

Watkinson Library Guides, no. 1.

MUSIC IN THE WATKINSON LIBRARY

by

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The music collection in the Watkinson Library reflects the musical taste and interests of the American people from the beginning of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th. It included many varieties of classical, religious and popular music, making it valuable to musicians and social historians alike.

In the early years of the library, collecting music was not a priority, though there were some important acquisitions. For example, George Brinley's library contained a number of early American musical works such as Thomas Walter's Grounds and Rules of musick explained, Boston, 1721, and Timothy Swan's The songster's assistant, Suffield [1795?] There were also a number of early works dealing with the church singing controversy which ranged in New England in the early 18th century, notable Thomas Symmes Utile dulci, Boston, 1723.

It was while Frank Butler Gay was librarian, 1897-1934, that the music collection began to attain more importance. Gay was interested in all the arts, including music, and actively tried to build up the collection. At this time, too, the library acquired many important gifts.

Barnard Collection. In 1905 the Henry Barnard Collection of early American textbooks came to the library. It contained a number of 19th century musical instructors some with sharp notes, for example, Smith and Schenk's Musical primer, Chambersburg, Pa. [1846]. Since then many examples of 19th century school song books and instruction books have been added to the collection.

Wells Collection. In 1908 the library was given a fine collection of books from a Hartford resident, Charles T. Wells. According to the bookplate, which he himself designed, the collection encompassed art, music, bibliography and New England. The music part consisted of several hundred psalm and hymn books and many early American tune books. Besides early editions of Sternhold and Hopkins, The whole books of psalms and Tan'sur's American harmony; it included almost all the works of William Billings, Supply Belcher, Daniel Read and numerous other American "Tune-smiths". It also had many editions of Smith and Little's Easy instructor. Many of the music books in the Wells Collection have MS music additions. In addition, Wells also gave a large collection of English and American editions of the works of Isaac Watts.

Nathan Allen Collection. A few years later the library was fortunate to receive substantial gifts from another Hartford resident, Nathan H. Allen, 1848-1925. Allen was born in Marion, Mass. and in 1868 went to Germany where he was trained in singing by Grell and organ playing by Haupt. In 1878 he came back to Hartford and was the organist at the Park Church and later at the Center Church. He was also a teacher of piano and organ and composed many works, including cantatas, songs and anthems. He organized the Musurgia Club of Hartford whose concerts were a highlight of the musical life of Hartford in the 1890's. He devoted many years to writing his History of music in Connecticut from psalmody to symphony, but died before it could be published. He also contributed an important series of articles to the Connecticut Quarterly entitled Old time music and musicians.

Besides many books and musical scores presented by him to the library from 1915 till his death in 1925, the library received these important items.

1. The MS of his unpublished History of music in Connecticut.
2. The MS notes for a projected work on ancient history.
3. The MSS of about 80 of his musical compositions and arrangements, including some never published.
4. About 350 letters, covering the period ca. 1878-1925, from musicians, students and others, of interest as a sidelight on the musical life of Connecticut at the time.
5. 13 scrapbooks with 4 index volumes. 10 contain newspaper clippings and hundreds of programs of concerts and recitals, in which he participated or

attended, ca. 1870-1925. 2 are devoted largely to magazine clippings and programs dealing with the organ and organ recitals 1870-1895, and there are 2 volumes of miscellaneous clippings on architecture, etc.

6. The MS record of the Musurgia Club of Hartford, June 16, 1891-April 7, 1893.
7. A large collection of English and American theatre broadsides of the period ca. 1795-1840.

The first 6 of these items now comprise the Allen MS collection. Item 7, Theatre broadsides, are in the Ephemera Collection with other material of the same type.

It was Nathan Allen who enabled the Watkinson Library to acquire an interesting collection of the music of Henry Wilson, 1828-78.

