Guide to the Leo Smit Papers, 1905-1998

JPB 00-42

Music Division

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York

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Date Completed: July 13, 2006

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Descriptive Summary

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<td>JPB 00-42</td>
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<td>Smit, Leo</td>
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Abstract:

The Leo Smit collection contains scores, correspondence, and research materials from the prolific composer and performer, Leo Smit.

Administrative Information

Access

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

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division.

Preferred Citation

Leo Smit Papers, JPB 00-42, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Leo Smit Papers were donated to the Music Division in 2000 by the Leo Smit estate.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2006.
Biographical Note

Leo Smit was born on January 12, 1921, in Philadelphia. He received his earliest musical training from his parents. His father, Kolman Smit was a violinist who performed in the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony, and the NBC Symphony.

Smit's early piano teachers included Martha Lantner and Bert Shefter. When he was eight years old, Leo traveled to Moscow with his mother to study piano with Dmitri Kabalevsky at the Moscow Conservatory. Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1930, Smit received a scholarship to study piano at Curtis Institute of Music with Isabelle Vengerova.

Smit began his professional career as a pianist while still in his teens. His first job was as rehearsal pianist for George Balanchine’s American Ballet Company in 1936-37. Smit gave his first recital as a solo pianist at Carnegie Hall in February 1939. This was followed by a concert tour of the United States in 1940.

Leo Smit's career as composer, pianist, conductor, and teacher spanned nearly seventy years. He established close working relationships and friendships with many of the most prominent musicians of the 20th century. This included Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Harold Shapero, William Schuman, and Lukas Foss. As a performer, Smit was an advocate and interpreter of the music of his time, especially the solo piano music of Aaron Copland, with whom he enjoyed an especially close relationship.

Smit was also a talented photographer. In addition to the many photographs he took of musicians, performers, and friends, Smit also used his skill as a photographer to capture images from his travels.

During his career Leo Smit earned several awards and honors, including Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships in 1950, a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome for 1950-51, the Boston Symphony Merit Award in 1953 for his Symphony No. 1, and the New York Critics Circle Award in 1957. Smit was also selected to give a State Department concert tour of Latin America in 1967-68. He also had an educational career, holding positions at Sarah Lawrence College (1947-49), UCLA (1957-63), and the State University of New York at Buffalo (1962-84).

Leo Smit died December 12, 1999 in California.
Scope and Content Note

The Leo Smit Papers contain documents from 1905 to 1998 and cover the professional musical career of the decorated pianist and composer, Leo Smit. The collection is divided into nine series: Correspondence, Writings, Presentations and Lectures, Clippings and Programs, Dickinson Materials, Librettos, Scores, Images, and Oversized Materials. Correspondence includes letters between Smit and his friends and colleagues, including Aaron Copland, Harold Shapero, and Leonard Bernstein. The Emily Dickinson materials are also noteworthy, and include research and notes on Dickinson, her life, and her poetry. Smit devoted a large portion of the late 1980s and early 1990s creating a song cycle around Dickinson’s poetry, and amassed quite a bit of research on the subject. This includes notes, slides, and photocopied research materials. The Librettos series includes much of Smit’s work, and is notable for the several drafts and rewrites, with notes from Smit. One can assess how he worked and made changes in his compositions. The collection is lacking in materials of a personal nature, though fortunately many of Smit’s working relationships were also close friendships, and this can be seen in the correspondence.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into 9 series and 2 sub-series. They are:
Series I: Correspondence, 1930-1998
Series II: Writings, 1932-1998
Series III: Presentations and Lectures
Series IV: Clippings and Programs, 1936-1998
Series VI: Librettos, undated
Series VII: Scores, 1940-1998
  Sub-series 1: Original Compositions, 1940-1998
  Sub-series 2: Arrangements, undated
Series VIII: Photographs, 1905-1998

SERIES I: Correspondence, 1930-1995
Arrangement: Alphabetical
Correspondence between Smit and his friends and colleagues. Includes correspondence between Smit and Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and others.

SERIES II: Writings
Arrangement: Alphabetical by title.
Includes published and unpublished writings by Smit, both typed and handwritten pieces.

