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Creator: Hilbish, Thomas
Title: Thomas Hilbish Papers
Inclusive dates: 1937-2004
Bulk dates: 1960-1990
Extent: 2.5 linear feet (in 3 boxes)
Call number: 2009139 Aa 2

Language: Material is in English.
Acquisition: The Hilbish papers were received in May 2009 (donor no. 10199).
Access: The collection is open without restriction.
Photographs: Box 2
A-V Material: Box 1
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Processed By: Kate Donovan, June 2009

Abstract

Professor at the University of Michigan (1965-1988). Director of Choirs, and respected conductor of choral music, well-known for his extensive repertoire and new interpretations of 20th century choral music. The collection includes photographs, video, press clippings, writings, correspondence, and programs documenting Hilbish's work as an instructor and conductor from 1948 to 2004.

History

Thomas Hilbish was born on August 28, 1918, in Bristol, Indiana, and graduated from Bristol High School in 1937. Hilbish attended the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, where he participated in numerous student activities including varsity basketball, student government, symphonic band, church choir, glee club, and the Phi Mu Alpha, Alpha Phi Omega, and Kappa Sigma fraternities. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music in instrumental supervision in 1941. Hilbish earned a master of music degree from Westminster Choir College in 1947, and pursued doctoral studies at Rutgers (1949), Columbia University (1950), and Indiana University (1952). In addition to formal educational training, Hilbish did private score study and analysis with renowned choral conductor Julius Herford in New York City.

Prior to coming to the University of Michigan, Hilbish was an instructor and choral conductor in Princeton, New Jersey, working as the supervisor of music for the public school system (1948-1964), the director of music at the Hun School (1948-1964), the director of music at the First Methodist Church (1948-1964), a professor of conducting and director of the symphonic choir at Westminster Choir College (1956-1963), and professor of conducting (1961-1962) and director of the men's glee club at Princeton University (1961-1962 and 1962-1964, respectively). While working for the Princeton public schools, Hilbish built the Princeton High School Choir into a nationally recognized ensemble, acclaimed for the complexity and professional level of its work. Under Hilbish's leadership the choir was the first high school to receive United States State Department sponsorship for tours of Europe (1962, 1964).

Thomas Hilbish joined the faculty at the University of Michigan in 1965 as an associate professor of music, earning the status of professor (of conducting) in 1973. During his tenure at Michigan, Hilbish served as the chairman of the Conducting Department for nine years, director of University Choirs, and founder of the University of Michigan Chamber Choir. In addition to serving as the director of conducting and choral activities at the university, Hilbish taught graduate courses in music education, choral and orchestral conducting, and 20th century musical literature. Hilbish also facilitated choral conducting instruction during the summers, at the University of Southern California (1955), Harvard University (1972), and the University of Michigan.

Throughout his career, Hilbish engaged in professional and educational service. In addition to writing on the importance of musical education in schools, Hilbish served on the Board of Observers of Harvard College, as a member of the American Choral Directors Association, board member of the Kodaly Fellowship Program sponsored by the National Council on the Arts, and a board member of Choruses of the World.

Under Hilbish's guidance, the University of Michigan Chamber Choir became internationally recognized for its sophistication and excellence. Among Hilbish's notable accomplishments with the choir are its residency at Gian Carlo Menotti's Festival of Two Worlds, and concerts and operas with Thomas Shippers and the Trieste Orchestra in Spoleto, Italy (1969); a State Department Cultural Exchange tour to the Soviet Union, the

first collegiate choir to be so honored (1971); a performance at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in New York (1972); the second U.S. performance of Schönberg's *Die Jakobsleiter* at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. (1974); participation in the Canary Islands International Opera Festival in Las Palmas, Spain, with performances with Joan Sutherland, Birgit Nilsson, and Plácido Domingo (1975, 1976); and State Department sponsored tours of Poland, Eastern Europe, and Israel (1976, 1983, 1980). Hilbish also led the Michigan Chamber Choir in several recording sessions, primarily of 20th century music. The choir's recording of Italian composer's Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore* received a Grammy nomination in 1981.

