Peter Yates Musical Composition and Material Collection
[mid-20th century]

Descriptive Summary:

Title: The Peter Yates Musical Composition and Material Collection
Date Span: [bulk, mid 20th century]
Acquisition Number: N/A
Creator: Peter Yates
Donor: Dr. Peter Yates; Buffalo State College Music Department
Date of Acquisition: ca. 1980
Extent: 1 box; .25 linear ft.
Language: English
Location: Archives & Special Collections Department, E. H. Butler Library, SUNY Buffalo State
Processed: ca. 1990; Marjorie Lord, reprocessed 2011

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Biographical Note:

Peter Yates (1909-1976), along with his wife Frances Mullen, is perhaps best remembered for his founding of the concert series Evenings on the Roof in Los Angeles. It grew literally on the roof of the 2nd floor of the Yates’ home, designed by Rudolf Schindler, one of the first of many artists and musician to emigrate from Europe to southern California during the early years of World War II. This concert series was to give most of them a much needed opportunity to have their music performed in an extremely supportive setting. (The reader is urged to consult the early chapters of D. Crawford’s Evenings On and Off the Roof for extensive coverage of this most important aspect of music history in the United States.)

Mr. Yates’ appointment as Chair of the Music Department at Buffalo State College in 1968 met with many “raised eyebrows,” due to his lack of experience in higher education teaching and administration. He was, after all, an interviewer with the California Employment Service for most of his pre-Buffalo years. Additionally, he had earned only minimal academic qualifications, a BA degree from Princeton. However, having served as associate editor of Arts and Architecture, 1940-1967, as a contributing editor to Arts in Society, as well as author of two well-received books -- An Amateur at the Keyboard (1964) and Twentieth Century Music (1967) plus his long and unparalleled association with many of the most important contemporary European and American composers, the usual and traditional resume expectations were overlooked in lieu of this newer and richer experience.

During their years in Western New York, Peter and Frances participated actively in the musical life of Buffalo. With the Albright Knox Art Gallery directly across the street, hosting the infamous Evenings for New Music, 1964-1980, which might be said to have found its predecessor in Yates’ Evenings on the Roof, Peter felt right at home in Buffalo. At the larger SUNY university center, SUNY at Buffalo, Peter hosted a weekly series of music programs on WBFO-FM, the local public radio station. He successfully brought Lou Harrison, the then-controversial American composer, to the Albright Knox for a stunning evening of talk and music. He continued to lecture as professor in the music department after retiring from the chairmanship. He passed away from a heart attack in Buffalo, in 1976.
Additional Suggested Readings:


Inventory:

Box 1:

Folder 1:

This piece is listed in Musical Works of Charles Wakefield Cadman, Cadman Estate, 1947, as “unpublished or out of print.” Cadman, an American composer (1881-1946), lived in Los Angeles from 1916 until his death in 1946. He was one of the founders of the Hollywood Bowl. Some of his pieces were featured in programs of Evenings on the Roof concert series, especially during the first season, and his “Tone-drama: Carlotta and Maximilian,” for cello and piano received its world premier there during the sixth season, 1944. Considering his close association with the Evenings series, both as a subscriber and supporter, it may perhaps be safely assumed that the “Frances” to whom he refers in the pencil note was Frances Mullen Yates, pre-eminent pianist, champion of new music and co-founder with her husband Peter Yates of the Evenings on the Roof. Looking at the list of compositions featured over the years, it seems that “Tarantella” was not performed, either by Frances or any other pianist. John Crown, the dedicatee, was a faculty member, 1942-1972, at the University of Southern California. He was a well-known pianist who had studied with Moritz Rosenthal (the last student of Franz Liszt) and, in turn, was the teacher of Michael Tilson Thomas.

Folder 2:
Musical composition, “Trio in D minor,” violin, cello and piano, score and
parts (piano score incomplete), manuscript, dedication on first page of piano score: “To the great Compinsky Trio, from their devoted friend and admirer, in deepest gratitude and homage [signed] Baruch Klein, no date.

Baruch Klein (no information).

The Compinsky Trio consisted of family members, (siblings) Manuel, violinist; Alex, cellist; and Sara, pianist. The Trio played weekly on CBS radio network in Los Angeles (c. 1935-45?). Manuel, formerly a member of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini, was a steady member of the Evenings on the Roof group, playing frequently with Frances Mullen Yates. Alex had a recording company, named Alco, which issued a number of recordings of Evenings programs.

[A letter, April 2011, was sent to Noelle Compinsky Tinturin, daughter of Manuel Compinsky, niece of Sara, soliciting any information on Baruch Klein and/or the Trio. She returned a negative reply via telephone in May.]

