San Jose Symphony Records

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2017
Descriptive Summary
Title: San Jose Symphony Records
Dates: 1940-2001
Collection Number: 2000-51
Creator/Collector: San Jose Symphony
Extent: 32 linear feet
Repository: History San Jose Research Library
San Jose, California 95110
Abstract: Records of the San Jose Symphony, which operated between 1878 and 2001 in San Jose, California. The collection includes business records, scrapbooks and programs, photographs, press clippings, and recordings of performances.
Language of Material: English
Access
The collection is available to researchers by appointment with the Curator of Library & Archives. Performance recordings are only available for research purposes and must be accessed in-house.
Preferred Citation
San Jose Symphony Records. History San Jose Research Library
Acquisition Information
The records were donated to History San Jose in July 2000.
Biography/Administrative History
In 1878, conductor/musician F. Louis King arrived from England and an Australia tour to lecture in San Francisco, and was hired by the College of the Pacific to head their new Music Department, and a private conservatory. He founded the San Jose Orchestral Society, drawing on many local musicians from the San Jose Normal School faculty and Germania Verein Amateur Orchestra then extant; it was the first classical European-style orchestra west of the Mississippi. He and J. H. Elwood of the Normal School also mounted a giant choral festival in October, 1878, that attracted hundreds of singers, musicians -- and potential audiences -- for the new orchestra. The name was later changed to the San Jose Symphony; it performed under King until 1892, when Herman Brant succeeded him. After World War I, the symphony declined until it was reorganized and combined with the San Jose Elks Orchestra (the two groups shared members); the group continued to perform, decline and reorganize periodically through the 1950s and 1960s under William Van der Heide and Sandor Salgo, until George Cleve became conductor between 1972-1992, succeeded by Leonid Grin. Management and financial problems, crises and scandals periodically threatened the existence of the Symphony over the years; it struggled until 2001 when it could no longer continue. Players and managing director Andrew Bales reorganized the group and saved the instrumental scores, and the Silicon Valley Symphony continued the tradition, playing in the Center for the Performing Arts until opening in the restored California Theatre in 2004. San Jose Symphony conductors: 1878: F. Louis King 1890: Hermann Brandt c. 1937: William Van den Burg 1941-1945: Suspended during war era 1946: Gaston Usigli 1950s: Sandor Salgo 1970: James K. Guthrie 1972: George Cleve 1992: Leonid Grin
Scope and Content of Collection
The San Jose Symphony Records include a selection of pre-1945 concert programs, a small selection of programs from the 1950s and 1960s, and an extensive collection of concert programs and season announcements from the 1970s through 2001 when the Symphony ceased performing. News clippings document events and artists, and various management and union crises and confrontations from the same period. Records of the company include office operations; Board of Directors papers; fundraising/marketing materials; personnel records including materials on conductors, staff, union/management problems; and material about the Youth Symphony, school concerts, and other educational activities of the Symphony. Audiovisual material consists of promotional photographs of soloists and conductors; and photographs of performances, as well as recordings of performances and governance meetings. Ephemeral material includes late 19th century activities of King Conservatory/early San Jose Orchestral Society activities, and scrapbooks containing concert/recital programs.
Indexing Terms
Symphony orchestras
San Jose (Calif.)