



The New York Public Library Music Division

Guide to the

Kevin Oldham papers

1984-1997

JPB 13-35

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2013

Summary

Creator: Oldham, Kevin, 1960-1993

Title: Kevin Oldham papers

Date: 1984-1997

Size: 1.6 linear feet (5 boxes)

Source: Donated by Stephen Rotondaro, 1996, 2002.

Abstract: Kevin Oldham (1960-1993) was an American composer and pianist. The Kevin Oldham papers, dating from 1984 to 1997, document Oldham's life and career through personal and professional correspondence, subject files, publicity files, photographs, and journals. Most content dates from 1989 to 1993.

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Preferred citation: Kevin Oldham papers, JPB 13-35. Music Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2013 Original order was maintained. Some files were consolidated.

Creator History

Kevin Oldham (1960-1993) was an American composer and pianist. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, he studied at Northwestern University and at the Juilliard School, where he received his bachelor and master degrees. His teachers at Juilliard were Herbert Stessin and Sascha Gorodnitzki. He made his orchestral debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1980, and through the mid-1980s performed well-reviewed recitals in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, and various cities in Europe.

In 1988, after learning that he was infected with HIV, Oldham abandoned the concert stage and devoted the rest of his life to composition. He received a grant from Meet The Composer in 1991, as well as the Festival of the Atlantic Young American Composers Award. The Festival commissioned his

Concerto for Piano, Op. 14, which the Festival orchestra premiered. Oldham also performed the piece with the Kansas City Symphony a few weeks before he died. His other works include a Symphony for Organ; solo piano pieces; songs for voice and piano; choral works written for, performed, and recorded by the choir of Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan, with which Oldham sang; an uncompleted opera, *Thérèse Raquin*; and over two dozen cabaret songs.

Oldham was active in the AIDS Music Emergency Network and the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS. He died of AIDS-related causes on March 11, 1993.

Source: Tim Page. "Oldham, Kevin." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 30, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42623>.

Custodial History

The collection was maintained and added to by Oldham's companion and estate executor, Stephen Rotondaro. With the exception of one score in this collection, Oldham's music manuscripts were cataloged.

Scope and Content Note

The Kevin Oldham papers, dating from 1984 to 1997, document Oldham's life and career through personal and professional correspondence, subject files, publicity files, photographs, journals, and scores. Most content dates from 1989 to 1993. Correspondence and subject files comprise the bulk of the collection. Personal correspondence is with friends and discusses the refocusing of Oldham's life toward music composition following his positive test for HIV; it also holds purely humorous letters (titled the Tickle Pickle File). Professional correspondence is with critics, other musicians, and publishers regarding the performance and promotion of Oldham's music. Posthumous publishing correspondence is with Stephen Rotondaro. Professional correspondence can also be found in the subject files.

Subject files document both personal and professional aspects of Oldham's life. They include papers regarding several compositions: the premiere of *Concerto for Piano*, the posthumous premiere of *Symphony for Organ*, and an unfinished opera, *Thérèse Raquin*. The files for *Concerto for Piano* include the full score manuscript and correspondence with the Kansas City Symphony. Rough versions of the libretto for the opera are present, as well as a few music sketches and costume designs. The files for Marble Collegiate Church contain letters regarding its commission of choral pieces from Oldham, and include correspondence with the Aaron Copland Fund and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. The Church files also hold papers regarding Oldham's memorial service.

The scores consist of Oldham's arrangements for piano or choir of music by J.S. Bach, Jean Sibelius, and John Jacob Niles. They also contain a song by Sigmund Romberg and Herbert Reynolds. Some of the scores are manuscripts, others are computer prints.

