

CURTIS THEN AND NOW



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Images of Curtis's past and present are at
www.curtis.edu/ThenAndNow



As the Curtis Institute of Music celebrates its 90th-anniversary year, we take pride and pleasure in looking back on a storied history: paying tribute to the wisdom of great teachers and the legacy they pass down through the generations; treasuring the buildings, both old and new, where students play and learn; and reveling in honored traditions that continue today.

RECITALS

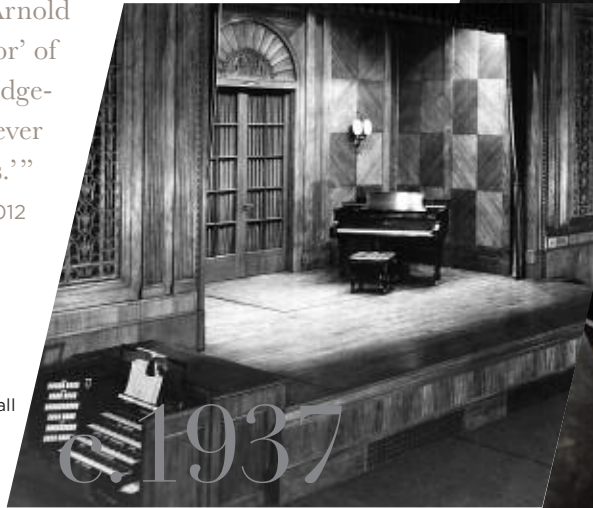
In the school's early years, recitals took place in a combined assembly room and conservatory for plants (see back cover) on the site of the current Field Concert Hall. By 1927 a new state-of-the-art hall had been built. Ever since, "the Hall" has lived in the memory of thousands of Curtis students who found it both intimidating and inspiring to perform there.

"The Hall is the unifying factor running through nearly nine decades of superlative music-making. It leaves an indelible impression on performers that is eerily uniform, and everyone who has ever studied or taught at Curtis shares this bond. The weight of history alone can be intimidating ... Violinist Arnold Steinhardt recalls the 'sheer terror' of performing in front of 'the most knowledgeable and critical audience (he) would ever encounter—the Curtis faculty and students.'"

—*Overtones*, Spring 2012

1974: Practicing for a recital
PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/GEORGE KRAUSE

1974



c. 1937: A view of Casimir Hall (as it was then called), ten years after its construction
PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES

c. 1937

2014: Daniel and Ashley Hsu
PHOTO: PETE CHECCHIA

2014



LIBRARY

At first Curtis's library lived in the main building at 1726 Locust Street. Students pored over scores and books in the Reading Room (now the Bok Room). A spiral staircase led to basement stacks filling another eight rooms. By 1975 the collection had been moved next door to 1720 Locust Street, where, as the Rock Resource Center, it remains today. A full renovation of the Rock Resource Center was completed in 2013.

"In less than four years the Library of the Institute has grown to proportions which mark it as one of the outstanding collections of music and literature on music in the country ... Books at present number 2,363, while the number of musical titles is 9,646."

—*Overtones*, March 1930

c. 1930





“In my student days, we coached mostly with Louis Bailly ... It was always very technical ... With the coming of the Guarneri Quartet and Felix Galimir—and for many years, Jascha Brodsky and I coached chamber music here too—we endeavored to impart a love for the music itself.”

—Orlando Cole, oral history, October 2001

CHAMBER MUSIC

The distinguished history of chamber music at Curtis began before its founding, with a legendary ensemble that served as inspiration to the faculty: the revered Joachim Quartet. A painting of the quartet adorned the wall of the rehearsal studio in which Louis Bailly trained the students who would ultimately form the Curtis String Quartet in the 1930s. Today most students at Curtis play chamber music, in increasingly varied forms; and a string quartet in residence rehearses in a studio containing a portrait of the Guarneri Quartet, that fabled ensemble made up of Curtis alumni.

c. 1928: Louis Bailly with students in front of a painting of the Joachim Quartet PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES

1936: When the Curtis String Quartet toured Europe, its members met up with their former classmate Samuel Barber in Rome, where he was studying. The Curtis Quartet was closely identified with Barber's *Dover Beach* for baritone and string quartet, as well as his String Quartet, Op. 11, with its famous Adagio. PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES

2014: The Dover Quartet, first string quartet in residence through the string quartet program inaugurated in 2013, gathers in front of a painting of the Guarneri Quartet by Curtis alumnus Gary Logsdon. PHOTO: HELENE VAN ROSSUM



c. 1930: Studying in the original library PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/KUBEY-REMBRANDT STUDIOS

1938: The reading room (now the Bok Room), viewed from the staircase that led to eight rooms of books in the basement PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/FRITZ HENLE

2014: The reference section of the Rock Resource Center, seen after its recent renovation PHOTO: DAVID SWANSON

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ORCHESTRA

Ever since Leopold Stokowski conceived it as a training ground for budding Philadelphia Orchestra musicians, the Curtis orchestra has prepared students to graduate into the leading ensembles of the world. At first Stokowski led rehearsals in the common room. Then for decades the orchestra was shoehorned into the recital hall, placing double basses and percussionists in its balconies. The advent of Lenfest Hall in 2011 relocated rehearsals into the spacious and acoustically superb Gould Rehearsal Hall.

“I have always dreamed of an ideal training method for our [Philadelphia] Orchestra—at last it is come—in the student orchestras of The Curtis Institute. I can develop completely trained young artists fully equipped for every school of symphony playing—an opportunity of the highest value.”

—Leopold Stokowski, head of the orchestra department from 1924 to 1927, quoted in *Seventy-Five Years of The Curtis Institute of Music*



1925: Leopold Stokowski leads an orchestra rehearsal (assisted by Thaddeus Rich) in the common room. PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES



1938: The legendary Fritz Reiner, shown rehearsing in the recital hall, led the orchestra and the conducting program for a decade, from 1931 to 1941.

PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/FRITZ HENLE



2011: Yannick Nézet-Séguin led a reading with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in Gould Rehearsal Hall shortly after becoming music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has since joined the Curtis faculty as mentor to today's conducting fellows. PHOTO: JESSICA GRIFFIN

“It’s incredible that in a school setting, this training approach is embraced,” remarks faculty member Chas Rader-Shieber, who has directed more than 25 Curtis Opera Theatre productions. “These young artists are prepared to be singers of consequence—they’re going to be ready.”

—*Overtones*, Spring 2011



OPERA

From Curtis’s debut opera production in 1929 to the present day, opera and voice students have benefited from rubbing shoulders with leading professionals. In the 1930s they performed side-by-side with artists of Philadelphia’s primary opera company in productions that ranged from lush-landscape-traditional (*Tiefland*) to cutting edge (*Wozzeck*, in its American premiere); today the Curtis Opera Theatre presents three to four productions annually to capacity audiences, with superb artistic and production values.



1929: Curtis staged Eugen d’Albert’s *Tiefland* at the Academy of Music amid elaborately painted backdrops.
PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/ KUBEY-REMBRANDT STUDIOS

2013: When the Curtis Opera Theatre performed Benjamin Britten’s *Owen Wingrave* at the Perelman Theatre two seasons ago, the sets were dominated by futuristic projections. The production was part of Curtis’s annual collaboration with Opera Philadelphia and the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. PHOTO: DAVID SWANSON



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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC



Composers, both teachers and students, have been active at Curtis from its first days, from Barber and Menotti to Rorem and beyond. Their successors continue to study, create, and perform the music of their time. They are inspired by annual composers in residence; mentored by the contemporary ensemble in residence, eighth blackbird; and offered performance opportunities in abundance by the student contemporary music group, the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble. Curtis has also created commissioning opportunities, like Curtis On Tour, that allow for repeat performances of new works.

1938: Samuel Barber and Gian Carlo Menotti were closely identified with Curtis, first as students and later as faculty members. PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/FRITZ HENLE



1999: A panel of Curtis composition faculty near the millennium: Ned Rorem, Richard Danielpour, and Jennifer Higdon PHOTO: CURTIS ARCHIVES/DON TRACY



“What I would like to bring about in Curtis, which has so many skilled young performers, is a real liaison between the composition students and the performers. I would like to convey to those young performers how important it is for them to play the music being created in their own time ... I would like the young composers who are working with me not merely to think about a work in the abstract, but to follow through on it, bring it to the point of being performed.”

—Ned Rorem, *Saturday Review*, October 19, 1980

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2014: Curtis composition faculty and alumni composers were featured in concert in October 2014, co-presented by Curtis and American Public Media's *Performance Today* (l. to r.): Katerina Kramarchuk, David Ludwig, Chiyau Hsu, Richard Danielpour, Zhou Tian PHOTO: NATE RYAN/AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA