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City Symphony Orchestra of New York Records, 1927-1971
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bulk 1945 and 1961

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Abstract Established in 1927 by Leopold Prince the City Symphony Orchestra of New York, a non-profit organization comprised mostly of amateur musicians, gave free concerts throughout New York. The collection contains board minutes, correspondence, financial documents, programs, and ephemera that highlight the organization and financial operations of the orchestra.

Administrative Information:

Acquisition:	Received in 1996
Access:	Collection is open to the public.
Restrictions on Use:	For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
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History Note

In 1927, Leopold Prince, a Municipal Court Judge of New York, established the City Amateur Symphony Orchestra of New York (After 1953 it was referred to as simply the City Symphony Orchestra of New York). The orchestra quickly grew to include between 80 and 110 musicians, the vast majority of whom were amateurs. Leopold Prince, a violinist himself, conducted the orchestra in its first twenty-five years of existence, until his death in 1951. The former assistant conductor, Franz Bibo, succeeded Prince as the new conductor. The City Symphony Orchestra of New York catered to audiences who could not afford entrance fees at typical venues, and frequently gave free concerts at New York hospitals, parks, and museums. Typically, in the 1950s, the orchestra would perform six concerts at the American Museum of Natural History in the winter, and four summer concerts held on the mall of Central Park. The free concerts were generally well attended, with the summer concerts drawing crowds between 5,000 and 20,000 a performance. The orchestra would also perform at benefit concerts throughout the city in an effort to raise money for charitable organizations.

The City Symphony Orchestra existed without any monetary support from the city or state of New York. They survived solely on the philanthropy of individuals. For the first few years, Judge Leopold Prince personally bore all of the expense for the operations of the orchestra. From the beginning of the 1930s until 1951, funds were raised primarily through benefit dinners. Upon Leopold Prince's death in 1951, the orchestra lost their principal fundraiser and consequently, the orchestra created a Board of Directors whose primary responsible focused on fundraising. The Board of Directors and specifically, the Finance Committee solicited donations from friends, community members, and philanthropic organizations. In 1956, the orchestra incorporated as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization.

It remains unclear what became of the City Symphony Orchestra of New York after the late 1960s. Beginning in the 1940s, several groups began operating under the title of the New York City Symphony and to complicate matters the City Symphony Orchestra of New York was often casually referred to as the New York City Symphony.

Scope and Content Note

The papers in this collection represent the activities of the City Symphony Orchestra of New York from 1927 to 1971. The bulk of the collection falls between 1945 and 1961. The vast majority of the files document the fiscal history of this musical organization. Most of the correspondence and board minutes detail fundraising efforts and their relative successes. This collection provides insight into the operations of a non-profit organization in addition to outlining the history of the City Symphony Orchestra of New York.

Organization:

Series I: Board of Directors Minutes and Correspondence, 1955-1961

Series II: Correspondence, 1944-1961

Series III: Financial Documents, 1953-1960

Series IV: Programs, 1936-1971

Series V: Subject Files, 1927-1964

Series VI: Ephemera, 1956 and undated

Series Descriptions:

Series I: Board of Directors Minutes and Correspondence, 1955-1961
6 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

The series containing the Board of Directors Minutes and Correspondence highlight the management of the City Symphony Orchestra of New York. The Correspondence largely consists of letters concerning the Board of Directors meetings with proposed dates and matters to be discussed. The minutes contain information regarding upcoming concerts, the recruitment of new donors, and details about the annual budget.

Series II: Correspondence, 1944-1961
4 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The bulk of the correspondence pertains to fundraising drives. Form letters, which served as acknowledgements of recent donations, comprise the majority of the correspondence. Some limited personal correspondence, including letters to the Leopold Prince are also found in this series.

Series III: Financial Documents, 1953-1960
11 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

The Financial Documents series contains deposit books, receipts, tax exemption forms, budgets, and other materials elucidating the fiscal situation of the City Symphony Orchestra of New York. The contributions and disbursement files broadly highlight the orchestra's annual revenues and expenses.

Series IV: Programs, 1936-1971

11 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

This series contains programs from City Symphony Orchestra of New York concerts. Most of the programs are from a summer series, which the Orchestra played annually in the 1950s. Also, some programs from other orchestras, such as the New York Philharmonic, are located in this series.

Series V: Subject Files, 1927-1964

2 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The Subject Files series contains topical folders on an array of subjects. Included in this series are personal notes kept by Hiram Gans, a member of the Board of Directors and the Chair of the Finance Committee of the orchestra. Also, files pertaining to several benefit concerts given by the orchestra are located within this series.

