

Adolfo Betti:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Betti, Adolfo, 1875-1950
Title	Adolfo Betti Papers
Dates:	1907-1940
Extent	2 document boxes, 2 oversize boxes (osb) (2.35 linear feet)
Abstract:	Italian violinist and leader of the Flonzaley String Quartet, Adolfo Betti played in the Quartet for twenty-five years until it disbanded in 1929, and spent the remainder of his life writing and teaching. His papers contain correspondence and concert review clippings as well as a number of musical manuscripts and photographs.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-4786
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Transfer from Fine Arts Library, 1996
Processed by	Dell Hollingsworth, 1998, updated by Jack Boettcher, 2012
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Adolfo Betti, violinist and leader of the Flonzaley String Quartet, was born in Bagni di Lucca, Italy, on March 21, 1875. He soon displayed a gift for music, making his debut as a violinist at the age of seven. Many eminent musicians, including Puccini, were guests at his father's home and encouraged the boy to study music. In 1892 he entered the Liège Conservatory where he studied violin with César Thomson. Upon his graduation in 1896, Betti embarked on a successful recital tour through Austria, Germany, Italy, and England, and in 1900 he became Thomson's assistant at the Brussels Conservatory. In 1903 he was chosen by the Swiss violinist Alfred Pochon to become first violinist of the newly organized Flonzaley Quartet. He held this position until the quartet disbanded in 1929. From then until his death he divided his time between his home in New York and his villa in Bagni di Lucca, writing, editing early music, teaching, and occasionally appearing as a soloist. In 1933 Betti was awarded the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation medal for his valuable services to chamber music. In 1936 he married the French cellist Madeleine Monnier. He died at his villa on December 2, 1950.

The Flonzaley Quartet was the creation of Edward J. de Coppet (1855-1916), a wealthy New York banker of Swiss descent. The American composer Daniel Gregory Mason, in his *Music In My Time* (Macmillan, 1938), called the quartet "de Coppet's own supreme work of art," and described him as the ideal patron of the arts. De Coppet had a home in New York and a summer estate, Le Flonzaley, near Lake Geneva. A dedicated amateur musician, in 1886 he formed a semi-professional chamber group with his wife and some friends which for years gave regular performances in his New York apartment.

In Switzerland in 1902 de Coppet met Alfred Pochon, who taught with Betti at the Brussels Conservatory, and invited him to come to New York to join his quartet. Pochon went to New York and took up the new position, but before long he found that the outside demands on the members of the quartet left them insufficient time for rehearsals, so he suggested to de Coppet that if he could find four men willing to devote their time exclusively to quartet playing, a unique ensemble could be created. This idea appealed to de Coppet (the moreso as he was beginning to lose his hearing), and he allowed Pochon to assemble the musicians of his choice: Adolfo Betti, first violin, Ugo Ara, viola, and Iwan d'Archambeau, cello.

The first rehearsals took place at Le Flonzaley in the summer of 1903, and the following year the quartet began touring Europe and America. It immediately became one of the two most important American quartets of the first quarter of the century (the other being the Kneisel Quartet); it was also one of the first to make recordings.

De Coppet stipulated that the four musicians could take on no other work outside of practicing, rehearsing and performing together. As a result, they achieved a legendary perfection of ensemble. In addition to the standard repertoire, they championed both modern and early music, commissioning new works while also introducing audiences to forgotten pieces by 18th-century composers such as Sammartini, Leclair, and Boyce.

Scope and Contents

The Betti papers consist primarily of typed and autograph manuscripts, incoming correspondence, financial records, newspaper clippings, concert programs, and publicity photographs. The materials mainly relate to Betti's activities with the Flonzaley Quartet but also, to a lesser extent, to his teaching and editing. The papers span the years 1907 through 1940, and items have been grouped by form of material.

Manuscript works include two essays by Betti: "Leaflets from my Diary," in which he reminisces about the great artists he heard as a young man and their influences on him, and "Why Chamber Music? Being a Brief Outline of What Chamber Music Can Teach Young Students."

