

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

Guide to the
Composers' Forum Inc. records
1935-2002
JPB 12-01

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, February 2012

Summary

Creator: Composers' Forum (U.S.)

Title: Composers' Forum Inc. records, 1935-2002

Size: 11 linear feet (27 boxes)

Source: Performing Artservices Inc., 1995

Abstract: The records of the Composers' Forum document the history of the organization from 1935 to 2002. They hold correspondence, concert programs, press releases, clippings, grant applications and other development files, board meeting minutes and correspondence, photographs, membership files, concert production files, concert discussion transcripts, historical essays and scrapbooks.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photography and photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required

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

Preferred citation: Composers' Forum Inc. records, Music Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Processing consisted of arranging files, filing loose papers, and deaccessioning duplicate programs, clippings and other papers. Issues of the Forum's newsletter and membership directories were separated for cataloging by the Music Division. Some correspondence in the collection was previously cataloged under Music-Am letters 83-39. Scans of the original catalog cards may be accessed through the archival portal.

Related collections

Archival Recordings of the Composers' Forum, 1951-1977. Butler Library, Columbia University. These concert and discussion recordings have been digitized and are available for listening at the Butler Library. They can be found by searching for "composers' forum" on the library's online catalog at <http://clio.cul.columbia.edu:7018/vwebv/searchBasic?sk=CLIO>

Federal Music Project Collection. Music Division, Library of Congress

Frank Wigglesworth papers, JPB 97-44.Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Creator history

The Composers' Forum was founded in New York by Ashley Pettis in 1935. Funded by the Federal Music Project (a division of the Works Progress Administration), its goal was to present the work of emerging American composers; in its early years it was also known as the Composers' Forum-Laboratory. The Forum's first concert was held on October 30th, 1935, and by 1940 more than 1600 works had been presented. For much of its history, concerts featured moderated question-and-answer sessions with the composers; the questions taken from the audience.

When the WPA was shut down, the organization moved in 1940 to San Francisco under private patronage. It continued for two seasons before World War II temporarily halted its activities. It was revived in 1947 under the joint sponsorship of the New York Public Library and Columbia University. The chief of the Library's Music Division, Carleton Sprague-Smith, played a large role in the direction of the Forum in those years. From 1951 to 1960 the organization was led by the composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks. The composers Frank Wigglesworth and Jack Beeson oversaw the organization in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Composers' Forum closed its doors around 2003. Today organizations presenting and performing new music exist in various cities around the United States and in other countries (sometimes even using the same name); however the Composers' Forum was among the first of its kind and was for many years one of the only performance outlets available for contemporary composers.

Source: B.C. Vermeersch. "Composers' Forum." In Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42750> (accessed February 14, 2012).

Scope and content note

The records of the Composers' Forum document the history of the organization from 1935 to 2002. They hold correspondence, concert programs, press releases, clippings, grant applications and other development files, board meeting minutes and correspondence, photographs, membership files, concert production files, concert discussion transcripts, historical essays and scrapbooks. The collection contains correspondence from many significant composers, such as George Antheil, Milton Babbitt, Aaron Copland, Lukas Foss, and Virgil Thomson; and from the directors of the Composers' Forum, including founder Ashley Pettis, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, Carleton Sprague-Smith and Frank Wigglesworth.

Notable portions of the collection hold transcripts of post-concert question-answer sessions between audiences and composers in the early years of the Forum, including sessions with Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Henry Brant, Ross Lee Finney, Paul Bowles, Virgil Thomson, Otto Luening, Ernest Bloch, Marion Bauer, Howard Hanson and David Diamond; board meeting minutes documenting internal deliberations on the activities and direction of the organization; and a nearly-complete run of programs of concerts produced by the Forum.

The photographs are of composers and performers associated with the Forum, including Ashley Pettis, Darius Milhaud, Lukas Foss, Muhal Richard Abrams, Joel Chadabe, Leroy Jenkins, and the Kronos String Quartet.

The collection also contains sound and video recordings comprised mainly of Forum concerts from the

early 1950s to 1992. They consist of about 160 cassette tapes, 50 open reel tapes, 7 DATs, and 6 video cassettes in various formats. There are also audio and video recordings of collaborations between the Composers' Forum and the Electronic Music Foundation from 2000 to 2002, including music and interdisciplinary projects by John Cage, Elliot Sharp, Annea Lockwood, and Joel Chadabe (on VHS tapes, CD-Rs, and DATs).

