

Guide to the Sandor Salgo Papers SC0870

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Biographical / Historical

Professor emeritus of Music, Sandor Salgo conducted the Marin Symphony for 33 years (1956-1989), the Carmel Bach Festival for 35 years (1956-1991), the San Jose Symphony for 19 years (1951-1970), and the Modesto Symphony for nine years (1951-1970). For 24 years during that period, as professor of music at Stanford University, he conducted its symphony and opera program (1949-1974).

With the Marin Symphony, at Carmel and Stanford, he introduced more works to the Bay Area than any other conductor. These included in Marin the first West Coast performance of Britten's War Requiem, Honegger's Jeanne d'arc au bûcher, Dutilleux, Frank Martin, Szymanowski's and Milhaud's Second Violin Concertos, and Virgil Thomson's Mother of Us All.

He developed the Carmel Bach Festival from a local event into a nationally recognized celebration of Bach's music, with three weeks of concerts and recitals, and performances of the cantatas and of one of the Passions or the B Minor Mass each year. Often an opera was featured, with memorable performances of Beethoven's Fidelio, Monteverdi's Orfeo, and Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, Il Clemenza di Tito, Magic Flute, and Don Giovanni. Performing an extraordinary span of the Baroque repertory and works from the Classical period, he pursued a middle road between the romantic and modern sensibility and the viewpoint of early music revivalists.

Sandor Salgo was raised in Budapest, Hungary, where he graduated from the Liszt Academy in 1928, after which he studied music in Berlin with the great violin master Carl Flesch and in Dresden with the distinguished conductor Fritz Busch. The conducting teacher to whom he said he owed the most was George Szell, whom he studied with much later, in Princeton in the 1940s. In the 1930s, he played in several orchestras, including the Budapest Opera, where he played under Dohnányi, Richard Strauss, Erich Kleiber, Bruno Walter, and Hans Knappertsbusch, and, for three weeks, at Bayreuth under Toscanini. While Salgo returned to Europe later in his life, he refused ever to visit Hungary or even speak Hungarian, because of the repressive government during his youth, the anti-Semitism, and in the Nazi years, the holocaust.

Sandor Salgo began his professional career as a violinist with the Roth String Quartet. In 1937, he came to the United States for the first time on a tour with the Quartet. Two years later, he was offered a job teaching music at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, where he stayed 10 years, and met and married his wife, Priscilla. In Princeton, after attending one of Salgo's orchestra concerts in 1942, Albert Einstein expressed his written appreciation, "Mr. Sandor Salgo is a musician of high standing. The concert he gave ... has made a deep impression on me." Later, the two met to play violin duets by Vivaldi. Salgo recalled that Einstein was not a very good violinist, and that once, one of the musicians in a string quartet with which he was playing shouted at him, "What's the matter with you, Albert? Can't you count?"

After three years of wartime service as a musician in the U.S. Army, he joined the Stanford University faculty and conducted the orchestra in an increasingly adventurous repertory that included works of Bartók, Kodaly, Copland, Dutilleux,

Sessions, Carter, and Berg. Milhaud's Stanford Serenade was dedicated to the distinguished Los Angeles oboist Donald Leake, who had played at the Carmel Festival, as well as to Salgo and the Stanford Orchestra, who together gave its premiere in 1970. Salgo conducted the Stanford Opera in major company repertory that included Verdi's Falstaff and the West Coast premieres of Stravinsky's Rake's Progress and Prokofiev's Love for Three Oranges, as well as operas by Mozart, Gluck, Dvorák, Poulenc, Foss, Moore, and Dallapiccola. He "discovered" Jess Thomas, then a graduate student there, and gave the tenor his first roles.

The courses he taught were popular, in particular his Beethoven course, which he gave for some 10 years. One year it had the second-highest enrollment of any course at Stanford, second, he recalled with much amusement, to a course in sexual behavior. The impact of his teaching was once attributed to "a combination of his courtly, European manner and the force of his scholarship and knowledge" and a "gentle, down-to-earth quality to his lectures, which are designed to help listeners make more sense of classical music." "The only way to understand music is to see how it is put together," he said. "It is what is behind those notes. It is the poetry of it." One of his more celebrated students, the late Denis de Coteau, former music director of the San Francisco Ballet, who received the DMA degree under Salgo in 1964, recalled, "When I went to work with him at his home, I didn't feel like I was a student. I felt like a friend. He has a humanness about him."