Among the music manuscripts are holograph parts, in the hands of Betti and other members of the quartet, for Stravinsky's *Concertino* for string quartet (1920), which was commissioned and premiered by the Flonzaley. These parts have performance annotations. Also present are the holograph score and parts for Betti's arrangement of Geminiani's *Concerto in sol minore*, op. 3, no. 2, and two of his cadenzas for Viotti's 22nd concerto. There are also holograph scores for violin and piano, cello and piano, and string quartet by various composers, arranged alphabetically. Dates of composition range from 1894 to 1955.

Outgoing correspondence consists of a single letter from Betti to a Mr. Farbman, regarding a collaboration on a series of private concerts and classes between 1938 and 1940. Included with this are Betti's handwritten lists of works to be presented. Incoming correspondence, mainly dating from the late 1930s and 1940, is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Subjects touched on in the correspondence include the financial difficulties faced by the Beethoven Association and by the Society for the Publication of American Music, which was facing controversy over what kinds of music to publish; Betti's arrangements of Geminiani concertos for Schirmer and his efforts to get these and other transcriptions performed; his editing of a chamber music series for International Master Editions; and the inception of licensing agreements between RCA Records and radio stations wishing to broadcast recordings.

Also included is brief correspondence from or about Betti's violin students Ralph Hollander, David Nadien, and Erno Valasek as well as correspondence from other musicians, including a carbon copy of a letter from the composer Daniel Gregory Mason to Randall Thompson, then director of the Curtis School of Music, recommending Betti for a position there. There are several letters in Italian, including four from Adolfo's brother Mario Betti.

There is a folder of materials on Betti's wife, the French cellist Madeleine Monnier. These consist of concert programs, correspondence and contracts relating to her recitals for various clubs, and publicity flyers.

The clippings consist of concert reviews from American and European newspapers between 1907 and 1910, with another group dating from 1920. One of the most interesting portions of the archive, these give a detailed composite picture of the quartet's sound, style, and working methods as well as their reception in Europe and in different regions of the U.S. The reviews are often quite evocative of their time and place and reveal the prevailing concert etiquette of the day.

Betti's archive was purchased by the UT School of Music in 1951, but his papers and music manuscripts were transferred to the Ransom Center in 1996. Although there are a few printed scores from the Betti archive in the HRC, most of the printed materials have been cataloged as part of the Fine Arts Library's circulating collection. These materials are available on UTCAT. Also see Donald Jones, *The Adolfo Betti Music Collection at the University of Texas*, M.M. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1956.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Betti, Mario
Hollander, Ralph
Mason, Daniel Gregory, 1873-1953
Ormandy, Eugene, 1899-1985
Pitcairn, Raymond, 1885-
Reese, Gustave
Thompson, Randall, 1899-

Organizations

Beethoven Association (New York, N.Y.)
Society for the Publication of American Music

Subjects

Music--Manuscripts
String quartets
Chamber music

Document Types

Scores

Essays by Betti	Box 1 Folder 1
Correspondence:	
Outgoing	Box 1 Folder 2
Incoming, A-M	Folder 3
Incoming, N-Z	Folder 4
Clippings, concert reviews	
1907-1909	Box 1 Folder 5
1908	Folder 6-7
1909	Folder 8
1909-1910	Folder 9
1910	Folder 10-11
1920	Folder 12
Clippings, general	Folder 13
Concert programs	Folder 14
Concert programs, continued	Box 2 Folder 1
Financial records	
Bank statements	Box 2 Folder 2
Receipts, Heckel Music Supply catalog	Folder 3
Madeleine Monnier-Betti: correspondence, programs, publicity material	Folder 4
Photos of Betti and the Flonzaley Quartet	Folder 5
Photos of other musicians, Matteo Raimondi, American Art Quartet,	Folder 6
Music manuscripts	

