

The Toscanini Archives

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Texas State Library

TWO archival depositories in New York City are identified with the name of the late renowned musical conductor Arturo Toscanini. One is the Toscanini Memorial Archives,¹ at the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, a branch of the New York Public Library, and another is the Toscanini Archives at Riverdale,² the conductor's suburban home.

TOSCANINI MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

The Toscanini Memorial Archives had its inception on May 13, 1936, when the New York Public Library announced plans to establish the Arturo Toscanini Collection of Musical Autographs. The purpose of establishing the collection of original musical manuscripts was to honor the great conductor at the time of his retirement as conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and to make possible the housing in one location, open to public, scholar, and performer alike, photographic reproductions of musical works in the handwriting of the composers. Conductors, musicians, and musical scholars in this country have had considerable difficulty in gaining access to copies of originals and early musical manuscripts. New York, center for so much musical activity, was an appropriate locality at which all available musical archival material could be brought together.

With the outbreak of World War II in Europe, many priceless musical manuscripts were destroyed, a number of private collections were scattered, and very little material could be obtained for the Toscanini Memorial Archives. The idea and purpose remained,

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¹ Information about the Toscanini Memorial Archives project has been furnished by Sydney Beck, the curator. Mr. Beck took time from a busy work schedule to give the writer a tour of the Archives at Lincoln Center.

² Walter Toscanini is the curator of the Toscanini Archives of Riverdale and has been generous and kind to the writer by supplying many answers to questions in correspondence. Mr. Toscanini was a most courteous host for personally conducted tours of the Toscanini home and Archives at Riverdale.

however, and sprang into new life with the announced plans for the erection of New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

The Committee of the Toscanini Memorial Archives, which gathered financial and artistic support for the undertaking, set forth the following objectives:

1. To collect and preserve, by means of microfilm and other photographic methods, the autograph scores and preliminary sketches of the master composers.

2. To make this material easily accessible to the scholar and serious musician, as well as to the interested public, through the establishment of a central archives.

3. To make the study of the autographs more profitable by including in the collection closely related manuscript materials and important first and early editions, particularly those with the composer's corrections and revisions, and by developing special files and catalogs dealing with bibliographical, historical, and analytical writings concerning these basic sources.

4. To stimulate research and publication in this field of study through cooperation with the various colleges and universities, libraries, and learned societies.

5. To bring about a greater awareness among teachers of the importance of the composer's original manuscripts, particularly for students embarking on a concert career.

6. To provide musicians and scholars with copies of items in the Archives—with permission of the owner of the originals or copyright owners—when needed for the preparation of a performance or for advanced study.

7. To establish a forum for the discussion of controversial textual problems of the performer and to offer interested artists and researchers the opportunity to demonstrate and discuss in public the results of their investigations.

8. To encourage the wider use of microfilm among educational institutions in this country and elsewhere, by offering them *gratis*, copies of manuscript materials in their collections duplicated for the Archives: This will serve as the most economical and effective means of protection against damage from the frequent handling of fragile manuscripts in the course of study and from their repeated subjection to the camera. It will also serve to make these valuable musical documents readily accessible to the student in places where permission to consult the originals is often refused or only reluctantly given.

9. To offer co-operating libraries opportunities for microfilm exchange of manuscript and other rare musical materials that may not otherwise be available to them.

10. To place in safe storage a master microfilm file of all accessible autographs in public and private possession, as insurance against irretrievable loss in the event of war or other catastrophe.

Alan Rich, writing about the Toscanini Memorial Archives in the *New York Herald Tribune* on June 28, 1964, made the following

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observation: "To hope that the Archive, or any similar project, could possibly lead to the playing of music from the past as it was played in the past—a canard often encountered today among the Baroque buffs—is hopelessly unrealistic. To hope, however, that the performances of such music be at least *correct* in terms of the notes in the composer's score, is well within the province of reality. More than that, this is the hope that lies at the horizon of musical scholarship."

It is most appropriate for this new archival depository to carry the name of Arturo Toscanini because his watchword was fidelity to the composer. Alan Rich noted this fact: "Much of the time the conductor spent . . . was in the pursuit of musical correctitude, in clearing away the debris of editorial corruption in printed scores to get at the composer's original design. He knew his libraries, and cared considerably about their contents. Not even Toscanini had access to what can eventually come out of current enlightened scholarship, however."

The dedication of the Toscanini Memorial Archives took place in the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts on December 15, 1965, with Walter Toscanini and Mrs. Vladimir Horowitz, son and daughter of Arturo Toscanini, attending. At the opening ceremony there was unveiled a plaque designed by the architect Wal-fredo Toscanini, son of Walter and grandson of the Maestro, listing those founders who initially offered large contributions.

In this archives eight microfilm readers are available for use, and photostat copies are supplied at low cost. The collection now contains some 500 microfilmed items of composers' manuscripts and sketches from early times to the present. Many of the copies were obtained in Europe under the direction of Sydney Beck, head of the Music Division's Rare Book and Manuscript Collections, New York Public Library, and agreements have been made with a number of European depositories to exchange microfilmed records. The microfilming was done with funds made available by the Archives' 33 founders, who have contributed a thousand dollars each toward the project. It is hoped that the collection will number 20,000 items within the next 5 years. The Archives Committee points out that, although housed in a branch of the New York Public Library, the Toscanini Memorial Archives is privately supported. Musicians, archivists, and others interested in the program may send contributions payable to the New York Public Library and addressed to the Toscanini Memorial Archives, 111 Amsterdam Ave., New York, N.Y. 10023.

THE TOSCANINI ARCHIVES OF RIVERDALE

The Toscanini Archives of Riverdale is located in the 30-room timbered Gothic house, the Villa Pauline, high on a hill overlooking the Hudson River, where Arturo Toscanini spent his last years in the United States. The house is now occupied by the Maestro's son, Walter, who in 1955 began to transcribe on tape all the acetate recordings made by his father. Many of these recordings were in the process of deteriorating and disintegrating and many others of these reference discs were recorded on a fragile glass base, easily breakable into many pieces like the old 78 r.p.m. records. The idea came to be known as "The Riverdale Project."³ Death came to Toscanini in January of 1957, but his son continued to collect materials relating to the father for what has come to be known as the Toscanini Archives of Riverdale.

In the home, off the second-floor landing, is the Maestro's studio and study, with his piano and his scores and priceless mementos, including autographed pictures of Puccini, Dvorak, and Debussy. Many original scores have been preserved, such as a first edition of "Alceste" by Gluck, the first edition of the Beethoven symphonies, and a score of "Iberia," inscribed by Debussy to Toscanini.

Upstairs, on the third floor, Walter Toscanini has assembled many filing cabinets with sheet music containing markings made by his father; programs of music conducted by his father at La Scala and the Metropolitan and with the New York Philharmonic and the National Broadcasting Company Symphony; reviews; photographs; newspaper and magazine clippings; and other materials collected during Toscanini's musical career. Precise indexes to some of the materials are arranged chronologically and alphabetically according to composer and concert hall. Detailed biographical material relating to every aspect of Toscanini's life (1867-1957) has been gathered with great patience and effort by Walter Toscanini from newspapers, magazines, and individuals in all parts of the world. Filing cabinets contain letters from world figures such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a telegram from Benito Mussolini, and a collection of letters of Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner. Motion pictures and kinescopes of the Maestro's television appearances have been preserved, and in a humidity-controlled room are many recordings (some never released) made by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

³ See Walter Toscanini "The Story of the Riverdale Project and My Father's Recordings," in *Arturo Toscanini: A Complete Discography* (Radio Corporation of America, Oct. 1966).

Downstairs, in the huge air-conditioned basement—once used as a billiard room—are the sound-recording laboratories as well as the tapes and acetate discs of every performance under Toscanini's baton, anywhere in the world, that has found its way to any kind of recording equipment. Several thousand hours of tape, much from Toscanini rehearsals⁴ but many recording rare pieces like the "Dixie" played as an encore in Richmond and Atlanta during the 1950 NBC Symphony tour, are stored in the basement. Walter Toscanini himself had recorded many of his father's broadcasts when they were on the air. Others came from NBC files, from the RCA Victor studios, and from interested individuals who had made their own recordings of the Toscanini broadcasts.