Folder 3:

Ben Weber (1916-1979), American composer of minimal musical training in piano and voice, was largely self taught in composition. Primarily in the 12-tone technique with romantic and sometimes witty leanings, his compositions are numerous, bridging orchestral, chamber, vocal and keyboard genres. He won two Guggenheim fellowships, plus various other awards and citations from prestigious musical and scholarly organizations. His “Piano Concerto,” commissioned by the Ford Foundation, was premiered by the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein with William Masselos as pianist.

Irving Ilmer, violinist at the first performance was a faculty member at the Cleveland Institute and violinist with the Chicago Symphony. He left the latter position in 1952, to become violist and founding member of the Fine Arts Quartet.

Harriet Parker, pianist and dedicatee, appeared frequently in concert with Louis Gabowitz. Information on her connection/association with the composer, Peter Yates and the Evenings on the Roof concert series, etc., was not forthcoming at this writing.

Gerald Strang (1908-1983), composer, acoustics expert, and editor of *New*
Yates

Music Quarterly after Henry Cowell’s departure, 1935-1941. He was closely associated with Peter Yates and the Evenings on the Roof concert series, and was teaching assistant and amanuensis for Arnold Schoenberg during his tenure at USC and UCLA, 1936-1938.

Folder 4:
Musical composition, “Sonata for Flute and Piano,” by Everett B. Helm, no date; score and part, no annotations, Ozalid reproduction (?). Top of first page of both score and part -- “No. 2” recorded above the title. This sonata was published in 1952 by Schott & Co., London (Edition Schott 4133, p.pl.no. 37771,) with no indication of “No. 2” on either cover or first page.

Everett B. Helm (1913-1999) was an American composer and musicologist, educated at Harvard, receiving his PhD in 1939. He studied composition with Malipiero and Vaughan Williams, and musicology with Alfred Einstein. He moved to Europe in 1948 where he remained for the rest of his life except for a 2-year interval, 1961-63, when he was editor of Musical America. The only recorded association with Peter Yates and/or Evenings on the Roof was a performance of Mr. Helm’s “Sonata for Viola and Piano” during the 10th season, 1947-48.

Folder 5:
Two musical compositions: A) Song, “Jerusalem,” medium voice and piano, three pages, text by William Blake, composition date July 1941, recorded at last measure. “For Ernest Hocking” at top of first page; “for Peter from John 14 July 1953 N.Y.” written lengthwise in left margin, first page. B) Song Collection, Adam, spiral bound, cardboard cover. Table of Contents lists 10 songs, some with poets and dedicatees, composition dates, 1938-1949:

1) The Faucon, anon., to Randall Thompson
2) Now wolde I fain some Merthes make, A. Godwin
3) I saw a fair Maiden, anon., for Susan Edmunds Prall
4) Lament for Walsingham, anon., for Theodore Chanler
5) A Maid peerless, anon., for Eva Gauthier
6) I sing of a Maiden, anon.
7) The Stork, anon., for my mother
8) The Nightingale, anon.
9) Adam, anon., for Janet Lewis
10) St. Steven, anon.

Enclosures between last page and back cover – publicity brochures from two singers, Gladys Steele and Carl Hague, with photos and text; one half-sheet of note paper with penciled address and phone number of Julius Herford, and a list of names, “Juilliard, Un. Theol Seminary, Westmin Choir College Chorale,” inscribed in ink.
John Edmunds, 1913-1986, was an American composer and musicologist, educated at University of California, Curtis Institute, Columbia and Harvard. He was awarded many prestigious grants, and taught for a short time at Syracuse and University of California, Berkeley. He founded the Campion Society and was in charge of the American Collection at the New York Public Library, 1957-1961. He worked in England, 1968-1976, returning to San Francisco in 1977. An accomplished song writer, specializing in setting Middle English texts and the poetry of W.B. Yeats, he is probably best known for his transcriptions and arrangements of English song and poetry of the 17th century. It might be surmised that the side margin designation, “for Peter...” mentioned above in “Jerusalem,” might refer to Peter Yates, although this is based purely on recalled conversations with his wife, Frances, who had mentioned John Edmunds as a friend/acquaintance in California, several times to this writer. The dedicatee, [William ] Ernest Hocking, was an American philosopher (1873-1966). He taught at Harvard during the years that Edmunds attended there, with an overlap of two years – Edmunds graduated in 1941 and Hocking retired in 1943 after 30 years on the faculty. There is a possibility that they may have met.

