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2020

Guide to the Collection of De Paur Chorus Materials

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Columbia

COLLEGE CHICAGO

CENTER FOR BLACK MUSIC RESEARCH COLLECTION

Collection of De Paur Chorus Materials, 1951-1969

EXTENT

2 boxes, 1 linear foot

Includes 7 analog sound discs not listed here

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Sound recordings, photographs and ephemera documenting the De Paur Chorus and its activities, primarily during the early 1950s.

BIOGRAPHICAL & HISTORICAL NOTE

Leonard de Paur (1914–1998) received his musical education at Columbia University and the Institute of Musical Arts. In 1932, he became the associate conductor of the Hall Johnson Choir, and in 1936 he became the director of the New York City Negro Unit of the Federal Theatre. In 1942, de Paur joined the armed forces and was soon assigned as the musical director of the Army Air Force show, “Winged Victory.”

In the meantime, four members of the 372nd Regiment—Charles Ernie, Tommy Harris, Allen Ferguson, and Sidney Greenard—began singing together, and this group soon expanded into a glee club that provided entertainment for fellow GIs. In 1944, de Paur was assigned to direct the group, which took part in war bond rallies and radio programs. The group continued after the war and was renamed the De Paur Infantry Chorus (and subsequently, the De Paur Chorus). Touring the globe, the Chorus went on to become one of the leading choral groups in the United States and throughout the world until its disbandment in 1957.

The group’s repertoire included spirituals, songs of World War II, folk songs of other countries, and religious choral works. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Chorus was the dignity and skill with which it presented the music of African Americans. De Paur reorganized the De Paur Chorus again in 1963, and this group toured extensively until 1969. De Paur received numerous awards for his contributions to music during his life. He is widely recognized as a significant figure in male choral music, as well as in African-American history and culture.

SCOPE & CONTENT/COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The collection is small and includes just two concert programs (with several autographs) and one clipping, but the photographs are more complete, with 12 individuals represented and 5 group poses. The De Paur Chorus sound recordings reflect the variety found in their repertoire and have gone out of print. This collection complements other archival holdings highlighting African American concert composers and arrangers, choral music, military music directors (see the Alton Augustus Adams Sr. papers) and the study of spirituals and work songs (see the Dena Epstein papers, among others).

ARRANGEMENT

Arranged into two series: Photographs, programs and clippings and Sound Recordings

RELATED MATERIALS

CBMR:

Alton Augustus Adams Collection

Dena Epstein Collection

External Materials:

[Leonard De Paur oral history](#), Works Progress Administration Oral Histories, George Mason University.

ACQUISITION SOURCE

Photographs donated by Joseph S. Lewis.

Sound recordings donated by William Longstreet (2006) and Diane Smith (2008).

Ephemera donated by Frances T. Matlock (2004).

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Choral music, Choral conductors, Concert music, 20th Century, Programs (documents), work songs

ACCESS STATEMENT

The collection is open and available for research use.

RIGHTS STATEMENT

United States copyright laws apply to the materials in this collection.

PREFERRED CITATION

Collection of De Paur Chorus Materials, Center for Black Music Research Collection, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

COLLECTION OF DE PAUR CHORUS MATERIALS INVENTORY:

SERIES 1: Photographs, programs and clippings

Box 1:

Photographs:

Bradford, Robert

Bray, Joel

Brown, Teddy

Collymore, Phil

Ernie, Charles

Ferguson, Alan

Lewis, Joseph**

Marshal, George

Peters, Brock

Saxon, Luther

Unknown (2)

“Sing You Soldiers” (Herbert Kupferberg article for Collier’s) group photo

Group photos (4)

Programs:

“5TH Annual Tour” booklet

Title page: “Columbia Artists’ Management, Inc. presents for their annual tour of the United States, Canada and Europe: de PAUR’s INFANTRY CHORUS.” With handwritten date “1951.”

Spring 1951 South America and the Caribbean tour: photos in Bogota, Havana.

Signed by Leonard de Paur on page entitled “The Conductor.”

Signed by Luther Saxon on page entitled “The Soloists.”

Program included arrangements by de Paur and Hall Johnson and a “Spiritual Derivative” by Ulysses Elam, and music by contemporary composers Howard Swanson and Otto Luening.

1953 program at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, Sunday February 15th. Presented by Allied Arts Corporation. Program included “Nightingales” by Howard Swanson, “The Tiger’s Ghost” by Otto Luening.

Clipping from *Daily Defender*, March 4, 1969.

SERIES 2:

Seven sound recordings of performances by the choir.