Treasures from the Collection of Florian Bruyas

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Music Library
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Case 1 -

In the short life of the University at Buffalo Music Library, its relationship with antiquarian book dealers has been crucial to the development of the collection. James Coover, founding director of the music library, utilized catalogs like this one to find new items to be purchased for the library. He did not hesitate to acquire the items from the highlighted Bruyas collection. In the article co-authored with Carol June Bradley “The Genesis of a Music Library: SUNY at Buffalo,” there appears a mention of its acquisition. It states, “…in 1982, a rich collection of forty-nine more French scores came from writer Florian Bruyas’s collection, most of which contained his tipped-in photos, newspaper clippings, drawings of stagings, and cast lists. Another large group from his library was acquired a few years later.” Because of Coover’s relationship with the European dealers like Hermann Baron, and his enthusiasm for collecting unique items, the library now boasts 125 of the original 987 volumes available for purchase.

This letter from Hermann Baron to James Coover details the extent of the Bruyas collection and the great lengths Baron went to in its acquisition.

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Dear Jim,

Many thanks for your complimentary letter with cheque for the books. Christel Wallbaum’s packing technique was developed to a high degree of perfection over the years and complaints about damaged parcels, however roughly treated in transit, no longer come our way.

We acquired the Bruyas collection about 18 months ago. There were 987 vocal (no full) scores, of which 60 were non-operatic ones. The son of Florian Bruyas approached us via the French ABA and we went to view the formidable collection about two years ago. Florian Bruyas was a member of the French Senate; his passion was the French operetta and he bought any he could lay his hands on over many years, plus quite a number of opera conque and operas. All were bound in half leather; he probably employed more than one binder. The larger collections, e.g., Massenet, Lecocq, Massagne, Aurias, Varney, Ofenbach, Saint-Saëns, were allotted a colour each: Massagne orange, Massagne crimson red, Varney dark green, Ofenbach I can’t remember. It was irresistible, despite the formidable difficulty of transporting it all from Lyon to London. The only way was to hire a three-ton van from Avis and Christel and I took turns in driving it from London via Paris and back in five days, including loading the 21,111.03

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Realia – The object on display is the original Baron catalog, open to the title page listing the Bruyas collection.
As testament to the relationship Coover had with his book dealers, the return letter from Coover to H. Baron illustrates a collegiality that often worked to the benefit of the UB Music Library.
Florian Bruyas was born in Lyon in 1901. After attending high school and serving in the military, he joined his family iron business where he worked until after World War II. At that point he entered politics, serving as the secretary of the 6th Arrondissement of Lyon from 1946 to 1952 and as a French senator from 1953 until 1968. While serving in the Senate, he was involved in farmers’ rights and protections, and birth control legislation.

Above all, Florian was a lover of music. His time on the Committee of Cultural Affairs allowed him to explore this interest as he fought for the well-being of artists and a higher cultural level.
status for conductors. In addition, he served as the director of the National Music Conservatory of Lyon. Upon leaving the Senate in 1968, he was able to focus on his opera hobby, researching and eventually writing *Histoire de l’Operette en France (1855-1965)*, which was published in 1974 and is considered the seminal volume for the study of French opera.

**Case 2 -**

A defining feature of the collection is the binding. Each score was bound in half-leather, with each color representing a different composer.

Realia – the object shown in the exhibit is Albert Grisar’s *Les Carillonneur de Bruges*, positioned to show the unique binding.

Florian Bruyas signed many of the title pages of the scores in his collection. His signature is one characteristic that enabled us to locate each volume.
As director of the Lyon Conservatory, one can only speculate that Bruyas was involved in staging and directing student performances of the operas, as evidenced by the handwritten performance directions found in a few volumes.
Case 3-

Les Saintes Maries de la mer, by Emile Paladilhe, contains what are presumably hand-colored and illuminated illustrations that surround a plot summary for each of the four acts of the opera. This illustration precedes Act 1.

Les Saintes Maries, illustration preceding Act 2.

Les Saintes Maries, illustration preceding Act 3.
As a lover of opera and operettas, Bruyas was aware of the many performances that took place throughout France. In many of the scores he handwrote cast lists for each performance.

From the score of *Les 28 Jours de Clairette*, Roger Victor.
Case 4-

*Messaline*, by Isidore de Lara, is the most elaborate of all of the Bruyas volumes. Prior to each act of the opera are hand-drawn stage designs and watercolors of the sets for each act. Also included in this volume are handwritten notes and annotations, handwritten cast lists and photographs of the actors and stage sets. The two watercolors above are on the pages prior to Act 3.

*Messaline*, stage design for the set of Act 3.

*Messaline*, stage design for the set of Act 1.
Messaline, watercolor of the set for Act 1.

Messaline, stage design for the set of Act 2.

Messaline, watercolor of the set for Act 2.

Messaline, stage design for the set of Act 4.
Messaline, watercolor of the set for Act 4.

Many of the photos appear in “color” and were carefully cut out by Bruyas for inclusion in his scores, as illustrated by this photo of Charlotte Wyns.
Another defining feature of the collection is the addition of photos of cast members, which appear to be clipped from programs or magazines. In most cases, Bruyas added handwritten notes identifying the performers.
From the score of *Le bon Roi Dagobert*, Marcel Samuel-Rousseau

Photos of performances are included and give insight into what the sets, costumes, and stagings for each opera looked like.

Along with photos of performers, Bruyas included newspaper articles, including reviews, advertisements for upcoming performances, and obituaries.

From the score of *Mam'zelle Nitouche*, Hervé
These photos of Mme. Anna Judic appear in *Mam’zelle Nitouche* and can also be found in *Histoire de l’Opérette en France* (1855-1965).

*Monsieur Dumollet*, by Louis Urgel, also contains many colored photos, including these images of Edmée Favart.
M. Vilbert and M. Robert Burnier, performers in *Monsieur Dumollet*.

It is interesting to note that the name Louis Urgel is actually a pseudonym for Mme. Louise Legru, the female composer of *Monsieur Dumollet*. 