Betti, Adolfo. Cadenze (I & II) per il 22o concerto di Viotti	Box osb 3 Folder 1
Britt, Roger. Adagio pour quatuor à cordes; Berceuse pour violoncelle & piano (2 versions); Death! The wind! (voice & piano; 2 versions); [Piece for piano] By the brook...; Preludeum (piano); Vieille chanson française (voice & piano)	Folder 2
Evans, Louise. Supplication, a meditation on the one hundred and thirtieth Psalm, for cello and piano	Folder 3
Freed, Isadore. Caprice for violoncello & piano; Improvisation (cello & piano)	Folder 4
Geminiani. Concerto grosso in sol minore op. IIIa no. II; revisione di Adolfo Betti	Folder 5
Gros, Edm. L'Art de l'archet	Folder 6
Karnovitch, G. Remembrances of the House of Usher (string quartet)	Folder 7
Lagourgue, Charles. Paysages pour soprano, violoncelle et piano, op. 62, no 1-3	Box osb 4 Folder 1
Lagourgue, Charles. Petite suite contrapointique pour quatuor à cordes, op. 72	Folder 2
Loeffler, Charles Martin. Quintet	Folder 3
Pochon, Alfred. Two sketches based on old Scottish songs (string quartet)	Folder 4
Richter, E.C.G. Streich-Trio	Folder 5
Schilling, Ernst (?). Scherzo (string quartet)	Folder 6
Stravinsky, Igor. Concertino pour quatuor	Folder 7
Thatcher, Howard R. Berceuse (cello & piano)	Folder 8
Van der Voort, Antoni. Quartet in F maj.	Folder 9

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- Arnold Volpe Memorial Building and Orchestra Fund (University of Miami)--1.3
- Beethoven Association (New York, N.Y.)--1.3
- Betti, Mario, 1875- --1.3
- Christopher, F. F.--See National City Safe Deposit Co. (New York, N.Y.)
- De Fiori, Vittorio--See Roma Press
- Deis, Carl--See Beethoven Association (New York, N.Y.)
- Di Longhi, Mario Serven--1.3
- Early, W. W.--See RCA Manufacturing Company, Inc.
- Farbman--1.2
- G. Schirmer, Inc.--1.3
- Glenn, Creda--1.3
- Griffiths, Samuel--See Pine Peak (N.H.)
- Hodgson, Hugh--See Tas, Helen Teschner
- Hollander, Norman--1.3
- Hollander, Ralph--1.3
- Hughes, William J.--1.3
- Ingle, Edward T.--See National Committee for Music Appreciation. New York Chapter
- International Master Editions, Inc.--1.3
- Krook, Mary--See Musicians Emergency Fund, Inc.
- Levy, Leo--1.3
- Mason, Daniel Gregory, 1873-1953--1.3
- Master Scores, Inc.--See International Master Editions, Inc.
- Miller, Hortense--See Arnold Volpe Memorial Building and Orchestra Fund
- Musicians Emergency Fund, Inc.--1.3
- Nadien, George--1.4
- National City Safe Deposit Co. (New York, N.Y.)--1.4
- National Committee for Music Appreciation. New York Chapter--1.4
- Ormandy, Eugene, 1899-1985--1.4; see also Pitcairn, Raymond
- Pine Peak (Groton, N.H.)--1.4
- Pitcairn, Raymond, 1885- --1.4
- Pochon, J.--1.4
- Polley, Mrs. H. M.--1.4
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- Raimondi, Frances--1.4
- Reese, Gustave--See G. Schirmer, Inc.
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- Stern, Lee--See Who Is Who in Music, Inc.
- Tas, Helen Teschner--1.4
- Thompson, Randall, 1899- --See Mason, Daniel Gregory
- Torre, Nina Cioffi--1.4
- Valasek, J.--See Levy, Leo
- Who Is Who in Music, Inc.--1.4

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- 1--059188000054683
- 2--059188000054672