In addition to his work with the University of Michigan Chamber Choir, Thomas Hilbish has trained choirs to perform with the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, conducted with the Cleveland Chorus, and directed the U.S. Universities Chorus at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. As an orchestral conductor, Hilbish has conducted the Warsaw Symphony and the Szczecin Philharmonic in Poland, the Harvard Philharmonic, the Princeton University Orchestra, and the University of Michigan Symphony, Philharmonic and Faculty Orchestras.

Over the course of his career, Hilbish gained a reputation for his ability to inspire musicians in their performances and for his wide-ranging knowledge of choral literature. Hilbish has led choirs in professional recordings of Menotti's *The Unicorn*, Randall Thompson's *Americana*, Elliot Carter's *To Music*, Seymour Shifrin's *The Odes of Shang*, Salvatore Martirano's *O, O, O, O, That Shakespearean Rag*, and eighteenth century American music. Hilbish has also conducted world premiers of Arnold Schönberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*, Roger Sessions' *A Mass*, Peter Maxwell Davies' *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Igor Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles*, Thomas Janson's *Eternal Voices*, Leslie Bassett's *Notes in the Silence* and *Moon Canticle*, Réne Leibowitz's *Two Settings of William Blake, Op. 71* and *Empedakles Opus 13*, David Winkler's *Frische Schatten, meine Freude*, Eugene Lee's *Afterimages*, and Jacques-Louis Monod's *Cantus Contra Cantum III*.

Thomas Hilbish retired from the University of Michigan as a Professor Emeritus of Conducting in 1988. Since his retirement, Hilbish has worked as a guest conductor and visiting professor of conducting at New York University, Indiana University, Florida State University, University of Cincinnati, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Arizona, University Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Western Michigan University, and the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China.

Scope and Content Note

The Thomas Hilbish papers document his educational background and his career as a conductor and choral instructor. The papers include performance material (scores, programs, publicity, photographs and videotapes) and teaching material. All phases of his career are included, from Princeton through to the University of Michigan as well as various visiting professorships. The papers are organized into five series: **Biographical**, **Conducting Work**, **Programs**, **Teaching**, and **Audio-Visual Material**.

Records in the **Biographical Materials** series, 1937-2003 (0.25 linear feet) document Hilbish's early years, education, and lifetime achievements. The series includes information on his college years, awards, honors, and curricula vitae.

The **Conducting Work** series, 1947-2003 (0.5 linear feet), documents Hilbish's professional career. The series is divided into three subseries: Administrative Materials,

Choirs, and Choral Scores. The records in the administrative materials subseries are concerned with the more general aspects of Hilbish's conducting work, and include program notes, correspondence, and press clippings. The choirs subseries includes materials documenting Hilbish's work with the United States Universities Chorus, the Princeton High School Choir, and the University of Michigan Chamber Choir. Materials in this subseries include tour information, performance reviews, and correspondence. Programs for concerts by these choirs may be found in the Programs series. The final subseries, choral scores, is comprised of Hilbish's notes on choral scores, primarily those of Stravinsky and Schönberg.

Materials in the **Programs** series, 1946-2004 (0.5 linear feet), document Hilbish's orchestral and choral conducting performances. The majority of the programs in the series are for Hilbish's work with the Princeton High School Choir and the University of Michigan's many musical ensembles.

The **Teaching** series, 1949-1997 (0.25 linear feet), contains records documenting Hilbish's teaching career. The series is divided into two subseries: Administrative Materials and Class Materials. The administrative materials subseries includes records on academic appointments, educational service, and musical education. The class materials subseries includes information on courses taught by Hilbish, syllabi, and instructional materials.