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound (rha@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Arrangement

The Composers' Forum Inc. records are organized into the following series:

Series I: Correspondence, 1936-1983
Series II: Office Files, 1935-1993
Series III: Concert Files, 1935-2002
Series IV: Writings, 1935-1985
Series V: Scrapbooks, 1960-1986

Key terms

Names

Abrams, Muhal Richard, 1930-
Antheil, George, 1900-1959
Bauer, Marion, 1882-1955
Beeson, Jack, 1921-2010
Bloch, Ernest, 1880-1959
Bowles, Paul, 1910-1999
Brant, Henry, 1913-2008
Braxton, Anthony
Cage, John
Chadabe, Joel
Composers' Forum (U.S.)
Copland, Aaron, 1900-1990
Dello Joio, Norman, 1913-2008
Diamond, David, 1915-2005
Engel, Lehman, 1910-1982
Federal Music Project (U.S.)
Finney, Ross Lee, 1906-1997
Foss, Lukas, 1922-2009
Freed, Isadore, 1900-1960
Glanville-Hicks, Peggy
Glick, Jacob
Goeb, Roger, 1914-1997
Hanson, Howard, 1896-1981
Harris, Roy, 1898-1979
Jacobi, Frederick, 1891-1952

Occupations

Composers
Musicians

Jenkins, Leroy
Kennan, Kent, 1913-2003
Kronos Quartet
Lieberson, Goddard, 1911-1977
Lockwood, Annea, 1939-
Luening, Otto, 1900-1996
Mason, Daniel Gregory, 1873-1953
Milhaud, Darius, 1892-1974
Parran, J. D.
Pettis, Ashley, b. 1892
Relache (Musical group)
Schuman, William, 1910-1992
Sharp, Elliott
Shepherd, Arthur, 1880-1958
Smith, Wadada Leo, 1941-
Spoerri, Bruno
Sprague-Smith, Carleton
Stokowski, Leopold, 1882-1977
Thomson, Virgil, 1896-1989
United States. Works Progress Administration
Wagenaar, Bernard, 1894-1971
Wigglesworth, Frank, 1918-1996

Special formats

Application forms
Black-and-white photographs
Clippings (information artifacts)
Commercial correspondence
Contracts
Essays
Fliers (printed matter)
Personal correspondence
Press releases
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks

Container list

Series I: Correspondence, 1936-1983 (5.5 boxes)

This series contains correspondence between the Forum (usually represented by its director at the time of writing) and a wide array of composers, impresarios and corporate entities involved in the creation of new music in the mid- to late-twentieth century. Correspondents include Bruno Amato, the American Music Center, George Antheil, Milton Babbitt, Marion Bauer, Leslie Bassett, Jack Beeson, Wallace Berry, Aaron Copland, George Crumb, Alvin Curran, Noel Da Costa, Vincent Persichetti (whose letters can be found under the publisher Elkins-Vogel), Lukas Foss, John Franco, Herbert Fromm, Ross Lee Finney, Frederick Jacobi, Meyer Kupferman, the League of Composers, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Ned Rorem, William O. Smith, Halsey Stevens, Carlos Surinach and Virgil Thomson. The composers with the most correspondence in the series are Antheil and Thomson. Antheil's correspondence consists only of letters to Peggy Glanville-Hicks.

Several important figures in the history of the Composers' Forum have their own files of correspondence: Ashley Pettis, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, Carleton Sprague-Smith and other employees of the New York Public Library, and Frank Wigglesworth. Pettis, Sprague-Smith and Glanville-Hicks have the largest portions of correspondence.

Most of this series dates from 1936 to ca. 1970. Later correspondence is found throughout series II and III.

