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## Vladimir Ussachevsky papers 7583223

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

### Rare Book and Manuscript Library

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Columbia University, Mail Code 1127  
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URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
<b>Creator:</b>	Ussachevsky, Vladimir, 1911-1990
<b>Title:</b>	Vladimir Ussachevsky papers
<b>ID:</b>	7583223
<b>ID:</b>	MS#1492
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1932-1969
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8.25 linear feet 14 document boxes and 1 flat box
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English , French , Russian , German , Spanish .
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Vladimir Ussachevsky Papers document the academic and professional career of pioneering electronic-music composer Vladimir Ussachevsky. This collection contains teaching and administrative materials, correspondence with other composers, writings and compositions by Ussachevsky and others, and programs, publicity materials, and personal documents.

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Name of Collection; Box and Folder; University Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.  
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Vladimir Ussachevsky Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Vladimir Ussachevsky was born in 1911 in the Russian province of Outer Manchuria, where his father was serving as a career officer in the Russian Army. Ussachevsky's mother performed and gave lessons on the piano, and she became her son's first teacher, initiating his musical education in piano and Russian Orthodox choral music. After playing in restaurants and vaudeville theaters as a teenager in Manchuria, Vladimir emigrated to California with his mother and siblings in 1930. Although he had intended to study electrical engineering, he

became fascinated with composition while at Pomona College, where he received his B.A. in 1935. Ussachevsky then pursued graduate studies at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, studying with Howard Hanson among others. Ussachevsky returned briefly to California in the early 1940s after receiving his Ph.D. to care for his ailing mother. He taught high-school and junior-college music classes there before enlisting in the United States Army in September 1942 for the duration World War II.

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## Biographical / Historical

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After the war Ussachevsky began his long association with Columbia University, coming to New York in the fall of 1947 as an instructor and post-doctoral student under Otto Luening. At first, he taught introductory courses and continued to compose chamber, piano, and choral works in what he later called a "pseudo-Romantic Russian style." Ussachevsky's longstanding interest in electrical engineering, however, led him to pursue a radical new direction in composition. As his student Robert Moog recalled "The department had acquired its first tape recorder, an Ampex 400, and Vladimir was assigned to care for it. After using it extensively to record live performances, he began looking for new ways to use the tape machine. He created new musical sounds by speed changing, playing segments of tape backwards, splicing, looping, and electronic processing, and then assembled the sounds into experimental compositions." His tape compositions, many of them collaborations with Luening, were first performed in 1952, garnering Ussachevsky acclaim among both the New York musical community and the emerging transnational network of electronic music composers.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Inspired by his contacts with Pierre Schaefer, the creator of musique concrete, and electronic music composers in Russia, Ussachevsky along with fellow composers Luening, Milton Babbitt, and Roger Sessions founded in 1959 the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center (CPEMC), which was modeled on Schaefer's Centre d'Etudes Radiophoniques in Paris. According to Moog, himself a major innovator in the field, Ussachevsky and engineer Peter Mauzey built equipment and developed technical practices of the highest possible quality, assisted by the funding of the Rockefeller Foundation and technical support from Bell Laboratories. Until his retirement from Columbia in 1980, Ussachevsky directed the CPEMC and mentored hundreds of students in theory and composition, most notably Moog and the composer Wendy Carlos. Ussachevsky also became a tireless crusader in the promotion of electronic music, presenting lecture-demonstrations at colleges and universities across the United States and Canada.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Outside of Columbia, Ussachevsky continued actively to pursue a composing career, writing scores of works for orchestras and choral groups, almost all of them incorporating the tape medium. Ussachevsky contributed musical settings for film, television, theater and poetry, collaborating with Clifton Fadiman, John Houseman, Stan Brakhage, Louis Zukofsky, Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, and Burgess Meredith among others. He also played an active role in several artist organizations, principally the American Composers' Alliance and the MacDowell Colony, and served as editor for the journal *New Music Edition*.

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## Biographical / Historical

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After retiring from Columbia in 1980, he remained as a tenured professor at the University of Utah, where he had been Composer-in-Residence since 1970. He was married to the poet Elizabeth ("Betty") Kray from 1947 until her death in 1987. The couple had no children. Ussachevsky died on January 4, 1990 in New York City, remembered as a seminal figure in the development of electronic music in the United States.

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## Summary

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This collection consists primarily of teaching and administrative materials from Ussachevsky's tenure as a professor at Columbia, including materials related to the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center: equipment catalogs, memos, correspondence, schematics, intellectual content, and grant requests. There are also documents of Ussachevsky's professional activities outside of Columbia including: correspondence, board minutes, and newsletters from composer organizations; and programs, press releases, and news clippings that document performances of his works as well as concerts he attended, especially among the post-war American avant-garde. A sub-series of Ussachevsky's writings contains his published articles and notes for articles on musicology and tape music, and notebooks from his graduate studies.