Arrangement: Alphabetical
Handwritten and typed lecture texts by Smit

SERIES IV: Clippings and Programs, 1936-1998
Arrangement: Chronological
Newspaper clippings, primarily reviews of Smit’s concert performances and programs from Smit’s concerts and events.

Arrangement: Alphabetical
Writings and research materials gathered by Smit during his research on Emily Dickinson
SERIES VI: Librettos
Arrangement: Alphabetical by title
Librettos from operas and other works Smit composed for/wrote. Includes final copies and handwritten drafts.

SERIES VII: Scores, 1940-1998
Arrangement: Alphabetical by title.

Subseries 1: Original Compositions, 1940-1998
Scores composed by Smit. Includes holographs and blackline prints.

Subseries 2: Arrangements
Scores arranged by Smit, written by other composers.

SERIES VIII: Personal Photographs, 1905-1998
Arranged by subject
Includes personal photographs of Smit, his friends and family. Also includes slides used in presentations, many of which were taken by Smit.

Arranged by subject.
Professional photographs – both taken by Smit and in studios. Includes portraits of Smit as a young man, as well as large mounted photographs by Smit – many used for display in exhibits

SERIES I: CORRESPONDENCE, 1930-1995

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SERIES II: Writings

Box 3 Fol 1
Aaron Copland: The Dean of American Composers
2 Assorted Notes
3 Bear College: A Tough School
4 Beethoven Var.II Op. 120: A Musical Beheading
5 The Classic Cole Porter
6 Conversation with Aaron Copland
7 A Copland Portrait
8 A Copland Portrait - notes
9 For and About Aaron on His 75th
10 Fred Hoyle
11 Igor Stravinsky: A Card Game, a Wedding and a Passing
12 Jan DeGaetani: A Personal Note
13 J.S. Bach: Fox or Hedgehog?
14 Kidding and Coping
15 Latin American Journal

Box 4 Fol 1
Latin American Journal - notes
2 Musical Foxes and Hedgehogs
3 Nadia Boulanger
4 Nicolas Nabakov, a memoir
5 On Artistic Obsession
6 Pianista Norteamericano
7 Roma
8 School Work, 1932-1934
9 Self Portraits of Composers
10 Some Musical Foxes and Hedgehogs
11 Trishky
12 Zilotti's Kiss - chapter outlines
13 Zilotti's Kiss - introduction


Box 5 Fol 1
Call Me Ludwig
2 Leo Smit Remembers Stravinsky
Leo Smit Papers

Masters Write Jazz  (English and Spanish text included)
Music By Composers I Have Known and Played For
Sitka
Six Pieces By Franz Liszt
Slee Lectures
Slides of the Southwest

SERIES IV: Clippings and Programs, 1936-1998

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Programs, Performances with Others

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Programs: Program Notes

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Programs: Smit As Composer

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Programs: Smit's Copland Celebrations

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SERIES VI: Librettos

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SERIES VII: Scores, 1940-1998

Subseries 1: Original Compositions, 1940-1998

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<td><em>Alabaster Chambers</em>, 1989 (For string orchestra, holograph)</td>
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<td><em>Alchemy Marches</em>, 1980 (For wind ensemble, contrabasses and percussion. Holograph)</td>
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<td>Act I, undated (Blackline print of vocal score)</td>
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Alone, 1988 (For female violist/reciter. Holograph)

At the Corner of the Sky, undated (Holograph)

Banners and Pennants, 1976 (Holograph transparencies)

Caedmon, 1972
  (Cantata for 3 solo voices, male chorus, and orchestra. Vocal score.)

Canon, 1985 (For string quartet. Holograph.)

Canon F, 1963
  (For violin and pianoforte. Reproduction of holograph.)

Choral Harmonizations, 1952 (Holograph)

Capriccio, 1958 (For string orchestra. Reproduction of holograph.)

Canticle - Preludes, 1991 (For organ. Holograph - pencil.)

Channel Firing, 1970
  (For baritone and piano. Reproduction of holograph.)

