

ROSLYN WEISBURG COMINSKY COLLECTION

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UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

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Eugene Goossens and Roslyn Weisberg in rehearsal for performance of the Grieg Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (December 1925). Photograph from Roslyn Cominsky Collection, Box 2, Sleeve 15.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Shelf location: C3B 15,5

Physical extent: 2 linear feet

Biographical sketch



Portraits of Roslyn Weisburg Cominsky (left) and Jacob Robert Cominsky (right), from Roslyn Cominsky Collection, Box 2, Folder 9 and Folder 30, respectively.

Roslyn Weisburg (later Mrs. Roslyn Cominsky) (*b.* January 1, 1901, Syracuse, NY; *d.* June 3, 2000), formally designated the “first graduate of the Eastman School of Music,” graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1922. She was one of ESM’s most prominent and most generous benefactors. In recognition of her generous gifts, the grand hall on the second floor of the ESM main building was named the Cominsky Promenade, and, in 1995, the tower atop the ESM Student Living Center was dedicated as Cominsky Tower. The two together have made her a household name among ESM’s enrolled student body. In addition, the University of Rochester’s Rush Rhees Library has been the beneficiary of Mrs. Cominsky’s largesse, having received from her, in 1970, the funding for the Reading Room and Department of Rare Books Manuscripts and Archives, which was named to honor her husband, Jacob Robert Cominsky (1899–1968), an alumnus of the University of Rochester (class of 1920).

Alongside her prominent stature within the Eastman School community, Mrs. Cominsky’s performance career won her much praise. Following her graduation from Eastman, she was awarded fellowships from the Julliard Musical Foundation for three successive years, which funded advanced study under Ernest Hutcheson. One of her most notable performances was the U.S. premiere of Pantscho Wladigeroff’s First Piano Concerto with the Milwaukee Philharmonic Orchestra in 1931. The reviewer for the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote of her

performance, “The pianist revealed an immense resourcefulness. She was quick and sure in all the intricate exchanges with the orchestra and definite in her grasp of difficult rhythms. In melodic measures her piano sang warmly. There was color in every phase of the work. The ovation at the close was entirely earned.”

Mrs. Cominsky died on June 3, 2000, at the age of 99.

Provenance

The materials were received by the Sibley Music Library.

Scope and content note

The collection is comprised of personal papers of both Roslyn and J. R. Cominsky, publicity material relating to Mrs. Cominsky’s performance career, photographs, and awards. Among the personal papers are a holograph score of Mrs. Cominsky’s student composition “Why” for piano and voice and two theory notebooks, likely dating from her studies at Eastman. The series of photographs primarily consists of professional portraits of Roslyn and J. R. Cominsky; this series also includes three binders assembled by Eastman School of Music staff in acknowledgement of Mrs. Cominsky’s generous donations to the school.

Restrictions and use

There is no restriction on research access for study.

Associations

This collection is one of numerous special collections at RTWSC that document the careers and legacies of Eastman School of Music alumni. Among this group of collections, five are from other Eastman alumni from the school’s inaugural decade, namely the collections of Pauline Alpert (piano, studied 1923–1927), Paul Horgan (voice, BM 1926), Allen I. McHose (BM 1927, MM 1929), Edward N. Waters (BM 1927, MM 1928), and Ethel Codd Luening (opera, BM 1928). Additionally, the department holds the papers of two other Eastman keyboard alumni, Marie Erhart Pearson (piano, BM 1933) and Carl E. Amt (theory and organ, MM 1937).

DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

Series 1: Personal Papers

This series contains various personal items from the studies and careers of Roslyn Weisburg Cominsky and J. R. Cominsky. Notable within this series are a holograph score of Mrs. Cominsky's student composition "Why" for voice and piano, a limited sequence of correspondence, and two of Mrs. Cominsky's theory notebooks, likely from her studies at Eastman. Additional items include student publications (e.g., yearbook, alumni bulletin), concert programs, and the September 1990 issue of *Eastman Notes*, which documents Mrs. Cominsky's landmark bequest to the Eastman School of Music's building campaign.

