

9-2018

Documenting the genesis of the International Horn Society

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Recommended Citation

Cooper, Zachary, "Documenting the genesis of the International Horn Society" (2018). *University Grant Program Reports*. 50.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/ugp-reports/50>

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UGP Small Grant - Final Report

UGP 2017: Documenting the genesis of the International Horn Society

Objective

The primary objective of this project was to enhance the historical, educational, and pedagogical records regarding the inauguration of the International Horn Society (IHS) by creating new audio documents with 97-year-old founder William “Bill” C. Robinson. The applicant would conduct a week of interviews with IHS founder Robinson (born 1919) to create an audio document of his personal insights and recollections regarding Robinson’s important contributions to the founding of the IHS. This project would commemorate and honor Robinson’s legacy to the international horn community, create a greater biographical footprint of his life, and enhance the international pedagogical archive.

Objectives would be carried out by Dr. Zachary Cooper by travelling to Robinson’s home in Winter Springs, FL, where he would conduct and record a week of interviews and create audio documents of Robinson’s life and work. These interviews would be recorded by Cooper using his own recording and computer equipment. Due to Robinson’s age, these interviews were of a time-sensitive nature and needed to be conducted expeditiously. The applicant sought funding for travel to and from Missoula, MT, to Winter Springs, FL, the interview site.

Summary

Cooper travelled during the week of May 27-June 1, 2017 and met with Bill Robinson, his wife, Nimrie Robinson, and his daughter, Charlotte Robinson in his living room in Winter Springs, Florida. Cooper’s close relationship, as a former student of Robinson’s, enabled him to have a candid and personal conversation with the Robinson family. During their meetings, Cooper recorded more than three hours of unedited audio recordings. Due to Robinson’s health (he was 97 at the time), he would often return to the same story several times before moving on. However, the trip was a great success and ended up providing more than the original scope of the project.

In addition to completing the initial objective of collecting audio samples recounting the genesis of the International Horn Society, Cooper also recorded important reflections regarding Robinson’s career and family and his pedagogical philosophies. At age 97, Robinson was still teaching a private studio (at his home) of approximately twelve students. With over 75 years of teaching experience, Robinson is a master teacher, evident in his many students’ successes. Documenting his pedagogical views via the audio documents is a priceless commodity for all hornist educators and

musicians globally. Furthermore, Robinson gave recollections from his entire career, including time as a music student, as a public school educator, as a military band musician during World War II, as a university professor, as a professional musician, as a retired teacher of a private studio, and as a family man.

Dissemination

The forthcoming documents are to be published in a variety of media.

1) A transcription of the interview, edited for content and length, is to be published as an article in the journal of the International Horn Society, *The Horn Call*. The journal is tri-annually published and disseminated to the entire membership of more than 3,500 hornists, including internationally renowned touring artists, symphony musicians, university teachers, students, horn designers/builders, composers, music libraries, music publishers, and amateur players of all ages and walks of life, in 55 countries and in a variety of languages. The edited interview article titled, "In His Own Words: Meet Bill Robinson," has been approved for publication in *The Horn Call* Volume XLIX (49), No. 2, February 2019 issue. As submitted, it is approximately 5,700 words and includes photographs from Robinson's personal photo albums.

2) Cooper is currently working with the webmaster for the International Horn Society to build a webpage that commemorates Robinson and the genesis of the International Horn Society. The webpage will include photographs from Robinson's photo albums and audio excerpts from the live interviews with Cooper regarding a variety of topics from historical to pedagogical. The webpage will be housed on the hornsociety.org website and will be available to the entire international community.

3) Recorded audio documents will be sent to the Sibley Music Library International Horn Society Archives.

Significance

Creating archival documents of the founding of the IHS is vital to the development of the horn world, but is perhaps most important for younger players in understanding the development of our performance, pedagogy, and publication history. This project has been a significant improvement in the recorded history of the International Horn Society and is unparalleled in wind or brass society historical archives. Hornists around the world will have readily available access to the legacy of Robinson through documents and publications as a result of this research. The educational impact of this project and its efforts to record the genesis of the IHS is invaluable.

Through execution of this project, the University of Montana has become recognized as a forerunner in innovative research in music, and this has enhanced the School of Music's international reputation. These archival recordings are the first of their kind and are a significant contribution to the horn world and higher education.

Lastly, Nimrie Robinson, who participated in the recordings, passed away in June of 2018 at the age of 93. As of this final report, Bill Robinson is still in good health. In December of 2018, Bill will turn 99 years old. This project has produced the only archival recording of the nature of Bill and Nimrie's relationship, a marriage of 72 years.

Cooper is grateful to the University of Montana UGP Small Grant program for support of this project.