

PERFORMANCE!

The Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists' Performing Arts Roundtable

Issue for Summer 2003

[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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Message from the Roundtable Chair

By Bridget Carr

Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives

SAVE THE DATE!

The Performing Arts Roundtable annual meeting at SAA will be held on Friday, August 22, 2003 from 4:45 to 6:15. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Our meeting will give us an opportunity to welcome new roundtable members, catch up with returning members, and to collectively discuss ideas for SAA 2004 session proposals. I am also pleased to announce that Karen Spicher of Yale University has volunteered to give the roundtable a special 15-20 minute presentation entitled Manuscript Music Cataloguing: New Rules Developed for Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials. I'd like to thank Karen in advance for sharing her work at Yale with us.

If any roundtable members have issues or topics they would like to see discussed at the Roundtable meeting, please contact me. This is your roundtable and I need your input.

News Items

SAA Conference Programs Feature the Performing Arts

There are several sessions at the SAA annual conference in Los Angeles with direct benefit for performing arts archivists. Take note of the following

- Session 39, Central Avenue: Archival and Eyewitness Accounts from Black Musicians
- Session 44, Film Treasures in American Archives: Dancers on Celluloid
- Session 63, Taking Center Stage: Issues of Access, Outreach, and Theater Archives

Sessions 39 and 44 are conveniently scheduled for the Friday afternoon slots leading into the roundtable's annual meeting. Session 63 is on Saturday afternoon.

In addition, other sessions with a more indirect focus and some of the tours will also prove beneficial for those who can make the meeting. For those who cannot attend, practically all the sessions will be recorded and made available for sale.

Roundtable to Meet at the SAA Annual Conference

The Performing Arts Roundtable annual meeting at SAA will be held on Friday, August 22, 2003 from 4:45 to 6:15. Check the short calendar booklet at the conference for the place.

Dance Heritage Coalition Receives Mellon Grant for Digital Preservation Reformatting

The Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) has received a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a project that will “determine and specify preservation file format candidates appropriate for the dance community to preserve its heritage.” The DHC’s web site is <www.danceheritage.org/>. (Source: April 2003 DHC news release)

NFPF

A review of the web site for the National Film Preservation Foundation www.filmpreservation.org/ shows the NFPF awarded two federal grants this year for film preservation projects. Grants went to the Appalshop Archives for a film of the 1972 “Music Fair” and the Louisiana State Museum for the 1962 opening of the New Orleans jazz Museum.

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. For this issue we have solicited two articles, both dealing with archival aspects of renowned symphonic orchestras in the United States. The first is by George Blood concerning the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, about how it almost lost its recordings and about how it now gives added value to its recorded resources. The second article is by Bridget Carr on the development of Boston Symphony Orchestra, the establishment of its archival unit, and users and uses of its records.

"Paper is cheap. The Tape is Expensive...or is it": A perspective on archives for one performing arts organization

By George Blood

There's an old adage in the recording business: "tape is the cheapest part of the session". It's what goes on the tape that is expensive. Rights, royalties and recording fees: these *are* expensive.

The Philadelphia Orchestra was the first American orchestra to have its own nationally syndicated radio broadcasts. However after 30 years "on the air", the

Philadelphia Orchestra radio broadcasts lost its sponsor, leaving many issues to be resolved. After considerable discussion (with management, musicians, staff archivist and recording engineer) the Philadelphia Orchestra decided to continue taping its concert performances. "If we are going to archive anything, it should be the sound of the performances" was the consensus.

The performance history of the Philadelphia Orchestra which begins in 1900 is a who's-who of 20th century music and musicians. Directors Leopold Stokowski (1912-41), Eugene Ormandy (1936-80) and Riccardo Muti (1980-92) were essentially unknown before their association with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Every major classical performing artist and composer, and numerous world premieres are a part of that legacy. But the paper records are silent. And the audio record has been tenuous indeed.

The story of the Philadelphia Orchestra's radio broadcasts is a good case in point. The first labor agreement with the musicians regarding these broadcasts called for the programs to be recorded, broadcast once, and then the tapes were to be destroyed. The musicians were concerned that the tapes would be used for other purposes (bootleg recordings overseas, radio commercials in foreign lands) and that they would not be compensated for these uses. These same concerns exist today over archival recordings. Different institutions address these problems in different ways. The recordings of some orchestras are kept at the administrative offices under lock and key and are available only by special arrangement. Other orchestras' tapes are stored at the musician's union hall. Some orchestra musicians do not allow any recording whatsoever unless they are paid at the time the recording is made.