Series VI: Ephemera, 1956 and undated

4 folders

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains photographs, posters, and press releases. The photograph materials include portraits of Franz Bibb, one-time conductor of the Orchestra, and a photograph of a 1947 fundraising dinner held in honor of Leopold Prince.

Series I: Board of Directors Minutes and Correspondence, 1955-1961

Box 1

F. 1	1955-1956 (Minutes only)
F. 2	1957
F. 3	1958
F. 4	1959
F. 5	1960
F. 6	1961

Series II: Correspondence, 1944-1961

F. 7	Basil Bass, 1956 Franz Bibo
F. 8	1954-1957
F. 9	1958-1959
	J.F. Charvat.
F. 10	1955 Jan.-1956 Mar

Box 2

F. 1	1956 June-1956 Dec.
F. 2	1957-1959
	Hiram Gans
F. 3	1955
F. 4	1956 Mar.-1956 Oct.
F. 5	1956 Nov.-1957 July
F. 6	1957 Aug.-1958 May
F. 7	1958 June-1958 July
F. 8	1958 Aug.-1958 Oct.
F. 9	1958 Nov.-1959 Feb.

Box 3

F. 1	1959 Mar.-1959 May
F. 2	1959 June-1959 Nov.
F. 3	1959 Dec.-1960 Mar.
F. 4	1960 Apr.-1960 Aug.
F. 5	1960 Sept.-1960 Oct.
F. 6	1960 Nov.-1961 Mar.
F. 7	1961 Apr.-1961 June
F. 8	1961 July-1961 Nov.
	Erwin Loewy
F. 9	1954 Feb.-1954 Nov. 17
F. 10	1954 Nov. 18-1954 Dec.
F. 11	1955 Jan.-1955 May

Box 4

F. 1	1955 June-1955 Dec.
F. 2	1956
F. 3	1957 Jan.-1957 Apr.
F. 4	1957 May-1957 Dec.
F. 5	1958 Jan.-1958 June
F. 6	1958 July-1959 May
F. 7	L. Porter Moore, 1958
F. 8	Leopold Prince, 1940-1951
	Mrs. Leopold Prince
F. 9	1944-1953

F. 10 1954
F. 11 1955
F. 12 1956

Box 5

F. 1 1957
F. 2 1958-1961
F. 3 Fredda S. Sieve, 1953-1958

Series III: Financial Documents, 1953-1960

F. 4 Deposit Book, 1953-1958
F. 5 Bank Statements, 1953-1959
F. 6 Reports, 1954-1957
F. 7 Manufacturers Trust Company, 1954-1958
F. 8 Contributions, 1955-1957

Box 6

F. 1 Orchestra Insurance, 1955-1959
F. 2 Disbursements, 1956-1958
F. 3 Tax Exemption, 1956-1960
F. 4 Contributions, 1957-1958
F. 5 Miscellaneous Business Notes, 1957-1961
F. 6 Disbursements, 1958-1959
F. 7 Contributions, 1959-1960

Series IV: Programs, 1936-1971

F. 8 1936-1951
F. 9 1952
F. 10 1953
F. 11 1954
F. 12 1955
F. 13 1956
F. 14 1957
F. 15 1958
F. 16 1959
F. 17 1960

Box 7

F. 1 1961
F. 2 1964-1971

Series V: Subject Files, 1927-1964

F. 3 Benefit Concert: American Ballet Theatre, 1958
F. 4 Benefit Concert: Birgit Nilsson, 1960
F. 5 City Symphony Foundation Materials, 1964
Clippings
F. 6 1930-1939
F. 7 1931-1939 (From scrapbook)
F. 8 1940-1949
F. 9 1950-1959
F. 10 1960-1969
F. 11 Undated

	Hiram Gans' Notes
F. 1	1956-1957
F. 2	1958
F. 3	1959-1960
F. 4	Leopold Prince, 1927-1948
	Rehearsal Notes, 1945-1957
F. 5	1945-1947 (From scrapbook)
F. 6	1948-1950 (From scrapbook)
F. 7	Annette Royak, undated
F. 8	Charles Schiff, 1964
F. 9	School Concerts, 1957

Series VI: Ephemera, 1956 and undated

F. 10	Photographs, undated
F. 11	Press Releases, 1956

**Box 8
(oversize)**

Photograph, 1947
Poster, undated