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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Dean Dixon papers

1939-1979 [bulk 1950-1976]

Sc MG 324

Summary

Creator: Dixon, Dean, 1915-1976

Title: Dean Dixon papers

Date: 1939-1979 [bulk 1950-1976]

Size: 10 linear feet (8 record cartons, 2 print boxes, 1 archival box, and a 1/2 archival box)

Source: Roswitha Dixon, 1999 and 2002.

Abstract: The Dean Dixon Papers reflect Dixon's career as a conductor of philharmonic orchestras; the majority of the material covers his time in Europe (1950s - 1960s) and his American tours in the early 1970s.

Access: Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request_access

Preferred citation: [Item], Dean Dixon papers, Sc MG 324, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Some of the printed matter and letters are written in German, Dutch, and Czech.

Processing note: Accessioned by Janice Quinter, November 21, 2003.

Creator History

Dean Dixon was a renowned conductor of symphonic orchestras in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Asia, and he guest conducted virtually all of the leading orchestras on four continents. Born in Harlem, New York, in 1915 to West Indian parents, Dixon began studying violin at the age of 1 or 2, and played most of the instruments that comprise an orchestra. He graduated from the Juilliard Institute of Musical Art, Juilliard Graduate School and Columbia University Teachers College (1936-

1939). While still in high school, he organized his own amateur orchestra, and developed and conducted several other orchestras from 1932 - 1937. In 1941 he became the first black person to direct the NBC Summer Symphony Orchestra. The following year, in 1942, Dixon made his debut as guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, thereby becoming the first black person to conduct this major orchestra. In the 1940s he also served as a guest conductor for other American orchestras. Unable to secure a permanent position in the United States due to racial discrimination, Dixon went to Paris in 1949, at the invitation of a radio symphony. He found success conducting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra during the 1950 - 1951 season, and in 1953 was appointed permanent conductor of the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden, a position he held until 1960.

Between 1961 and 1970 Dixon served as the main conductor of the Hesse Radio Symphony Orchestra in Frankfurt, Germany. During this period he held two posts simultaneously, as he was also the principal conductor of Australia's Sydney Symphony from 1964 - 1967, returning there for the 1973 opening performances of the new Sydney Opera House. Throughout this period he toured widely as a guest conductor for major symphony and radio orchestras in Europe, the Far East, and Latin America.

In 1970 Dixon ended his twenty-one year self-imposed exile and returned to the United States. After twenty-eight years he again conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, this time before an audience of 75,000 in Central Park. He also conducted the St. Louis Symphonic Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphonic Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphonic Orchestra, among others, receiving glowing reviews for his performances. His acclaim in the summer of 1970 was repeated in 1971 following numerous appearances as a guest conductor with leading American orchestras, while continuing his conducting activities in Europe.

Dixon recorded with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna State Opera Orchestra, the Prague Chamber Orchestra, and other orchestras for European recording companies. He died in 1976, a few days after returning home from a concert engagement in Brussels.

Scope and Content Note

The Dean Dixon Papers reflect Dixon's career as a conductor of philharmonic orchestras; the majority of the material covers his time in Europe (1950s - 1960s) and his American tours in the early 1970s. The collection consists of personal papers including biographical articles, resumes, college diplomas, certificates and awards, medical records, date books, and passports. Of special interest are a series of interviews conducted by journalist Kaj Kristoffersen for an article he wrote in 1967. There are also Dixon's general impressions of Japan, written during a tour in which he guest conducted the NHK Orchestra in Tokyo. The correspondence files (personal and professional) discuss primarily music-related topics with such individuals as Kaj Kristoffersen, friends, and associates from the United States and Europe. Correspondence also concerns Dixon's recordings, invitations to guest conduct university and other orchestras, and honorary awards (1960s - 1970s). There are no correspondence files for the 1940s and 1950s. Other files pertain to Dixon's positions as an orchestra conductor. His founding and the operation of the American Youth Orchestra in New York in 1944 are described in a lengthy report that he wrote. His concert itinerary, including his touring schedule for 1964 - 1975 when he was head conductor of the Radio Symphony Orchestra (Hessischer Rundfunk Sinfonie) in Frankfurt, Germany, is in the collection. In the files for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) are news clippings and other documents concerning labor grievances Dixon and other orchestra members shared against the manager ABC from 1964 - 1967. Dixon maintained detailed files of his repertoire including works he had performed and wanted to perform; these are categorized by composers, conductors, music editors, and festivals from 1961 - 1973. To handle his extensive touring schedule during which he guest conducted in Europe, Israel, and Latin America, Dixon hired Martin Taubman as his worldwide general

