

Turning Loss into Gain: Cello Music Collections at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Margery Enix

Margery Enix is professor of music at Chapman University in Orange, California. A student of Luigi Silva, she earned a B.M. degree in cello performance from Yale University. She holds M.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Indiana University.

A close associate of Rudolf Matz during his last decade, she recently completed a biography of Matz that includes substantial appendices on his basic principles of cello playing and a detailed listing in both English and Croatian of his more than 500 compositions. The book is scheduled for publication this winter by Dominis Music of Ottawa.

When Luigi Silva (1903-1961) died suddenly 30 years ago this November, his students and colleagues suffered an irreparable loss.¹ Silva's death has left a legacy, however, that increasingly honors his contributions to music as one of the great cellists and cello teachers of the twentieth century.

Part of the shock and grief over Silva's untimely demise came from a realization that it cut short his work on so many important projects. Compelled by a sense of urgency compounded of musical, scholarly, and personal ties, one of his colleagues, Elizabeth Cowling of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), took on the task of ensuring the preservation of an important part of Silva's legacy.² With her persuasive guidance, the Friends of the Library of UNCG purchased Silva's library from his widow in 1963. The following year, the UNCG library staff completed a cross-reference listing of the Silva material, which they later published in a handsome catalogue.³

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Since then, cellists and scholars have had access to this treasure of manuscripts, rare books and musical editions, correspondence, and other documents. Among the many remarkable items in the collection are more than 2000 manuscript leaves of Silva's own pedagogical and historical writings.⁴

But the acquisition of the Silva library is only the first chapter in the story of the Cello Music Collections at UNCG. It turned out to be the beginning of a series of acquisitions that together comprise the most extensive and arguably the most valuable collection of cello music in the United States, especially in the area of pedagogical materials.

Other collections acquired since that of Silva include those of cello historian Elizabeth Cowling and cello theorist Rudolf Matz. Janos Scholz, the venerable New York cellist, art historian, and collector of cello bows, has promised UNCG his cello music library in his will, having already given the library an eighteenth-century manuscript of 29 unidentified cello sonatas and 11

cello arrangements of opera arias. The collection of Pablo Casals' longtime associate, Maurice Eisenberg (1901-1972), was recently promised to the library by his daughter Maruta Friedler. Other acquisitions are in various stages of negotiation, and there are indications that, as word spreads of the UNCG commitment of resources and expert attention to this project, still more collections will be added.

Each of the collections thus far acquired or promised is unique. Little ephemera or exact duplication exists among the five sets listed above. All share a common strength in pedagogical materials, but each has its own distinctive profile, reflecting the interests of the collector.

The Silva Collection

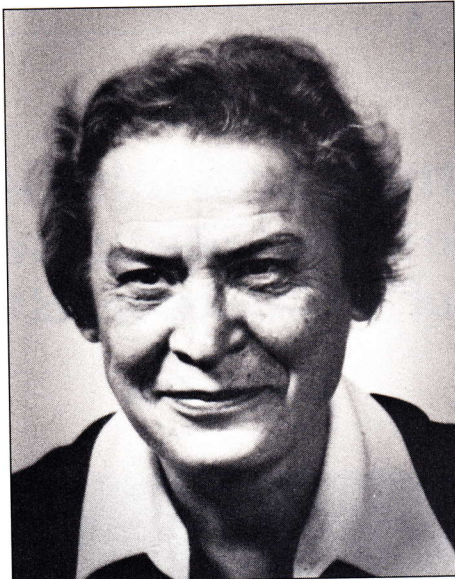
The first acquisition established the general theme for the Cello Music Collections at UNCG. Luigi Silva was "above all else a great teacher of the cello."⁵ His library contains a systematic collection of cello study material dating from the seventeenth century.⁶

Born in Milan in 1903, Silva had his first cello lessons there and continued them in Parma, Rome, and Bologna, where he was a student of Arturo Bonucci at the Liceo. He graduated from the Liceo with degrees in cello performance and music pedagogy. After establishing himself as an orchestral musician (principal cellist of the Opera Orchestra in Rome), chamber player (cellist of the Quartetto di Roma) and virtuoso soloist (winner of the Boccherini Prize in Rome in 1933), Silva performed throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, becoming known as the "Paganini of the Cello."

