



Performance!

The SAA Performing Arts Section encourages the exchange of information on historical and contemporary documentation of music, dance, theatre, motion pictures, and other performance media.

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N E W S L E T T E R O F T H E S A A
P E R F O R M I N G A R T S S E C T I O N

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Message From the Co-Chairs

Greetings PAR members,

In this issue

This issue of Performance! contains an engaging array of news and articles from PAR section members. First, Brenna Edwards, a master's student at the University of North Carolina's School of Information and Library Science, shares her experience at the Center for Dramatic Art in a case study of her work with the Center's non-digital records. In the second article, John Davis describes a new acquisition at the University of Maryland: the papers of Skip Groff, a significant figure in the Washington, D.C. punk scene. This Performance! also contains news of publications from the Boston Conservatory archives at Berklee College of Music and the Melinda Camber Porter Archive of Creative Works, an acquisition at the University of Pittsburgh, exhibits at the Arthur Friedheim Library at the Peabody Institute and the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University—Newark, as well as the availability of new digital resources from the New York Philharmonic's Leon Levy Digital Archives. Thanks to all of this issue's authors for contributing their news and articles!

SAA news

SAA recently switched to a new email platform and decommissioned the Archives and Archivists list. We hope that you will check out all of the features of the new online platform and post frequently to the PAR list to share your news, job and internship announcements, questions, and ideas. Please also consider sharing grant and educational opportunities you think might be of interest to PAR members. Now more than ever, the PAR email list has become an important source of information for performing arts archives and repositories, so we hope that you will help us keep up-to-date on all the latest news.

SAA also recently released a new standard: Standardized Statistical Measures and Metrics for Public Services in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries. A joint initiative of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), its Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS), and SAA, this new standard provides guidance on how best to measure and evaluate public services in an archival setting. Given the increasing pressure on archivists to demonstrate their value and impact, this new professional standard offers an excellent advocacy tool, based on real-life facts and figures. For those who are new to archives or who wish to learn more about public services, the document provides guidance on what kinds of things to measure and evaluate and is a useful tool for both designing and revising public services in archives and similar repositories. The standard is freely available on the SAA, ACRL, and RBMS websites, and we encourage everyone to take a look and learn more.

NEH/NEA Funding

January of last year sent a wave of panic through the memory institution community when the Trump administration announced plans to cut funding to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute for Library and Museum Services (IMLS). The NEA, NEH, and IMLS have routinely faced threats of budget cuts, but the possibility of complete elimination by the new administration came as a shock after a difficult election cycle and subsequent election. Combined, the three entities comprise less than 0.02% of the federal budget and yet are vital for libraries, museums, and archives across the United States. The cuts to the fiscal year 2018 budget were proposed in order to grow military funding by 10% and provide tax cuts without endangering the limit for the federal deficit. According to the most recent budget proposal, these organizations will be funded through FY 2018; per the budget appendices, accounts for each agency have funds that will not be in jeopardy until they are expended, at which point new funds will not be added. Closure of these agencies after the end of FY 2018 is still written into this budget proposal. Although funding for the NEA, NEH, and IMLS has not received national attention since last spring, be advised that the future of these agencies is not certain. Please continue to stay informed and contact your elected federal legislators to voice your support for funding of these agencies, which are so vital to supporting archival repositories. Because these agencies still have funds, grants will continue to be offered throughout FY 2018, but the future of their funding remains uncertain.

Performing Arts Section Participation

In the coming months, we encourage more engagement with PAR from current members. In addition to initiatives aimed at addressing member needs, we would like to encourage participation in the upcoming SAA elections. Please consider nominating a colleague or yourself for a leadership position.

Finally, please keep an eye out for PAR emails in coming weeks, as we will be unveiling a couple new initiatives at the end of February. We think these will be of great interest to PAR members and help PAR section members in the course of their day-to-day work as performing arts archivists. Stay tuned for details!

