Finding Aid

Edmund R. Cooke Collection

Descriptive Summary

Title
Edmund R. Cooke Collection

Extent
Number of containers: 7 boxes
Linear feet: 0.25 lin. ft.

Repository
Archives and Special Collections
Friedheim Music Library
Peabody Institute

Location
Archives stacks, second floor of the Friedheim Music Library

Processed by
Unknown (n.d.)
Updated July 2009, May 2015
Last Updated by
Jennifer Ottervik (May 10, 2015)

Administrative Information

Accession Number
1995.20

Provenance
Gift of Al and Anne Cooke

Access
Materials in the Edmund R. Cooke Collection are available for use by appointment, Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm. Please telephone 410-234-4587 or e-mail for further assistance.

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Biography
Edmund R. Cooke (1900 – 1966) was conductor, composer, violinist, violist, and member of the Baltimore Symphony from 1917 until 1965. He served as the orchestra's Principal Violinist, Personnel Manager, Tour Manager, Librarian, and Assistant Manager, and played under eight of its conductors, from Strube to Adler.

A scholarship student at the Conservatory, he studied violin with Theodore Hemberger and harmony and composition with Gustav Strube and Howard Thatcher. At the age of sixteen, he became a member of the Baltimore Symphony a year after the orchestra's founding, eventually becoming principal violinist. A versatile musician, he often doubled on piano, celesta, and percussion. In 1934, he conducted his own symphonic poem, *Ariadne*, and in 1952, the orchestra again performed another of his symphonic poems, *Nebula*. As tour manager, he booked all of the orchestra's out-of-town concerts. Cooke was centrally involved in the bitter strike that led to the orchestra's collapse in 1942 and with the revival of the Baltimore Symphony led by Reginald Stewart.

In the 1920s, Cooke played first violin in the WBAL String Quartet. He was later engaged as arranger for the station's orchestras and ensembles. Cooke, who played violin and viola with equal facility, made regular appearances on WBAL as soloist with the station's orchestra and had his own compositions played over the airwaves.

In the early 1930s, he performed with the Baltimore Civic Orchestra. Under Cooke's direction, the orchestra premiered his tone poem, *American Youth*. He founded the Chamber Music Guild in 1936 and conducted its orchestra. In April 1936, he directed the Guild in a performance with pianist Shura Cherkassky.

Beginning in 1959, Cooke conducted a 40-piece orchestra made up of Baltimore Symphony players that performed during the summer at the Mondawmin shopping mall. The "Starlight" series, sponsored by the National Brewing Company, the Mondawmin Merchants, and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 40, attracted 20,000 people. Appearing with the orchestra during its inaugural series were baritones Frank Whitmore and James Smith, sopranos Phyllis Frankel, Gladys Callahan, Joan Panetti, and Elaine Scott, tenor Elwood Gary, violinist Wallace Toroni, and conductors Richard Bales and Herbert Grossman. George R. Woodhead directed the Mondawmin Chorus. The Chorus of the Chesapeake and the Catholic Art Chorus also performed with the orchestra.

Cooke later appeared as guest conductor at the Watergate concerts in Washington and with the North Carolina Symphony. Several of his symphonic works were broadcast by the NBC radio network, and include *Panorama: A Musical Topography of Maryland*, a musical journey from the towering Alleghenies and the Blue Ridge Mountains, through Baltimore to the Chesapeake Bay and the Eastern Shore.

Cooke lived in Catonsville with his wife, Ida, their son, Alexander, and their daughter, Jean. He remained with the Baltimore Symphony until his health began to fail. He retired in January 1965 after more than 44 years with the orchestra. He died the following year, on May 1, 1966.

*Unknown author; revised May 2015 by Jennifer Ottervik*
Scope and Content

The papers contain correspondence from radio fans and with publishers and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from 1921 to 1966. A scrapbook documents Cooke's career as a conductor, composer, and violinist from 1921 to 1937. Programs and clippings document musical performances in and around Baltimore from 1915 to 1965 with the Chamber Music Guild, Baltimore's Civic and Symphony Orchestras, Mondawmin Starlight Concerts, the Paint and Powder Club, the Women's String Symphony, and the Maryland Symphony Orchestra. Of special interest is the documentation on the worsening relations between the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's manager, Frederick Huber, and the players that led to the orchestra's collapse in 1942.