Folder 6:
Two musical compositions by Richard Maxfield: A) Composition [for clarinet and piano], piano score only, 11 pages, no date. There are no annotations or editorial marks except for evidence of whiteout applied following the word “composition” in title. Ozalid reproduction? B) Composition “for violin and piano, 1954” added in ink. On first page, the composer has written in ink script, “Dedicated to Rudolf Kolisch in fond recollection of his artistry on behalf of Webern at Marienthohe Summer 1955 Very truly [signed] Richard Maxfield.” Ozalid reproduction? Also present is a folder containing two duplicate lists of R. Maxfield’s Major Compositions, listed in chronological order, dating 1942-1964.

Richard Maxfield (1927-1969), was an American composer acknowledged to be the pioneer in teaching electronic music techniques in the United States. He studied with Roger Sessions at University of California, Berkeley, and with Sol Babbitt at Princeton. Ernst Krenek, Aaron Copland and Luigi Dallapiccola were among others with whom he studied. He succeeded John Cage as instructor of composition at the New School for Social Research in New York, 1959-1961, and went on to found and briefly direct the electronic music studio at San Francisco State College. Maxfield worked closely with LaMonte Young, David Tudor, and Terry Riley – all colleagues in the New York electronic music scene during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Richard Maxfield took his own life in 1969. His scores, tape work and equipment have been kept in storage by the MELA Foundation since 1985.
Rudolf Kolisch, 1896-1978, was an Austrian-born, American violinist. He founded the Kolisch Quartet in 1922, which disbanded in 1938. He then went on to become first violinist with the Pro Arte Quartet, appearing with this group during the 8th season (1945-46) of Evenings on the Roof. Peter Yates wrote the liner notes for the Kolisch Quartet’s recording of Schoenberg’s complete string quartets, released in 1950. Rudolf was the brother of Gertrud, Schoenberg’s wife, and much of their professional lives centered around the Evenings on the Roof concert series after the second World War.

Folder 7:

a) Text: typescript for actors, along with prefatory details and staging directions throughout.
b) Musical score: “Sonata No. 6 for Piano.” Commentary by Mr. Hiller indicates that this piece “can be performed as a solo composition in an ordinary concert environment.” It is also designed compositionally to be performed as part of *Rage*…
c) Printed program from performance February 19 and 20, 1972 presented as part of Evenings for Music Theatre by the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and the SUNY at Buffalo Center for the Creative and Performing Arts at the Albright Knox Art Gallery, commemorating the Gallery’s tenth anniversary.
d) Two recordings (33 1/3 rpm) of the above first performance, February 20, 1972. One record is damaged by small chip at outer edge which appears not to extend into actual sound grooves.

This folder may not have originally been part of Mr. Yates’ archive. There appears a penned note on the sleeve of one of the records (identified as the handwriting of a former Archivist here at E. H. Butler Library) “received from Anton Wolf 1985.” Dr. Wolf (deceased) was a former Music Department faculty member. It is not known whether this note applied to the entire folder’s contents or just to the recording. However, Peter Yates was foremost a proponent of new music and was at Buffalo State College as Chair of the Music Department at the time of the 1972 performances of *Rage* …; in fact, as Renee Levine Packer points out in her 2010 book, *This Life of Sounds: Evenings for New Music in Buffalo*, Mr. Yates and his Evenings on the Roof concert series could be seen a model and precursor for the Buffalo Evenings for New Music. The College is situated directly across the street from Albright Knox, and it is difficult to imagine that Yates was unaware of what was going on there, musically. Ms. Packer hastens to point out recollection of a snowy evening in that same year, 1972, that Peter had arranged an appearance of the famous and somewhat controversial composer, Lou Harrison.
Lejaren Hiller (1924-1994), American composer most remembered as an innovator in the field of computer music. He pursued intense study of chemistry at Princeton while studying composition with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt. Leaving the corporate world of chemistry (Dupont) he accepted an academic appointment at the University of Illinois, and while there continued his study of music and computer composition. He left Illinois in 1968 after being offered an endowed chair of composition at the University of Buffalo Music Department, and with Lukas Foss became co-director of the Center for the Creative and Performing Arts. An attack of encephalitis and then failing memory precipitated an early retirement. Mr. Hiller is remembered for his eclecticism, theatricality and a propensity for combining the traditional with the avant garde in his musical compositions. Numerous contributions to scholarly music journals are to his credit as well. His composition *Machine Music* (1964) was performed during the twenty-eighth season (1965-66) of Monday Evening Concerts, the successor series directed by Lawrence Morton after Peter Yates discontinued Evenings on the Roof. Very little regarding Frank Parman is forthcoming in standard literary biography sources. He seems to be mostly associated with joint projects of Lejaren Hiller, appointed to a faculty position for two years, 1970-1972, at the University of Buffalo in conjunction with Hiller’s interest in theatre pieces.