Elizabeth Surlles and Hannah Jellen
Co-Chairs of the Performing Arts Roundtable

Preparing for the Next 40 Years: Joan H. Gillings Center for Dramatic Art Archive Project

by Brenna Edwards

Brenna Edwards is a graduate student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Right: East Room
(August 2017)



As a student at the School of Information and Library Science at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in May 2017 I took on the continuation of the work of a 2014 community archives class project for the Center for Dramatic Art (CDA) production archives as a field experience. The 2014 class went through existing archival materials within the CDA, inventoried them, and provided a document of best practices moving forward to the CDA. The goal of this project was to weed and add collections to the current archive.

This archive aims to document both the Department of Dramatic Art (DDA), along with its various entities, and PlayMakers

Repertory Company (PRC) to express the pride behind “what has been created here” for future researchers (R. Dooley, personal communication, May 31, 2017). Worked on intermittently over the summer, this project really took shape once the fall semester started and full access was granted to the archive. The main goals were to:

- identify the needs of the faculty and staff in the CDA for an archive and potential use,
- talk with faculty, staff, and student-organization leaders to see what items they might have to go into the archive,
- determine the best way to organize and weed materials already in the archive from the 2014 inventory and the best place to store them,
- collect new material from faculty and staff to be integrated into the archive, and
- create and implement a collection policy and finding aid for the collection for the department chair and the Artistic Director of Playmakers.

Due to constraints, both time and resource wise, this experience was mainly focused on physical materials, with hope for digital materials to be included in the future. In talking with faculty and staff, there was interest expressed in the digital side of things, and what they might be able to do

with it in the future. Notes were made documenting materials people offered, so a record is available and can be used for tracking purposes in the future.

The DDA/PRC collection contains scripts, production notes, design sketches and plots, cast lists, photographs, and promotional material from different undergraduate productions in theatres such as the Lab Theatre, Studios I, II, and III, and the Kenan Theatre-- items commonly not found in the DDA records held in the University Archives in Wilson Library on UNC-CH's campus. The PRC part focuses on the same sorts of materials, but with special focus on the past 40 years, as most of the previous material of Carolina Playmakers is held in Wilson Library. These collections will help faculty and staff refer back to materials for classes, marketing purposes, or for personal research when planning for a show or for other purposes.

Process

I used the summer months to talk with various faculty and staff within the CDA to see what materials they might have. I also asked them what they would use the archive for and what they hoped the archive would contain to help support them in their teachings and research, as well for future users of the archive to "close the loop between performance and scholarship" (G. Kable, personal conversation, July 12, 2017). These conversations were very informative and allowed me to understand what they wanted out of the archive and to establish connections.

Throughout the summer, I was also reading through the 2014 inventory and report the community archives class compiled while making notes and questions I hoped to address when updating the archive. I paid special attention to the inventory list, noticing there were a lot of materials not in line with what faculty and staff had mentioned they were interested in having in the archive. I brainstormed where these materials might end up; the UNC University Retention Schedule came in use and helped me decide which materials needed to be moved and which materials were to be weeded.

In August, I was able to gain access to the mysterious "closet above the Kenan," where the materials are kept, and started journeying into the actual materials. My first impression was not so favorable, as there were various materials blocking the

pathway and I could not reach parts of the collection without climbing over them. For the materials I could reach, I started double-checking the inventory list versus the actual items found in the archive. There were a few items I had problems finding, due to them either being moved, mislabeled, or behind other boxes, but these were found as the process continued.

Once I was in the archive, I realized this was a much bigger project than I initially thought, which led me to scale back my expectations for what could be done over the course of three months. I decided to focus more on weeding, as well as making sure there was a full, complete set of playbills available, since that's what people seemed most interested in. Scaling back the project helped me gain a deeper understanding, and more practical



Opposite page:
West Room
(August 2017)

Right: East
Room
(December
2017)

experience, of appraisal techniques in archives.

As mentioned above, the University's retention schedule really came in handy here, since it clearly outlines what should be kept, what records can be either recycled or confidentially shredded, and which ones should go to University Archives after a specified period of time. The retention schedule also kept me from being too zealous about my weeding and potentially getting rid of something with value. I also double-checked with various faculty and staff on items I wasn't completely sure on weeding out, to have their go-ahead and permission.