Following retirement in 1974, he continued to give lectures on the campus and for alumni, and wrote a book, Thomas Jefferson, Musician and Violinist, in 2000. It was Jefferson, and specifically the Declaration of Independence, that he devoured as a 16-year-old and who inspired his earliest dreams of America. Awards he received included the Dinkelspiel Award for Outstanding Service to Undergraduate Students and the French government's Chevalier des arts et lettres.

Salgo was perfectly suited to the role he was to play, not only in musical gifts, training, and experience, but also in temperament and style, which was gracious and patiently insistent — ideal for dealing with the range of musicians he faced here and the patrons. As one of his leading former students, Mark Volkert, assistant concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony, was quoted as saying in Salgo's oral history about his B Minor Mass performances, "No one captures the drama of the piece like Mr. Salgo. He's always scholarly, never mannered, and he captures the emotions just precisely. ... It was a romantic style, but beyond that there were the emotions that were lacking in what is called the authentic style." As an interpreter above all, Salgo devoted himself to making the expressive or spiritual message utterly clear and involving.

He died Jan 20, 2007. He was survived by his wife of 63 years, Priscilla, a daughter, Debra Danove, and grandsons Daniel and Michael, of Chicago.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Orchestral music, Arranged

Musical performances

Music -- Study and teaching

Papers Accession ARCH-2007-151


box 1	Photographs of Sandor Salgo 1960s
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box 4, folder 47	Carmel, clippings 1991
box 4, folder 48	Carmel, clippings 1996-97
box 5	Files (about half is clippings of reviews of performances in Marin, Modesto, San Jose, Stanford, etc., 1957-88; rest is programs from Carmel Bach Festival, 1965-92)
box 6	Files (includes programs and a few other items from Marin Symphony, Modesto Symphony, San Jose Symphony, and Stanford concerts; miscellaneous correspondence; research on T. Jefferson; correspondence with Darius Milhaud, 1965-72)
box 7	Binders and bound objects
box 8	Loose papers; programs and ephemera from several orchestras and from other miscellaneous performances
box 9	Assorted papers, one binder, correspondence (mostly still in envelopes), card file index, button "I Go for Salgo"
box 10	Letter from Albert Einstein; packet of travel materials (mostly newsprint); assorted papers (possibly some certificates); Album "The Salgo Years Marin Symphony 1956-1989" [mostly programs]; binder of notes and registrations for Salgo Lectures 1996; photo album Music of Beethoven in Honor of Founders' Day 1974; album "Johann Sebastian Bach Golden Chair to honor Maestro Sandor and Priscilla Salgo Carmel Bach Festival" [list of names 1992]
box 11	Assorted papers (programs, correspondence, clippings, etc.); 2 books: vocal score to Puccini's La Boheme and Henry N. Switten's Living Musical Theory, First Volume (1943 - self-published course book, inscribed to Salgo); Modesto Symphony Orchestra programs 1976-1987
box 12	Marin Symphony programs 1969-1988; Marin Symphony Guild programs 1957-69; Carmel Bach Festival Programs 1954-1991; framed item "Priscilla" [1991 printed piece on her name]
box 13	Assorted programs, publicity (including a small amount of newsprint), and other papers 1940-; 1 reel of audiotape: Side I Jean Gilles "Te Deum", Side II Jean Gilles "Requiem" copied from a record

