Otto Klemperer Collection of Musical Scores

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2019
Descriptive Summary

Title: Otto Klemperer Collection of Musical Scores

Dates: 1774-1959

Collection Number: 2016.005

Creator/Collector: Otto Klemperer

Extent: 12.34 ft

Repository: California State University, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, California 90032-8300

Abstract: Otto Klemperer was a German conductor and composer born in Breslau, Germany on May 14th, 1885. After studying at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt and the Stern Conservatory in Berlin until 1918, he became one of the leading German conductors of his generation. Klemperer had already been a conductor at the German Opera in Prague in 1907 through the recommendation of his friend, Gustav Mahler. He went on to hold a number of prominent positions in Hamburg, the Strasbourg Opera, the Cologne Opera, and the Wiesbaden Opera House. He championed in not only conducting classic pieces from Mozart and Bach, but also new works by composers of his own time.

Language of Material: English

Access

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Preferred Citation

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Biography/Administrative History

Otto Klemperer was a German conductor and composer born in Breslau, Germany on May 14th, 1885. After studying at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt and the Stern Conservatory in Berlin until 1918, he became one of the leading German conductors of his generation. Klemperer had already been a conductor at the German Opera in Prague in 1907 through the recommendation of his friend, Gustav Mahler. He went on to hold a number of prominent positions in Hamburg, the Strasbourg Opera, the Cologne Opera, and the Wiesbaden Opera House. He championed in not only conducting classic pieces from Mozart and Bach, but also new works by composers of his own time. Being of Jewish descent, he was forced into exile when the Nazi regime came into power in 1933, becoming a conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra from 1933 to 1939. He received his American citizenship in 1937, and went on to be an acclaimed conductor for the standard works of Germanic repertoire, such as Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler. Despite his difficulties in adapting to South California’s cultural environment and suffering from episodes of depression, the orchestra thrived under his leadership. Looking to expand his career, he applied for many positions across the country; however, he was passed over by all. He continued to conduct for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra until he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The surgery left him paralyzed, depressed, and with fits of insanity – on one occasion having to be admitted to an institution from which he later escaped, but was found and arrested. Although he did conduct on occasion for the LAPH, negative publicity lost him his position as Music Director and he was rejected by most US orchestras. After WWII, he returned to Europe, earning himself positions in Hungary, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Germany, and Canada. In his later life, Klemperer developed many health issues resulting from a fall and burn accident, but continued to conduct in the form of arrangements for EMI recording in London. He also expanded out to conduct in Middle Eastern countries including Israel and Palestine, earning himself an honorary passport from Israel. Klemperer died and was buried in Zürich, Switzerland, in 1973, aged 88. He was survived by his son, Werner, and daughter, Lotte. The Klemperer Collection was presented to the University in the mid-1970s.

Scope and Content of Collection

The materials in this collection range from 1774 to 1954. The bulk of the collection includes musical score books, as well as, loose scores, microfilms and LP vinyl records. The musical score books contain conductor renditions of scores originally written by famous musicians such as Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and Stravinsky, and more contemporary 19th – 20th century composers. Smaller series include LP vinyl recordings of music from when Klemperer conducted for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and EMI in London, and microfilm and photocopies of scores whose originals have since been returned to family.

Indexing Terms

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2016.005

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