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Citation

Pirrotta, Nino. 1958. The Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library. Harvard Library Bulletin XII (3), Autumn 1958: 410-417.

Permanent link

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The Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library

To the freshman, or other newcomer to Cambridge — this writer would hardly feel qualified to speak for Harvardians of longer standing — the building that contains the Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library looks from outside as if it had always been there, so quietly does it fit into the frame of its surroundings. Forming a right angle with the northern façade of the Music Building, the new library wing has narrowed by almost half the wide gap that separated the Music Building from the opposite façade of the Jefferson Laboratory. In so doing it has succeeded in conferring an agreeable sense of spatial definition, if not of stylistic unity, to the east end of the large and irregularly shaped courtyard that lies behind the white mass of Littauer Center and the rather rusty one of Austin Hall.

With a similar sense of naturalness and harmony the young student, after having attended classes in the Music Building, need take only a few steps along a corridor to find himself in the Library, where practically everything he needs for the continuation of his work is assembled and at hand. The sense of 'rightness,' together with the smoothness that has in general marked the entry of the Library into Harvard life, is one of the highest rewards for those who first planned the Library and then brought it into being.

Some hints of the situation confronting the user of the music collections at Harvard before the opening of the Eda Kuhn Loeb Library may be gleaned from the remarks of Professor Randall Thompson, then Chairman of the Music Department, in announcing the breaking of ground for the new wing.¹ These collections were scattered 'in a dozen rooms in half a dozen buildings,' to the point that one might say 'the sun never set' on them. To gather the material they needed for their courses, teachers had to expend, 'week after week, year after year,' vast amounts of energy 'through space, up and down stairs, steps, corridors. To analyze a single chord might require an effort of 8,000 foot-pounds.' The special factors contributing to such a strain, and drain, require some explanation. To the reason given by Professor Thompson — that 'scores must be played or sung to come to life' — one might add that, even more than the other arts, music

¹ *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, LVII, 16 (4 June 1955), 659.

refuses to be talked about *in absentia*. In any case, the conclusion must be that the teaching of music and of the history of music, in the forms required by such an institution as Harvard, depends heavily for its success upon the availability of an extensive library.

Not all the music materials existing at Harvard, however, were intended to find, or have found, place in the new Library. The 'united' library for which the Music Department longed during more than thirty years was primarily envisaged as the unification, in a convenient location, of the larger collection in Widener with the smaller one already established in the Music Building. After due consideration, it was decided to leave the Isham Memorial Library in its present quarters in the Memorial Church. This library, originally a collection of organ music, had in the course of time extended its field to include a large number of photostats and microfilms of early manuscript and printed music and music treatises.² In spite of its very great value in itself and in connection with the work of the Department, its transfer was not regarded as indispensable, its material being chiefly used for self-contained projects of research by graduate students.

Music, certainly in some aspects a part of the Harvard College Library from its earliest years, was represented by a collection of about 3,000 volumes in 1897, the year in which the scheme of classification that still applies to the subject was instituted. From that date to 1956, when the Widener collection was transferred to the new Library, the total rose to 27,725 volumes. That in this figure books on musical subjects equaled, or even slightly exceeded, the scores is what might be expected in a university such as Harvard, where the accent must naturally fall on broad coverage of all aspects of the general field of music rather than on exhaustive coverage of the needs of practical performance. It may safely be assumed that all important books and periodicals on music published in the present century, as well as the greater part of those belonging to the preceding century, are present on Harvard's shelves. Further, although no attempt was made to encompass the immense field of published music, those in charge of acquisition for the College Library succeeded in securing — generally at the moment of publication, and therefore at prices far below those now asked by dealers — all the main collections of complete works of individual composers, together with all the edi-

²For an account of the Isham Library see Archibald T. Davison, 'The Isham Memorial Library,' *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, VI (1952), 376-380.

tions of works of historical importance published during the last hundred years. To such a foundation there were added considerable numbers of scores of important works of representative composers of all periods down to the present.