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- box 14 **Assorted files, programs, and loose papers; Notebook on orchestration; album of congratulatory letters re Marin Symphony; small notebook "Love Notes to Maestro Salgo"; notes on Bach, Samuel Barber, and other topics not clearly noted**
- box 16 **photos from Bach Festival; hand-made portfolio "Maggie & Jiggs 1971" containing music for a skit about behind-the-scenes at the Carmel Bach Festival; and drawing of a costume [flat box]**
- box 17 **Plaques:**
- box 17 **San Jose Symphony Orchestra in recognition...**
- box 17 **CA State Assembly in appreciation...music conductor of the Modesto Symphony May 1986**
- box 17 **Association of CA Symphony Orchestras, in honor of contributions to classical music...August 12, 2000**
- box 17 **Carmel-by-the-Sea City Council in appreciation August 1991**
- box 17 **Modesto Symphony Guild...May 12, 1988**
- box 17 **CA State University, Stanislaus, in appreciation...September 1986**
- box 17 **Framed poem written for ACSO luncheon in honor of Salgo, August 12, 2000**
- box 17 **Ceremonial key to the City of Modesto**
- box 18 **Annotated books from Salgo's library (on Bach):**
- box 18 **Adrich, Putnam. Ornamentation in J. S. Bach's Organ Works**
- box 18 **Bach, the Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute. Spring 1990, Spring-Summer 1991**
- box 18 **Bach-Händel-Schütz-Ehrung der DDR 1985 : V. Internationales Bachfest in Verbindung mit dem 60. Bachfest der Neuen Bachgesellschaft, Leipzig, 19. bis 27. März 1985**
- box 18 **Bachforschung und Bachinterpretation heute : Wissenschaftler und Praktiker im Dialog : Bericht über das Bachfest-Symposium 1978 der Philipps-Universität Marburg**
- box 18 **Boult, Adrian Cedric. The St. Matthew Passion; its preparation and performance**
- box 18 **Chailley, Jacques. Les passions de J.-S. Bach**
- box 18 **David, Hans Theodore. J. S. Bach's Musical Offering**
- box 18 **Durr, Alfred. De Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach. Band 1, Band 2**
- box 18 **Durr, Alfred. Performance Practice of Bach's Cantatas. American Choral Review**
- box 18 **Geiringer, Karl. Johann Sebastian Bach, the Culmination of an Era**
- box 18 **Geiringer, Karl. Symbolism in the Music of Bach**
- box 18 **Gerber, Rudolf. Bachs Brandenburgische Konzerte**
- box 18 **Marshall, Robert L. The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach**
- box 18 **Mellers, Wilfrid. Bach and the Dance of God**
- box 18 **Reinhart, Walther. Die Aufführung der Johannes-Passion von J. S. Bach**
- box 18 **Riemenschneider, Albert. The use of the Flutes in the Works of J. S. Bach**
- box 18 **Schrade, Leo. Bach, the conflict between the sacred and the secular.**
- box 18 **Schwendowius, Barbara, ed. Johann Sebastian Bach: Life, Times, Influence**
- box 18 **Terry, Charles Sanford. Bach, the passions. Book I and Book II**
- box 18 **Whittaker, W. Gillies. The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach, Vol. I and II**
- box 18 **Wolff, Christoph. Bach, Essays on His Life and Music**
- box 19 **Annotated books from Salgo's library (on Beethoven, Berlioz, Haydn, Handel, Rameau):**
- box 19 **Bairstow, Handel's Oratorio "The Messiah"**
- box 19 **Beethoven : Fidelio**
- box 19 **Burnham, Scott. Beethoven Hero**
- box 19 **Holoman, D. Kern. Berlioz**
- box 19 **Hughes, Rosemary. Haydn String Quartets**
- box 19 **Kerman, Joseph. The Beethoven Quartets**
- box 19 **Kinderman, William. Beethoven**
- box 19 **Larsen, Jens Peter. Handel's Messiah**
- box 19 **Larsen, Jens Peter. Handel Studies**
- box 19 **Mellers, Wilfrid. Beethoven and the Voice of God**
- box 19 **Pischner, Hans. Die Harmonielehre Jean-Philippe Rameaus**
- box 19 **Tovey, Donald Francis. Beethoven**
- box 19 **Tyson, Alan, ed. Beethoven Studies**
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- box 19 **Weingartner, Don Felix. Ratschlage dur Auffhrungen der Symphonien Beethovens**