Henry Wilson Collection. Henry Wilson was born in Greenfield, Mass. and as a young man studied music in Leipzig, his teachers including Plaidy and Moscheles. He came to Hartford in 1855 and became organist and choirmaster at Christ Church Cathedral, a position he held for over twenty years. He wrote many anthems, motets, chants and compositions for the organ. He also taught piano and organ, and organized the St. Cecilia Club, under whose auspices many concerts were given in Hartford in the 1860's and 70's.

Besides copies of his published works, the Watkinson Library has the MSS of over sixty of his musical compositions, many of them unpublished, It also has his copy of the score of Mendelssohn's 42 Lieder ohne Worte, containing a piece of the original MS of one of the songs. This book was given to Wilson by his teacher Louis Plaidy in Leipzig in 1855. There is also his copy of the score of Meyerbeer's opera Le prophete, containing the composer's signature.

Manuscript Music Collection. At around this same period the library received from various donors approximately 26 American MS music copybooks dating from the 18th to the mid-19th century, and 32 MS choir parts used in various Hartford churches during the 1860's. Many miscellaneous MS pieces by Connecticut amateur composers of the 19th century also came to the library as gifts.

Gay also made an effort to collect sheet music, especially of the period 1820-40, or later if by American composers. For example, the library has many examples of the music of the American composers Henry C. Work and Dudley Buck. During the Depression years and for many years after the library did not receive and major music gifts although it did acquire a good amount of valuable secondary material - histories, bibliographies etc. In 1957 one gift of note was the original MS of Richard Strauss's song Gefunden.

Niles Collection. In 1976 the library was fortunate to receive an important major gift – the Abbe Niles Collection. Edward Abbe Niles, 1894-1963, a graduate of Trinity College, Hartford, was a New York lawyer who was extremely interested in music, especially jazz. He collected books, music and records, wrote on the subject, and also knew many of the American popular musicians of the time.

The collection which came to the library included about 150 books on jazz, blues and folk music plus musical comedy scores, and a large collection of sheet music, especially of the 1920's and 30's. There were also about 165 early jazz records (78 rpm) including many with the OKeh label.

These records have been taped and indexed by composer, title and artist.

Besides the jazz and blues material the collection also included 24 volumes of bound sheet music, most published in the U.S., covering the years 1790-1910, and another volume containing fine examples of sheet music with lithographed covers.

Two other very important items were books which belonged to Micah Hawkins, the American musician and composer. One is his MS music copybook given by his widow to Henry Mount in 1826. It contains popular vocal and instrumental music of the late 18th and early 19th century

including some of his own compositions and one by Mount. The second volume contains 18th and 19th century English and American sheet music, with additional MS pieces by Hawkins. It is entitled Music. Vol. 5 and vols.3-4 which probably go with it are in the Library of Congress.

The Niles Collection also included approximately 200 letters to Niles, many from personalities of the New York music and theatre world, including George Gershwin and Irving Berlin. Niles knew blues composer, player and publisher W.C. Handy well and collaborated with him in writing the book Blues: an anthology, New York, 1926. Among the letters are several from Handy as well as memorabilia of him, including an album of photographs taken at a party in New York to celebrate his birthday in 1958.

Malcolm-Smith Collection. George Malcolm-Smith, a Trinity College alumnus and jazz musicologist, hosted a jazz program on WTIC radio in Hartford for many years. He was the author of a number of novels, one of which was made into a musical comedy which ran almost a year on Broadway. On his death in 1984 he bequeathed to the library his collection of jazz books and periodicals cert programs and other items relating to jazz, covering the period 1936-63.

Besides what has already been mentioned it may be useful to provide a brief description of the various types of music and music related material in the library. An alphabetical listing of these categories follows.

Ballads and folk music. This includes many collections of traditional English and Scottish ballads, with and without music, published from the 18th century on. For example, there are the works of William Chappell and Joseph Ritson and the publications of the Ballad Society of London, 1869-1902. There is also a good representative collection of more recent books on ballads and folk song for example, Bertrand Bronson's The traditional tunes of the Child ballads, Princeton, N.J. 1959-71. 4v.