manager and Sherman Pitluck as his manager for the American tour in the 1970s. The collection includes extensive correspondence with these managers, and for the 1950s - 1970s, there are detailed itineraries, typed programs, and contracts. His tour to the United States included conducting the Young People's Concert for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and his verbatim script for this teaching experience forms an interesting portion of the series. The Dixon Papers also encompass hundreds of printed programs featuring concerts Dixon conducted both as head and guest conductor. The programs cover performances in Europe, the United States, Japan, Israel and Australia from 1939 - 1976. Although the files pertaining to Dixon's career prior to his leaving the United States for Europe in 1949 are sparse, the programs for the early time period in New York are especially interesting and include concerts for the American Youth Orchestra, the NBC Symphony Orchestra, the Juilliard Orchestra, and others. The recordings made while conducting in Europe are documented via agreements, interviews, and correspondence. A vast number of reviews and feature articles (including obituaries and other posthumous articles) about Dixon offer a comprehensive understanding of the man as a musician from 1939 - 1979. Scrapbooks of news clippings and photographs document Dixon's tours conducting the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) in 1962 and 1966, and as musical director of the SSO in 1967. Publicity files primarily concern the planning of Dixon's American tour from 1968 - 1972. Dixon remained committed to music education from the time of his youth when he was awarded a Master of Arts degree in education from Columbia University. The collection contains his evaluations of numerous international students he taught for the Stichting Nederlandsche Radio Unie in Holland in 1963 and again in 1971. Additional papers discuss Dixon's teaching philosophy for music courses taught in Sweden, Germany, and Australia. While the Dean Dixon Papers do contain some information from the 1950s (programs, news clippings, and itineraries), there is very little correspondence. Additionally, only scattered personal information can be found in the personal papers and correspondence. More information can be found in articles where Dixon discussed his experiences as a black student aspiring to become a conductor and the discrimination which prevented him from receiving more conducting offers in the United States. He also referred to the more tolerant and less prejudicial attitudes he encountered in Europe and Australia, which allowed him to conduct professionally.

Arrangement: Organized into eleven series: (1) Personal papers; (2) Correspondence; (3) Conducting positions; (4) Teaching; (5) Repertoire; (6) Tours; (7) Programs; (8) Recordings; (9) Reviews and articles; (10) Scrapbooks; and (11) Publicity.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American conductors (Music)
African Americans -- Music
Black author
Conducting
Conductors (Music)
Music -- Instruction and study
Orchestra
Symphony orchestras -- Australia
Symphony orchestras -- Europe
Symphony orchestras -- Germany
Symphony orchestras -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Interviews
Itineraries
Programs
Reviews

Scrapbooks

Names

Dixon, Dean, 1915-1976

All-American Youth Orchestra

New York Philharmonic

Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Container List

Personal papers

- b. 1 f. 1-2 Biographical articles
- b. 1 f. 3 Education 1925 - 1942
- b. 1 f. 4 Personal documents 1915 - 1976
- b. 1 f. 5 Biographical information and awards 1966 - 1976
- Interviews
- b. 1 f. 6 Various
- b. 1 f. 7 Kaj Kristofferson interview transcripts 1970
- b. 1 f. 8 Materials used by Kaj Kristofferson for article 1941 - 1967
- b. 1 f. 9 Letters relating to interviews with Dean Dixon American Youth Orchestra 1941 - 1946
- b. 1 f. 10 Diploma and certificates 1939 - 1945
- b. 1 f. 11 Medical records 1959 - 1976
- b. 1 f. 12 Three notebooks
- b. 1 f. 13 Dixon's observations on NHK Symphony Orchestra, Toyko, Japan 1968
- b. 1 f. 14 Datebooks 1959 - 1964
- b. 1 f. 15 Passports (seven) 1950s - 1970s
- b. 1 f. 16 Financial records 1973 - 1976