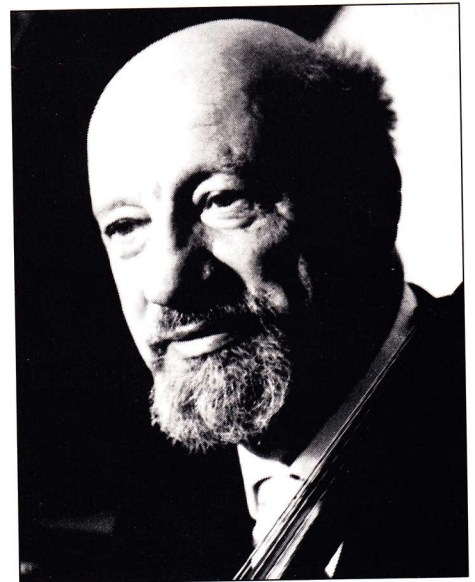
Silva began his teaching career in 1933, serving on the faculties of conservatories in Teramo, Padua, Venice, and Florence before emigrating with



Luigi Silva



Elizabeth Cowling



Rudolph Matz

his family to the United States in 1939.

In America he continued performing as a soloist and as a member of chamber ensembles, including the Mannes-Gimpel-Silva Trio, but his love of teaching increasingly occupied his time and creative energies. Having had to overcome the difficulties posed by his own small hands, Silva developed what amounted to a genius for building technique in his students. Between 1940 and his death 21 years later, he taught at the Mannes School of Music in New York, Eastman, Yale, Juilliard, Peabody, and the Hartt College of Music, turning out dozens of professional cellists, many of whom, like him, took up combined careers as performer-teachers. Among his students are two former editors of the *AST Cello Forum*, Gordon Epperson and Charles Wendt; Joel Krosnick of the Juilliard String Quartet; concert artists Timothy Eddy, Avram Lavin, and Barbara Stein Mallow of New York, and many others.

Though not a composer himself, Silva had studied composition with Rosario Scalero and Ottorino Respighi, and he published a number of excellent transcriptions and editions of cello music (pieces by Schubert, Kreutzer, Paganini, Vitali, Boccherini, and others). Several works remain unpublished; manuscript copies of nearly all of them are in his collection in the library in Greensboro, where they invite study and preparation for publication.

The Silva Collection reflects his fascination with every aspect of cello playing. In addition to his own writings on the subject, the collection contains hundreds of works—many now long

out of print—addressing one or another feature of the structural, technical, or musical development of the instrument and its literature. The collection includes manuscripts and published copies of Silva's transcriptions and editions of concert repertoire (e.g., the Casella *Notturmo e tarentella*) and of his pedagogical works, such as his transcriptions of the Kreutzer *42 Etudes* and the Paganini *24 Caprices*. Especially valuable are his holograph editions of Boccherini cello sonatas and concertos, some of which were never published; the Silva Catalogue lists 45 entries on his holograph Boccherini editions alone.

Also of great interest are the many "working" copies of printed cello music, with performance notes and markings in Silva's own hand. Rare first editions of treatises such as *The Theory and Practice of Fingering the Violoncello* by John Gunn (c.1765-c.1824) reflect Silva's interest in the history of cello playing. His own musicological and pedagogical writings have been described in detail elsewhere.⁷

The Cowling Collection

A direct link exists between Silva and Elizabeth Cowling, Emeritus Professor of Music at UNCG. She was his student and colleague during the last 15 years of his life. Cowling was born in 1910 in Northfield, Minnesota, where her father was president of Carleton College. She holds degrees in philosophy and economics (B.A. from Carleton and M.A. from Columbia) and in music (M.M. and Ph.D. from Northwestern). After early cello studies in the United States, she went to Paris in 1929 to

study with Paul Bazelaire. Later, after establishing herself as a teacher and performer back in the U.S., she returned to Europe to study briefly with Casals in Prades. Wishing to increase her playing and teaching ability still further, she took her first lessons from Silva at the Eastman School of Music in 1946. From the beginning of their association, she developed a close working relationship with Silva, which lasted until his death. From 1945 until her retirement in 1976, Cowling taught at UNCG. Inspired partly by her work with Silva, she developed an interest in cello history and pedagogy that led to the establishment of the Cello Music Collections at the university.

The Cowling Collection, now undergoing preliminary processing at UNCG, features pedagogical and historical materials, among them an exceptionally fine store of Italian Baroque cello pieces gathered for her 1967 dissertation, *The Italian Literature for the Violoncello in the Baroque Era*. Her collection is also strong in books and treatises on the cello as well as mint condition copies of out-of-print cello music.

The Rudolph Matz Collection

In June 1991, the library staff began cataloguing materials in the Rudolph Matz Collection. Matz's relationship with the university developed through a common tie with both Silva and Cowling. The former sought him out as a pedagogical collaborator, and the latter began corresponding with Matz when she was writing her book, *The Cello*.