Beginning in 1960, when the original broadcast recordings were to be destroyed, the recording engineer spirited the original tapes away to a house he owned, where they were kept

in the basement. About 15 years later, after missing a zoning hearing, the engineer got a telephone call from a neighbor, reminding him that "today" was the day the property would be demolished to become an interstate highway interchange. Miraculously, he managed to retrieve the tapes *and* be on time for a 2PM matinee! The broadcast tapes were subsequently relocated to his recording studio where they were stored in the attic. With the sale of the engineer's company, the tapes were moved again, to WFLN-FM, the local classical music station (which was later sold for \$100 million and is no longer classical). At the radio station, the broadcast tapes were stacked against the baseboard heaters in the Smoking Lounge.

In 1984 the syndication contract for the Orchestra's broadcasts moved to WFMT-FM in Chicago, which recorded the concerts until they end in 1990. At that time WFMT was the largest syndicator of fine-arts programming in the country, purchasing \$50,000 (wholesale, bulk) of 1/4" recording tape *every* year, directly from Ampex. In 1992 WFMT decided they could no longer store the tapes of the many programs they produced (including the Philadelphia Orchestra), but which they had no longer had rights to broadcast again.

Within months of the notification from WFMT, WFLN "reorganized" and the engineer who had been looking after the Philadelphia Orchestra tapes (in the Smoking Lounge) was laid off. With these two events orchestra management became concerned about the future of its broadcast archives.

The Philadelphia Orchestra had come to recognize the value of its broadcast legacy, but where would they keep it? The Orchestra's broadcast archives consisted of over 5,000 10" reel-to-reel tapes, nearly equal in volume to the paper records in its archives! The Orchestra decided to contract for off-site storage with climate control and secure access. The collection is stored at 70 degrees Fahrenheit (plus or minus 2 degrees), 40 percent relative humidity (plus or minus 5 percent). This range was selected based primarily on two criteria. First, this range is easily sustained. If there were a catastrophic systems failure (power outage in summer for instance), the media could be severely stressed by a wide swing in temperature and humidity. Discussions of climate control for magnetic media emphasize the importance of stability over the choice of any given range. Therefore, once stability is achieved, target conditions are chosen based on access and other considerations. So, second, the collection is semi-active, with regular access. In this range tapes are very close to the prevailing climate conditions and are neither stressed by the change, nor need to be climatized prior to use.

Access to the collection is highly restricted, requiring written approval of either the President or the Vice President of Artistic Planning and Operations. No individual is allowed to have digital copies. After 10 years the collection has grown to 10,000 tapes, including broadcast masters, individual concert recordings, special events, and CD masters.

During the 10 years since the orchestra unified its concert archives the following uses have been possible:

- 20 CD set of historic recordings for their Centennial (still available on its website)
- 5 radiothon fund raising CDs of historic performances (including the famous "Wintersturme" concert when the instrumentalists were snow-bound and Maestro Sawallisch played Wagner at the piano with the soloists and many of the chorus -- still available on the Orchestra's website)
- 2 CDs of major American composers (Vincent Persichetti and Jacob Druckman)
- Dozens of works (plus all current concerts) available on the web at Andante.com
- And the just-released all-Schumann recording 3-CD set in honor of Wolfgang Sawallisch's 10 years as Music Director.

All of these uses produce revenue for the Orchestra. All of these uses pay the musicians who are now major supporters of the recordings through the Philadelphia Orchestra Media Institute. POMI is a 50/50 joint venture between the musicians and management.

Compensation to the musicians varies with each product. For commercial recordings (such as the Persichetti or the radiothon CDs), they are paid "scale" according to their contract. If the musician is deceased, the payment goes to the spouse. If the spouse is deceased, or there is no spouse, the funds go to the Philadelphia Orchestra's musicians retirement fund, which pays the pensions of retired members. For works from Andante.com, any profits made by

Andante.com are paid through a formula to the ensembles represented on the site.

The message is clear. Without an archive, you cannot use archival material. Equally important, however, is to find uses for the archives. There is no utility or purpose to be derived from keeping materials on a shelf (much less in climate controlled storage) if they can not be accessed. Finding ways, finding revenue-producing uses, will keep the archives alive through each round of budget cuts.

Post Script: In addition to the recordings, the Philadelphia Orchestra archives also include the Adrian Segal photographs (made famous in the 1972 book *Concerto for Camera*), video, and the inevitable paper. The paper files and the recordings complement each other. When Disney released *Fantasia* for home video, for instance, the Philadelphia Orchestra sued for compensation as "co-creator" of this

historic movie. Disney claimed that the musicians had been paid for their services at the time the film was made. Disney argued that it was understood at the time the movie was made that the studio had all future rights to a film unless it was specifically stated otherwise. Found in the Philadelphia Orchestra Archives, however, were separate contracts with Disney: one for Stokowski and one for the musicians. The contract with Stokowski included an "and all future uses" clause. The contract with the musicians does not. This was the "smoking gun" which was used by the Orchestra during its lawsuit. Clearly the Disney lawyers at the time knew the distinction. The suit was settled out of court for "an undisclosed sum" (some number of millions of dollars). The Orchestra's staff archivist referred to that piece of paper as her "job security" for several years. "Useful" and "revenue-producing" for sure.