There were a few items in which I had to use best judgement on, since they were not mentioned anywhere in the Retention Schedule. For those items, I consulted with both the Chair of the DDA and the Managing Director of PlayMakers to determine the best course of action. Working with both of them also helped solidify what materials they were looking for in the archive, and their goals.

As the weeks went on, I continued talking with various faculty and staff members in the CDA to work out where certain materials should go, along with cleaning up the current archive so pathways are walkable and materials accessible. I even ended up helping with pulling of items for the exhibit in Wilson Library, which was both an entertaining and educational experience, as it showed the work that goes into planning an exhibit and how selections are made. Working with this wide range of people helped me expand upon my interpersonal skills, and provided experience working across departments within an organization.

In November, playbills were gathered from various faculty and staff members and integrated into the archive. I was provided with a master list of PlayMakers productions since their inaugural year, created and maintained by a faculty member of the DDA, which was helpful. This list provided a great jumping off point to organize the



materials both gathered and found within the archive. This was a daylong event, and we ended up with an almost complete collection of playbills; a few were missing, but a call was sent out and they are marked on the master list. I aimed for three copies of each playbill - one for reference, one for use, and one for an archival copy - and the number of each was marked on the master list. Other items identified are to be collected in the spring for addition to the archive.

For now, the archive is still housed in the "closet above the Kenan," and boxes have been rearranged. The West Room contains materials which are more likely to be used, such as morgue books from the costume shop, technical director files, and playbills. The East Room is mainly filled with items which are either in discussion with various departments in Wilson Library about, or are still needed to be gone through with the University retention schedule to see where, and if, these records should be kept in the long run.

A new finding aid/inventory list was created for the CDA, which identifies what each box is, and where it is located. It is not item level as the original inventory by the 2014 class was; instead, it is a more “traditional” finding aid. A collection policy was also created, outlining some of the recommendations mentioned briefly above, along with guidelines for what should be collected. There is still work to be done, especially on the digital side and with the student groups, but this project was a good start, with room to grow and expand.

Final Thoughts

I became interested in this project early in my time at UNC-CH SILS, as I was informed about the American Theatre Archive Project (ATAP) while at the Society of American Archivists meeting in 2016. Working with community theatres and university theatres alike, ATAP aims to capture theatrical history and help theatres preserve their own histories.

While doing research on ATAP, I discovered the North Carolina team leader was the Chair of the DDA, who was my supervisor for this project. Initially, we met in the fall of 2016, where I was informed of the 2014 SILS class report, and expressed interest in the project if they ever

started it back up. I was contacted in spring 2017 saying the CDA was interested in moving forward with the archives.

This experience supplemented what I am learning in classes, and it was nice to put these theories to practice. I feel more confident in my decision-making skills, and feel I could potentially manage a small archive in the future. It really opened my eyes to the world of theatre archiving, especially the materials collected, and how difficult it can be to expand a community archive, while also being mindful of the community and their viewpoints.



Left: West Room
(December 2017)

“Skip, We Love You!”: The Skip Groff collection comes to the University of Maryland

By John Davis

John Davis is the Performing Arts Metadata Archivist at the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library at the University of Maryland.

Right: Skip Groff in front of his store, Yesterday and Today Records, shortly before he closed the physical location in 2002



Every major music scene has its routinely lauded icons and heroes, just as they also have their underappreciated figures who nevertheless played critical roles in the scene’s evolution. When it comes to the Washington, D.C. punk rock scene, which has thrived for more than forty years and inspired everyone from teenage garage bands to arena-filling rock stars, native musicians like Ian MacKaye, Henry Rollins, and Dave Grohl have had nearly every step of their careers chronicled. Yet, for all of the ink rightfully spilled over that trio, there are scores of other participants in the D.C. punk scene for whom respect is also due.

