Joe Catalano papers

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Mills College
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Joe Catalano papers
Dates: 1952-1998
Collection Number: Consult repository.
Creator/Collector:
Extent: 22 linear feet.
Repository: Mills College
Oakland, California 94613
Abstract: Collection consists of research materials, subject files, compositions and projects, materials relating to the arts community and organizations, publicity materials, audiovisual materials and personal papers documenting Joe Catalano’s career as a composer, performer, and producer.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
Contact the Special Collections Curator, F.W. Olin Library, Mills College, for copyright information and permission to publish.
Preferred Citation
Joe Catalano papers. Mills College
Acquisition Information
Biography/Administrative History
Joe Catalano was a native of New York State. He was born in Elmira on November 29, 1952, and most of his early years were spent in Buffalo. He attended St. Joseph’s Collegiate High School there, received a B.A. in Music at the University of Buffalo, and obtained his M.A. in Musicology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1985, as did Wendy Jeanne Burch, and they were married on July 2, 1988 in San Francisco. Catalano was deeply committed to contemporary music and to the arts community in the San Francisco Bay Area and elsewhere up to his early death in San Francisco on May 27, 1998. In addition to his diverse musical activities, he held several posts in branch libraries in the University of California library system: Biosciences Library (head of serials processing), Astronomy/Mathematics/Statistics Library (operations manager), and Music Library (circulation supervisor). In this last position, he was leader in the Digital Music Network Project (which he dubbed “Musilan”), a system of delivering music listening assignments via the network, for which the team won a Distinguished Service Award in 1997. He was a composer, producer and performer of great versatility and extensive eclectic inspiration. He wrote music for the concert hall, the theater, film, and gallery spaces, using, among other instruments, piano, harpsichord, electronic drones and harmonics, sounds of the natural world, harmonic singing, the didjeridu, and an instrument he invented, the Spirit Stick, which was a bowed, one-string instrument with a little round ceramic drum that he electronically enhanced in performance with small contact microphones and played with a violin bow and chopsticks. Catalano repeatedly explored the relation to music of mathematics, geometry and astronomy, and incorporated into his compositions the cosmologies of ancient or distant cultures. He was drawn to large-scale time structures, the archaeological remains of ancient civilizations, the enduring natural world, extended geologic periods, and the nature of large bodies of water with their very slow currents in the deeps; perceptions of these he made available to the listener in site-specific meditative soundscapes or sonic environments, performances of eight or nine hours. Joe Catalano had also collaborated with his wife, poet and musician Wendy Jeanne Burch. The couple worked to establish a California chapter of the Pauline Oliveros Foundation, and on November 12, 2000 the Pauline Oliveros Foundation Bay Area (POFBA) was announced by Oliveros.
Scope and Content of Collection
Collection consists of research materials, subject files, compositions and projects, materials relating to the arts community and organizations, publicity materials, audiovisual materials and personal papers documenting Joe Catalano’s career. Series 1, Research and Study in Musicology, consists primarily of graduate study toward a Masters of Fine Arts degree. Series contains class assignments (1980-1981); class notebooks (1978-1985); card index of works, composers, librettists, and instruments; thesis materials (1982-1983); scores. Series 2, Research, Reflection, and Synthesis, consists of scientific and cultural background material; artistic and reflective pieces; personal papers; formal writings on music. It also contains subject files (mostly photocopies of printed material); personal notebooks, journals and sketchbooks (1985-1998); personal calendars, astrological, and poetic and literary material. Series 3, Works, consists of original compositions and music for
plays. Included: It’s In the Cards (1985-1987); Five Terrestrial Projections (1983-1990); Yesterday ForeTold (1985-1992); As Oceans Curve (1991-1995) and An Arc of Gathering (1996-1997); Pins & Noodles (1993-1998); Pauline Oliveros’ projects (1971-1996); High Tides New Music Festival (San Francisco Festival of New Music by Bay Area Composers); Intersection for the Arts; other projects and productions; teaching and speaking engagements. Series 4, The Arts Community, consists of material relating to professional associations, funding organizations, other assistance, and recording and performing copyright regulations and other practical issues. Series 5, Publicity, consists of advance announcements, performance programs and post-performance mentions and reviews including programs and flyers (1971-1997); news clippings and reviews (1960s-1997); and events programs for other performers (1979-1997). Series 6, Audiovisual Material, consists of music on diverse recording media. Series 7, Photographs, consists of family photos and snapshots of places and performance venues (1932-1996). Series 8, Correspondence, consists of Mail Art, which includes publications, announcements, events, reviews, and samples of others’ works. Series also contains miscellaneous correspondence from organizations and individuals (1986-1997). Series 9, Personal Material, consists of milestones, tributes and remembrances, including diplomas and degrees, recommendations, and memorabilia. Series 10, Oversize Materials, consists of scores; posters and flyers; artwork and initial sketches; vellum masters, paste-ups, and transparencies. Collection inventory available upon request.

**Indexing Terms**

Music--20th century.
Improvisation (Music)
Oliveros, Pauline, 1932-2016.
Intersection for the Arts.