

SHARON K. BENNETT PAPERS

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*Sharon K. Bennett as Lucia in Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor.
Photograph from Sharon K. Bennett Papers, Box 1/9.*



*Sharon K. Bennett as Nerina in Haydn's La fedeltà premiata (ca. 1972).
Photograph from Sharon K. Bennett Papers, Box 1/9.*

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DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTION

Accession no.: 2023/11/06

Shelf location: C3B 6,7

Extent: 10 linear inches

Biographical Sketch



Photograph from Sharon K. Bennett Papers, Box 2/81.

Sharon Kay Bennett (*b.* September 17, 1939, Wester Jefferson, Ohio; *d.* July 26, 2023, Columbus, Ohio) was a noted coloratura soprano and music educator who performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

Ms. Bennett grew up in Plain City, Ohio. During her youth, she was active in several musical and academic school organizations and also served as a director of the Presbyterian Church carol and youth choirs. In 1956, at the age of 16, she enrolled as an undergraduate at the Eastman School of Music and ultimately earned a Bachelor of Music (1960), Performer's Certificate (1961),

and Master of Music (1962) from the institution. She also performed for one year with the Metropolitan Opera Studio, where she was coached by George Schick.

In 1958, Ms. Bennett made her professional operatic debut as Lauretta in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. In the 1960s, she appeared in operas throughout the US, which included performances with the Chautauqua Opera, Santa Fe Opera Company, and the Turnau Opera Company. She also appeared in concert with the Cleveland Orchestra, National Symphony, and Columbus Symphony and performed recitals at various colleges and universities in the eastern and southeastern United States. In 1970, Ms. Bennett made her European debut as a member of the Nuremberg Opera Company, after which, in 1973, she joined the Hamburg State Opera. In the 1970s, she appeared frequently as a guest artist in Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Stuttgart, playing such roles as Ophelia (*Hamlet*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Gretel (*Hansel und Gretel*), and most notably Gilda (*Rigoletto*) and the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*). Her performance career took her far beyond Germany, however: she sang internationally in Scotland, Ireland, England, South Africa, Israel, and Spain, as well as the United States, and she also appeared on camera in a full-length feature film for the Dutch television station Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS) and on *Unsolved Mysteries* in the US.

In 1980, Ms. Bennett joined the teaching faculty at the University of Iowa as an Assistant Professor of Music. In 1985, she returned to Ohio, where she continued teaching, initially as an adjunct instructor at Capital University (1985–1992) and Otterbein College (1986–1987) before being hired as an Assistant Professor at Capital University in 1992. In 1994, she began teaching full-time at Capital University, where she ended her career after more than 20 years of teaching. Over her long performing and teaching career, Ms. Bennett received multiple grants and awards, which included the Detroit Grand Opera Association Francis Robinson Professional Engagement Award (1985) as well as the Women of Achievement Award for the Arts from the Columbus YWCA (1986).

Ms. Bennett passed away peacefully on July 26, 2023, at the age of 83, after a battle with cancer.

Provenance

The Sharon K. Bennett Papers were the gift of Ms. Bennett's nephew, Phillip Bennett, and his wife Vickie Bennett. The collection was received by Sibley Music Library in November 2023.

Scope and Content

The Sharon K. Bennett Papers is small collection of personal papers—comprising concert programs, press clippings, publicity materials, awards, photographs, and audio recordings—that document Ms. Bennett's career as a performing artist. The most substantial material in the collection is the series of photographs, which is comprised of 82 individual photographic prints, negatives, and slides; 16 scrapbook pages with additional photographic prints; and a USB drive containing 50 image files. The bulk of the photographs depict Ms. Bennett in costume or on stage

during the height of her operatic career in the 1970s. The five audiocassette tapes in the collection are recordings of Ms. Bennett performing operatic or concert works.

Restrictions on use

There are no restrictions on the use of the Collection. Requests for reproductions of material protected by U.S. Copyright Law and its revisions will be granted only upon presentation of the written permission of all associated copyright holder(s).

