Guide to the Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound Collection ARS.0104

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound Collection

Dates: 1946-1991

Dates: Bulk, 1972-1976

Collection number: ARS.0104

Collection size: 14 boxes: 265 open reel tapes (73 7" reels; 192 10.5" reels); 2 audiocassettes; 28 folders

Repository: Archive of Recorded Sound

Abstract: The Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound was a project begun by English Department graduate student Mike Stillman that sponsored readings by poets and novelists either in residence or visiting Stanford. These readings were professionally recorded, and a series of vinyl LPs were produced. The collection consists of original open reel tapes of these readings.

Language of Material: Multiple languages

Access

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

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation


Source

The Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound Collection was donated to the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound by Mike Stillman from 1980 to 2008.

Sponsor

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

Scope and Contents

Formed 1972 by Michael Stillman, then a graduate student in the English Department, the Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound aimed to create studio-quality recordings of readings by poets and novelists either in residence or visiting Stanford University. Many writers read their own work, some read the work of others. The tapes include commentary, introductions, and translations when necessary (some works were in Hebrew, French, Russian, German, Latin, and Swedish). The majority of readings are of poetry, fiction, and criticism. There are also plays, lectures and interviews, but the collection is not exclusively focused on literature (cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz speaks on thick description on one tape).

Most readings were at Stanford or at the Djerassi Foundation near Woodside, California, but almost all were in the San Francisco Bay Area, including recordings from the Foothill College Writers' Conference and the San Jose State University Contemporary American Poetry Festival. Yvor Winters, whose work is an inspiration and guide to much of the collection, is featured in a 1958 reading at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Winters and his wife Janet Lewis were also recorded by the Library of Congress in the 1940s, and copies of those readings are in the collection (the original discs are housed in the Archive of Recorded Sound's Transcription and Instantaneous Disc Collection). A few readings have been recorded from radio broadcasts (such as Winters on KPFA in 1953, Miriam Patchen reading Kenneth Patchen on KZSU in 1978), and there are a handful of home recordings as well.

The SPRS tapes were used in the production of six vinyl LPs. These albums, while not part of the SPRS collection, are in the Archive's general collection and are available for listening. All master tapes were intended to be permanently housed at the Archive of Recorded Sound. Stillman left for a career at IBM in 1976 and the project slowed down considerably. Most recordings date from this period. Although readings by writers-in-residence at the Foundation were recorded beginning in 1985, the Stillman/Djerassi partnership began formally with a document of understanding in 1987. The SPRS Collection contains tapes from Djerassi readings through 1991.

A few of the more familiar names in the collection: Saul Bellow, Robert Bly, John Cheever (also interviewed), Wanda Coleman, Robert Creeley, Carl Djerassi, Alex Haley, Seamus Heaney, John Irving, Michael McClure, Diane Middlebrook, N. Scott Momaday, Pablo Neruda, Ishmael Reed, Adrienne Rich, Alain Robbe-Grillet (lecture), Ntozake Shange, Gary Snyder,

**Arrangement**

Tapes were numbered consecutively prior to accession, although there are also many unnumbered reels. 1-138 are SPRS-sponsored recordings, 138-229 are Djerassi Foundation. Detailed notes concerning the recordings are held in the Archive in the form of an Annotated Discography of Literary Recordings, created in 1985 by Mike Stillman. The remainder of tapes are listed in a spreadsheet.

**Related Collections**

Stanford University Archives holds the Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound Collection, SC0888, which is likely a duplication of recordings at ARS. Likewise, the Djerassi Foundation retains copies of readings conducted there.

**Indexing Terms**

Stanford Program for Recordings in Sound.
Djerassi Foundation.
Authors, American--20th century.
Poets, American--20th century.

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**Recordings**

*Physical Description: 265 open reel tape(s); 2 audiocassettes*

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### Box 11
- **11. 219 - 229, unnumbered tapes**

### Box 12
- **12. Unnumbered tapes**

### Box 14
- **13. Unnumbered tapes**

### Box 13
#### Files
- Physical Description: 28.0 folder(s)

1. Binder of correspondence, memoranda, and liner note drafts
2. Financial documents, discography drafts, donation records, Yvor Winters notes and background
4. Recording service information packets
5. Archive brochures, outreach/networking correspondence
6. NARAS, Grammy forms and correspondence (Stillman was chairman of the Craft Committee) 1975
7. Misc. correspondence (including Janet Lewis) 1985-1987
8. Correspondence and memoranda re: copyright
9. Misc. correspondence and memoranda, including original project proposal 1972-1984
10. Sales and financial documents 1984-1990
11. University of California Extension Media Center correspondence and brochures
12. Revox tape recorder, Sony ECM-22P microphone, magnetic tape suppliers information
13. Accounting, advertising, etc. 1972-1977
14. Information and correspondence: Custom Fidelity; Award Record Manufacturing; Library of Congress; ARSC; NEA; Yale University/Barbara Eick (later Sawka); S.F. State Poetry Center (many handbills); Black Box literary magazine
15. Stanford legal department correspondence and memoranda