Audio Preservation and Digitization on a Shoestring

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The Collection

• In-house and commercial recordings
• Choirs, organists, composers linked to Westminster
• Faculty recitals
• Festivals
• Commencements and convocations
• Lectures and master classes
• Radio broadcast transcriptions

• Multiple formats from 1925–present
Assessment

• 2011: NEH Preservation Assistance Grant for collection assessment
• Estimate for reformatting and preservation of audiovisual materials

Included:
• Digitization
• Access copies
• Metadata
• “Extraordinary intervention contingency”

Not included:
• Maintenance/storage of originals
• Enterprise-class digital storage
• Training of staff
• Remote access provision
Seeking guidance

- Association of Recorded Sound Collections Technical committees
- LOC’s National Recording Preservation Board
- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Technical Committee (IASA)
- TAPE (Training for Audiovisual Preservation in Europe)
- FAGI
- Indiana University Media Preservation Initiative
  - Great, open documentation
  - Collaborative research, proposing best practices
  - Putting it into practice
Long-term plan

- Overall goals: **preservation** and **access**
  - Inventory
  - Condition survey
  - Prioritization
  - Digitization
  - Metadata creation
  - Stable and secure storage of preservation masters
  - Stable and secure storage of originals
  - Production of access copies
  - Making content discoverable and accessible
Inventory

- Over 800 reel-to-reel tapes
  - Paper, acetate, polyester
  - Late 1940s to early 1990s
- 500-1,000 (?) cassette tapes
  - 1970s to late 1990s (?)
- LPs, 78s, metal and glass discs
- Digital Audio Tapes (DAT)
Prioritization

• Discs are the most stable
  • Variety of formats is an issue

• DAT obsolescence

• Tape is least stable
  • Mold, sticky shed, vinegar syndrome, wavy acetate
Standards, Software, & Access

- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) guidelines in TC-03 and TC-04
  - 96 kHz sampling rate
  - 24 bit resolution
  - Stored as .wav files on an external hard drive and on servers located on Rider University’s main campus
  - Access copies (streaming mp3 files, CDs?)
- Audacity editing software
- CONTENTdm (OCLC’s digital management system)
Technics RS-TR 535

Korg MR-2000S
dbx decoder

TEAC X10
Korg MR-2000S studio recorder
dbx type II noise reduction system
Moldy acetate tape
Quarantined moldy tapes
Sticky polyester tape
Baking a polyester tape
Wavy acetate tape
Curled, moldy acetate tape
Delaminated acetate tape
Other issues...

Reused tapes
No information on the box, and ...
No information on the reel
Multiple types of tape on one reel
So far:

- Reel-to-reel inventory nearly complete
- Cassette inventory in process
- ~220 hours of audio digitized
  - 1 hr. of audio = 5 to 6 hrs. of labor
- Selected items loaded onto CONTENTdm
- Expenditures: less than $30,000
Collection view in CONTENTdm

Rider University Libraries

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Westminster Choir College Archival Audio Collection

The pearl fishers, April 30, 1952.

About this collection

The Westminster Choir College Archival Audio Collection includes commercial and locally-produced recordings spanning from approximately 1926 to the early 1980s. It is comprised of multiple formats of grooved disc and magnetic tape, documenting the varied activities of the school and the choir over the years. The collection includes many rare or unique recordings of a vast range of choral performances; rehearsals with renowned orchestras and conductors; faculty and student recitals; festivals; guest performers; lectures; convocations and commencements; and interviews with prominent figures in choral and...
Album view in CONTENTdm


Track 1 - Palestrina: Hodie Christus natus est.

Object Description

Rating: Based on 0 rating(s)
Description: 2 sound tape reels: analog, 7 1/2 ips, mono.
Date: 1956-02-26
Type: tape reel
Identifier: 52027002877578, 52027002877511
Source: Westminster Choir College Archival Audio Collection
Note: Digital file -- 01/16/17 Track 1: Palestrina: Hodie Christus natus est, Track 2: Byrd: Ave verum corpus, Track 3: Lotti: Crucifixus.