George Blood is recording engineer for the Philadelphia Orchestra. His company is responsible for storing and preserving the audio archives of the Philadelphia Orchestra His e-mail address is <georgeblood@safesoundarchive.com>.

An Overview of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives

By Bridget Carr

For going on twelve years now, I've had the pleasure of working as the Archivist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Following, I would like to share with you an overview of the symphony's unique history as well as

give you an overview of the Archives' collections.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1881 by philanthropist, Civil War veteran, and amateur musician

Major Henry Lee Higginson. For many years Higginson had dreamed of founding a great and permanent orchestra in his hometown of Boston. On October 22, 1881, his dream became a reality when the BSO gave its first performance in the Old Boston Music Hall. Major Higginson was involved in the life of the BSO, playing an active role in recruiting conductors and musicians from abroad. In addition, he sustained the orchestra by personally paying the yearly deficit until 1918 when control was turned over to a newly-formed board of trustees. After holding concerts for twenty years in the Music Hall, the BSO moved its concert-making activity to the newly constructed Symphony Hall in 1900.

In July 1885, musicians of the BSO gave their first "Promenade" concert. Light classics and refreshments were offered, fulfilling Major Higginson's wish to give "concerts of a lighter kind of music." Within a few years these concerts, renamed first "Popular" and then "Pops," became a tradition for many years most closely associated with Arthur Fiedler, the Boston Pops' legendary conductor from 1930 to 1979.

In 1936 the BSO and its Music Director Serge Koussevitzky were invited to give a series of concerts in the Berkshires. A year later he and the players took up annual summer residence at Tanglewood, a 300-acre estate that was donated to the BSO for this purpose. Koussevitzky shared Major Higginson's dream of "a good honest school for musicians," and in 1940 that dream was realized with the founding of the Berkshire Music Center (now called the Tanglewood Music Center), a summer music academy for pre-professional

musicians. Musicians passing through the Music Center included Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, Zubin Mehta, and Seiji Ozawa who served as the BSO's Music Director for 29 years.

The BSO is active year round. Symphonic concerts and tours run from September through April. Two orchestras, the Boston Pops and the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, give concerts from May through July in addition to a series of Christmas concerts in December. The BSO relocates to western Massachusetts for its Tanglewood season in July and August. The Tanglewood Music Center, the summer teaching academy run by the BSO, attracts top pre-professional musicians from around the world. Unlike many orchestras in the United States, the BSO owns its own concert hall. In addition, Tanglewood, the orchestra's summer home in Lenox, Massachusetts, now encompasses 800 acres and three estates: Tanglewood, Seranak, and Highwood. The BSO's 60-million dollar budget is the largest operating budget of any of the major orchestras in the United States.

The BSO Archives is the repository for historically significant records created by the organization. The Archives accepts (and encourages) donations of materials from outside the organization that document the BSO and its many facets. The core collections include a small number of Henry Lee Higginson's papers; records of the Board of Trustees and Manager's files; student records and administrative files from the Tanglewood Music Center; and several hundred architectural plans. Additionally, there is a nearly complete collection of printed concert programs;

scrapbooks with newspaper clippings and reviews of concerts dating back to 1889; about 15,000 photographs depicting conductors, orchestra members, tours, soloists, staff, trustees, events, and buildings; a collection of over 6,000 sound recordings in a variety of formats; and a collection of oral histories.

One of the most heavily used materials – 132 scrapbooks containing reviews of concerts and feature articles dating back to 1889 – were microfilmed under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1993. The grant also provided for the filming of a parallel collection in the Boston Public Library’s Music Department dating back to 1881. Two service copies of the films were made so that both the BSO Archives and the Boston Public Library would be able to provide access to both collections. A glimpse inside these scrapbooks reveals reviews of the BSO’s world premiere of Bela Bartok’s *Concerto for Orchestra* commissioned by Music Director Serge Koussevitzky, and almost two complete scrapbooks containing articles chronicling a dark episode in the BSO’s history – the arrest and internment of BSO Music Director Karl Much as an enemy alien in the spring of 1918. This episode is a stirring example of the anti-German hysteria that swept the country during World War I.

Another significant series of scrapbooks contain printed programs of non-BSO events taking place in the old Boston Music Hall from 1864 to 1900, and in Symphony Hall from 1900 to 1951. The events recorded in these scrapbooks serve as examples of almost a century of cultural and social progress in Boston and chronicle the stimulating pace of the

city’s intellectual life. Such disparate events as the world premiere of Tchaikovsky’s *Piano concert in B-flat, Opus 23* given in 1875 by Dr. Hans Von Bulow, the International Congress of Religious Liberals in 1907, and the premiere of Cecil B. Mille’s silent film version of *Carmen* starring renowned opera singer Geraldine Farrar in 1915 are documented in these scrapbooks.

