

The New York Public Library
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center
Music Division

Guide to the
Charles Thruston Johnson papers
1902-1996
JPB 13-18

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, July 2013

Summary

Creator: Johnson, Charles Thruston

Title: Charles Thruston Johnson papers, 1902-1996

Size: 3.01 linear feet (10 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Evelyn Johnson in 2009.

Abstract: The Charles Thruston Johnson papers document the violinist's career as an orchestral, solo, and chamber musician; as a teacher and conductor; and as the director of the International Festival Series of chamber music concerts. The collection consists of correspondence, programs, photographs, scrapbooks, clippings, promotional material, student and teaching records, awards and honors, and military records.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying and photography will apply. Advance notice may be required. Inquiries regarding audio/visual materials in the collection may be directed to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound (rha@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Copyright information: For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Preferred citation: Charles Thruston Johnson papers, JPB 13-18. Music Division, New York Public Library.

Processing note: Physical processing consisted of de-framing and foldering photographs, foldering papers, and arranging files.

Creator history

The violinist Charles Thruston Johnson (1915-1996) was born in Louisville, Kentucky. He was a descendant of Colonel Charles Mynn Thruston, a veteran of the American Revolution. Johnson studied privately with the violinist Carl Flesch, received degrees from the New York College of Music and the Manhattan School of Music, and attended the American Conservatory in Fountainebleau, Paris, on a scholarship. Over the course of his career, Johnson performed with the Chicago Symphony, the Kansas City Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Naumberg Symphony (where he was concertmaster), the Houston Symphony, the Paris Opera Ballet, and the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra, among other orchestras. He also performed as a soloist and in chamber groups.

Johnson was a pedagogue as well, heading the string department at the Conservatory of Music in Kansas City in the 1950s, and teaching violin and orchestral music in New York City high schools during the 1960s. He also conducted the New York City String Ensemble, a student group. During the 1970s and 1980s, Johnson directed the International Festival Series, an annual program of chamber music concerts held at Carnegie Recital Hall, in which he also performed.

He died in Manhattan in 1996 at St. Luke's Hospital.

Scope and content note

Dating mostly from the mid-1930s to the late 1980s, the Charles Thruston Johnson papers document the violinist's career as an orchestral, solo, and chamber musician; as a teacher and conductor; and as the director of the International Festival Series of chamber music concerts. The collection consists of correspondence, contracts, programs, photographs, scrapbooks, files for the International Festival Series, an ancestry file, clippings, promotional material, student and teaching records, awards and honors, military records, a diary, and the papers of Johnson's wife, Evelyn.

The correspondence can be found in the General Correspondence files, in the International Festival Series files, and in Johnson's Professional Dossier file. Much of it consists of letters of reference or recommendation from Johnson's teachers or colleagues. Other letters are to and from friends. Correspondents include Josef Gingold, Walter Piston, Leopold Stokowski, and Richard Blaveau. Letters from these figures are mostly short notes thanking Johnson or acknowledging his talents.

The International Festival Series files contain correspondence, programs, and flyers documenting the recruitment of musicians and program planning for the series, and are arranged by concert theme.

The concert programs cover much of Johnson's career from the late 1940s to the 1980s, and feature him as performer, conductor, and musical director. They are arranged chronologically. The scrapbooks also contain programs.

Photographs are held partially in two albums; loose photographs are in folders. The albums mostly contain personal photographs of Johnson with his wife. The loose photographs consist of prints of Johnson from throughout his career. Prints of orchestras he performed with include the Kansas City Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, and the Pittsburgh Symphony. Formal and informal publicity prints of musicians include Arthur Rubinstein, Ossy Renardy, Isaac Stern, Joseph Szigeti, Kirsten Flagstad, Pierre Monteux, Dmitri Mitropolous, Bruno Walter, Igor Stravinsky, Lotte Lehman, Arthur Fiedler, the London String Quartet, Zino Francescatti, Francis Poulenc, Leopold Stokowski, Arturo Toscanini, the Paganini Quartet, the Budapest String Quartet, Tossy Spivakovsky, Artur Rodzinski, Morton Gould, the Hungarian Quartet, Carl Flesch, Sir Thomas Beecham, Jascha Heifetz, and Ginette Neveu. The loose photographs also hold informal photographs from the All-American Orchestra's 1940 tour of South America with Leopold Stokowski conducting. Some of the photographs of other musicians are autographed to Johnson. These include prints of Hans Lange, Karl Krueger, Leon Pommer, Joseph Rosenstock, and the Paganini Quartet. There is also a drawn portrait of Ivan Galamian (signed by Galamian).