- b.1 f.1 Ab-An, 1947-1970
- b.1 f.2 American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, 1960-1970
- b.1 f.3 Antheil, George, 1952-1954
- b.1 f.4 Ap-Av, 1940-1983
- b.1 f.5 Ba-Be, 1947-1969
- b.1 f.6 Barlow, Samuel, 1950
- b.1 f.7 Beeson, Jack, 1960-1966
- b.1 f.8 Bi-Bu, 1947-1967
- b.1 f.9 Bowdoin College, 1964-1966
- b.1 f.10 Broadcast Music, Inc., 1956-1966
- b.1 f.11 Ca, 1938-1966
- b.1 f.12 Ce-CI, 1938-1970
- b.1 f.13 Co-Cu, 1937-1983
- b.2 f.1 Columbia University, 1948-1961
- b.2 f.2 Copland, Aaron, 1937-1953
- b.2 f.3 D, 1936-1970
- b.2 f.4 Dello Joio, Norman, 1955-1956
- b.2 f.5 E, 1952-1968
- b.2 f.6-8 Edmunds, John, 1958-1962
- b.2 f.9 F, 1936-1970
- b.2 f.10-11 Ga-Gu, 1937-1970
- b.2 f.12-15 Glanville-Hicks, Peggy, 1948-1961
- b.3 f.1-2 Ha-Hu, 1939-1969
- b.3 f.3 Hanson, Howard, 1947-1951
- b.3 f.4 I, 1938-1959

Series I: Correspondence, 1936-1983 (5.5 boxes... (cont.)

- b.3 f.5 Ihrig, Ruth, 1949-1959
- b.3 f.6 Ja-Ju, 1948-1969
- b.3 f.7 Juilliard School of Music, 1938-1963
- b.3 f.8 Ka-Ki, 1938-1967
- b.3 f.9 Kelly, Robert, 1952-1958
- b.3 f.10 Kl -Ku, 1947-1967
- b.3 f.11 La, 1949-1970
- b.3 f.12 Laske, Otto, 1968-1969
- b.3 f.13 Le, 1938-1961
- b.3 f.14 Lessard, John, 1947-1966
- b.3 f.15 Li-Ly, 1950-1970
- b.3 f.16 Mc-Ma, 1947-1970
- b.3 f.17 Me-Mi, 1947-1967
- b.3 f.18 Mo-Mu, 1939-1961, 1970
- b.4 f.1 Moore, Douglas, 1947-1959
- b.4 f.2 Moss, Laurence, 1958-1960
- b.4 f.3 Na-Ne, 1938-1966
- b.4 f.4 *New York Herald Tribune*, 1947-1965
- b.4 f.5 New York Public Library, 1940-1980
- b.4 f.6 Ni-No, 1947-1970
- b.4 f.7 O, 1952-1969
- b.4 f.8 Pa-Pe, 1948-1969
- b.4 f.9-12 Pettis, Ashley, 1938-1970
- b.4 f.13 Ph-Pi, 1946-1965
- b.4 f.14 Po-Pu, 1949-1964
- b.4 f.15 Polin, Claire, 1958-1967
- b.4 f.16 Ra-Rob, 1947-1967
- b.4 f.17 Roc-Ru, 1949-1969
- b.4 f.18 Sa-Sch, 1947-1967
- b.5 f.1 Scott, Eric, 1964-1967
- b.5 f.2 Se-Sh, 1939-1966
- b.5 f.3 Si-Sm, 1937-1962
- b.5 f.4 So-Star, 1949-1966
- b.5 f.5-8 Sprague-Smith, Carleton, 1947-1961
- b.5 f.9 State-Ste, 1959-1967
- b.5 f.10 Stern, Robert, 1964-1965
- b.5 f.11 Stokowski, Leopold, 1948-1962
- b.5 f.12 Stone-Sy, 1952-1970
- b.5 f.13 T, 1944-1967

Series I: Correspondence, 1936-1983 (5.5 boxes... (cont.)

- b.5 f.14 Thome, Joel, 1965-1966
- b.5 f.15 Thomson, Virgil, 1952-1958
- b.5 f.16 U, 1938-1957
- b.5 f.17 V, 1951-1967
- b.5 f.18 Wa-We, 1936-1968
- b.5 f.19 Wh-Wi, 1949-1970
- b.6 f.1-2 Wigglesworth, Frank, 1950, 1963-1971
- b.6 f.3 Wq-Wy, 1949-1966
- b.6 f.4 Y-Z and Unidentified, 1950-1967

Series II: Office Files, 1935-1993 (9.5 boxes)

This series holds subject files containing reports, board of trustees meeting minutes, development and membership files, clippings, and photographs.

The files hold correspondence and other papers regarding composers, performers, music festivals, and Forum projects such as the Composers' Services Program, the publications *New Music Calendar* and *Network News*, and events produced for the Forum's fiftieth anniversary season. One file is devoted to the papers of the composer Jacob Glick, a board member.

The board meeting minutes (which include correspondence as well), and, to a lesser extent, the annual reports, offer an inside view of the development of the Forum from the early 1960s to the early 1990s. Other official Forum papers in the series include Statements of Purpose, prospectuses, letters of agreement with employees, auditor reports, annual reports, and certificates of incorporation.

