Guide to the Blanche Thebom Collection ARS.0059

Finding aid prepared by Franz Kunst
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Archive of Recorded Sound
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Blanche Thebom Collection
Dates: 1934-2003
Collection number: ARS.0059
Creator: Thebom, Blanche
Collection size: 85 boxes
Contributing Institution: Archive of Recorded Sound
Abstract: The Blanche Thebom Collection has three major components. The first is scores, correspondence, publicity, production notes, and media from her post-Met career as teacher and director. Secondly, there are published and unpublished sound recordings of Thebom. Lastly, the collection also retains Thebom’s extensive archive of printed music.

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Access
Open for research; material must be requested at least two business days in advance of intended use. Contact the Archive for assistance.

Preferred Citation

Biography
Operatic mezzo-soprano Blanche Thebom was born in Monessen, Pennsylvania in 1915, and began her formal concert career in 1941. She was a member of the Metropolitan Opera through 1967, known for her roles in Wagnerian epics. During this period she also toured extensively, including being the first American to perform at the Bolshoi in Moscow. In 1967 she was appointed head of The Atlanta Opera Company in Atlanta, Georgia. Following that experience, Thebom taught at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. In 1980 she moved to San Francisco and directed an opera workshop at San Francisco State University, and founded the Opera Arts Training Program in 1988 in conjunction with the San Francisco Girls Chorus. Thebom passed away in March 2010 at the age of 94.

Scope and Contents
The bulk of the Blanche Thebom Collection contains scores, publicity, correspondence, notes, and media from her many years as a theatrical director. Included are business records and production materials from the Atlanta Opera Company, production materials from the operas and puppet shows she directed at the University of Arkansas - Little Rock, and some files from her stint teaching at San Francisco State University. The largest portion of this collection is devoted to Thebom's own printed music collection, intact and in the order she kept it. Outside of some ephemera from her many tours abroad, there is little material from her time performing with the Metropolitan Opera, nor is there much in the way of personal correspondence. Thebom also did not keep a diary, nor did she intend to write a memoir. However, the collection does hold many recordings from this era, including test pressings from her years recording for RCA (some with unissued takes), as well as almost 150 unique recordings on fragile instantaneous discs, several from the 1930’s.

Indexing Terms
Thebom, Blanche -- Archives
Atlanta Opera Company (Atlanta, Ga.).
University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
Mezzo-sopranos
Opera
Operas
Puppet theater