While the collection in Widener was thus steadily growing along lines in harmony with the purposes and needs of the Music Department, the Department itself was undergoing a process of development and also of consolidation.³ In 1914 it transferred its center from Holden Chapel, a single large room where all its courses had been given since 1898, to the present Music Building, then just erected, which allowed opportunity for greatly expanded facilities and activities. A room comprising about five hundred square feet was provided on the third floor for a Departmental library. Inasmuch as members of the Department staff, and notably Professor Archibald T. Davison, were at the very heart of choral activity at Harvard, the greater part of this library consisted at first of choral music for mixed voices performed at joint concerts of the Harvard Glee Club and the Radcliffe Choral Society.⁴ To this choral collection there were slowly added books and scores in various categories, such as reference works, biographies and complete works of certain important composers, books on musical techniques and on music appreciation, scores needed either for general or for special courses. Thus the Department, while continuing to rely on the large collection of the College Library for wide scope in exemplification and for research in special fields, came to have at hand at least the essential material for reference and for tutorial and class work. This material not only in most cases duplicated items already existing in Widener, but was often purchased in multiple copies for course use. Note should also be taken of a slight tendency, accentuated in recent years, to supplement Widener acquisitions in the field of modern music.

The annual report of the Department for 1955/56, immediately before the opening of the Eda Kuhn Loeb Library, indicated a total

³ See Walter R. Spalding, 'Music 1862-1929,' in *The Development of Harvard University . . . 1862-1929*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 106-129.

⁴ Music for men's voices alone went rather to the collections of the Glee Club, the Memorial Church Choir Library, and the Harvard Alumni Chorus Library, that for women's voices alone went to the libraries of the Radcliffe Choral Society and of the Radcliffe College Choir; see G. Wallace Woodworth, 'The Choral Libraries at Harvard College,' *Bulletin of the Harvard Musical Association*, January 1952.



PLATE I



PLATE II

for the Department Library of 1,756 books and 6,767 scores, plus totals of 44,911 units (hardly to be called volumes) for the 'multiple-copy choral library' and of 2,232 units for the 'single-copy' one. No figures were given for the large collection of recordings on discs, which had been greatly augmented during the preceding decade. For some years the single room on the third floor of the Music Building had been inadequate for the housing of all this material, and deposits of various kinds were scattered about in offices, class rooms, and corridors, thereby compounding the problem of quick access to what might be needed.

A project for creating a library in the basement of the Music Building capable of including the Widener holdings had to be abandoned in 1938, since by that date the space available would merely hold collections already on hand, with no room for growth. This basement area then was appropriated for practice rooms, and the question of a suitable location for a centralized music library was thenceforth to be considered within the general frame of an over-all expansion of the Department to meet its increasing responsibilities.

In 1951 Professor A. Tillman Merritt, then Chairman of the Department, had plans drafted for a new Music Building that would include a large section allotted for library purposes. What was to be the final solution, however, began to take shape the following year, under the chairmanship of Professor Thompson, when a generous sum was offered to the Department by the trustees of the Eda Kuhn Loeb Estate for the express purpose of an addition to the existing Music Building, which itself had been made possible in 1914 through the generosity of another member of the Loeb family, James Loeb, '88. By 1954 the necessary minimum stipulated by the Corporation for building and maintenance had been raised through additional offers from the Loeb Estate, the Fanny P. Mason Estate, and members of the Visiting Committee for the Department, and the University administration accordingly gave orders to proceed with the addition. The Department had meanwhile decided to give precedence to the need for an adequate library, and Mr Stanley B. Parker, '04, had been appointed architect. Work on the new wing, begun in the spring of 1955, was completed in the summer of 1956, and the transfer of the collections was carried out in time for the opening of the fall term.⁵ The Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library was officially dedicated,

⁵ See 'The Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library,' HLB, X (1956), 415-416.