Series 2: Publicity Materials

The items in this series date from Mrs. Cominsky's performing career as a concert pianist. Included in this series are clippings of newspaper reviews of her performances, concert programs featuring Mrs. Cominsky, and a few promotional materials.

Series 3: Photographs

The series of photographs is primarily comprised of professional portraits of Roslyn and J. R. Cominsky. The series also includes a portrait of Mrs. Cominsky's Eastman classmate Marion B. Eccleston (violin, BM 1922, MM 1935).

The series also preserves three binders that were gifted to Mrs. Cominsky by the Eastman School of Music in acknowledgement of her generous donations to the school. One binder includes photographs and press clippings relating to the Eastman Philharmonia (materials date from 1966–1980); the other two document the dedication of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky Promenade and the unveiling of the portrait of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky in the Student Living Center.

Series 4: Awards and Framed Iconography

This series contains a glass plaque documenting Mrs. Cominsky's life membership in the Rush Rhees Presidents Society, a certificate acknowledging Mrs. Cominsky's gift to Rush Rhees library (1970), and J. R. Cominsky's honorary doctorate from Ithaca College. The final items in this series are two hinged photograph frames, one containing a pair of portraits of Mrs. and Mr. Cominsky and the other a gift from Eastman School of Music and its students in acknowledgement of Mrs. Cominsky's contribution to the building fund for the Student Living Center.

INVENTORY

Series 1: Personal Papers

Box 1

Folder 1 “Why.” For voice and piano. Words and lyric by Roslyn Weisberg. Holograph score (pencil and ink); c1926. 3 pp.

Folder 2 Correspondence to Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky and/or J. R. Cominsky. 4 letters (4 typescript), 13 telegrams; dated between December 27, 1930, and August 20, 1982 (arranged chronologically).

- Correspondents represented: Eugene Goossens, John Cukins(?) (Juilliard School of Music), Robert Freeman, various friends and family.
- 12 telegrams are well wishes and congratulations to Roslyn Cominsky from friends and family for January 4, 1931, concert.

Folder 3 Roslyn (Weisberg) Cominsky Student Notebooks.
Ernest Hutcheson, *The Literature of the Piano from the 16th Century to the Present Time: A Survey in Seven Programs* (New York: Ernest Hutcheson, 1924). Booklet. 20 pp.
Notebook, labeled “Theory, Roslyn Weisberg.” Cloth-bound notebook, containing theory notes and exercises (pencil and ink). 43 leaves, with 4 leaves interleaved.
Notebook, labeled “Theory, Roslyn Weisberg.” Bound notebook of staff paper, containing graded theory and counterpoint assignments (pencil and ink). 39 leaves, with 4 leaves interleaved.

Folder 4 Roslyn (Weisberg) Cominsky Personal Papers.
Facsimile of pages from *The University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, Annual Catalogue* (1922–1923). Consists of facsimiles of title pages and list of candidates for degrees and certificates. 5 pp.
Certificate certifying membership in Sigma Alpha Iota, Sigma Theta Chapter; dated May 6, 1926.
Facsimile of *The University of Rochester Alumni Bulletin of the Eastman School of Music*, vol. 1, no. 1 (November 1929). 2 pp.
“Sigma Alpha Iota Prospectus, 1944.” Booklet. 28 pp.

- Roslyn Weisberg listed as honorary chapter member on p. 21.

Folder 5 J. R. Cominsky Personal Papers.
Yearbook from East High School, Rochester (1916). Cover, front matter, and pp. 1–2 missing. 80 pp.

- Photograph of Jacob Cominsky on p. 31.

Ithaca College commencement program; dated May 18, 1968.

- J. R. Cominsky awarded honorary Doctor of Letters, see p. [16].

The University of Rochester Library Bulletin, vol. 25, no. 3 (Spring 1970).

148 pp.

- “Gifts and Acquisitions” section announces gift of funding for the Jacob Robert Cominsky Reading Room, Department of Rare Books Manuscripts and Archives, Rush Rhees Library, and the receipt of his papers (pp. 146–147).