box 20 **Annotated books from Salgo's library (on Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Dutilleux, conducting):**
- box 20 **Bamberger, Carl, ed. The Conductor's Art**
box 20 **Berlioz, Hector. The Orchestral Conductor**
box 20 **Blom, Eric. Tchaikovsky Orchestral works**
box 20 **Braunbehrens, Volkmar. Mozart in Vienna 1781-1791**
box 20 **Dent, Edward J. Mozart's Operas**
box 20 **Einstein, Alfred. Mozart, his character and work**
box 20 **Girdlestone, Cuthbert. Mozart and His Piano Concertos**
box 20 **Jacob, Gordon. Orchestral Technique**
box 20 **Rimsky-Korsakow, Nicolas. Principles of Orchestration**
box 20 **Lang, Paul Henry, ed. The Creative World of Mozart**
box 20 **Lang, Paul Henry, ed. Stravinsky, a new appraisal of his work**
box 20 **Prout, Ebenzer. The Orchestra, Volume II Orchestral Combination**
box 20 **Rudolf, Max. The Grammar of Conducting**
box 20 **Zodiaque, January 1893 (issue on Henri Dutilleux)**
- box 21 **Annotated books from Salgo's library (on music appreciation, music history, etc.):**
box 21 **Bagar, Robert. The Concert Companion, a comprehensive guide to symphonic music**
box 21 **Blume, Friedrich. Classic and Romantic Music, a comprehensive survey**
box 21 **Boyden, David D. The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761**
box 21 **Bukofzer, Manfred F. Music in the Baroque Era from Monteverdi to Bach**
box 21 **Busch, Fritz. Aus dem leben eines Musikers**
box 21 **Busoni, Ferruccio. Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music**
box 21 **Cannon, Beekman C., et. al. The Art of Music**
box 21 **Copland, Aaron. What to Listen for in Music**
- box 22 **Annotated books from Salgo's library (on music appreciation, music history, etc.):**
box 22 **Daniels, David. Orchestral Music, a Source Book**
box 22 **Dart, Thurston. The Interpretation of Music**
box 22 **Decker, Harold A., ed. Choral Conducting, A Symposium**
box 22 **Donington, Robert. The Interpretation of Early Music**
box 22 **Drinker Library of Choral Music [a catalogue and an article on]**
box 22 **Einstein, Alfred. A Short History of Music**
box 22 **Einstein, Alfred. Music in the Romantic Era**
box 22 **Ford, Newell F. Peter Quince's Orchestra**
box 22 **Grout, Donald Jay. A History of Western Music**
box 22 **Hermann Fretzschmar. Dem Behrunder Moderner Hermeneutik**
box 22 **Haggin, B. H. The Toscanini Musicians Knew**
box 22 **Hindemith, Paul. A Concentrated Course in Traditional Harmony**
box 22 **Hofstadter, Douglas R. Godel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid**
box 22 **Banner - Maestro Sandor Salgo, In Honor of His 35th Carmel Bach Festival 1990**

Audio Recordings Accession ARCH-2010-025

- box 1 **Rehearsals and performances; list and survey notes inside each box 1974-1998**
Physical Description: 132 audiocassette(s)
- box 1 **Marin Symphony 1980 Jan 24**
General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Stanford Symphony Orchestra 1972, 1974**
General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Rhythmicana 1971 Dec 3 **
General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Marin Symphony Feb. 5, 1967**
General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
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- box 2 **Andrew Imbrie**
 General Physical Description note: 3 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Peter and the Wolf (no narration)**
 General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Fairy Queen**
 General Physical Description note: 2 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Choral piece with orchestra**
 General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Gabrieli, G. Canzon per sonar noni toni**
 General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)
- box 2 **Marin Symphony Orchestra Feb. 11, 1968**
 General Physical Description note: 1 audiotape(s) (reel-to-reel)

Additional Papers Accession ARCH-2017-307

- Box 1, Folder 1 **Salgo Additions - Glazounow Concerto for Violin and Piano**