The collection also contains music composed by Cooke for symphony orchestra, small ensembles, and solo instruments, including a small group of songs and arrangements for radio performance and a single work, Wiegenlied, by Cooke's teacher, Theodore Hemberger.

Container List

Box 1

- Picture postcard of Theo Hemberger
- B&O Railroad Relief Department certificate
- Awards/Honors 1964-1966
- Contracts 1946
- Correspondence 0 1922-1946
- Lectures n.d.
- Lecture: Evolution of Music
- Notes
- Misc. Clippings
- Clippings - Obituaries
- Radio - clippings
- Photographs
- Scrapbook 1921-1937 (preservation copy)

Box 2

- Baltimore Civic Ballet - Clippings - 1937
- Baltimore Civic Orchestra - 1931
- Baltimore Civic Opera - Clippings - 1944
- Programs - 1915-1953
- Chamber Music Guild - Clippings
- Chamber Music Guild - Programs - 1936
- Little Symphony - Programs - 1959
- Maryland Symphony Orchestra - clippings/releases
- Maryland Symphony Orchestra - programs - c. 1939
- Maryland Symphony Orchestra - correspondence - 1939-1945
- Mondawmin Starlight Concerts - clippings
- Mondawmin Starlight Concerts - photographs
Mondawmin Starlight Concerts - programs c. 1959
Paint and Powder Club - clippings - c. 1935
Peabody Conservatory - programs - 1938
Radio
Richmond Symphony - clippings - 1935
Richmond Symphony - programs - 19035-1936
Women's String Symphony

Box 3

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Season Announcements c. 1942
Clippings
Clippings: Janssen Resignation/Barlow appointment c. 1938
Baltimore Symphony/Huber Dispute 1937-1942
Correspondence: BSO Negotiations 1938-1939
Correspondence: BSO/Werner Janssen 1938-1939
Correspondence: Nebula Premier 1952
Correspondence: BSO members 1960s
Correspondence: Cooke retirement 1964-1965
Programs - 1965
BSO Overture - Cooke Tribute February 1965
Clippings: Cooke resignation 1965
BSO clippings (originals - Janssen resignation/Barlow appt.)
Programs: Cooke article - 1948
BSO Players payment sheets
Programs (autographed) - Jan. 1943
Programs: Nebula premier - March 1952
Programs - 1953
Programs: "Pops" Edmund Cooke, cond. 1962
Pressbook: 50th Anniversary - 1964-1965

Box 4: Music Manuscripts

Ariadne - (score)
Ariadne - (parts)
Midtown arr. for concert band. - (parts)
Overture - written for Paint and Power Club (parts)
Night - tone poem for orchestra (score)
Piano Quintet - (score and parts)
Poetic Fantasy - (piano reduction)
Poetic Fantasy - for male chorus and orchestra - (parts - masters)
Poetic Fantasy - for male chorus and orchestra - (score - master)
Panorama - A musical topography of Maryland. Its diversity of landscape. Mountains, a modern metropolis and pastoral scene. (score and parts - master)
Midtown - concert band arr. (score and parts)
Box 5: Music Manuscripts and Songs

Music Manuscripts:

Metropolitan Suite (parts - masters)
String Quartet (score)
Quartet in F Minor (score)
Concerto for Cello (masters)
Concerto for Viola and Piano
Claire de Lune - arrangement for violin, cello and piano
Industrial District - for two pianos
Industrial District (score)
Reminiscence - for strings and piano (score and parts
Midtown (score - master)
Midtown - for brass band. From Metropolitan Sketches (parts)
Pastorale - (parts)

Songs:

The Call of the Woods
The Call of Romance
Democratic Party Song
Food for My Heart lyrics by Ken Williams [for radio performance over WFBR]
Once in a Lifetime - (orchestral parts) [probably written for radio performance]
Love Comes Once in a Lifetime by Edmund Cooke and Jos. Imbrogulio. Lyrics by C. B. Alexander. vocal solo with orchestral accompaniment (score and parts)
Wiegenlied (aus Hasemann's Töchter) by Theo. Hemberger 4 Mai 1908
A Stroll Through the Meadow Solo (instrumental) - piano

Box 6: Oversize

Nebula (score - master)
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (score - master)
Panorama (parts - masters)
Panorama (score - master)
Panorama (parts)
Panorama (score)
Symphonic Synopsis from Roberta (parts - master)
Symphonic Synopsis from Roberta (score)

Box 7

Originals of clippings
Original scrapbook pages