Folder 6

Cominsky Tower Dedication.

Eastman Notes, vol. 20, no. 7 (September 1990). 16 pp. 3 copies.

- Feature article, “Alumna Makes Landmark Bequest,” pertains to Roslyn Cominsky’s bequest to the Eastman School of Music’s building campaign.

“Cominsky Tower Dedication.” Transcript of remarks given by Dennis O’Brien at dedication of Cominsky Tower; March 12, 1990. 5 pp. 3 copies.

Folder 7

Concert Programs.

5 concert programs:

- Fifth Graduation Concert with Orchestra, Eastman School of Music; dated April 14, 1954.
- Opening week of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (September 23–30, 1962). Program booklet with inserts on traffic and program changes. 42 pp., total.
- Metropolitan Opera National Council, Regional Auditions National Semi-Finals; dated March 29, 1968. Accompanied by Metropolitan Opera National Council membership booklet (1967–1968).
 - Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Cominsky listed as National Council award donors (Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky award), see p. 3 of program.
- The Golden 20s Gala in Honor of George Eastman, Eastman School of Music (January 13, 1973). 20 pp.
- Vladimir Horowitz recital, Carnegie Hall (April 27, 1975). 4 pp. Accompanied by press clipping. 1 p.

Series 2: Publicity Materials

Box 1 [cont.]

Folder 8

Press Clippings.

11 press clippings and facsimiles pertaining to Roslyn Cominsky’s professional activities; dated [1920?]–1931.

Press clipping pertaining to conferral of honorary degree to J. R. Cominsky, Ithaca College, [issued May 18, 1968]; clipping dated May 26, 1968.

Press clipping pertaining to Roslyn Cominsky’s presentation of funding for the Jacob Robert Cominsky Reading Room, Department of Rare Books

Manuscripts and Archives, Rush Rhees Library; clipping dated April 24, 1970.

Oversized Oversized Press Clippings.
Folder 7 press clippings pertaining to Roslyn Cominsky's U.S. premiere of Pantscho Wladigeroff's First Piano Concerto with the Milwaukee Philharmonic Orchestra; dated January 3–5, 1931.
C3B 5.5 1 press clipping announcing multimillion-dollar gift of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky to the Eastman School of Music; dated March 23, 1990.

Box 1 [cont.]

Folder 9 Programs: Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, pianist.
4 concert programs and facsimile; dated 1925–1931.

- Concert program dated December 3, 1925 (Paul Whiteman), mentions Roslyn Cominsky's December 10, 1925, concerto performance with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.
- 6 copies of concert program for Milwaukee Philharmonic Orchestra concert, January 4, 1931.

Folder 10 Promotional Circular: Roslyn Weisberg.
Promotional circular for Roslyn Weisberg. 4 pp. 4 copies and 2 incomplete facsimiles.

Folder 11 Publicity Materials.
Publicity poster, consists of reprint of Steinway Pianos advertisement featuring Roslyn Weisberg. 1 item.
Music page layout for *Democrat and Chronicle*, November 22, 1920. Consists of photographs used in issue, including photo of Roslyn Weisberg. 1 p.

Series 3: Photographs

Box 1 [cont.]

Folder 12 Roslyn Weisberg.
B/W photograph, attributed to J. Peltz; undated (ca. 1920s), 8" x 10".
Enclosed in photograph folder, 11" x 14".

Folder 13 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L).
B/W photograph, affixed to stiff mat board, 11" x 14".

Folder 14 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Smith-Curry, 6.75" x 10.75". Enclosed in photo folder, 7" x 11".

Folder 15 J. R. Cominsky.
3 B/W photographs, [attributed to Antony Di Gesú], 11" x 14".
B/W photograph, attributed to Antony Di Gesú, affixed to stiff mat board, 11" x 14".

Folder 16 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, 11.5" x 14.5".