Associations

RTWSC possesses several special collections relating to concert and opera singers active during the twentieth century, including the papers of a handful of Eastman alumni and faculty. The Leonard Treash Collection, which documents Mr. Treash's work as a director with Eastman Opera Theatre, the Chautauqua Opera Association, and other opera companies, may of particular interest, as Ms. Bennett performed with the Chautauqua Opera Association during its 1977 season. The performing and teaching career of another Eastman voice alumnae, Jane Günther-McCoy (BM 1959), a professional choral singer and soloist, is preserved in the Seth McCoy and Jane Günther-McCoy Collection, which also documents the career of her husband, Eastman Professor of Voice, Seth McCoy. Further, RTWSC holds the collections of Eastman voice faculty Jan DeGaetani and Tom Paul as well as the collections of sopranos Josephine Antoine, Olga Tremelli, and Dorothea Dix Lawrence.

DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

Series 1: Papers

Series 1 contains concert programs, press clippings, publicity materials, artist directories, and awards collected by Ms. Bennett over the course of her performing career. The programs and press clippings date from 1962–1993, though the bulk of the materials date from the 1970s during the height of Ms. Bennett’s operatic and performing career. Also among the papers are a facsimile of Ms. Bennett’s Eastman School of Music transcripts, a program from the YWCA First Annual Women of Achievement Awards Tribute Luncheon in (at which Ms. Bennett was presented with the 1986 Eleanor Gelpi Award), and three items of correspondence.

Series 2: Photographs

Series 2 is comprised of photographic prints, negatives, slides, scrapbook pages (which contain additional photographic prints), and a USB drive containing 50 image files. The bulk of the images depict Ms. Bennett in costume or on stage in performance, thus providing rich documentation of Ms. Bennett’s operatic career. Further, a handful of personal photographs dating from Ms. Bennett’s early career in Europe (1970s) are included in the scrapbook pages, and additional photographs from her later years after her operatic career are included among the image files on the USB drive.

Series 3: Audio recordings

Series 3 contains five audiocassette tapes with recorded performances by Ms. Bennett of operatic and concert works.

INVENTORY

Series 1: Papers

Box 1

- Folder 1 Programs, 1962–1977.
 13 recital and opera programs and flyers, for performances in the US and Europe.
- Folder 2 Programs, 1978–1993
 6 recital and opera programs, for performances in the US and Wales.
- Folder 3 Press clippings.
 10 newspaper clippings, facsimiles, and translations, for performances in the US, South Africa, Spain, and Ireland; dated ca. 1970–1981.
- Folder 4 Publicity material.
 Includes biographical sketch, excerpts from press reviews, and publicity flyer and postcard.
- Folder 5 Artist directories.
 3 artist directories with listings for Sharon Bennett; dated 1977–1980.
- Folder 6 Eastman School of Music transcripts
 Facsimile of student transcripts for Sharon Bennett (for courses 1956–1962); issued January 6, 1988. 2 p.
- Folder 7 Eleanor Gelpi Award, YWCA (1986).
 Program from YWCA Women of Achievement Awards Tribute Luncheon, MS notes for thank you speech, and facsimile of certificate of congratulations from members of the Ohio Senate.
- Folder 8 Correspondence.
 3 items (fan mail or congratulations); dated 1971–1981.

Series 2: Photographs

Box 1

- Folder 9 Photo album pages.
16 pages extracted from photo album, 11.25" x 11.75".
Pages contain photographs of Sharon Bennett and 1 newspaper clipping with typescript captions (primarily photos from opera productions in Europe); dated ca. 1970–1977.
- Item 10 Columbus Symphony Chorus 1962 photograph.
1 B/W photograph, x 19.5" x 8". Photo by Firestone Photographs, Columbus, OH. Rolled.