Skip Groff, whose personal archive came to the University of Maryland in 2017, is one of those people. Starting in the mid-1960s, Groff forged a long and winding path that

saw him spend time as a department store announcer, disc jockey, United States Army veteran, record store manager, and record promoter before eventually playing a vital role in the development of D.C.’s nascent punk scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. Headquartered out of his Rockville, Maryland record store, Yesterday & Today, Groff served as a record producer for some of the earliest and most influential punk records to come out of Washington, D.C., and also headed Limp Records, one of D.C.’s first punk record labels.

Groff took a teenage MacKaye under his wing in 1979, first befriending him when he was a customer at Yesterday & Today and then serving as the producer of two of MacKaye’s earliest bands, The Teen Idles and Minor Threat. Although Groff also

produced music by early D.C. punk bands like the Slickee Boys and the Nurses that served as important musical landmarks for the young scene, it was his production work with the Teen Idles and, especially, the epochal Minor Threat that left the greatest sonic mark.

Groff's main tool when producing records was an ear honed from years of disc jockeying and collecting records. "I just basically used my knowledge as a Top 40 jock of how things should sound or might sound on the radio," Groff told me. "And that was my entire interest in working with these groups ... to [not] sound like a band just thrashing around live in a basement, but to play something that could be played on the radio, if they wanted it to be played on the radio." Although Groff felt MacKaye and his bandmates in The Teen Idles were still finding their footing when they recorded their lone EP, 1980's "Minor Disturbance," the young singer's next group, Minor Threat, was clearly something special. "[The first, Groff-produced] Minor Threat record, I think, is a classic," Groff declared. "And when they came in with [1981's self-produced] "In My Eyes" ... I said, 'Hey, guys, there's nothing I can do for you anymore. You've got it all down.'"

Equally important as Groff's work producing Minor Threat, he also encouraged MacKaye and his bandmate, Jeff Nelson, to release the music on their own label, which the teenage duo dubbed Dischord Records. Although Groff had released more than a dozen singles and albums on Limp Records, he felt it was time to pass the torch. "[MacKaye and Nelson] wanted to initially put it out on Limp," Groff explained, "but I was just getting ready to wind the label down at that time, because the store was just too busy. And I convinced them they'd be better off starting their own label, and that's what they did. I think it's fortunate that they did. I mean, Dischord has become legendary."

Legendary, indeed. Dischord Records will celebrate its 38th anniversary in 2018, having issued or distributed hundreds of releases by notable D.C. punk bands like Fugazi, Minor Threat, and Jawbox, selling millions of copies along the way and influencing generations of musicians and listeners. Fans of Dischord and the D.C. punk scene include some of the most accomplished musicians of the past thirty years, including Pearl Jam, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Beastie Boys, and producer Rick Rubin. Dischord also released some of the earliest music by



two musicians who went on to have major commercial and artistic impacts, the aforementioned Grohl and Rollins (whose first band S.O.A. was also produced by Groff).

Although Groff shuttered the Yesterday and Today storefront in 2002 -- he now sells a collection of more than 200,000 singles online -- his contributions to the D.C. punk scene have not been forgotten. When Grohl documented the love he felt for his hometown punk scene by centering an episode of his 2014 HBO television series, "Sonic Highways," on D.C., he included several clips of an interview he conducted with Groff about his experiences interacting with hardcore punk bands like

Opposite page:
Skip Groff on a
record buying
trip to the
United Kingdom,
circa 1980

Bottom: Skip
Groff, circa 2000

Bad Brains and Minor Threat.

In summer 2017, Groff donated archival materials to Special Collections in Performing Arts (SCPA) at the University of Maryland to create the Skip Groff collection, which gives researchers and fans access to recordings, photographs, correspondence, and other materials related to Groff's role as a background figure of enormous influence on the local punk subculture. The bulk of the collection consists of recordings Groff made of his radio shows, going back to his time as a DJ at WMUC, the University of Maryland's campus radio station, in the late 1960s. One highlight of the collection is a 1972 letter from Jerry Greenberg of Atlantic Records to Groff, thanking him for the radio edit that he provided the label of the song "America," by the progressive rock band Yes, which shaved the ten minute epic down to just over four minutes, leading Greenberg to state "I feel it is going to be a No. 1 record." The edited version peaked at number 46 on the Billboard Singles chart, which was still no small feat. The collection also includes an oral history series, featuring an interview that I conducted with Groff in September 2017.