The Professional Dossier file contains clippings, resumes, biographies, promotional material, and recommendation letters from conductors, teachers, and other musicians who knew or worked with Johnson. The scrapbooks hold additional photographs, clippings, programs, and career information.

The Student and Teaching files contain diplomas, school records, and Johnson's teaching certification for the New York City schools. The Ancestry file contains papers from the Sons of the American Revolution documenting Johnson's membership in the organization and the life of Colonel Charles Mynn Thruston.

The Military Records hold Johnson's draft papers, service record, and discharge papers. The file for Johnson's wife, Evelyn, contains photographs and school records.

The collection contains a substantial component of audio recordings in the form of open-reel and cassette tapes, and 78- and 33-rpm discs, many of them unique test pressings or demonstration recordings. A large portion of the tapes feature recordings of International Festival Series concerts of the 1970s and 1980s. Other tapes and discs contain recordings of Johnson as a soloist with orchestras or chamber groups, dating from the late 1940s to the 1960s. Some tapes contain practice sessions or rehearsals. The discs include recordings, possibly unique, of Johnson's violin teacher, Carl Flesch.

The collection also includes two film reels of the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, their origin and content unknown.

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Arrangement

The papers are arranged alphabetically by file title.

Key terms

Names

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Flesch, Carl, 1873-1944
Galamian, Ivan
Gingold, Josef
Johnson, Charles Thruston
Kansas City Philharmonic Association
Krueger, Karl, 1894-1979
Lange, Hans
Paganini Quartet
Philadelphia Orchestra
Piston, Walter, 1894-1976
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Pommer, Leon
Rosenstock, Joseph, 1895-1985
Sons of the American Revolution
Stokowski, Leopold, 1882-1977

Special formats

Awards
Black-and-white photographs
Business correspondence
Clippings (information artifacts)
Color photographs
Military records
Motion pictures (visual work)
One-sheet posters
Personal correspondence
Programs (documents)
School records
Scrapbooks
Sound Recordings

Occupations

Conductors (Music)
Musicians
Teachers
Violinists

Events

New York World's Fair -- 1964-1965 -- New York,
N.Y.

Container list

- b.1 f.1-3 General Correspondence, 1950-1983
- b.1 f.4 Ancestry, 1902-1996
- b.2 f.1 Ancestry, 1915
- b.2 f.2 Awards and Honors, 1951-1996
- b.1 f.5 Awards and Honors, 1982
- b.1 f.6 Contracts, 1941-1949
- b.1 f.7 Diary, 1937
- International Festival Series
- b.1 f.8 General, 1977-1983
- b.1 f.9 German Festival, 1983
- b.3 f.1 Hispanic Festival, 1982-1983
- b.3 f.2 Stokowski, Leopold, 1977
- b.3 f.3-4 Swiss Festival, 1972-1974, 1980
- b.3 f.5 Johnson, Evelyn, 1935-1963
- b.3 f.6 Military Records, 1941-1944
- b.3 f.7 Passport, 1951
- Photographs
- b.4 Albums, 1937, 1970s
- Loose Photographs
- b.3 f.8 Johnson, Charles Thruston, 1920s-1950s
- b.5 f.1 Johnson, Charles Thruston, 1940s-1960s
- b.6 f.1 Orchestras, 1916-1950s
- b.2 f.3 Orchestras, 1922
- b.5 f.2 Other Musicians, 1934-1957 (Autographed.)
- b.3 f.9-10 Other Musicians, 1930s-1960s
- b.7 f.1-4 Professional Dossier, 1940s-1960s
- b.8 Programs, 1940s-1950s
- b.9 Programs, 1960s-1980s
- b.10 Scrapbooks, 1930-1933
- b.6 f.2 Scrapbook, 1940-1951
- b.6 f.3 Student Records, 1932-1961
- b.5 f.3 Student Records, 1950-1967
- b.7 f.5-6 Student Records, 1943-1961