
Guide to the William Ames Collection ARS.0072

Finding aid prepared by Franz Kunst

Archive of Recorded Sound

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Descriptive Summary

Title: William Ames Collection

Dates: 1947-1966

Collection number: ARS.0072

Creator: Ames, William T.

Collection size: 1 box: 22 open reel tapes

Contributing Institution: Archive of Recorded Sound

Abstract: Tape recordings of works by composer William Ames.

Language of Material: English

Access

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

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Preferred Citation

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Sponsor

This finding aid was produced with generous financial support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Biography

American composer William Thayer Ames (1901-1987) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts and wrote his first compositions while attending Harvard in the early 1920s. After graduating with a degree in music, Ames studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and returned to the United States to teach at the Eastman School of Music. In 1940 Harvard awarded Ames a masters degree, and he lived for a time in New York. It was during this period that a program of his works was performed at Carnegie Hall. In 1954 Ames was appointed to the faculty at Cornell's dance department (pieces for dance and theater were almost as important to him as his chamber music, orchestral works and operas). Following spells in New Hampshire and New York, Ames retired to the peaceful setting of Mendocino, California in 1965, where he spent the rest of his life writing music.

Scope and Contents

The William Ames Collection consists of twenty-two tape reels of performances of Ames compositions, some with Ames' own involvement. Documentation of these performances is limited; all information from the tape boxes has been transcribed. Some performers are identified, including sopranos Barbara Troxell and Antonia Lavanne, tenor Earl Rogers, violinist Max Pollikoff and 'cellist George Finckl. Nine of the reels are professional transfers from instantaneous discs by Stone Sound Studio in Woodstock, New York. It is likely, however, that all reels are copies and that the originals exist elsewhere.

Related Collections

Special Collections at the Eastman School of Music holds the William Ames Collection, which contains the composer's papers, music and recordings.

1. Unnumbered reels

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|-------|---|
| Box 1 | Augurs: opera in one act for two sopranos and baritone. Ames on piano, with Suzy, Marilyn, Dino 1959
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Concerto for clarinet and orchestra ; Prologue for flute, horn and strings
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |

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| Box 1 | Improvisation
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Junk ; Summer Elegy
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tapefolders |
| Box 1 | Piece for flute and piano ; Trio for flute, violin and viola ; Improvisations for piano ; Piano-percussion sketches
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Quartet for oboe, violin, viola and 'cello ; Two movements for bassoon quartet
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Quest ; Mad woman of Chailot
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Sixth string quartet ; Piano quartet
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Sonata for violin and piano ; Composition for 10 instruments
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Songs: Earl Rogers, Antonia Lavanne
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Trio for flute, oboe and 'cello. Two performances: Carnegie Hall recital 1958, Town Hall 1964 1958-1964
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Trio for piano, violin and 'cello
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Trio for violin, viola and 'cello ; Waltz "Spring song"
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |

2. Numbered reels (disc transfers)

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| Box 1 | Reel 1. Tree of bane ; two preludes for piano (1948-05-01) ; Rhapsody for piano, American Festival (1952-02-18) ; The darkness rolls upward / Barbara Troxell 1948-1952
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Reel 3. Music for film, "Philip Evergood" ; The jester
Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Reel 4. Composition for modern dance 1-4 (same as reel 2 but other pressings)
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Reel 5. Movement for woodwind quintet ; Trio for violin, 'cello and piano 1956-1957
Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape |
| Box 1 | Reel 6. Composers Forum concert. Song group #1 ; Song group #2
Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape |

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| Box 1 | <p>Reel 7. Song cycle, "Pygmalion" (songs 1-6) 1946-03-24
Physical Description: 1 5" open reel tape</p> |
| Box 1 | <p>Reel 8. 1966 Bennington Composers Conference 1966
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape
Scope and Contents
Rigamarole - Among the gods - Bereft - Stopping by the woods - A blue butterfly day - A peck of gold - A minor bird / Earl Rogers, tenor ; Sketch for violin and piano / Max Pollikoff, violin ; 5 songs / Ethel Leuning</p> |
| Box 1 | <p>Reel 9. American Festival, etc. 1947-1958
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape
Scope and Contents
Patch of old snow - Meeting - Rapid and vansit - Now close the window - Star moss / Ethel Luening, soprano ; 1958 American Festival (1958-02-18): No city - Dream pang / Barbara Troxell ; 1947 American Festival WNYC (1947-02-21): Twilight - Winter apples - Sand paintings - Outwitted - Nocturne from suite for 'cello and piano ; 1952 American Festival (1952-02-18): Rhapsody for piano - The darkness rolls upward / Barbara Troxell ; No city ; Dream pang</p> |
| Box 1 | <p>Reel 10. Suite for 'cello and piano (Prelude, Nocturne, Scherzo, Epilogue) / George Finckel, cello
Physical Description: 1 7" open reel tape</p> |