Groff will likely never receive the kind of attention that many of the musicians he mentored have, but his legacy, as reflected in the materials found in the Skip Groff collection at SCPA, is secure. A man with a sharp ear for music and a keen eye for musicians full of potential, Groff's impact might best be expressed by MacKaye, when he declared amidst the musical chaos at the end of Minor Threat's full throttle cover version from 1981 of the Monkees' hit "(I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone," "Skip, we love you!"



News

Archives collection spotlight Boston Conservatory's 150th Anniversary

The archive collections at Boston Conservatory at Berklee played a starring role in the celebration of the conservatory's 150th anniversary in February of 2017. Through a collaboration between the archives, the school's marketing department and a local author, the institution produced a book entitled "150 Stories," detailing the people, places and events that helped define the conservatory's past, present and future. The year of celebration culminated at school's annual gala in May, where archival materials were showcased in displays and video presentations. The event was hosted by Alan Cumming and featured performances by students and faculty from the three departments – music, dance and theater.

Rosa Ponselle Exhibit at the Peabody

The Arthur Friedheim Library at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University has launched an exhibit and digital collection about Rosa Ponselle featuring memorabilia from her career on the Metropolitan Opera stage and her opulent Villa Pace estate in Baltimore, where she spent her retirement years. After starting on the vaudeville circuit with her sister Carmela, Rosa Ponselle captured the attention of Enrico Caruso, who secured her an audition at the Metropolitan Opera and performed beside her in her debut in *La Forza del Destino* in 1918. For the next 19 seasons, she was a true prima donna for the Metropolitan Opera in New York and on tour, performing lead roles in beloved operas such as *Norma*, *La Traviata*, and *Carmen*.

The Friedheim Library's physical exhibit, which opened in January 2018, presents items from Ponselle's home, including a piano and formal gown, as well as corresponding images from her career. The story of her remarkable career is told through a web exhibit featuring rare concert programs, photographs, advertisements, and

other ephemera from the collection. More than 1,400 scanned items are now online as part of the Rosa Ponselle digital collection.

The collection was donated to the Peabody Institute in 2014 by the Lester Dequaine/Frank Chiarenza Foundation, which had operated a museum dedicated to Ponselle in her Connecticut hometown. More information about the collection and exhibit is available at <http://musiclibrary.peabody.jhu.edu/rosaponselle>.

Night Angel

Night Angel (A One-Woman Musical) just published from the Melinda Camber Porter Archive of Creative Works (ISSN: print (2379-2450), Blake Press ISBN: (978-1-942231-33-2)). *Night Angel* is a poignant and witty one-woman musical about a cabaret singer's efforts to resurrect her life and career in the aftermath of a painful divorce. She tries to pull together her singing career, her emotions, and her life. *Night Angel*, with concept, libretto, and backdrops painted by the late Melinda Camber Porter, features the exhilarating music of Carman Moore presented in fourteen songs, ranging from hard rock to mystic ballad, all strong on melody, rhythm, and unexpected harmonies. *Night Angel* was first performed at the Clark Theater at Lincoln Center in New York.



Right: A painting by Melinda Camber Porter, 1992.

All 19th-Century Materials Released by the New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives

To celebrate the New York Philharmonic's 175th birthday on December 7, the New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives (archives.nyphil.org) has digitized and launched all of the material from the nineteenth century, including minute books, correspondence, financial documents, and photographs. Also released were the extant scores and parts used by the Orchestra in the nineteenth century, which includes rare and unique printed music. With this release, all materials from 1842 to 1900 are now digitized and freely available online. Highlights include:

Nearly 1,000 scores and their associated parts used by the orchestra in the nineteenth century. Rare items include the world's only extant lithographic edition of the orchestral score of Richard Wagner's *Rienzi*, as well as early printed editions of European composers like Beethoven and Brahms and American composers such as Bristow and MacDowell.