Matz (1901-1988) was a native of Zagreb, Yugoslavia, where he spent



Janos Scholz

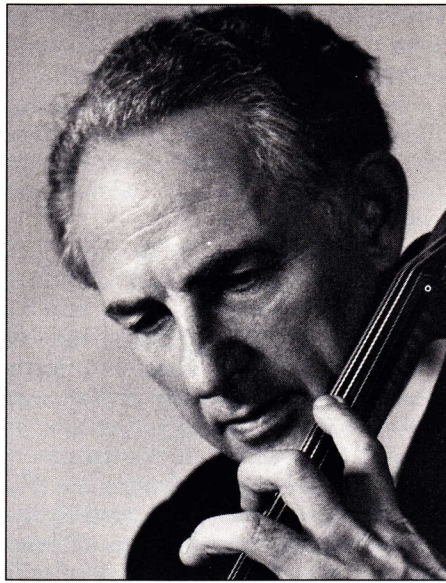
Photo: Grobet

nearly his entire life. Like Silva, he developed an interest in pedagogy that came to dominate his career. When the Second World War cut short his performing career, Matz retreated inward and began conceiving the work that would bring him to the attention of cellists around the world, his 32-volume *First Years of Violoncello*.⁸ Silva became acquainted with parts of this work in the early 1950s, and when Matz and his wife were in the U.S. during 1955-57, the two men met and began exchanging ideas. They planned to write a cello method together but had only begun organizing it when Silva died in 1961.

The Matz-Silva correspondence and the unfortunately few leaves of their collaborative effort are preserved in the collections at UNCG. Among the jewels in the Matz Collection are the autographs of almost all of Matz's nearly 100 original compositions for cello, including that of his magnum opus, *First Years of Violoncello*. Holographs of his more than 400 compositions in various other media are included in this collection, along with a fascinating assemblage of historical materials and memorabilia relating to his many-faceted career as one of the artistic leaders of his beloved homeland, Croatia. Ethnomusicologists and others interested in the history of music in the Balkan countries, especially Croatia, will find this a valuable new resource.

The Scholz Collection

The fourth cello music collection destined to take its place in the library at Greensboro is that of a Silva colleague from New York, Janos Scholz. Born in Sopron, Hungary, in 1903 and a



Maurice Eisenberg

Photo: Meitner-Graf

fifth-generation cellist, Scholz—like Silva, Cowling, and Matz—is a person of broad interests. Known in the musical world as a cellist, teacher (his students include Yo Yo Ma), and collector of bows, Scholz is equally famous in the art world for his expertise in diverse subjects, especially drawings by the Italian masters from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. He gave his priceless collection of more than 1500 Italian drawings to the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York in 1973.

Generous and out-going by nature, Scholz has a wide circle of friends and admirers. Along with Silva one of the founding members of the New York Violoncello Society in 1956, Scholz has enriched both the music and art worlds through his participation as a performer, teacher, scholar, collector, and international music competition jurist.

The Scholz Collection, most of which has yet to come to the library, is described by Alexander Broude as consisting of "two main sections: rare, early editions, largely inherited from his family; and modern publications of working materials assembled during his long professional career as soloist, teacher, and chamber music player." Scholz himself describes the part of his collection devoted to instructional methods and etudes as "particularly valuable and interesting for teaching purposes and research as, *in toto*, it traces the entire historical development of cello technique by leading masters of past eras."⁹

The Eisenberg Collection

Rounding out the quintet of holdings at UNCG is the recently promised

cello music library of Maurice Eisenberg. Born in Königsberg of Polish parents, Eisenberg was brought to the United States by his family when he was two years old. After early training in Baltimore, he played in the Philadelphia Orchestra before becoming principal cellist of the New York Symphony at the age of 18. In 1921 he had the opportunity to play for Casals, who was then touring the U.S. This meeting proved a turning point in Eisenberg's life because, with Casals' encouragement, the young cellist went to Europe the following year to continue his advanced training. Although Eisenberg studied with Klengel, Becker, and Alexanian, Casals was his most important mentor, and they became lifetime friends.

Following his successful debut in Paris in 1926, Eisenberg embarked on a long and successful concert career. He was "particularly known for the nobility of his playing, its beautiful tone, the warmth of his interpretation, the command of his technique, and his rhythmic vitality."¹⁰ He also developed an interest in teaching, holding positions at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris (where he succeeded Alexanian as professor of the Casals Class), the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the International Cello Centre in London, the Juilliard School of Music, and—during the last 10 years of his life—the International Summer Courses in Cascais, Portugal. His book, *Cello Playing of Today*, first published in 1957, is now in its fourth edition.

An exceptionally warm and generous person, Eisenberg became a beloved figure in the cello world. When I met him in 1958, he took time from a busy touring schedule to hear me play and to encourage me in my studies. I have always been grateful for his inspiring words and his kindness. Of course, I have since learned that such thoughtfulness was characteristic of the man.

