ARTISS DE VOLT COLLECTION

RUTH T. WATANABE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
SIBLEY MUSIC LIBRARY
EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Description of the Collection . . . . . . . . . 3
Description of Series . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 6

INVENTORY

Series 1: Unbound Imprints and Manuscripts. . . . . . . . . . . . 8
Series 2: Binder’s Collection. . . . . . . . . . . . . 15
Series 3: Scrapbooks and other press items . . . . . . . . . . . 16
Series 4: Documents . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 17
Series 5: Photographs. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 18
Series 6: Correspondence . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 18
DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Shelf location: M3B 3,5

Extent: 3 linear feet

Biographical Sketch

Harpist, author, and pedagogue Artiss de Volt was born on March 5th, 1907 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She moved with her mother and sister to Boston in 1916; the following year she began her studies under the renowned harpist Alfred Holý (1866-1948), who was at that time first harpist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Miss de Volt was enrolled at New England Conservatory and, following her graduation, performed on tour with her sister, a violinist who had graduated from the Longy School of Music. After Alfred Holý retired and returned to Vienna, Miss de Volt followed him there to continue her studies under him. She stayed in Vienna until the worsening political climate obliged her to return home; she remained in contact with her teacher and mentor until his passing in 1948. In 1951 Miss de Volt married Robert M. Zacharias, and in the following year the couple settled on Sea Island, Georgia. (Miss de Volt would later write affectionately of her home on Sea Island in the summer, 1975 issue of the American Harp Journal.) There on Sea Island she founded a harp ensemble that performed extensively in South Georgia and North Florida. In the Southeast she fostered a community of harpists to whom she was teacher and mentor until her death on August 28th, 2000.

In the course of her active teaching career, Miss de Volt served on the faculties of the Mozarteum (Salzburg), New England Conservatory, Boston University, and Jacksonville University (Florida). Throughout her professional life she strove to further the legacy of Alfred Holý, and became a leading exponent of his teaching methods in both Europe and North America. She also edited Holý’s memoirs for publication; the book was published in 1985 by Lyra Music Co. (New York).

Alfred Holý, harpist and composer of Czech origin, was born on August 5th, 1866 in Oporto, Portugal, where his father was serving as Director of the Conservatory and Kapellmeister. The young Holý was educated at Prague Conservatory, where he studied harp under Alois Staněk, and from which he graduated with honors in 1885. Thereafter he held several appointments as first harpist: with the Prague German Opera under Karl Muck (1885-96); with the Berlin State Opera (1896-1903), again under Karl Muck; and with the Vienna Court Opera (1903-1913). He played under conductors Bruno Walter, Richard Strauss, Felix Weingartner, and Gustav Mahler; it was the latter who had engaged him for the Vienna Court Opera. During his decade in Vienna he toured Europe giving solo recitals, and also played at the Bayreuth Festivals. In 1913 he was appointed first harpist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, serving in that capacity until 1928. During his Boston tenure he performed as soloist with the BSO and with the Boston Pops on numerous occasions; he also performed solo recitals throughout New England. His appointment to the faculty of New England Conservatory engendered a new and keen interest in the harp in that region. In 1928 he
retired from both the BSO and NEC and returned to Vienna to be close to his family once more; there Holý continued to teach and compose. Along with so many of his countrymen, Holý suffered tremendous personal hardship in the wake of the Anschluss and resulting Nazi occupation of Austria, the calamities of World War II, and the war’s aftermath that was marked by extreme privations. Impoverished and malnourished, he died in Vienna on May 8th, 1948.

Altogether, Holý composed some forty works for the harp, together with pedagogical studies and works for small ensemble. In addition, he prepared two books of studies from the harp parts in Richard Strauss’ orchestral works, which Strauss himself had commissioned of Holý, and which were published as the *Orchesterstudien aus den symphonischen Werken für Harfe* (C. F. Peters, 1910). Many of Holý’s works were rendered permanently out-of-print when his publisher’s stock was destroyed during Allied bombing raids in the later years of World War II.

**Provenance**

The collection represents the amalgamation of two bodies of material that were received separately. The first (accounting for the contents of boxes 1-4) was acquired in September, 2001 from the executors of the Estate of Artiss de Volt, and was delivered to the Eastman School of Music by Mr. Victor Roman, husband of harpist Mary Brigid Roman, who had studied under Miss de Volt. The second (accounting for the contents of boxes 5-8) was received through the agency of Mrs. Roman in June, 2016. The bulk of the collection holdings were once the property of Alfred Holý, but the occasion(s) of transmittal of documents (apart from the items of correspondence) to Miss de Volt has not been established with certainty.

**Scope and Content**

The scope and significance of this collection greatly transcend the collection’s physical extent. The documents attest to the professional relationship of a mentor and his student; to the life and career of a prominent European performing artist of a now-bygone era that was extinguished by World War II; and finally, in the collection’s survival and transmittal, to a pupil’s devotion to her mentor as embodied in her lifelong efforts to promote his legacy.