Box 2

- Sleeve 1 Sharon Bennett in costume [as Miss Silverpeal in Mozart's *The Impresario*], Antioch Festival; August 7, 1960.
1 color photograph, 3.5" x 3.5".
Photo by R. Grayman.
- Sleeve 2 Sharon Bennett in costume; processed February 1977.
1 color photograph, 3.5" x 3.5".
- Sleeve 3 Sharon Bennett in costume; processed July 1978.
1 color photograph, 3.5" x 4.5".
- Sleeve 4-5 Sharon Bennett, with group, in scene [of unidentified production].
2 B/W photographs, 4" x 3".
- Sleeve 6 Sharon Bennett, outdoors by fountain.
1 color photograph, 3.5" x 4.5".
- Sleeve 7 Sharon Bennett in costume.
1 color photograph, 2.5" x 3.5".
- Sleeve 8-11 Sharon Bennett, portraits [in fur hat and coat].
4 B/W photographs, 3" x 4".
- Sleeve 12-13 Sharon Bennett in costume, in Mozart's *The Abduction of the Seraglio*; [ca. 1970–1971?].
2 color negatives, 2.75" x 3.5".
Prints included in photo album pages; see Box 1/9.
- Sleeve 14-15 Sharon Bennett with group in costume, in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*.
2 B/W negatives, 3.5" x 4.5".

- Sleeve 16 Sharon Bennett in costume as Lucia, portrait (Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*).
1 B/W negative, 3.5" x 4.5".
- Sleeve 17 Sharon Bennett in costume, [in J. Strauss, Jr.'s *Night in Venice*].
1 color negative, 2.5" x 3.5".
- Sleeve 18-20 Sharon Bennett in costume, portraits.
3 B/W negatives, 4" x 5".
Negative in sleeve 16 indicates photo by Wm. Beck.
- Sleeve 21 Sharon Bennett, in costume, portrait.
1 B/W negative, 2.5" x 3.5".
- Sleeve 22 Sharon Bennett in costume [as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*?].
1 B/W negative, 1/25" x 1.5".
- Sleeve 23 Sharon Bennett [during a recital?].
1 color negative strip (4 images), 0.5" x 4.25".
- Sleeve 24-26 Sharon Bennett, outdoors.
3 color negative strips (4 images, each), 0.5" x 4".
- Sleeve 27 Unidentified man, outdoors.
1 color negative strip (4 images), 0.5" x 4".
- Sleeve 28-31 Personal photographs [of Sharon Bennett and group at event(s)?].
4 color negative strips (4 images, each), 0.5" x 4".
- Sleeve 32 Sharon Bennett in costume as Miss Silverpeal in Mozart's *The Impresario*,
Antioch Festival; August 7, 1960.
1 color slide, 2" x 2".
Photo by R. Grayman.
- Sleeve 33-35 Sharon Bennett in costume in scene [in unidentified production]; January and
April 1969.
4 color slides, 2" x 2".
- Sleeve 36 Sharon Bennett, outdoors on bridge over river; October 1969.
1 color slide, 2" x 2".
- Sleeve 37 Sharon Bennett [as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*?].
1 color slide, 2" x 2".

- Sleeve 38-41 Sharon Bennett as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, [Shreveport Opera]; March 1985.
7 color slides, 2" x 2".
- Sleeve 42 Sharon Bennett with group in front of Christmas tree.
1 color slide, 2.75" x 2.75".
Originally in envelope marked "Slides; McAlister's."
- Sleeve 43 Sharon Bennett, outdoors in front of building.
1 color slide, 2.75" x 2.75".
Originally in envelope marked "Slides; McAlister's."
- Sleeve 44-45 [Unidentified man] in Volkswagen Beetle.
2 color slides, 2.75" x 2.75".
Originally in envelope marked "Slides; McAlister's."
- Sleeve 46 House.
1 color slide, 2.75" x 2.75".
Originally in envelope marked "Slides; McAlister's."
- Sleeve 47 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man, in scene [in Verdi's *Rigoletto*]; [October 1970].
1 B/W photograph, 4" x 5.75".
- Sleeve 48-49 Sharon Bennett with group, in scene [in J. Strauss Jr.'s *Der Zigeunerbaron* = *The Gypsy Baron*], Nürnberg; [January 1971].
2 B/W photographs, 4.25" x 5.75".
Photos by Gerber.
- Sleeve 50 Sharon Bennett in costume as Lucia, portrait (Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*).
1 B/W photo postcard, 4.25" x 5.75". 2 copies.
- Sleeve 51 Sharon Bennett in costume, portrait, Staatsoper Hamburg.
1 B/W photo postcard, 4" x 5.75".
Photo by Lieske.
- Sleeve 52-53 Sharon Bennett [as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*?].
2 color photographs, 5.25" x 3.5".
- Sleeve 54-55 Sharon Bennett [as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*?].
2 color Polaroid photographs, 3.5" x 4.25".
- Sleeve 56 Personal photographs [of Sharon Bennett and group at event(s)].
1 color negative strip (4 images), 0.5" x 6".

