

A Guide to the Donald Erb Collection, 1960-1975

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A Collection in University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University SC 209

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History

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Descriptive Summary

Accession number

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Language

English

Abstract

Contains scores, musical programs, LP records, and compact discs of American composer Donald Erb.

Creator

Donald Erb

Physical Characteristics

2.0 Linear feet.

Location

Located in locked compact shelving, level 1, shelf 12B.

Repository

University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

An appointment for research is required. Collection is open for research. No interlibrary loan. For more visit the full collection at [Donald Erb Collection](#)

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

The Donald Erb Collection was donated by Radford University Music Professor Bruce Mahin, a personal friend of composer Donald Erb. The LPs and CDs were donated by Lucille Erb, Donald Erb's widow.

Preferred Citation

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Accruals

Additional accruals are expected.

Custodial History

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Biographical Information

Biography of Donald Erb, from Grove Music Online: After service in the US Navy during World War II, he attended Kent State University (BS 1950) and then studied composition with Marcel Dick at the Cleveland Institute of Music (MM 1952), Boulanger in Paris (1953) and Heiden at Indiana University, Bloomington (DMus 1964). He was appointed to the composition and theory faculty (1953-61), was composer-in-residence (1966-81), Distinguished Professor of Composition (1987-96) and became professor emeritus in 1996 at the Cleveland Institute; he was also composer-in-residence with the Dallas SO (1968-9) and professor of composition at Indiana University (1975-6, 1984-7) and Southern Methodist University, Dallas (1981-4). He was the recipient of numerous awards, prizes, fellowships and commissions.

Erb's approach to composition was mainly intuitive, but was based upon a strong foundation of musical craftsmanship. His conception of form was fundamentally organic: he frequently used a specific intervallic configuration or cell, melodic or rhythmic motives, and/or sonic gestures as the basis for a whole movement or work. He employed these 'seeds' to generate growth through developmental processes - using varieties of textures and sonorities as well as limited aleatoricism - towards a goalorientated succession of climaxes, analogues to the concept of variation. Although his works always have a tonal foundation, he used contemporary means, such as pitch repetition and pedal points, to establish a sequence of fluctuating tonics. His works are analogous to traditional forms and exhibit clear musical structures. His interest in incorporating improvisatory and aleatory elements in his music reflects his great interest and background in jazz.

In the 1960s, he developed his mature style based on exploring the sound capabilities of traditional instruments and electronically synthesized sound, as well as relationships between the two. *Reconnaissance* (1967) was one of the first compositions of its day to utilize the interaction of real-time performance with electronically generated sounds. Such works as *Fallout* (1964), *Kyrie* (1965), *Fission* (1968) and *The Purple-Roofed Ethical Suicide Parlor* (1972) reflect his response to the Cold War and the Vietnam conflict, and contain violent sonorous explosions. In the 1970s he embarked on a series of virtuoso concertos that made increased technical demands on performers.

His works from the 1980s and 90s reveal a greater emphasis on counterpoint and chromaticism than in his earlier works. Furthermore, he used chorales and hymns in such works as the *Concerto for Brass and Orchestra* (1986), *Watchman Fantasy* (1988), *Children's Song* (1995) and *Sunlit Peaks and Dark Valleys* (1995). His *Ritual Observances* (1991) for orchestra was written to honour the bicentennial of the death of Mozart; as a basis for this work Erb used music from the first eight bars of the 'Lachrymosa' of Mozart's Requiem. In all of these works the borrowed passages are seldom clearly audible and fragments are usually used as compositional germs.

Source: John G. Suess. "Erb, Donald." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08910>.

Scope and Content

Contains scores, musical programs, LP records, and compact discs of American composer Donald Erb. Scores and programs range from the years 1963- 1974 and feature such scores as "Space Music," and "Stargazing."

Also included is a program from opening night of the "New England Prospect." The collection also holds long play (LP) records of Donald Erb's compositions such as "Quintet," and "Harold's Trip to the Sky." Along with Compact Discs (CD) including "Symphony of Winds" and "Sunlight Peaks and Dark Valleys."

Arrangement

Collection is arranged as follows:

1. Scores and Programs
2. LP Records and Compact Discs

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