The collection contains numerous musical imprints and several manuscripts from the library of Artiss de Volt, some of which may have been owned by Alfred Holý. The scrapbooks, documents, photographs, and correspondence all reflect the illustrious career of Alfred Holý as an orchestral harpist and solo performer. With respect to the history of the harp as a solo performance instrument, perhaps the single most remarkable item in the collection is the scrapbook (box 4) that was maintained by Alfred Holý, preserving many, many press items on matters harpistic that were published in German, English, French, and Czech newspapers between 1866 and 1937. (A microfilm of the scrapbook was placed in the American Harp Society Repository, as reported by Mark Palkovic in the winter, 1981 issue of the *American Harp Journal*. )
Restrictions on Use

There are no restrictions on use of the collection. Requests for reproductions will be granted in compliance with the provisions of the U.S. Copyright Law and its revisions, together with consideration of the physical condition of any given item.

Associations

The Artiss de Volt Collection is one of a number of collections of harp music and other harp-related holdings within the Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections. Other collections in that number are the Gullo Harp Collection, the Henry B. Neejer Collection, the Lucille Johnson Rosenbloom Collection, the Eileen Malone Collection, and the Jane B. Weidensaul Collection. In addition, the Artiss de Volt Collection joins the department’s growing corps of performers’ libraries, others in that number being the collections of mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani; organists Michael Farris, Mario Salvador, and Rolande Falcinelli; and violinists John Celentano and Zvi Zeitlin.
DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

Series 1: Unbound Imprints and Manuscripts

This series contains nearly 120 works for the harp—original compositions as well as arrangements or transcriptions of works composed for other instruments. In addition to études and concert pieces for solo harp, the holdings include chamber works for multiple harps, for harp with strings, and for harp with wind instruments. Concert works for harp with orchestra, here represented by piano reduction editions, are also present.

Series 2: Binder’s Collection

This series contains one volume, comprised of eighteen separate music imprints and manuscripts that were bound together.

Series 3: Scrapbooks and other Press Items

One file of loose press items and three scrapbooks are present. Two scrapbooks contain, for the most part, concert reviews, including reviews of Mr. Holý’s own performances. The third, more extensive scrapbook that is housed in Box 4 is a compendium of press items published between 1881 and 1937 in the press of several European countries, appearing in the German, English, French, and Czech languages, and embracing all aspects of the harp. The entries include articles, concert programs, reviews, short biographies, obituaries, newspaper clippings, photographs, brochures, cartoons, and artwork depicting the harp. Further, the scrapbook constitutes a lexicon of many prominent harpists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was this scrapbook that Artiss de Volt described in her warmly written profile of Alfred Holý in the fall, 1962 issue of Harp News, in which she wrote of having receiving the scrapbook from the Holý family while visiting Europe in 1949.

Series 4: Documents

This series contains numerous documents of professional relevance and Holý family background. The professional documents include printed programs from recital performances by Alfred Holý, and also numerous documents recording financial transactions. Personal documents include Alfred Holý’s last will and testament. Genealogical information on the Holý family, including its heraldry, is also present. This series also includes Miss de Volt’s own typescript notes about her mentor. Finally, drafts of the Alfred Holý Memoirs, later published in an edition prepared by Miss de Volt, are present.

Series 5: Photographs

The collection provides a varied and rich selection of photographs of Alfred Holý taken during his professional life, including during his years as a member of the Boston
Symphony Orchestra. Other photographs depict members of the Holý family, and also other musicians.

Series 6: Correspondence

At the heart of this series is the correspondence between Alfred Holý and his pupil Artiss de Volt: altogether, some 122 letters that he wrote to her, from the 1920s until near the end of his life in the 1940s, are present. In addition, this series contains letters sent to Miss de Volt from other members of the Holý family. Significantly, this series also includes facsimiles of letters to Alfred Holý from three of the orchestral conductors under whose baton he performed: Karl Muck, Bruno Walter, and Gustav Mahler.
INVENTORY

Series 1: Unbound Imprints and Manuscripts

Box 1


folder 25  Hoffmann, Ernst Theodor Amadeus.  *Quintett in c-moll for harp and string quartet.*  In manuscript.

folder 26  Hostushki.  *Nocturne.*  1952.  In manuscript.

folder 27  Howes, Ralph E.  *Fantasia in d minor for two harps.*  1952.  In manuscript.


folder 34  Mayr-Hegwein, Georg. “*Libellenglug*.” 1942. In manuscript.


folder 36  Meyerbeer, Giacomo, arr. Ch. Oberthür. “*Les Huguenots*.” 1880. Oberthür

folder 37  Mokranjac, B. *Old Song for Violin and Harp* 1953. 1953. In manuscript.