Walter Toscanini's recording project at Riverdale has developed in two directions. First, the effort was made to collect as many non-commercial recordings as could be found. Then, under the capable supervision of John Corbett, technical curator of the Archives and longtime engineer at NBC for the Toscanini broadcasts, this material has been re-recorded on tape, with subsequent editing, eliminating noise with electronic filters, and restoring as many performances as possible to their original sound. One cannot imagine a person better qualified for the job than Mr. Corbett; he knows his electronic and recording equipment as well as recorded music.

The archives at Riverdale have been used by musicians, scholars, writers, and others. The National Broadcasting Co. consulted and searched the Archives at great length in 1963, when the network began to broadcast the weekly radio series "Toscanini: The Man Behind the Legend," a program designed to commemorate the 17 years when Toscanini conducted for NBC. The Archives yielded many unusual as well as standard musical recordings, Toscanini rehearsals, interviews, conversations, and other historical materials associated with Toscanini's life. The program was produced by Don Gillis, who was also the producer of the NBC Symphony Broadcasts from 1944 to 1954, and the announcer and interviewer was Ben Grauer, who was identified for many years with the earlier Toscanini radio broadcasts.

⁴ Don Gillis recounts how the recordings of NBC Symphony Orchestra rehearsals were preserved. One day Gillis and NBC Music Librarian James Dolan were walking down a hall at the NBC studio in Radio City and were crowded by a huge moving hamper or truck. Gillis looked into the hamper and noticed "NBC Symphony" marked on some of the containers. Upon inquiring of the man doing the moving, Gillis was told that the materials were being moved away. Gillis checked with NBC officials and learned that the recordings of the rehearsals were to be scrapped for space. Walter Toscanini was informed, and instead of being dumped from a barge into the Atlantic Ocean the materials were taken to the Toscanini Archives at Riverdale.

Toscanini probably did more than any other person during this century to make Americans (and at times worldwide audiences) conscious of the beauty of orchestral concerts. His role was unique in many ways: his many years of music radio broadcasting, first with the New York Philharmonic (1930-36) and then with the NBC Symphony (1937-54), which is sometimes described as the crowning achievement of his long and full career; the occasional TV appearances with the NBC Symphony toward the end of his career; and the many years when he made recordings for RCA Victor Records (1920-54). Few persons will challenge the statement that the recorded legacy of Arturo Toscanini remains one of the great glories of our time. Future generations will owe a debt of gratitude to Walter Toscanini for the hard work and great care he has given to preserve the Toscanini Archives of Riverdale.

Archival Isolation

In 1910, in the course of the proceedings of the Royal Commission on Public Records, the deputy keeper of the public records, Sir Henry Churchill Maxwell Lyte, was asked by one of the commissioners whether or not he thought that his subordinates could profit by visiting foreign archives after the first training received at the Public Record Office. To this Sir Henry answered: "I do not think so; they would be our own records he would have to deal with. We do not encourage people to write treatises or essays on comparative systems of that sort; what we want them to do is to be able to make a clear list, and arrange documents scientifically, and to be able to make a good *précis*. I do not think a knowledge of foreign archives would be much help."

This policy of archival isolation was a thing of the past even in 1910. The famous manual of the Dutch archivists containing some undoubtedly general principles of archival administration had already been translated into three foreign languages. At about the same time when "treatises and essays on comparative systems of that sort" seem to be futile to Sir Henry, the International Congress was discussing common problems of librarians and archivists in Brussels and, in this country, one of the pioneers of archival science stated that in spite of differences of administrative and record keeping systems in the various countries, there existed a similarity of needs and a common stock of experiences, which would make it worth while investigating and observing the archival developments abroad.

—ERNST POSNER, review of G. Herbert Fowler, *The Care of County Muniments*, in *American Archivist*, 3:262-263 (Oct. 1940).

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