Children's song and hymn books. Besides the material in the Barnard Collection mentioned previously, the library possessed many examples of children's song books and hymnals, most published in the United States within the period 1820-1880. They include items by Hastings, Lowell Mason and Bradbury as well as many lesser known compilers and composers. There are also children's cantatas and musical plays and instruction books.

Dancing. The Watkinson Library owns a variety of books on dancing dating from the early 18th century to the 20th century. Some are dance instruction books, for country and ballroom dancing, often containing music, for example, Vincent Masi's The cotillion party assistant, Boston [1818?] and L.O. Carpenter's J.W. Pepper's universal dancing master, Philadelphia, 1882. The library also has many collections of dance music and individual pieces of sheet music, being especially strong in the period 1830-1870. Some of the MS music copybooks of the late 18th and early 19th centuries also contain dance music, usually for violin or piano. In the library's large etiquette collection the moral aspects of dancing and ballroom behavior are often dealt with.

Ephemera. The musical ephemera in the library is arranged in five main categories – Music advertisements, Pictorial note paper songs, Portraits of musicals, Programs and Song sheets. A short description of each category will be found under each of these subject headings. There is an index to the Ephemera Collection which is arranged by subject. It should be noted that much of the ephemera listed under Theatre is also of interest musically. For instance, there are ballet programs of the 1940's-60's, over 400 American and English playbills dating from the late 18th century to the 1840's which often list Theatre scrapbooks contain programs and press clippings of musical comedies. They cover the period from the later 19th century to the mid-20th century.

Instruction books. There is an interesting collection of musical instruction books for both voice and instrument. The books on singing are for the most part American editions, generally within the period of 1835-75. The musical instrument instruction are English, German and American, published from the early 18th to the late 19th century. Those for the piano, which include many

editions of Czerny and Plaidy, reflect changing teaching methods during the 19th century. There is a good collection of 18th and 19th century flute instructors, some quite rare. It includes such works as Oswald's Caledonian pocket companion for the German flute, London [1750] and The flute preceptor or Columbian instructor, improv'd, New York [ca. 1807-10]. There are also instruction books for a wide range of other instruments including banjo, mandolin, organ and violin and also less common ones such as J.B. Green's Concise instructor for the seraphine and melodeon, Boston, 1847.

Jazz and Blues. See Niles and Malcolm-Smith Collections.

Manuscripts. See Nathan Allen, Henry Wilson and Niles Collections.

Music Advertisements. In the Ephemera Collection there is a collection of advertisement of the 19th and early 20th century including lists of publications, material on early phonographs, etc.

Musical Scores. There is a representative collection of mostly 19th century editions of the scores of standard classical composition, plus some earlier European editions, for example a Paris 1688 edition of Lully's Acis et Galatée. American 19th century cantatas and oratorios and light operas is quite well represented. Among more recent items are works by George Gershwin and Cole Porter.

Opera librettos. We have approximately 800 librettos of operas performed in the United States, especially in Boston, Hartford and New York, ca. 1820-1950, being particularly strong in the period 1850-1880. They include the most popular operas as well as those now little known, and provide an interesting picture of the changing taste and styles of opera performed during this period. This collection can be supplemented by the many opera programs which are in the Programs Collection.

Periodicals. The library has an interesting variety of musical periodicals ranging from the Musical Magazine, London, 1767 to the Armed Forces Kit Bag of the 1940's and jazz periodicals of more recent years. It is especially strong in the 19th century American music periodicals and besides such short lived magazines as the Musical Liberty published in Boston from 1835-36, it also has the complete set of Dwight's Journal of Music, 1852-1881. An interesting item is the Boston National Peace Jubilee Musical Reporter brought out in connection with the great music festival held in Boston in 1869. The library also has all the daily programs for the events. In addition to the American magazines there are also important publications from other countries, for example the complete set of the Musical Antiquarian Society of London Publications, 1841-50 and the Musical Miscellany, London, 1729-31.