Box 2


folder 25  Reinl, Franz. *Alt-Wiener Hausmusik.* In manuscript. Dedicated to Artiss de Volt.


Box 3


folder 7 Spindler, Fritz. *Forestbrook*. In manuscript.


folder 9 Spohr, Louis. *Variations pour la Harpe sur l’air “Je suis encore dans mon printemps.”* In manuscript.


folder 34  Zingel, Rudolph Edward. *Abendlied (Intermezzo).* Leipzig: Ph. Grosch, 1940.


**Series 2: Binder’s Collection**

**Box 3**

folder 36  Binder’s Collection: contains the following items:

Adam, Adolphe. *Si j’étais Roi Overture.*

Akimenko, Th. *Consolation,* opus 22.

Dubez, J. *Deux Chansons Sans Paroles,* opus 33.


Hahn, Adam. *Schöne Erinnerung Fantasiestück.*


Lorenzi, Giorgio. *Il Canto Delle Muse Fantasia Caratteristica.*


Nadermann, F. J. *Sieben Progressive Sonatinen. Heft II, No. 5-7,* opus 92.

Nessler, Victor E., arr. Beatrix Fels. “*Behütt’ dich Gott, es wär’ zu schön gewesen!*” Lied aus “*Der Trompeter von Säkkingen.*”

Pierné, Gabriel. *Impromptu-Caprice,* opus 9.

Saint-Saëns, Camille, transcr. V. Ciarlone. *Fantaisie,* opus 95.


Wilm, Nicolai von. *Larghetto for violin and harp,* opus 119.

**Series 3: Scrapbooks and other press items**

**Box 4** Alfred Holy Scrapbook. Accompanied by Artiss de Volt’s handwritten table of contents.

**Box 5**

folder 1 Alfred Holý scrapbook of press clippings, mainly reviews (1896-1903)

folder 2 Alfred Holý scrapbook of press clippings, mainly reviews (1903-1948)

**Box 6**

folder 1 Alfred Holý press clippings, assorted (8 items)
**Series 4: Documents**

**Box 6**

folder 2  Lists of compositions by Alfred Holý (7 items)

folder 3  Artiss de Volt’s typescript notes on Alfred Holý (6 items)

folder 4  Alfred Holý concert programs (10 items)

folder 5  Alfred Holý professional and financial documents (23 items)

folder 6  Alfred Holý professional and financial documents, post mortem (72 items)

folder 7  Alfred Holý death notice, biography, obituary, last will and testament (11 items)

folder 8  Holý family genealogical documents, including the family heraldry (4 items)

folder 9  Obituaries of various musicians: Marie Bipsiues (a.k.a. La-Mara); Franz Pönnitz; Emmy Destinn (4 items)

folder 10  Obituaries of Holý family members: Marie, Gusti, and Fritz (4 items)

**Box 7**

folder 11  Sketches and outlines of Alfred Holý’s Memoirs (20)

folder 12  Drafts of Alfred Holý’s Memoirs (5 items)

folder 13  Reviews of, and publicity materials for, Artiss de Volt’s edition of Alfred Holý’s Memoirs (6 items)

folder 14  Artiss de Volt publicity print (1 item)

folder 15  Miscellaneous handwritten sketches and notes (8 items)

**Box 8**

folder 1  Alfred Holý biographical sketch (in German) with portraits, 1928 (1 item)
Series 5: Photographs

Box 6
folder 11  Holý family photographs (38 items)
folder 12  Photographs of various musicians (3 items)
folder 13  Portraits of Alfred Holý (16 items)
folder 14  Photographs of Alfred Holý with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (3 items)
folder 15  Photographs of Alfred Holý at the harp (9 items)

Series 6: Correspondence

Box 6
folder 16  Letters from Gustav Mahler to Alfred Holý, facsimiles and translations (19 items)
folder 17  Letters from Karl Muck to Alfred Holý, facsimiles and translations (3 items)
folder 18  Letters from Bruno Walter to Alfred Holý, facsimiles and translations (3 items)
folder 19  Letters from Alfred Holý to Barbara Lamson (16 items)

Box 7
folder 1  Letters from Theodor Manzel to Alfred Holý (27 items)
folder 2  Letters between Alfred Holý and his sons (18 items)
folder 3  Letters between Alfred Holý and various correspondents (9 items)
folder 4  Letters from Alfred Holý to Artiss de Volt, without date (14 items)
folder 5  Letters from Alfred Holý to Artiss de Volt, 1920s (23 items)
folder 6  Letters from Alfred Holý to Artiss de Volt, 1930s (66 items)
folder 7  Letters from Alfred Holý to Artiss de Volt, 1940s (19 items)
folder 8  Letters from Holý family members to Artiss de Volt (30 items)
folder 9  Letters to Artiss de Volt from various senders (54 items)
folder 10 Letters from Artiss de Volt to various correspondents (7 items)