Other subject files contain correspondence, programs, fliers, and clippings regarding Oldham's debuts at Carnegie Recital Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Merkin Concert Hall; correspondence with the Aperto Records company; correspondence and meeting minutes documenting Oldham's involvement with the AIDS Music Emergency Network and the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS; correspondence, programs and clippings regarding the Benson Concert Series for AIDS Relief; and correspondence and clippings regarding fliers sent to Oldham's parents by the Westboro Baptist Church shortly after his

death, the church's protest at Oldham's funeral, and the counter-protest organized by ACT-UP/Kansas City.

The publicity files hold professional photographs of Oldham dating from the mid-1980s to 1992, clippings, press releases, and programs. The journals contain poetry, prose fiction, song lyrics, and drawings. They also hold personal correspondence between Stephen Rotondaro and Paul Bonin-Rodriguez dating from after Oldham's death, as well as writings by Bonin-Rodriguez.

Kevin Oldham's compositions are described in detail at the website of The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS (<http://www.artistswithaids.org/artforms/music/catalogue/oldham.html>).

Arrangement: The papers are arranged by alphabetically by file format.

Key Terms

Subjects

AIDS activists
Composers -- United States
Music -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Black-and-white photographs
Clippings (information artifacts)
Color photographs
Commercial correspondence
Diaries
Fliers (printed matter)
Personal correspondence
Press releases
Programs (documents)
Scores

Occupations

Composers
Musicians
Pianists

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)

Names

Bonin-Rodriguez, Paul
ACT UP/KC (Organization)
Estate Project for Artists with AIDS
Kansas City Symphony
Marble Collegiate Church (New York, N.Y.)
Marble Collegiate Church (New York, N.Y.).. Choir
Westboro Baptist Church (Topeka, Kan.)

Container List

Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 1-3 Personal 1986-1993
- b. 1 f. 4-6 Professional 1990-1995
- b. 1 f. 7-8 Journals 1989-1993, undated

Publicity

- b. 3 f. 2 Clippings 1986
- b. 1 f. 9-11 Photographs 1985-1992
- b. 1 f. 12 Press Releases, Programs, Clippings, and Correspondence 1985-1997

Scores

Arrangements

Bach, Johann Sebastian

- b. 5 f. 1 *Cantata No. 29 BWV 29, Sinfonia* 1991
Piano transcription.
- b. 5 f. 2 *Fugue in G Major, BWV 577* 1984-1997
Piano transcription.
- b. 5 f. 3 *Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532* 1984-1997
Incomplete piano transcription.
- b. 5 f. 4 *Niles, John Jacob. Twelve Days of Christmas, Op. 8* 1980
Choral arrangement.
- b. 5 f. 5 *Sibelius, Jean. Be Still My Soul* 1992
For voice and organ.
- b. 5 f. 6 *Traditional. Go Tell it On the Mountain* 1989
For choir.
- b. 5 f. 7 *Romberg, Sigmund. Auf Wiedersehn!* 1990s
Music by Romberg, lyrics by Herbert Reynolds. For voice and piano.

Subject Files

- b. 2 f. 1 Aperto Recordings 1984-1985, 1993
- b. 2 f. 2 Benson Concert for United AIDS Relief Effort 1991-1994
Concerto for Piano, Op. 14
- b. 2 f. 3 Correspondence and Clippings 1991-1995
- b. 3 f. 1 Full Score Manuscript 1991
- b. 2 f. 4 Carnegie Hall Debut 1985
- b. 2 f. 5 Estate Project for Artists with AIDS/AIDS Music Emergency Network 1991-1993
- b. 2 f. 6 Kennedy Center Debut 1986
- Marble Collegiate Church
- b. 2 f. 7-9 Commissions 1989-1994
- b. 2 f. 10 Memorial 1993
- b. 2 f. 11 Merkin Concert Hall 1987
- b. 2 f. 12 *Symphony for Organ* 1997
- b. 4 f. 1-2 *Thérèse Raquin* undated
- b. 4 f. 3 Westboro Baptist Church 1993

Subject Files (cont.)

b. 3 f. 3 Westboro Baptist Church 1993