Many 19th century periodicals, especially of the period 1830 to 1880 include printed music and articles on musical subjects. Theatrical magazines, of which the library has a number, cover such subjects as musical comedy, opera and other stages musical events.

Pictorial note paper songs. The library has about 150 of these, issued during the period ca. 1861-65. Many are bound up in a Trumbull Prime Civil War Collection volume entitled Illustrated Ballads, the rest are in the Ephemera Collection.

Portraits of musicians, composers and performers. These are in the Ephemera Collection and include a large album of magazine clippings of opera singers and composers, ca. 1890-1912.

Programs. The collection of programs consists of individual programs and albums of collections of programs of all kinds of musical performances, mostly in the Eastern United States, dating from the 1820's to the 1950's. The arrangement is by city, then by theatre, concert hall, etc., then chronological. The scrapbooks of Nathan Allen already referred to also contain hundreds of programs, many of them church services or organ recitals. Some of the albums also contain press cuttings of concert and theatrical reviews.

Psalm books, hymnology, spirituals. Besides the collections of early psalm books and American tune books, many of which were received from Charles Wells, it should be noted that the library has a good collection of other religious music. This includes hymn books from many religious denominations including the Shakers. It also has many of the hymnals used at revivalist meetings from the end of the 18th century until well on into the 19th. Among other interesting items are the hymn books published for the use of American Indians by the Moravians and the American Board of Commissioners written in American Indian languages. We also have Thomas Commuck's Indian melodies, New-York, 1845, which is probably the first music book written by an Indian to be published in the United States.

The library has number of collections of negro spirituals, including the first book published, W.F. Allen's Slave songs of the United States, New York, 1867. It also has the songs of the Hampton Institute of Virginia and the Jubilee singers. Besides these earlier works the library has many later 19th and 20th century collections and historical and bibliographical material on the subject.

Reference books. The music reference books in the Watkinson Library reflect the main strengths of the collection. Besides the standard bibliographies, bibliographies and background histories, especially of music in the United States, it also has many older bibliographical tools which are often useful to find out about lesser known musicians of the past. As examples of more recent acquisitions, we have the 1973 reprint of the Board of Music Trade of the U.S. of America . Complete catalog of sheet music and musical works, 1870, and the microfiche edition of the National Tune Index to which the Watkinson Library contributed material.

Sheet Music. The library has about 25,000 pieces of sheet music in bound volumes or loose in boxes. The latter is divided into two categories, vocal and instrumental, and arranged alphabetically by composer. This collection is partially cataloged. The bound volumes of sheet music have a catalog arranged by composer and title. Ask watkinson staff for assistance. Most of the sheet music was published in the United States, but there is also a considerable amount of English and German publications. The collection encompasses the period from the late 18th century to the 1950's and covers a wide variety of both classical and popular, sacred and secular music. There are many examples of lithographed covers, popular songs of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, original editions of Stephen Foster, the Christy Minstrel songs, early jazz and blues.

Songsters. The library has a good selection of English and Scottish popular songsters both with and without music, of the 18th and 19th centuries. American songsters include 18th century works such as The Apollo, Philadelphia, 1793 and a host of 19th century items reflecting a variety of tastes and fashions. The popular singing groups such as the Hutchinson Family and the Christy Minstrels are well represented in both songsters and sheet music. Jenny Lind, Harrigan and Hart and Tony Pastor are also here. There are also many glee books and patriotic song books. In fact, patriotism and politics in the 18th and 19th century America generated many popular songsters. Our collections show the shift from the patriotic ballads of the early years of the United States to the songsters which supported political candidates during the 19th and early 20th century. Henry Clay, Garfield and Cleveland were all supported with song and songsters.

The popular causes of the 19th century, especially anti-slavery and temperance also had songsters of which the library has many examples.

Sound Recordings. See Niles Collection. The library has an interesting collection of record catalogs and record company magazines issued by such companies as Victor, Brunswick, Edison, etc. covering the period 1914-1925.

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