A Choir of Starlings
  1984 (For chamber orchestra and four voices. Holograph.)
  1954 (A serenata for four voices and ten instruments. Blackline print.)

Christmas Tree Carols, 1974
  (For mixed chorus and ensemble of eight instruments. Reproduction of holograph.)

Cock Robin
  1978 (Holograph sketches)
  1979 (For soprano, piccolo, and percussion. Holograph score.)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, 1968 (Piano score. Blackline print.)

Copernicus
  1973 (Narrative and credo. Holograph score.)
  1973 (Sketches)
  1973 (Text)

The Dwarf Heart, 1987 (For mezzo-soprano and piano)

Delauney Pochoirs, 1980 (Holograph - pencil)

Ecstatic Pilgrimage, 1989
  (Based on the poems of Emily Dickinson. Blackline prints.)

Cycle I: Childe Emile

Cycle II: The Celestial Thrush

Cycle III: The Marigold Heart

Cycle IV: Beyond Circumference

Cycle V: Tinted Mountains

Cycle VI: The White Diadem

Exequy

A Flock of Guinea Hens Seen from a Car, undated (Holograph score.)

The Flute of Wonder, 1983 (For flute and piano. Holograph)

Four Motets, 1955 (For two flutes, voice and violin. Holograph)

From Banja Luka

Glorious Sea, undated (Holograph)

Happy Birthday Duo, 1980 (Holograph)

Happy Birthday Pieces, 1994 (Holograph)

Happy Birthday Trio, 1995 (Holograph)

Hebraic Heritage, 1937 (Holograph)

I Dwell in Possibility, undated (For baritone and guitar)

In Evening Air, undated (For tenor and piano)

In Woods, undated (For oboe, harp and percussion)
16  I Reckon When I Count at All, undated (For baritone and guitar)
17  I Shall Not Live in Vain, undated (For voice and piano)
18  The Kiss, 1987 (Holograph)
19  Kookaburra Marches, 1980 (For symphonic band. Blackline print.)
20  The Last Hour
21  1988 (For mixed chorus a capella)
22  1988 (For five voices and piano)
23  Lizzie in Wonderland, 1974 (For harp)
24  Love is a Sickness, 1947 (For female chorus and piano)
25  Love Songs Without Words, 1974 (For woodwind quintet)

Madrigals

14  1 1955 (Blackline print)
2 1955 (Holograph)
3 1986 (For piano)

Magic Water
4  1978 (Libretto)
5  1978 (Piano/vocal score)
6  1978 (Ten instrument arrangement)

March for a Beloved General, undated (For orchestra. Reproduction of holograph.)

Martha Through the Looking Glass, 1974 (Piano solo)
Memento, 1951 (For vibraphone and bass)

A Mountain Eulogy,

draft (For narrator and chamber orchestra)

Myopia: A Night

Myopia: A Night

Night Chimes, undated (Piano solo)
Night Echo, 1997 (Piano solo)
Night Shadows, 1997 (Piano solo)

Petals of Amaranth, 1995 (For viola and piano. Holograph.)
Per Piano, 1977 (For voice and piano. Holograph.)
Piano Sonata Four Hands, 1987 (Reproduction of holograph)

Quartet for Strings

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1941 (Piano obbligato)

Sequence,

Sextet

Sinfonia, 1952 (Piano solo. Holograph)