in the presence of President Pusey and other officers of the University and guests, on 8 December 1956, and the occasion celebrated by a three-day festival of music.⁶

A two-story construction in Georgian style, forming in its main façade a right angle with the north or main façade of the Music Building, the library wing is actually an L-shaped unit, with the horizontal stroke of the L represented by the main façade, and the vertical stroke, short and thick, by a masonry shell containing the stacks. A light central portal leads to the entrance foyer, where is placed the circulation desk (see Plate I), strategically located to control the entrance, the main reading room to the north, the corridor from the Music Building to the south, two rear doors to the stacks, and the stairway leading to the second floor. The main reading room, measuring 31 by 24 feet, is named for Richard Aldrich, '85, whose distinguished personal collection of musical books and scores was given to Harvard for the new Library by his family. Besides seating comfortably twenty-five to thirty readers, either at the central tables or in sofas and armchairs disposed about the room, it houses, in shelves on two of the side walls, a selection of reference works (both music and general), all the material reserved for course study, and a display of the latest library acquisitions. Set out on a table are current issues of periodicals. Because of the course reserves, the Aldrich Room, though no policy has ever been enunciated, is generally regarded as the undergraduate reading room. From it, two openings in the east wall give access to the stacks and to the card catalogue located just within the stack area. This ground floor also contains two offices for the staff and small rooms specially designed for listening to records.

Up the stairway, on the second floor, a central hall, to be equipped in future with display cases, forms a focal point for two large rooms and two more offices. Toward the Music Building, a double door leads to the Davison Room, named for Professor Archibald T. Davison, designed for seminar use. This bright-walled and well-lighted room, measuring 31 by 20 feet, equipped with a Steinway grand piano and an elegant convertible combination of blackboard and projection screen, has as its dominant feature a massive oval table capable of seating sixteen to eighteen persons. Additional armchairs along the walls increase the capacity of the room, which has been occasionally used for small lectures and even, tentatively, for semi-private chamber

⁶ See 'Dedication of the Loeb Music Library,' *HLB*, XI (1957), 141.

concerts. A door, normally closed, can at need give direct access to the Music Building and its concert hall.

On the opposite side of the central hall on the second floor, and directly above the Aldrich Room, is the Spalding Room (see Plate II), given by Mr Walter W. Naumburg, '89, in honor of Professor Walter R. Spalding, long-time head of the Music Department and another of the leading figures in its history. Soft-carpeted and subdued in color, this is regarded as a room for research workers, containing on its walls a collection of specialized reference material, such as bibliographies of sources, handbooks of notation, liturgical repertories, and dictionaries of ancient and modern languages. As in the Aldrich Room below, there is access to the stacks located immediately to the east.

In planning the new Library, space for at least twenty years' growth was allowed for, to be accommodated, with material already on hand, in 450 stack bays, each three feet wide and containing either five or six shelves (in equal proportion) to receive books and scores of varying height. The approximately cubic unit already referred to as the vertical stroke of the L was designed to house, from basement to second floor, respectively 99, 92, and 97 of these stack bays, for a total of 288, the remaining 162 to be placed in other sections of the basement area. Also included in the main stack unit were eighteen stalls, six on each floor, for the use of graduate students. The two reading rooms, with their rather different clienteles, have to a certain degree influenced the distribution of material on the different floors of the stack. Thus biographies of composers, monographs on special periods, schools, and forms, records, and the main bulk of the scores (alphabetically arranged) are found at the ground-floor level, collections of periodicals, collections and serials relating to early music, and complete sets of individual composers are at the second-floor level, and the choral collection and less frequently used material are in the basement.

