

KURT BRYCHTA COLLECTION

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UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Processed by James Henry Benson, spring 2017
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Description of Collection	3
Description of Series	6
INVENTORY	
Series 1: Printed Matter	7

DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTION

Accession no. 2014/7/3

Shelf location: M3B 1,4

Physical extent: 0.3 linear feet

Biographical sketch



Photograph from Journal of the Violin Society of America, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 1978/79), p. 167, from Kurt Brychta Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

Kurt Brychta, luthier and violinist, was born in 1908. He began his musical life as a violinist and playing in movie theaters, but when the advent of the “talkies” and the Depression put an end to that activity, he turned his attention to learning how to make violins. Eventually he owned and operated his own shop, serving a clientele that extended beyond Buffalo. During his lifetime he made more than one hundred instruments. Simultaneously he continued to play the violin, including thirty years’ service as a member of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra under such distinguished conductors as Franco Autori, William Steinberg, Joseph Krips, Lukas Foss, and Michael Tilson Thomas. He died in 1978 and was survived by his wife Eleanor, his daughter Eleanor Brychta Caccamise, and two grandchildren.

Provenance

The collection was the gift of Mrs. Eleanor Caccamise, daughter of the late Mr. Brychta, and was received by the Sibley Music Library in July and September 2014.

Scope and content note

The collection represents a working luthier's reference collection pertaining to numerous aspects of the violin and violin-making. Among the items collected by Mr. Brychta were press items and journal articles, trade literature, and other materials. In addition to the given collection, the late Mr. Brychta's effects also included copies of five books that are now catalogued and shelved among the vault's monographs:

Fuhr, Karl. *Die akustischen Rätsel der Geige; die endgültige Lösung des Geigenproblems, für Physiker, Geigenbauer und Musiker*, dargestellt von Prof. Dr. Karl Fuhr. Frankfurt, F. Hofmeister 1958 [c1926].

186 pages; diagrams. Measures 23 cm.

Gingrich, Arnold. *A Thousand Mornings of Music: The Journal of an Obsession with the Violin*. New York: Crown Publishers, c1970.

256 pages. Measures 24 cm.

International Who's Who in Music; and Musicians' Directory. Seventh Edition; 1975. Cambridge, England: Melrose Press, c1975.

1348 pages. Measures 25 cm.

Jalovec, Karel. *Encyclopedia of Violin-Makers*. Translated by J.B. Kozak. London, Paul Hamlyn, 1968.

2 volumes; illustrated (partly in color); with facsimiles and musical examples. Measures 31 cm.

Van Loon, Hendrik Willem. *The Arts*: written and illustrated by Hendrik Willem Van Loon. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1937.

xxiii, 677 pages; 1 illustration; plates (some in color). Measures 24 cm.

Restrictions and use

No restrictions have been placed on the use of the collection.

Associations

The given collection, representing a luthier's papers, is the first of its kind at RTWSC. As regards violin study and performance, RTWSC holds several relevant collections, including the

papers of ESM faculty members John Celentano and Zvi Zeitlin as well as correspondence of concert violinist Arthur Hartmann. Moreover, the Frances Buxton Collection contains research materials related to Ms. Buxton's study of violin repertoire, most prominently that of the Spanish Baroque violin.

Mr. Brychta was a lifelong resident of Buffalo, New York; another collection of a prominent Buffalo musician held by RTWSC is the Robert W. Mols Collection, comprised of autograph manuscripts of this longtime SUNY-Buffalo faculty member (and ESM alumnus).

DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

The holdings are in one series, Printed Matter, and are arranged around the following areas: press clippings, promotional items, serial literature, trade literature, trade catalogues, and a set of microfilms representing in its entirety the classic publication *Regole per la costruzione de' violini, viole, violoncelli e violoni* by Antonio Bagatella in a German translation, *Über den Bau der Violinen, Bratschen, Violoncells und Violons*, translated by J. O. H. Schaum (Leipzig: A. Kühnel [Bureau de Musique], 1806).

INVENTORY

Series 1: Printed Matter

Box 1

Folder 1 Press clippings

18 items culled from a variety of newspapers, printed in the years from 1934 to 1979. The items address different aspects of violins or violinists.