Shekinah, undated (Sketches)
Sonata for Solo Cello, 1982 (Holograph)
Sonata in One Movement, 1951 (Piano solo. Blackline print.)
Sonata, Piano, Four Hands, 1987 (Holograph)
Songs of Wonder, 1976 (For high voice and piano)
Speak Baby!, 1988 (For solo soprano and small women's chorus)
7  
   Spring Harbinger, 1998 (For woodwind quintet. Holograph.)
8  
   Symphony in E flat, 1954 (Piano reduction. Holograph.)
9  
   Symphony of Dance and Songs, undated (Reproduction)
10  
   Symphony No. 2, undated (Holograph sketches)
11  
   Symphony No. 3, 1981 (Holograph sketches)
12  
   Tango, undated (Holograph)
13  
   Taps, 1980 (For five trombones and tuba. Holograph score.)
14  
   Thinngs All Over,
15  
   1983 (For voice and piano. Holograph.)
16  
   Undated, (For soprano, oboe and piano. Holograph)
17  
   This Was A Poet, 1989 (Holograph score.)
18  
   Thomas Jefferson, 1988 (A narrative monodrama for baritone and piano.)
19  
   Three Night Pieces, undated (Holograph score.)
20  
   Three Poems of Marcia Willieme, 1994 (For soprano and piano)
21  
   Three Pushkin Romances
22  
   1952 (For mezzo-soprano and piano)
23  
   1952 (For tenor and piano)
24  
   Trumpeter Swan
25  
   1985 (For voice and piano)
26  
   1985 (For soprano and piano)
27  
   Toccata, 1984 (For solo piano)
28  
   Two Alchemy Pieces, 1957 (For solo piano)
29  
   Two Birthday Pieces, 1994 (Reproduction of holograph)
30  
   Tzadik
31  
   undated (For orchestra, incomplete early holograph)
32  
   undated (For string quartet)
33  
   1985 (For piano trio)
34  
   1998 (For piano solo)
35  
   1983 (Full score for twelve players)
36  
   Tzway, 1935 (For voice and piano. Holograph)
37  
   Under a Tender Moon
38  
   1990 (For soprano, horn, viola and harp)
39  
   1990 (Holograph sketches)
40  
   Unlike Olympian Love, 1963 (For four hands, two pianos. Blackline print)
41  
   Variations, 1981 (For piano solo and orchestra)
42  
   Winter Sun, 1997 (For soprano and piano. Holograph.)
43  
   Yerma
44  
   1946 (A ballet from the play by Garcia Lorca)
45  
   1946 (Incomplete draft)
46  
   Yugoslav Folk Melodies, undated (Holograph score)
47  
   Unidentified
48  
   (Holograph)
49  
   (For voice and woodwind quartet)

Subseries 2: Arrangements

Box  Fol
19  1

Big Foot Ham, 1984
   (Morton, Ferdinand. Arranged for string quartet. Holograph reproduction)
2  
   Csardas Obstine (Liszt. Arranged for wind quintet)
3  
   Eleven New Bagatelles, Op. 119
   (Beethoven, Ludwig van. Arranged for wind quartet. Blackline print.)
4  
   Farewell
   (Liszt, Franz. Arranged for clarinet, accordion and mixed chorus)
5  *A Foggy Day In London*  
   (Gershwin, George. Arranged for piano solo. Holograph)

6  *Four Last Songs*  
   (Schumann, Robert. Arranged for mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra)

7  *Hatikvah*  
   (Arranged for piano solo)

8  *Jeu de Cartes*  
   (Stravinsky, Igor. Arranged for piano solo)

9  *Mazurka*  
   (Chopin. Arranged for piano left hand and voice.)

10  *Nocturnes*  
   (Liszt, Franz. Arranged for orchestra.)

11  *Ossian*  
   (Gottschalk, L.M. Arranged for oboe and piano)

12  *Pater Noster*  
   (Liszt, Franz. Arranged for a capella male chorus)

13  *Red Hot and Cole*  
   (Porter, Cole. Arranged for voice, oboe, string orchestra and percussion.)

14  *Sonata in D Minor*  
   (Brahms, J. Pencil holograph.)

15  *Three Pieces by Edward MacDowell*  
   (Arranged for flute and piano)

16  *Three Romances*  
   (Schumann, Robert. Arranged for oboe and chamber orchestra)

17  *Three Short Fugues on Russian Melodies*  
   (Rimski-Korsakov. Reworked by Smit.)

**SERIES VIII: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1905-1998**

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<td>Autographed photos</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Columbia Records, 1953 (Leo Smit and Harold Shapero)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conducting Symphony #2, Feb 1964</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Copland, Aaron and others, 1960-1989</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Hoyle, Fred with Smit, 1973</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Johnson, Pete, 1964</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Smit, Leo, c. 1930-1960</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Smit, Leo, c. 1960-1998</td>
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**Slides**

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**SERIES IX: Oversized Materials, 1921-1990**

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