Box 2

Sleeve 1 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky (ca. 1920s–1930s).
B/W photograph, 4.25" x 6.75"

Sleeve 2 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky at the piano with unidentified man.
Facsimile of B/W photograph, appears to be reproduction from newspaper or magazine clipping, 4.25" x 6".
• Duplicate of photograph in Box 2, Sleeve 16.

Sleeve 3 Unidentified audience.
B/W photograph, 5" x 6".

Sleeve 4 J. R. Cominsky, Cominsky family (?).
J. R. Cominsky at newsroom desk. 3 prints: 2 B/W photographs, 1.75" x 2.25"; 1 B/W photograph (cropped), 3" x 4".
Unidentified (Cominsky family photos?). 2 B/W photographs, 2.5" x 3.5".

Sleeve 5 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Arni, 4.75" x 7". 3 prints.

Sleeve 6 J. R. Cominsky.
Color photograph (Kodacolor print), 3.5" x 5".

Sleeve 7 Portrait of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky in Cominsky Promenade, Eastman School of Music (1).
Color photograph, attributed to Louis Ouzer, 5" x 6.75".

Sleeve 8 Portrait of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky in Cominsky Promenade, Eastman School of Music (2).
Color photograph, attributed to Louis Ouzer, 5" x 7".

Sleeve 9 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky (ca. 1920s).
B/W photograph, attributed to Mishkin (NY), 8" x 10". 3 prints.
• Duplicates of prints in Box 2, Sleeve 10.

Sleeve 10 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky (ca. 1920s).
B/W photograph, attributed to Mishkin (NY), 8" x 10". 3 prints.

- Duplicates of prints in Box 2, Sleeve 9.

Sleeve 11 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky (ca. 1920s).
B/W photograph, attributed to Mishkin (NY), 8" x 10". 5 prints.

- Duplicates of prints in Box 2, Sleeve 12.

Sleeve 12 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky (ca. 1920s).
B/W photograph, attributed to Mishkin (NY), 8" x 10". 2 prints.

- Duplicates of prints in Box 2, Sleeve 11.

Sleeve 13 Roslyn Weisberg (ca. 1920s–1930s).
B/W photograph, 6" x 8.5".

Sleeve 14 Roslyn Weisberg (ca. 1920s–1930s).
B/W photograph, 6" x 7.75".

Sleeve 15 Eugene Goossens and Roslyn Weisberg in rehearsal for performance of the Grieg Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (1925).
B/W photograph, 8" x 8.75".

- Photograph used in promotional circular for Roslyn Weisberg; see Box 1, Folder 10.

Sleeve 16 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky at the piano with unidentified man.
B/W photograph, 8" x 8.75".

- Duplicate of photograph in Box 2, Sleeve 2.

Sleeve 17 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky at art show.
B/W photograph, 6.75" x 9.25".

- Affixed to photo: business card of Ivan Dmitri (Director, Photography in the Fine Arts).

Sleeve 18 Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky with three unidentified individuals at formal event.
B/W photograph, attributed to Friedman-Abeles (NYC), 8" x 10".

Sleeve 19 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L).
B/W photograph, 8" x 10", affixed to mat board.

- Duplicate print of photograph in Box 1, Folder 13.

Sleeve 20 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L) (copies 2-3).
B/W photograph, attributed to Friedman-Abeles (NYC), 8" x 10". 2 prints; copy 2 affixed to mat board.

Sleeve 21 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L) (copy 4).
B/W photograph, 8" x 10", affixed to mat board.

Sleeve 22 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L) (copy 5).
B/W photograph, 8" x 10", affixed to mat board.

Sleeve 23 Rudolf Bing, Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, and unidentified man (R to L) (copy 6).
B/W photograph, 8" x 10", affixed to mat board.

Sleeve 24 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Rodriguez (Paris), 5" x 7", affixed to mat board, 7.25" x 9.5". 3 copies.
B/W photograph, attributed to Rodriguez (Paris), 5" x 7", affixed to mat board, 7.25" x 9.5".

Sleeve 25 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Blackstone Studios (NYC), 8" x 10".

Sleeve 26 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, 8.25" x 10".

