout the world.

## **Music Libraries Online (UK)**

<http://www.musiconline.ac.uk/>

Music Libraries Online is a pilot project to increase access to music materials of all kinds, including archival collections, held by British music libraries. Includes brief descriptions of special collections at several institutions, including the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the Welsh College of Music and Drama.

## **WWW Sites of Interest to Musicologists**

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/music/ams/musicology\\_www.html#MAO](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/music/ams/musicology_www.html#MAO)

This site, partly sponsored by the American Musicological Society, includes a section on Music Libraries, Archives and Online Catalogs.

## ***THEATRE***

### **Backstage Project (UK)**

[http://www.backstage.ac.uk/backstage/index\\_html](http://www.backstage.ac.uk/backstage/index_html)

Still in a developmental phase, the Backstage Project aims to develop a single point of entry for searching performing arts collections in the United Kingdom. When completed, its databases will contain collection level descriptions for all participating institutions and item level cataloging of selected materials.

### **Directory of Performing Arts Resources (UK)**

[http://www.backstage.ac.uk/cld2/directory\\_summary](http://www.backstage.ac.uk/cld2/directory_summary)

Another component of the Backstage Project (see above) is the creation of an online directory. The provisional listing of UK collections that is currently available on the Backstage Project website (which is more extensive than the one that is offered at the

Theatre Museum website, but somewhat cumbersome to search) also includes information about each collection and links to repository or organizational websites.

### **Other Specialist Performing Arts Collections (UK)**

<http://theatremuseum.vam.ac.uk/eduindex.htm>

The Theatre Museum, which describes itself as “Britain’s National Museum of the Performing Arts” maintains this alphabetical directory available on its website. This directory lists selected institutions in the United Kingdom, other than the Theatre Museum, holding significant collections devoted to the performing arts. Although all of the performing arts are covered, there is a decided emphasis on theatre.

### ***Performing Arts Links***

<http://www.theatrelibrary.org/links/Collections.html>

Another useful selection of links, this website maintained by the Biblioteca e Raccolta Teatrale del Burcardo in Rome, provides an extensive set of listings of theatre collections in its section on Museums, Library Collections and Documentation Centres, that is international in scope.

*Helice Koffler is Assistant Archivist in the King County Archives, Seattle, Washington.*

## ***Editor’s Corner***

### **Editorial Staff Changes**

Ashley Yandle has volunteered to help with the Performing Arts Roundtable Newsletter. With this issue she becomes Associate Editor.

### **The Next Issue**

The intended release date for the next issue of the newsletter will be early July.

The editors are open to suggestions for articles for the newsletter. The two “reports from the field” in this issue grew out of responses to the last issue. Is anyone, for instance, willing to write about how you capture performances and the related access and preservation issues? What other ideas do you have? Would a report on the NIPAD conference be useful?

What else is perplexing you intellectually with regard to the whole gamut of the performing arts—or one of the parts? Let your editors hear from you—please do not treat us as the Maytag repair shop.

### **Newsletter Distribution**

The method for distributing this newsletter is as a Word document sent as an attachment to an e-mail message to the subscription list maintained by the editor.

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