The **Audio Visual Materials** series, 1945-2003 and undated (0.75 linear feet) includes two subseries, Photographs and Videotapes (VHS) documenting Hilbish's conducting career. While the series contains a few photographs of Hilbish as a young man, the majority of tapes and photographs in this series document Hilbish's choral conducting work, primarily with the Princeton High School Choir and the University of Michigan Chamber Choir.

Box No. Description

Biographical Materials, 1937-2003**Box 1**

Awards and Honors, 1969-2003
 Curricula Vitae
 Education (3 folders)
 Bristol High School, 1937
 University of Miami, 1938-1941
 Westminster Choir College
 Naval Records, 1942-1946

Conducting Work, 1947-2003

General
 Conducting Notes (Bach/Motet VI)
 Correspondence, 1947-2003
 Press Clippings, 1955-1981
 Program Notes

Choirs
 Princeton High School
 Press Clippings (2 folders)
 Scrapbook, 1963-1964
 Tours, 1961-1964
 United States Universities Choir (2 folders)
 University of Michigan
 General
 Press Clippings (2 folders)
 Press Releases
 Tours
 Cultural Exchange Tour
 Eastern European Tour
 Fifth International Choral Festival, New York, NY,
 Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, PA
 Las Palmas Festival, Canary Islands
 Spoleto Music Festival, Rome, Italy
 State Department USSR Tour, USSR
 Voice of America Broadcast

Choral Scores
 Assorted Materials (2 folders)
 Schönberg, Arnold, Die Jakobsleiter, Notes
 Igor Stravinsky
 Les Noches, Notes
 Oedipus Rex, Notes
 Requiem Canticles, Notes
 Symphony of Psalms, Notes

Box No. Description

Programs, 1946-2004

Box 1 (cont.)

Assorted Programs
 Churches
 Florida State University
 Harvard University
 Princeton High School Choir (2 folders)
 Princeton University

Box 2

University of Michigan (2 folders)
 University of Wisconsin
 Westminster Choir College

Teaching, 1949-1997

Administrative Materials
 Academic Appointments
 Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China (2 folders)
 Mass in B Minor, Johann Sebastian Bach
 Visiting Professorship
 Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
 Letters of Recommendation
 Music Education Writings
 New Jersey Teacher Certification
 Search Committee
 Class Materials
 Choral Methods
 Conducting Examples
 Conducting Notations
 Conducting Seminar
 Syllabi
 Voice Methods

Audio Visual Materials, 1987-2003

Photographs

Hilbish, Thomas
 Princeton High School Choir
 University of Michigan Choir

Videotapes

Box 3

Ann Arbor Cantata Singers Concert, December 14, 2001 (VHS)
 Ann Arbor Cantata Singers Concert, November 23, 2003 (VHS)
 Chamber Choir (VHS)
 Chamber Choir, Russia Audition (VHS)
 Chinese Concert, Evangel College, Springfield, MO, February 13,
 1995 (VHS)
 Fall Concert, University of Arizona Choral Association, Tucson,
 AZ, October 17, 1993 (VHS)

Box No. Description

Audio Visual Materials, 1987-2003 (cont.)

Videotapes (cont.)

Box 3 (cont.)

Mass in B Minor, Johann Sebastian Bach, Beijing, China (3 VHS tapes)

Mass in B Minor, Johann Sebastian Bach, UCLA Choir & Orchestra, March 1989 (2 VHS tapes)

Pierrot Lunaire, Arnold Schönberg (VHS)

Reel to Reel Digitizations (DVD-R)

Symphony of Psalms, Igor Stravinsky (VHS)

Tom at Miami Graduation, 1992 (VHS)

The War Requiem, Benjamin Britten, University of Michigan Choir & Orchestra, Ann Arbor, MI, April 21, 1987 (4 VHS and 1 Beta tapes)

Winter Concert, Princeton High School Choir 50th Reunion, Princeton, NJ, December 21, 1995 (2 VHS tapes)