- Sleeve 57 Landscape [?].
1 B/W negative strip (4 images), 0.5" x 5.75".
- Sleeve 58 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man in scene; processed May 1970.
1 color photograph, 5" x 7".
- Sleeve 59 Sharon Bennett in scene [in Verdi's *Rigoletto*]; [October 1970], processed March 1977.
1 color photograph, 5" x 7".
- Sleeve 60 Sharon Bennett with group, in scene.
1 B/W photograph, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 61 Sharon Bennett in costume, on balcony.
1 B/W photograph, 5" x 7.25".
- Sleeve 62-63 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man in costume, outdoors by bridge.
2 B/W photographs, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 64-69 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man, in scene.
6 B/W photographs, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 70 Sharon Bennett with 2 unidentified men, in gondola.
1 B/W photograph, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 71 Sharon Bennett with 2 unidentified men, in gondola.
1 color photograph, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 72 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man in period costumes, outdoors, with house in background.
1 B/W photograph, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 73 Sharon Bennett with group, in scene.
1 B/W photograph, 7" x 5".
- Sleeve 74 Sharon Bennett with unidentified man, in scene [in Verdi's *Rigoletto*]; [October 1970].
1 B/W photograph, 8" x 10".
- Sleeve 75 Sharon Bennett with group, in scene [in Mozart's *Il Seraglio*], [Napac/Naruk Opera, Alhambra Theatre, South Africa]; [May 1976].
1 B/W photograph, 8.5" x 6.25".
Photo by Bird & Leeney, Durban [South Africa].

- Sleeve 76 Sharon Bennett with group, during a rehearsal, Santa Fe Opera; 1979.
1 B/W photograph, 10" x 8".
Photo by David Stein.
- Sleeve 77 Sharon Bennett in costume, Santa Fe Opera; 1979.
1 B/W photograph, 8" x 10".
Photo by David Stein.
- Sleeve 78 Sharon Bennett with group, in scene.
1 B/W photograph, 10" x 8".
- Sleeve 79 Sharon Bennett in costume [as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*?].
1 B/W photograph, 8" x 10".
- Sleeve 80 Sharon Bennett in costume, portraits.
2 B/W negative strips (5 images, total), 1.5" x 4.5" + 3".
In original wax sleeve.
- Sleeve 81 "S. Bennett Photos." USB flash drive.
Contains 50 image files, including both professional and personal photographs of Sharon Bennett (112 MB, total).

Series 3: Audio recordings

Box 2

- Tape 1 "Gypsy Baron (1970), Germany." Audiocassette tape.
No track list indicated.
- Tape 2 "Celina Recital, 2/18/78." Audiocassette tape.
Recorded February 18, 1978.
No track list indicated.
- Tape 3 "Sharon Bennett, soprano: Queen of the Night arias." Audiocassette tape.
[Side 1] From *The Magic Flute*: Oh have no fear my dearest son -- A fiery vengeance blazes in my bosom / W. A. Mozart.
- Tape 4 "Sharon Bennett, soprano; Clapp Recital Hall; 6 Feb. 1983." Audiocassette tape.
Recorded in Clapp Recital Hall, [University of Iowa], February 6, 1983.
[Side 1] Boulanger --
[Side 2] Debussy -- Milhaud.
- Tape 5 "Mozart, Milhaud; Bennett."
No track list indicated.