Sleeve 27 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, 7.5" x 9.5".

Sleeve 28 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Blackstone Studios (NYC), 8" x 10".

Sleeve 29 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Antony Di Gesú, 8" x 10". 3 prints.

- On reverse: "J. R. Cominsky, Chairman of the Board and Publisher, Saturday Review."

Sleeve 30 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W photograph, attributed to Antony Di Gesú, 8" x 10". 3 prints.

- On reverse: "J. R. Cominsky, Chairman and Publisher, Saturday Review."

Sleeve 31 J. R. Cominsky.
3 B/W photographs, labeled "Proofs Only, Pan American Photo Serv.," 8" x 10".

Sleeve 32 J. R. Cominsky.
3 B/W photographs, labeled "Proofs Only, Pan American Photo Serv.," 8" x 10".

Sleeve 33 J. R. Cominsky.
B/W negative, 5" x 7".

Sleeve 34 J. R. Cominsky with unidentified man at offices of the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*.
B/W photograph, 8.25" x 10".

Sleeve 35 Marion B. Eccleston with violin.
B/W photograph, attributed to Tibbals Studio, 4.75" x 6.75". Enclosed in photo folder, with inscription to Roslyn Weisberg.

Sleeve 36 Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (WWI), Arlington, VA.
B/W photograph, 6.5" x 8.5".

Sleeve 37 Walter Johnson (pitcher, Washington Senators baseball team) with unidentified boy (J. R. Cominsky?).
B/W photograph, 6.5" x 8.5".

Sleeve 38 Construction of Student Living Center (7 photographs, stuck together).
7 photographs, 5" x 7". Affixed together due to water damage.

- 6 photographs appear to be of the construction of Student Living Center.
- 1 photograph (last in pile) is of J. R. Cominsky and Rudolf Bing.

Box 3

Item 1 Photograph Album: Eastman Philharmonia (1966–1980).
Photograph album, 12.5" x 14.5". 14 pp.

- Album contains photographs, press clippings, and concert programs pertaining to the Eastman Philharmonia (especially prominent are materials from the ensemble's 1979 tour); dating from 1966–1980.
- 2 photographs of the construction of Student Living Center interleaved. 2 B/W photographs, 8" x 10".

Item 2 Photograph Album: Dedication of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky Promenade.
Photograph album, 11.5" x 12.25". 7 pp.

- Album contains invitation to and photographs from dedication ceremony of the Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky Promenade (1 invitation, 13 photographs, total).
- Letter from David A. Ruttenberg to Roslyn Cominsky interleaved. 1 letter (typescript); dated April 26, 1990. 2 pp.
- 1 photograph of the construction of Student Living Center interleaved. 1 B/W photograph, 8" x 10".

Item 3 Photograph Album: Unveiling of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky Portrait.
Photograph album, 10.5" x 12". 16 pp.

- Album contains photographs from unveiling of portrait of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky in the Student Living Center as well as dedication of Cominsky Tower (14 photographs, total).

Series 4: Awards and Framed Iconography

Box 4

Item 1 Rush Rhees Presidents Society Life Membership Plaque.
Engraved glass plaque, 7.5" x 8". Accompanied by glass stand.

Item 2 Certificate Acknowledging Gift to Rush Rhees.
Certificate, issued April 24, 1970, 6" x 8". Enclosed in certificate holder, 6.75" x 8.75".

Item 3 Honorary Doctorate from Ithaca College (J. R. Cominsky).
Honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, issued May 18, 1968, 8.5" x 11".
Enclosed in diploma holder (spine broken), 9" x 11.75".

Item 4 Hinged Photo Frame with Portraits of Roslyn and J. R. Cominsky.
R: B/W photograph of Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky, 7.5" x 9.5".
L: B/W photograph of J. R. Cominsky, 7.5" x 9.5".

Item 5 Hinged Photo Frame: Gift for Donation to Student Living Center.
R: "With Great Thanks for the Cominsky Tower." Page of student signatures.
L: Color photograph of Student Living Center, 8" x 10".