

## Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Music Department

**Title: Russell G. Wichmann Collection**

### Overview of the Collection

**Reference Code:** Pittsburgh Music Archive #15

**Creator:** Russell G. Wichmann (1912-1987)

**Dates:** 1936-1987

**Extent:** 1 box

**Language:** English

### **Repository:**

Music Department, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-Main, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**Acquisition Information:** Donated to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Music Department by Russell G. Wichmann's wife, Mina Belle Wichmann.

**Copyright:** none

**Restrictions:** none

**Requested Citation:** Russell G. Wichmann Collection, Pittsburgh Music Archive #15, Music Department, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

**Finding Aid Created by:** Mina Belle Wichmann, Joelle Killebrew

### **Related Finding Aids:**

- Correspondence to and from Pittsburgh Musicians, Pittsburgh Music Archive #14

### Notes on the Collection

#### **Historical Note**

Russell G. Wichmann was the organist and director of music at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh for 51 years (1936-1987). He was a professor and the head of the Music Department at Chatham College (1946-1978). He was the director of the Mendelssohn Choir (1952-1966). He was the first university organist at the Heinz Chapel, University of Pittsburgh (1938-1945). He was also a composer and recitalist.

#### **Scope and Content**

Three binders of correspondence, photos, news clippings and programs

## Container List

### **BOX 1**

- **Binder #1**
  - A narrative account of early days in Appleton, WI, graduate work in New York City, his arrival in Pittsburgh in 1936, and the celebration of his 50 years at the Shadyside Presbyterian Church as director of music and organist.
- **Binder #2**
  - Letters of tribute from colleagues, written for his 50th anniversary celebration on June 1, 1986
- **Binder #3**
  - A selection of photos, news items, and correspondence - including letters from William Steinberg, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and Marcel Duprè.

## See also

- Baynham, Edward G. [\*A History of Pittsburgh Music, 1758-1958\*](#)
- [Pittsburgh Music Information File](#)
- [Maurice Levy Oral History of Music in Pittsburgh Collection](#) #255

## Heinz Memorial Chapel

July 27, 2020

This week marks the 108th birthday of Russell G. Wichmann, first organist at the Chapel and as a member of Pitt's Music Department, the first University Organist. According to his obituary in the September 25, 1987 edition of "The Pittsburgh Press," he came to Pitt in 1936. Beginning with the Chapel's dedication two years later, Mr. Wichmann presided at the manuals of the Chapel's Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ (Opus 922) until 1947. Becoming an esteemed member of the city's music community, the Wisconsin native served as Dean of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Guild of Organists from 1941 through 1942, but at the end of that term, he entered another service -- military. For three and-a-half years, Mr. Wichmann served as Warrant Officer with the Fourth Infantry Division as a Band Leader. He and the band members landed at Utah Beach fourteen days after D-Day. They boarded a ship in January 1943 for England, where they received training before crossing the Channel to France. Discharged on December 7, 1945, he was awarded five battle stars and the Bronze Medal. While he left Pitt less than two years after his return from World War II, and the Chapel, he remained in the city to serve as Professor and Chairman of the Music Department of Chatham College, as well as Organist and Director of Music at Shadyside Presbyterian Church. In later years, while not serving the Chapel in an official capacity, Mr. Wichmann collaborated with the late Dr. Robert Lord in the design of the Möller pipe organ (Opus 19642) dedicated on March 21, 1971 that replaced the Aeolian-Skinner and preceded the current Reuter (Opus 2176). The grainy portrait of him is from a "Pitt News" of January 9, 1946, while the image showing him seated at an organ is from a Chatham yearbook and the one with choir members is from Shadyside Presbyterian Church.