Not all the space intended for stack has thus far been utilized. Of the 450 stack bays (corresponding to 7,425 linear feet) only 325 (or about 5,350 feet) have actually been purchased and installed, leaving the completion of the shelving to the future. This has allowed the use of certain space in the basement for purposes not originally envisaged. One area, equipped with a large table supporting six earphone record players, each with three head sets, provides a quiet spot, far from noise or other disturbance, where the large number of students taking the elementary course in music history for non-concentrators, known

for generations as Music 1, may peacefully fulfill their listening requirements. Further, the Library has been glad to alleviate problems of space for the Glee Club by housing in another section of the basement a large part of its collection of choral scores. It is recognized, however, that these arrangements can be only temporary, for if made permanent they would tend to nullify the purposes for which the Library was built, without contributing to a long-range solution for problems either of the Music Department or of the Glee Club.

It has already been made apparent that the Music Department has for long regarded recorded music as an important aid in its teaching. As indicated above, a large collection of records was transferred from the Music Building to the new Library. Perhaps because of the short life of records when used intensively, as well as the crisis created about 1950 by the supplanting of the old 78-rpm shellac discs by long-playing ones, no count of holdings had been kept in the old library, the annual reports listing only the new acquisitions. Including latest additions, the estimated total of the collection is about 2,000 l-p's and over 9,500 78's. Special mention should be made of the support given in the years 1947-56 by Mr Gilbert H. Montague, '01, in establishing and maintaining the Amy Angell Collier Montague Collection of Phonograph Records.

The Library's facilities for listening include, besides the earphone machines in the basement for the use of Music 1 students, three sound-proof booths opening off the corridor connecting with the Music Building. Two of these are equipped with high-fidelity machines specially designed by Mr Walter L. Puterbaugh, '45, a member of the Visiting Committee of the Overseers for the Music Department; the third booth, which also contains a piano for occasional score reading, has a Rek-o-kut set. All three booths are so intensively used that it is to be wondered whether the ever increasing demand will not create a problem of accommodation not foreseen when the building was designed. This mounting demand is of course directly related to the great expansion that the recording of 'serious' music has undergone in the last few years. Although not interested in records whose significance resides chiefly in virtuoso performances or 'personal' interpretations, the Library must unquestionably concern itself with all issues as they appear of music not previously available in recorded form. And the simultaneous presence in the Library of scores and records is a natural incentive to their use in combination.

The policies of the Eda Kuhn Loeb Library are fundamentally those of the Harvard College Library, of which, as a library of a department of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, it continues to be a part. Such variations as may exist are suggested by special circumstances. Access to the stack is free to all, with the exception of the record collections and a caged area in the basement where uncatalogued material is examined for acceptance or rejection. Single copies of works difficult or expensive to replace, such as serials, monumental editions, and complete works of a composer, circulate only within the building. This restriction, which naturally applies also to the records, is tempered by the fact that because of the dual origin of the Library (or even triple origin, through the coming of the Aldrich Collection) many of the works in these categories are owned in more than one copy. The restriction does, however, affect the periodicals with full force. Borrowing privileges for persons outside the Harvard community are in general the same as those extended by Widener.

Still another link with the Harvard College Library is maintained by the duplication in the Union Catalogue in Widener of every main entry in the card catalogue of the Music Library. Mrs Helen Black is in charge of the cataloguing, assisted by Mr Larry Mowers, who, working also in the Isham Library, devotes only half of his time to the Music Library, and by Mr Richard Blackham, who concentrates on the care and cataloguing of phonograph records. Mrs Marilyn Gombosi is in charge of circulation. All these activities are coordinated by the silent efficiency of Miss Mary Lou Little, Assistant Librarian.

The Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library does not include all the music material at Harvard — not even the largest part of it. Besides the Isham Library, besides the choral libraries already mentioned, besides the Houghton Library with its rare volumes and manuscripts and its enormous collection of vocal sheet music, besides the Morse Music Library at Radcliffe, there are many sections of the Widener Library and of various special libraries that include music material in conjunction with other aspects of culture and art. To gather into one place all such material, had it been possible, would have been a matter only of pride; it may be doubted whether such a collection could be as practical and effective an instrument for a humanistic approach to music as the present Library.

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