Most of the musical scores owned by the BSO are under the stewardship of the Orchestra Librarian, a position dating back to the orchestra’s founding in 1881. The Librarian, who is a member of the orchestra, generally has a background in musical performance rather than library science. The Archives and the Library work together to ensure that any original manuscript scores or published scores with composer’s inscriptions or conductor’s markings are transferred to the Archives. In 1996, a privately funded project enabled the BSO to carry out a preservation microfilming project to film more than 1,600 of these titles from the Boston Pops section of the library. This project was critical since the Pops library contains many unique scores and orchestral parts for arrangements commissioned by the Boston Pops over the last 65 years. In many cases only one copy of the scores and the orchestral parts exists.

The experiences of the musicians who make up the BSO are documented in a growing series of more than 85 oral history interviews conducted by a retired cellist. In these interviews, retired orchestra members talk about their early life and musical training, their audition experience, and their lives as members of the BSO.

The BSO's recorded sound collection boasts a nearly-complete collection of commercially released recordings on a variety of record labels dating back to the BSO's first acoustical recording made for the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1917. Recordings of live concerts come closest to documenting the live performances, and as such, are of vital importance to the organization both as an asset and an historical record. From the mid-1960s Boston University's Special Collections department had been storing and providing access to a collection of ten-inch reel-to-reel tapes of BSO and Pops radio broadcasts dating back to 1958. The tapes were created by WGBH and WCRB, two Boston radio stations. Between the two stations, there is an amazingly complete record of live concert broadcasts by the BSO and Pops concerts since the early 1950s. At the time the BSO had neither a designated safe or climate controlled space where the tapes could be stored, nor an archival program to administer them. Over the years the collection grew from a few hundred items to more than 6,000. In 1998 the Archives was able to retrieve this valuable collection. In addition, with the advent of a formal Archives program, the Archives has also received several private collections of reel-to-reel tapes and transcription discs which contain off-air recordings of BSO and Pops concerts from the 1940s and 1950s. These collections are filling in substantial gaps in our core collection of radio broadcast master tapes from that time period.

In the year 2000, the BSO celebrated the centennial of Symphony Hall. The BSO published two books that drawing heavily on the Archives. *The Making of Symphony Hall* was written by Richard

Poate Stebbins, a historian and long-time volunteer. Mr. Stebbins researched in depth the events leading up to the building of the one Symphony Hall. Symphony Hall is famous for its acoustics and was the first concert hall to be built in accordance with the then emerging field of architectural acoustics. *Symphony Hall: The First Hundred Years*, a coffee table book featuring topical essays and lavishly illustrated with beautiful reproductions of materials from the Archives. In preparation for this centennial year, the Archives was responsible for the creation and installation of a permanent exhibit in Symphony Hall that features 23 graphic panels and 10 exhibit cases throughout the corridors of Symphony Hall. The exhibit was originally to be mounted for the Centennial year; however, it became so popular with concert-goers, trustees, and staff, that it has become a "permanent" fixture in the Hall. Each year the cases are changed and some new graphic panels are created highlighting different aspects of the BSO's history.

In 2001, the BSO issued a 12-CD boxed set of live concert recordings from the BSO's broadcast Archives. All recordings were radio broadcasts of concerts that took place in Symphony Hall and include the BSO under its music directors, Serge Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, Pierre Monteux, Erich Leinsdorf, William Steinberg, and Seiji Ozawa as well as principal guest conductors Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Colin Davis, and Bernard Haitink. Guest conductors such as Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, and Guido Cantelli are also represented.

Since the establishment of a formal archives program in the BSO more than eleven years ago, the Archives has become an integral part of the organization, serving as source of historical information for the

organization, assisting scholars whose research coincides with the BSO's history, and providing outreach for the organization through the creation of historical exhibits both at Symphony Hall and at Tanglewood

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Editor's Corner

Your Newsletter

Is this publication serving you well? Can you suggest improvements? The purpose of *Performance!* is to serve the members of the roundtable. We encourage feedback and opinions from our readers and look forward to interaction at the roundtable's annual meeting in Los Angeles. We'll be listening for items for the **News Notes** section and for possible writers.

Reminder about dinner opportunity in LA

For those of you attending the annual SAA meeting, is there any interest in a group dinner after the roundtable meeting on Friday, August 22nd? If you are interested, please contact Bridget Carr at bcarr@bso.org.

The Next Issue

The expectation for the issuance of the next issue of the newsletter is December 2003. Remember, this is **your** newsletter, let your voice be heard!

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 editors. The distribution figure is currently more than 80 people.

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