Productions
| Box 34 | **Aida 1967**  
Scope and Contents  
Verdi, Giuseppe, 1813-1901. Aïda. |
| Box 4, Box 5, Box 6 | **Alice 1976**  
Scope and Contents  
An adaptation of Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" for the stage by Thebom. |
| Box 2, Box 4, Box 5, Box 8 | **Amahl and The Night Visitors 1975**  
Scope and Contents  
Menotti, Gian Carlo, 1911-2007. Amahl and the night visitors |
| Box 13, Box 46 | **The Astar Experiment 1978**  
Scope and Contents  
Kirby, Lou Ann, 1948- Astar experiment |
| Box 33 | **Barber of Seville 1984**  
Scope and Contents  
| Box 3, Box 4 | **Bastien & Bastienne / Mozart Fete Galante 1970-1976**  
Scope and Contents  
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 1756-1791. Bastien und Bastienne |
| Box 4 | **La Bella Dormente**  
Scope and Contents  
Respighi, Ottorino, 1879-1936. Bella dormente nel bosco |
| Box 5, Box 8, Box 13 | **Beret & Per Hanson 1977-1978**  
Scope and Contents  
Opera written by a Mr. Hagen, performed at UALR. |
| Box 34 | **La Boheme**  
Scope and Contents  
| Box 5, Box 8, Box 9, Box 13 | **Calhoun's Christmas 1972-1980**  
Scope and Contents  
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<tr>
<th>Box Numbers</th>
<th>Production Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Scope and Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 13, Box 33</td>
<td><strong>The Consul 1974</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Menotti, Gian Carlo, 1911-2007. Consul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Box 4, Box 8, Box 14, Box 47</td>
<td><strong>Carmen Cabaret / Caravan 1971-1982</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bizet, Georges, 1838-1875. Carmen. Adapted as a condensed version by Thebom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Box 10, Box 11</td>
<td><strong>Childhood of Christ 1977</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Berlioz, Hector, 1803-1869. Enfance du Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5, Box 6, Box 10</td>
<td><strong>Cinderella 1979-1980</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rossini, Gioacchino, 1792-1868. Cenerentola (Cinderella). Thebom's final production at UALR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Box 17, Box 18, Box 33</td>
<td><strong>Cosi Fan Tutte 1975-1979</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 1756-1791. Così fan tutte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 15, Box 16</td>
<td><strong>The Devil And Daniel Webster 1975-1982</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benét, Stephen Vincent, 1898-1943. Devil and Daniel Webster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Box 4, Box 5, Box 8</td>
<td><strong>Don Quixote 1978</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Massenet, Jules, 1842-1912. Don Quichotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Box 16</td>
<td><strong>Holiday For Santa 1970</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thebom, Blanche. Holiday for Santa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 33, Box 34</td>
<td><strong>King Arthur 1968</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purcell, Henry, 1659-1695. King Arthur. Debut performance at Atlanta's Memorial Arts Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box/Box</td>
<td>Production/Title</td>
<td>Scope and Contents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 13, Box 16</td>
<td><strong>Les Mamelles de Tiresias 1974</strong></td>
<td>Poulenc, Francis, 1899-1963. Mamelles de Tirésias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 13</td>
<td><strong>The Telephone</strong></td>
<td>Menotti, Gian Carlo, 1911-2007. Telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td><strong>Master Pete's Puppet Show</strong></td>
<td>Falla, Manuel de, 1876-1946. Retablo de Maese Pedro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 42, Box 47</td>
<td><strong>Merry Wives of Windsor 1985</strong></td>
<td>Nicolai, Otto, 1810-1849. Lustigen Weiber von Windsor. Performed at San Francisco State.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Box 5, Box 8, Box 12</td>
<td><strong>The Old Maid And The Thief 1978</strong></td>
<td>Menotti, Gian Carlo, 1911-2007. Old maid and the thief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4, Box 8, Box 9</td>
<td><strong>Orfeo 1974</strong></td>
<td>Monteverdi, Claudio, 1567-1643. Orfeo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Box 5, Box 46</td>
<td><strong>Snowmaiden 1970</strong></td>
<td>Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolay, 1844-1908. Snegurochka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td><strong>La Vida Breve</strong></td>
<td>Falla, Manuel de, 1876-1946. Vida breve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Box 34, Box 47 | **Atlanta Opera Company / Atlanta Opera Council 1960-1972** | Physical Description: 2 boxes  
Scope and contents  
Clippings, contracts, correspondence, memoranda, photographs, press releases, production notes, programs, Box recordings of gala, etc. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Physical Description</th>
<th>Scope and Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30, 44, 45</td>
<td>Discs - Instantaneous</td>
<td>149 instantaneous disc(s)</td>
<td>One 7&quot; disc; three 10&quot; discs; one-hundred-and-forty-five 12&quot; discs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, 26</td>
<td>Discs - Commerially pressed shellac</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seventy 78 rpm discs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 33</td>
<td>Dubrovnick Summer Festival 1959</td>
<td>2 boxes</td>
<td>Program and other ephemera from a festival in Croatia at which Thebom performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Metropolitan Opera House demolition clippings 1966-1967</td>
<td>1 folder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42</td>
<td>Printed music collection circa 1934-2003</td>
<td>19 boxes</td>
<td>Published scores, libretti, sheet music, teaching guides, etc. Many signed or possibly notated by Thebom. Some are manuscripts and some are photocopies. There are folders grouped by subject such as &quot;Russian&quot;, &quot;Italian&quot;, &quot;German&quot;, &quot;Light English&quot; and &quot;Encore Material.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 33</td>
<td>Osaka International Festival 1961</td>
<td>2 boxes</td>
<td>Programs, scrapbook, and other ephemera from a festival in Japan at which Thebom performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Songs of Experience - Daniel Steven Crafts</td>
<td>1 score</td>
<td>Crafts, Daniel Steven. Songs of Experience. Includes short correspondence and a news clipping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18</td>
<td>University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) circa 1973-1980</td>
<td>11 boxes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 13</td>
<td>UALR galas 1969-1971</td>
<td>2 boxes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guide to the Blanche Thebom Collection ARS.0059
Box 25, Box 42

**Books circa 1934-2003**

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Scope and Contents

Books signed by or inscribed to Thebom. Some are signed by author. One book includes an essay ("Opera - Evolution or Revolution") by Thebom.

Box 25

**Printed opera programs (San Francisco, Santa Fe, Seattle, Metropolitan) 1963-1990**

Physical Description: 1 box

Box 1, Box 69, Box 70, Box 71, Box 74, Box 76, Box 77, Box 78, Box 79, Box 80, Box 81, Box 82, Box 83, Box 84, Box 85

**Programs, clippings, correspondence, and personal documents circa 1934-2003**

Physical Description: 15 boxes

Creator: Villec, Phyllis

Donor note

Much of this series was donated by Villec, Phyllis, in 2014.

Arrangement

This series has been boxed in the order it was received. Its contents are therefore mostly unorganized at present.

Sensitive material

This series has not been weeded for potentially sensitive items. Researchers viewing these materials will therefore be required to sign an agreement that they will not disclose or reproduce any sensitive information they might find.

Box 9, Box 16, Box 33, Box 46, Box 47

**Audiovisual material 1938-1996**

Physical Description: 6 boxes

Scope and Contents

Many unmarked or poorly marked, some with no Thebom content. Among the recordings: Antony and Cleopatra 1966; Manila 1959; Kolodin; Trigere; "phone negotiations"; Samson and Delilah; Queen of Spades; Regina; Thebom interview KKHI; Thebom interview 1993 (also transferred to DVD); Aida 1953; The Trojans in London; many reels of disc transfers (marked with Roman numerals).

Box 17

**Film circa 1934-2003**

Physical Description: 3 films

Scope and Contents

One 1" film in 5" can; two 1/2" films in 12" cans

Films are minimally marked. One says "In Brasil with Senador Church" on its can, another says "rehearsals" on its leader.

Box 72, Box 73, Box 74, Box 75

**Photographs and negatives circa 1934-2003**

Physical Description: 3 boxes

Creator: Villec, Phyllis

Donor note

Much of this series was donated by Villec, Phyllis, in 2014.