The Eisenberg Collection is still being assessed by cataloguers at the Library of Congress and at UNCG. Contained in some 13 cartons, it promises riches to add yet another dimension to the contents of the collections already discussed.

Using the Library

The university has assembled a team of academic librarians, cellists, and scholars to facilitate access to the collections. Cataloguing information on the Cowling and Matz Collections is

being prepared and will be available through the OCLC system. Eventually the Silva Catalogue (prepared before the computer era) will be reformatted after the models of Cowling and Matz. As other collections arrive, they will be similarly processed.

These collections hold material of interest to several types of clientele. They have already begun serving scholars engaged in studying cello history. Elizabeth Cowling has used them for her work on Silva, and I have used them for my study of Matz. Cellists and cello teachers regularly consult the Silva Collection to obtain copies of rare or unpublished music for performance and instruction. For example, Elizabeth Anderson, the cellist on the School of Music faculty of UNCG, has just completed a recording of Silva transcriptions and editions of several works, which is being issued as part of the centennial celebration of the university during 1991-92; she used manuscripts from the Silva Collection as the principal source for this recording.

Additionally, readers of the "Find and Seek" column of the New York Violoncello Society *Newsletter* have located works in the Silva Catalogue and, when possible, have obtained photocopies for their own use. Teachers such as Martha Gerschefski have brought groups of students to the library to see firsthand the materials available there and to perform cello ensemble concerts using manuscripts from the Silva Collection.

Music editors such as Claude Kennison have used the Silva material as a primary resource in preparing new editions of the cello works of various composers. Bibliographers such as Dimitry Markevitch (author of *The Solo Cello: A Bibliography of the Unaccompanied Violoncello Literature*, published in 1989 by Fallen Leaf Press of Berkeley, Cali-

fornia) have drawn extensively on the Silva Collection for information used in their research and publications.

As other collections are catalogued and made available, we can anticipate increased use by performers, teachers, scholars and other interested individuals.¹¹

The value of the Cello Music Collections at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro cannot be overestimated. Though long a member of the great trio of classical musical instruments—along with the piano and violin—the cello has lagged somewhat behind the other two in the documentation of its history and literature. The last half of the twentieth century has seen the closing of this gap. Janos Starker calls our time the Golden Age of cello playing. He himself has played a vitally important role in creating this era. But others before him made equally strong contributions, especially the five cellists—Silva, Cowling, Matz, Scholz, and Eisenberg—whose libraries are now housed at or promised to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It is instructive to recall that the planting ground for this marvelous collection was prepared with the sorrow generated by the loss of one of the cello's foremost exponents, Luigi Silva. Though nothing could ever replace the man and his talents, the art to which he devoted his life is being well nourished by the fruits of his legacy.

1 The most complete biographical study of Silva remains Elizabeth Cowling's "Tribute to Luigi Silva" in the February 1980 New York Violoncello Society *Newsletter*. That issue is devoted entirely to Silva's life and work.

2 I wish to thank Dr. Cowling for permission to draw upon her research and writing in preparing this article. I am also indebted to several staff members of the Walter Clinton Jackson Library at UNCG for their

assistance, especially Emilie Mills, director of the Special Collections Division. I am grateful to my own university (Chapman University) for its generosity in granting me various kinds of help in my research.

3 Copies of the Silva Catalogue in hardcover or in paperback can be obtained by contacting Emilie Mills, Director of the Special Collections Division, Walter Clinton Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina, 27412-5201, (919) 334-5246.

4 Most of these documents are in Italian. In 1988, I completed an English translation of his unfinished treatise on the history of left-hand cello technique. A typescript copy of the translation, bound in three volumes (525 pp.), is now available for study as part of the Silva Collection.

5 Elizabeth Cowling, *The Cello* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 186.

6 Cowling reminds us that "Silva was taking an interest" in acquiring such material "decades before other cellists were aware of most of them" ("Tribute to Luigi Silva," 3).

7 See various articles by Cowling and Enix in the February 1980 issue of the New York Violoncello Society *Newsletter*.

8 For more information on Matz see, for example, my article entitled "Rudolf Matz: Cello Pedagogue, Composer, Humanist," *American String Teacher* Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter 1982): 24-26.

9 This and the immediately preceding quotation are from Broude's article, "Conversations with Janos at 80," New York Violoncello Society *Newsletter*, December 1983.

10 Cowling, *The Cello*, 175.

11 Readers who know of primary source materials, e.g., original copies of letters or manuscripts, print copies of cello music or books with performance notes in the hand of Silva or others listed above, or out-of-print recordings by any of the above, are invited to contact Emilie Mills of Special Collections, UNCG, concerning the possibility of contributing such materials to the appropriate collections. ♣