The development files contain grant applications to and correspondence with funding agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and Meet the Composer; and private foundations such as the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund. One folder in the development files contains a history of grant funding of the Forum, mostly from the 1980s.

Membership files contain lists of membership and general letters sent to members. The clipping files are extensive and cover the history of the Forum from its beginning to 1991. The photographs are of composers and performers associated with the Forum, including Ben Weber, Roger Goeb, Ashley Pettis, Darius Milhaud, Lukas Foss, Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Joel Chadabe, Leroy Jenkins, Kronos String Quartet, Yvar Mikashoff, J.D. Parran, the Relâche ensemble, Bruno Spoerri, and Leo Smith.

- b.6 f.5-6 Annual Reports, 1980-1984
- b.6 f.7 Auditor Reports, 1987-1991
- b.6 f.8-14 Board of Trustees Correspondence and Meeting Minutes, 1961-1991
- b.6 f.15 Carter, Elliott, 1981
- b.7 f.1-23 Clippings, 1935-1991
- b.7 f.24-25 Coleman, Ornette, 1986

Series II: Office Files, 1935-1993 (9.5 boxes... (cont.)

- b.7 f.26 Columbia/Princeton Electronic Music Center, 1985
- b.7 f.27 Composers' Services Program, 1981-1982
- b.7 f.28 Boudreau, Walter, 1981
- b.7 f.29 Certificates of Incorporation and Amendments, 1971, 1982
- b.8 f.1 Cross, Lowell, 1979-1980
- Development
- b.8 f.2 General, 1965-1984
- b.8 f.3 50th Anniversary Composers Gift Fund Letter, 1984-1985
- b.8 f.4 The Beard's Fund, 1983
- b.8 f.5 Ditson Fund
- b.8 f.6-10 Funding History, 1983-1990
- b.8 f.11 Jean Tennyson Foundation, 1951-1953
- b.8 f.12 Jerome Foundation, 1976-1987
- b.8 f.13-14 Martha Baird Rockefeller Aid To Music Program, 1957-1962
- b.8 f.15 Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund For Music, 1962-1969, 1976
- b.9 f.1-3 Meet The Composer, 1979-1987
- National Endowment for the Arts
- b.9 f.4 Funding History, 1989
- Grant Applications
- b.9 f.5-6 1979-1980
- b.9 f.7-11 1980-1981
- b.9 f.12-13 1981-1982
- b.9 f.14-15 1982-1983
- b.10 f.1-2 1983-1984
- b.10 f.3 1984-1985
- b.10 f.4 1985-1986
- b.10 f.5-7 1986-1987
- b.10 f.8 New York Foundation, 1965
- New York State Council on the Arts
- b.10 f.9 General, 1962-1988
- Grant Applications
- b.10 f.10 1978-1979
- b.10 f.11 1979-1980
- b.11 f.1 1980-1981
- b.11 f.2 1981-1982
- b.11 f.3 1982-1983
- b.11 f.4 1983-1984
- b.11 f.5-6 1984-1985
- b.11 f.7 1985-1986

Series II: Office Files, 1935-1993 (9.5 boxes... (cont.)

Development (cont.)

- b.11 f.8 Newspaper Proposal, 1981
- b.12 f.1 Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, 1984
- b.12 f.2 Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 1965-1966
- b.12 f.3 Einhorn, Richard, 1989
- b.12 f.4 Errante, F. Gerard, 1983
- b.12 f.5 Festival Database, 1991-1993
- b.12 f.6 Fiftieth Anniversary, 1985
- b.12 f.7 Finney, Ross Lee, 1981-1982
- b.12 f.8 Glick, Jacob, 1979-1984
- b.12 f.9 Hellerman, William, 1985
- b.12 f.10 Klein, Eric, 1987-1988
- b.12 f.11 Letters of Agreement, 1981-1983
- b.12 f.12 Maccombie, Bruce, 1981
- b.12 f.13 Martriano, Sal, 1981
- b.12 f.14-18 Membership, 1983-1993
- b.13 f.1-3 Merkin Hall, 1987-1992
 - b.13 f.4 Music From France Festival, 1982
 - b.13 f.5 National Jazz Service Organization, 1987-1988
 - b.13 f.6 *Network News*, 1989
 - b.13 f.7-9 New Music America, 1989
 - b.13 f.10 New Music Baltimore, 1980
 - b.13 f.11 *New Music Calendar*, 1981-1982
- b.13 f.12-17 New Music / New Composers Series
1982-1986
- b.14 f.1-8 1987-1992
 - b.14 f.9 *New Music News*, 1979-1980
 - b.14 f.10 New Music Virtuosi Festival, 1981-1983
 - b.14 f.11 New School for Social Research, 1977-1978
- b.14 f.12-14 Performer Contracts, 1985-1988
- b.15 f.1-3 Photographs, ca. 1940-1980s
 - b.15 f.4 Prospectuses, 1980-1982
 - b.15 f.5 Radio, 1984-1985
 - b.15 f.6 Record Distribution, 1984-1989
 - b.15 f.7 Relâche, 1989
 - b.15 f.8 Statements of Purpose, 1980-1985
 - b.15 f.9 Supove, Kathleen, 1985-1988
 - b.15 f.10 Tudor, David, 1979
 - b.15 f.11 Wigglesworth, Frank, 1988

Series III: Concert Files, 1935-2002 (9 boxes)

This series documents the concerts produced by the Forum and is in three divisions: programs and press releases arranged by season, discussion transcripts from the early days of the Forum, and season production files.

The programs and press releases are almost complete, containing only a single program from the 1935 season, but otherwise covering the entire life of the organization up to 2002. Press releases promote full season schedules as well as particular concerts.

The discussion transcripts date only from the first three seasons of the Forum's history. They document audience question-answer sessions with composers following performances of their work. Featured composers include Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Kent Kennan, William Schuman, Bernard Wagenaar, Henry Brant, Isadore Freed, Ross Lee Finney, Lehman Engel, Paul Bowles, Virgil Thomson, Otto Luening, Ernest Bloch, Arthur Shepherd, Frederick Jacobi, Marion Bauer, Daniel Gregory Mason, Howard Hanson, David Diamond, and Goddard Lieberson.

The production files contain correspondence with composers, performers and venues, contracts, flyers and posters, clippings, and composer and performer press kits. These files have one historical gap (1969-1976), and there are no files after 1998.

Programs and Press Releases

b.15 f.12	1935-1937
b.16 f.1-5	1937-1941
b.16 f.6-36	1946-1983
b.17 f.1-15	1984-2002

b.18 f.1-42 Discussion Transcripts, 1936-1939

Season Production Files

b.18 f.43-44	1935-1937
b.18 f.45	1939-1940
b.18 f.46-53	1946-1952
b.19 f.1-14	1952-1961
b.20 f.1-9	1961-1969
b.20 f.10	1976-1977
b.20 f.11-15	1979-1983
b.21 f.1-7	1982-1985
b.21 f.8-13	1987-1989
b.22 f.1-24	1988-1991
b.23 f.1-10	1990-1991
b.23 f.11-24	1991-1992
b.24 f.1-7	1992-1998
b.25 f.1	Undated

Series IV: Writings, 1935-1985 (1 box)

The writings consist primarily of essays and clippings on the history of the Composers' Forum, most written before 1955. Authors include Ashley Pettis and Peggy Glanville-Hicks. The writings also have lists of performers and composers who performed at Forum concerts as well as years of performance. *The Composers Forum 25th Anniversary Survey* offers a snapshot of the organization in 1961, with a history, description of its structure, and biographical notes on its executive officers. The folder on Peggy Glanville-Hicks offers more thorough biographical information on her, including resumes and biographies likely written by the composer herself.

- b.25 f.2 *The Composers Forum 25th Anniversary Survey*, 1961
- b.25 f.3 Glanville-Hicks, Peggy
- b.25 f.4-11 History, 1935-1955, 1985
- b.25 f.12 *The WPA and the American Composer* by Ashley Pettis

Series V: Scrapbooks, 1960-1986 (2 boxes)

This series contains three scrapbooks, all in good condition. They contain concert programs and clippings. Two are general historical books documenting the history of the organization from 1960 to 1972. The third focuses only on the 50th anniversary season (1985-1986). Though duplicative of material in other series, the scrapbooks assemble the history of the Forum in a more accessible (if less thorough) way. Portions of these scrapbooks have been microfilmed and cataloged under *ZB-3489.

- b.26 1960-1972
Two scrapbooks, with clippings and programs
- b.27 1985-1986
50th anniversary book. Programs and clippings