Correspondence

Friends 1960s - 1970s

- b. 1 f. 17 A - H
- b. 1 f. 18 I - Ka
- b. 1 f. 19 Ke - Kl
- b. 1 f. 20 L - Z

General

- b. 1 f. 21 A - C 1974 - 1977
- b. 1 f. 22 D - G 1972 - 1978
- b. 1 f. 23 H - K 1973 - 1976
- b. 1 f. 24 L - T 1972 - 1978
- b. 1 f. 25 1934 - 1956
- b. 1 f. 26 1938 - 1942
- b. 1 f. 27 1961 - 1975
- b. 1 f. 28 1964 - 1977
- b. 1 f. 29 1965 - 1975
- b. 1 f. 30 Norman, Jessye 1969 - 1971
- b. 1 f. 31 Dixon, Roswitha 1976 - 1993
- b. 1 f. 32 Sculpture of Dixon's hands 1942 - 1946
- b. 1 f. 33 Fan mail 1952

Conducting positions

- b. 2 f. 1-2 American Youth Orchestra 1944 - 1947

Conducting positions (cont.)

Hesse Radio Symphony, Frankfurt, Germany

- b. 2 f. 3-4 Correspondence 1967 - 1974
 - b. 2 f. 5-6 Concert programs and itineraries
- Sydney Symphony Orchestra
- b. 2 f. 7 Appointment as Musical Director 1962 - 1963
 - b. 2 f. 8 Correspondence 1963 - 1967
 - b. 2 f. 9 Australian Broadcasting Commission Tour 1964
 - b. 2 f. 10 Grievances against Australian Broadcasting Commission and concert itineraries 1962 - 1975

Teaching

- b. 2 f. 11 National Broadcasting Company 1936
- b. 2 f. 12 Various locations 1953 - 1973
- b. 2 f. 13-16 Stichting Nederlandsche Radio Unie - International Conductor's Course 1963
- b. 2 f. 17 Nederlandsche Omroep Stichting - International Conductor's Course 1963

Repertoire

- b. 3 f. 1 Correspondence 1970 - 1974
Concerns tours in Venezuela and Germany.
- b. 3 f. 2 Catalog 1972
- b. 3 f. 3 Book 1960s
- b. 3 f. 4 1962 - 1974

Lists

- b. 3 f. 5 1950s - 1970s
- b. 3 f. 6 undated
- b. 3 f. 7 Composers, conductors, and notes
- b. 3 f. 8 Music editors, festivals, and musicians union 1968 - 1971
- b. 3 f. 9 Artists A - G 1963 - 1971
- b. 3 f. 10 Artists H - L 1966 - 1973
- b. 4 f. 1 Artists M - Z 1962 - 1973
- b. 4 f. 2 Notebook 1969 - 1971
Includes information on music performers and score corrections.
- b. 4 f. 3 Notebook 1961 - 1971
Includes information on "outstanding Aufnahmen" (recordings) and tour program possibilities.

Tours

Correspondence

- b. 4 f. 4 Spain, Scandinavia, and Switzerland 1963 - 1973
- b. 4 f. 5 United States 1968 - 1974

General Manager

Martin Taubman

- b. 4 f. 6 Europe, Mexico, and Japan 1965 - 1976
- b. 4 f. 7 Europe and Japan 1966 - 1976
- b. 4 f. 8 Europe, Mexico, Japan, Israel, Latin America, and the United States 1967 - 1972
- b. 4 f. 9 Europe 1973 - 1974

Tours (cont.)

General Manager (cont.)

Martin Taubman and others

- b. 4 f. 10 Argentina - Soviet Union 1967 - 1974
- b. 4 f. 11 France 1967 - 1973
- b. 4 f. 12 Germany 1967 - 1974
- b. 4 f. 13 Great Britain - Israel 1967 - 1969
- b. 4 f. 14 Italy - Japan 1966 - 1973

Personal Manager, Sherman Pitluck

- b. 4 f. 15 United States
- b. 4 f. 16 1968 - 1970
- b. 4 f. 17 1971 - 1972
- b. 4 f. 18 1969 - 1971
- b. 4 f. 19 1972 -1974
- b. 4 f. 20 1969 - 1970
- b. 4 f. 21 1970 - 1971
- b. 4 f. 22 1971 - 1972