Folder 2 Published serial literature (first of three)

19 separate items culled from a variety of journals; all address matters regarding the violin, violin-making, and/or violinists; the bulk represented by off-prints or photocopies, or else by items clipped from their respective publications; a smaller number are represented by the complete issues in which they were published. Duplicate copies of some of the items. The exact chronological range is not readily discernible owing to the lack of publication information on several items.

Folder 3 Published serial literature (second of three)

Two copies of the *Journal of The Violin Society of America*, vol. V, no. 1 (Winter, 1978/79), in which Mr. Brychta's obituary was published, accompanied by a photograph (pages 165-167).

Folder 4 Published serial literature (third of three)

The contents are:

- "Perlman, Prince of Fiddlers" from *The Reader's Digest* [condensed from *Newsweek*], pages 33-34, 36-38.
- "Violins and Violinists", no. 2 (fall, 1961).
- *Museum Service: Bulletin of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 34, no. 5 (May 1961). The issue dedicated to the theme "Making the Violin".
- *Scientific American*, November 1962. Issue contains article "The Physics of Violins" by Carleen Maley Hutchins (pages 78-84, 87-93).
- "The Physics of Violins" [off-print] by Carleen Maley Hutchins, reprinted from *Scientific American*, November 1962.
- *Smithsonian*, October 1990. Issue contains article "It is no disgrace to be second fiddle to a Stradivarius" by Barbara Jepson (pages 160-164, 166, 168).
- "The Violin" by Albert Preisman, reproduced from an unattributed publication (pages 34-35, 67).

- “Handbook of Sound Reproduction” by Edgar M. Villchur, reproduced from an unattributed publication (36-37, 88-89).
- Photocopy of “Le Messie” (pages 123-127), chapter VII from *J. B. Vuillaume* by Roger Millant (W. E. Hill, 1972).

Folder 5 Promotional items

Bein & Fushi (Chicago, IL). Copies of the promotional calendars for the years 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.

Folder 6 Trade lists and catalogues (books and literature) (first of two)

17 items. The firms represented are: Oscar Shapiro (Washington, D.C.); William Reeves (London, UK); Vitali Import Company (Maywood, CA); W. E. Hill & Sons (London, UK); and, Martin Brinser (Irvington, NJ).

Folder 7 Trade lists and catalogues (second of two)

One dozen items issued by the firm of William Moennig and Son (Philadelphia, PA). The items are:

- *World of Strings*, seven issues: all issue 1956; fall issue 1958 (2 copies); spring issue 1960; spring issue 1967; spring issue 1970; spring issue 1972; and, one undated issue.
- Five single-page advertisements of violins, violas, and violoncellos.

Folder 8 Trade literature on instruments and related subjects

Comprises a gathering of printed pamphlets and loose extracts from publications, all addressing a range of violin-related topics, specifically physical aspects of the instrument, its bow, its finish, etc., including “The Proper Care of the Violin” (Githens-Sohl Corporation, New York, NY); Alte Meister-Geigen (Hans Nebel, Mittenwald); “Everything for Wood Finishing” (H. Behlen & Bro.); “The Finish of Your Lacquer: Problems” (Qualatone Products, Inc.); information on bows and on chin-rests; and, photographs of selected noteworthy instruments, identified by their makers and years of origin.

Folder 9 Other items, leaflets, booklets, and writings, not otherwise classified

Approximately one dozen items not classified under any other of the rubrics cited herein. Items include four picture postcards and other travel literature for the city of Cremona, Italy; one copy of the published leaflet “W. A. Mozarts Original-Instrumente im Mozart-Museum zu Salzburg”; a recital program (Coolidge Auditorium, the Library of Congress, April 4/5, 1963); and one copy of “The Art of Violin-Making” [research paper] by Judy A. Wieland.

Box 2

A set of slides in their original mailing container, sent from Günther & Kühl, Wissenschaftliche Versandbuchhandlung/Antiquariat (Hamburg, Germany); the content constitutes a micro-reproduction of the German translation of the tome *Regole per la costruzione de' violini, viole, violoncelli e violoni* by Antonio Bagatella: *Über den Bau der Violinen, Bratschen, Violoncells und Violons*, translated by J. O. H. Schaum (Leipzig: A. Kühnel. (Bureau de Musique), 1806).