5,500 pages nineteenth-century minute and attendance books, with transcriptions that render these rich resources text-searchable.

Almost 20,000 pages of material such as ledgers, contracts, rental agreements, tour materials, brochures, library records, and ephemera. These archives comprise a unique trove of 19th-century primary source material relating to orchestral music, arts administration, and New York City society.

Seven hundred unique special collections items, including letters by musicians such as Liszt, Mahler, and Mendelssohn.

An archival collection from Anthony Reiff Sr. (a founding Philharmonic member) and his son Anthony Reiff Jr. (also a Philharmonic musician), including correspondence, photographs, ephemera, and programs.

Over 800 nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs of Orchestra members, composers, and other musicians, as well as 70 illustrations from the weekly newspaper *The New-York Mirror*, from between 1827 and 1842, which capture the social milieu in which the New York Philharmonic was born.

The New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives at archives.nyphil.org was launched in February 2011, and makes freely available online over 14,000 printed programs, more than 2,000 marked conducting scores and associated parts, 8,000+ business documents, and nearly 20,000 photographs. When completed in 2018, the online collection will contain every document in the New York Philharmonic Archives from 1842 through 1970, more than 3 million pages — including correspondence, marked scores and parts, contracts, and minutes from meetings of the Board of Directors — as well as all public documents from 1970 through today, including marketing materials, press releases, and annual reports. For more information, email digitalarchives@nyphil.org.



Left: New York Philharmonic Club (orchestra principals)

Right: *Records at Play: The Institute of Jazz Studies @ 50* exhibit with Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers University-Newark

Bottom: Photograph of Marilyn Horne in a scene from *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Metropolitan Opera, 1973



Records at Play: The Institute of Jazz Studies @ 50

From January 23 through December 22, 2017, the Institute of Jazz Studies and Paul Robeson Galleries presented the exhibit *Records at Play: The Institute of Jazz Studies @50*. This 3,400 square foot exhibit celebrated the Institute's 50-year history at Rutgers University–Newark and displayed a wide range of materials and recordings from the Institute's collections, some of which had never previously been on public display. The exhibit was accompanied by an 80-page catalog featuring both materials from the exhibit and other Institute collections. Together, the exhibit and the catalog included over 250 individual items from the Institute's holdings, making this the largest exhibit to date in the Institute's history.

The Marilyn Horne Collection at the University of Pittsburgh

As part of a five-year project to create a museum dedicated to the life and career of world-renowned mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne, the University of Pittsburgh recently received a significant donation from Horne's extensive collection of memorabilia. The Marilyn Horne Collection is comprised of photographs, correspondence, programs, rehearsal schedules, musical scores and more. The collection documents Horne's career from her beginnings in Bradford, Pennsylvania to international stardom. Highlights from the collection are on view at the newly opened Marilyn Horne Museum and Exhibit Center in Bradford, Pennsylvania. The remainder of the extensive archive is currently being processed and will be stored in Pittsburgh as part of the University's Archives and Special Collections, a division of the University of Pittsburgh's library system. Original materials currently on view at the Marilyn Horne Museum and Exhibit Center include Horne's Kennedy Center Honor, National Medal of Arts, and musical scores with handwritten notes taken by Horne during rehearsals.



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Pages 3-6: Photos courtesy of Brenna Edwards, graduate student at the School of Information and Library Science at UNC at Chapel Hill.

Pages 7-9: Skip Groff collection, Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland Libraries.

Page 10: Photo courtesy of Joseph Flicek, Melinda Camber Porter Archive of Creative Works.

Page 11: Photo courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives

Page 12: Photo of *Records at Play: The Institute of Jazz Studies at 50*, courtesy of Elizabeth Surles, Institute of Jazz Studies; photo of Marilyn Horne Collection, CTC.2016.01, Curtis Theatre Collection, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System.

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