Concert programs and itineraries

- b. 5 f. 1 1954 - 1974
- b. 5 f. 2 Handwritten 1950 - 1956
- b. 5 f. 3 Handwritten 1954 - 1958
- b. 5 f. 4 Handwritten 1951 - 1971
- b. 5 f. 5 1961 - 1962
- b. 5 f. 6 1962 - 1963
- b. 5 f. 7 1963 - 1964
- b. 5 f. 8 1964 - 1965
- b. 5 f. 9 1965 - 1966
- b. 5 f. 10 1966 - 1967
- b. 5 f. 11 1967
- b. 5 f. 12 1967 - 1968
- b. 5 f. 13 1968 - 1969
- b. 5 f. 14 1969 - 1970
- b. 5 f. 15 1970 - 1971
- b. 5 f. 16 1971 - 1972
- b. 5 f. 17 1972 - 1977
- b. 5 f. 18 Travel checklist undated

United States--New York Philharmonic Orchestra Young People's Concert

- b. 5 f. 19 1970
- b. 5 f. 20-21 Concert #3 script 1971 - 1972
- b. 5 f. 22 Financial records, Australia 1975 - 1976

Contracts

- b. 5 f. 23 1953 - 1974
- b. 5 f. 24 1965 - 1974

Tours (cont.)

Contracts (cont.)

b. 5 f. 25 A - J 1965 - 1976

b. 5 f. 26 M - S 1965 - 1976

Programs

Handwritten

b. 6 f. 1 1945 - 1960

b. 6 f. 2 1961 - 1972

b. 6 f. 3-4 Various countries 1967 - 1973

Europe

b. 6 f. 5-6 1950s

b. 6 f. 7-12 1960s

b. 7 f. 1-4 1970s

b. 7 f. 4 Japan and Israel 1950 - 1968

b. 7 f. 6 Australia 1960s

b. 7 f. 7-8 United States 1939 - 1970s

Recordings

b. 7 f. 9 Westminster Recording Company and others 1969 - 1971

Barenreiter-Verlag/Supraphon

b. 7 f. 10 1963 - 1977

b. 7 f. 11 1969 - 1971

b. 7 f. 12 1972 - 1977

Reviews and articles

b. 7 f. 13 Press releases of European concerts 1949 - 1952

Reviews

b. 7 f. 14 1959 - 1968

b. 7 f. 15 1958 - 1961

b. 7 f. 16 1962

b. 7 f. 17 1963

b. 8 f. 1 1964

b. 8 f. 2-3 1965

b. 8 f. 4 1966

b. 8 f. 5-6 1967

b. 8 f. 7-8 1968

b. 8 f. 9-11 1969

b. 8 f. 12-14 1970

b. 8 f. 15-17 1971

b. 8 f. 18 1972

b. 8 f. 19 - 20 1970 - 1975

Articles

b. 8 f. 21 1939 - 1949

b. 8 f. 22 1950 - 1959

b. 8 f. 23 1951 - 1954

Reviews and articles (cont.)

Articles (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 1-2 1954 - 1959
- b. 9 f. 3-4 1960
- b. 9 f. 5-6 1961
- b. 9 f. 7 1962
- b. 9 f. 8 1963
- b. 9 f. 9 1964
- b. 9 f. 10 1965
- b. 9 f. 11 1966
- b. 9 f. 12 1967
- b. 9 f. 13 1968
- b. 9 f. 14 1969
- b. 9 f. 15-17 1970
- b. 9 f. 18 1971
- b. 9 f. 19 1972
- b. 9 f. 20 1973
- b. 9 f. 21 1974
- b. 9 f. 22 1975
- b. 9 f. 23 1976
- b. 9 f. 24 undated
- b. 9 f. 25-26 1972 - 1976
- b. 9 f. 27 1976 - 1979

Scrapbooks

Australian Broadcasting Commission

- b. 10 f. 1 1962
- b. 10 f. 2-3 Volume 1-2 1964
- b. 11 f. 1 Articles and clippings 1940s - 1970s
- b. 11 f. 2 Reviews and feature articles 1940s - 1970s
- b. 11 f. 3 1965
- b. 11 f. 4 1966
- b. 11 f. 6 1975
- b. 11 f. 5 Musical Director, Sydney Symphony Orchestra (4th term) 1967

Publicity

- b. 12 f. 1 1968 - 1972
- b. 12 f. 2 1970 - 1971
- b. 12 f. 3 1970 - 1974
- b. 12 f. 4 Correspondence 1968 - 1972