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## Summary

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The collection also includes several draft scores in manuscript of Ussachevsky's compositions, supplemented with sketches, notebooks, and textual sources that informed his works. There is also an extensive selection of music journals collected by Ussachevsky during the 1950s and 1960s, including rare foreign-language items that he acquired in his European travels. A series dedicated to personal files contains a cross-section of personal and professional correspondence that depicts the networks of composers, writers, artists, and technicians that made up Ussachevsky's milieu. There are a few folders of personal items, mostly related to the finances of him and his wife.

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## Arrangement

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This collection is arranged in five series.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### **Revision Description**

XML document instance created by Catherine N. Carson. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2010-06-30 2019-05-20

### **Restrictions on Access**

Box 3, Folder 4 is restricted until 2040, otherwise, the collection has no restrictions.

### **Restrictions on Access**

This collection is located off-site. You will need to request this material at least three business days in advance to use the collection in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library reading room.

### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

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### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

1999-2000-32: Source of acquisition--Antonia Bryson. Method of acquisition--Gift; Date of acquisition--2000 February.

### **Processing Information**

Papers processed Jude Webre.

### **Processing Information**

Finding aid written by Jude Webre February 2010.

### **Accrual**

No additions are expected

### **Accruals**

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. Contact [rbml@columbia.edu](mailto:rbml@columbia.edu) for more information.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material--Other Institutions

Vladimir Ussachevsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Audio amplifiers
- Composers -- France
- Composers -- United States -- Biography
- Composers -- United States -- Societies, etc
- Composition (Music) -- 20th century
- Electronic music
- Music -- 20th century -- History and criticism
- Music -- Acoustics and physics -- Congresses
- Music -- Instruction and study -- United States -- History
- Musicology -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Musique concrète -- History and criticism
- Babbitt, Milton, 1916-2011
- Bartók, Béla, 1881-1945
- Berio, Luciano, 1925-2003
- Brakhage, Stan
- Luening, Otto, 1900-1996
- Schaeffer, Pierre, 1910-1995
- Seeger, Charles, 1886-1979
- Ussachevsky, Vladimir, 1911-1990
- Zukofsky, Louis, 1904-1978
- Columbia University
- Eastman School of Music
- MacDowell Colony (Peterborough, N.H.) -- History
- Rockefeller Foundation

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## Collection Inventory

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**Series I: Academic Activities, 1937-1969**



<b>Subseries I.1: Academic Career, 1937-1969</b>		
<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Student Papers		
Essays, 1937-1963	box 1	folder 1
General, 1937-1955 <u>Physical Description:</u> (3 Folders)	box 1	folder 2 to 4
Barnard Counterpoint, 1951	box 1	folder 5
GS Music 37, 1952-1953	box 1	folder 6
General, 1952-1960 <u>Physical Description:</u> (3 Folders)	box 1	folder 7 to 9
General, 1955 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 1	folder 10 to 11
Music 37, 1955	box 1	folder 12
GS Music 38, 1955	box 1	folder 13
Blue Books, 1956	box 2	folder 1
Musicianship, 1956	box 2	folder 2
Regina Weiss, 1956	box 2	folder 3
General, 1956 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 2	folder 4 to 5
General, 1956-1959	box 2	folder 6
Counterpoint 210, 1956-1961	box 2	folder 7
General, 1956-1963 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 2	folder 8 to 9
20th-Century Music, 1963	box 2	folder 10
GS Music 38, undated	box 3	folder 1
Humanities, undated	box 3	folder 2
Music 35-36, undated	box 3	folder 3
Grade Sheets, circa, 1950s <u>Conditions Governing Access:</u> <b>Conditions Governing Access</b> [Restricted until 2040]	box 3	folder 4
Teaching Materials		
Eastman School of Music, 1938-1939	box 3	folder 5

Pasadena Junior College and Roosevelt High, 1940-1942	box 3	folder 6
Theory Seminar, 1948	box 3	folder 7
Seminar, 1949	box 3	folder 8
Music 23, Music History, 1950	box 3	folder 9
Humanities MB1, 1952	box 3	folder 10
Assignments in Modern Music, 1952	box 3	folder 11
Music 38, 1956	box 3	folder 12
Humanities RMB1, 1956	box 3	folder 13
Music 1, undated	box 3	folder 14
GS Music 17, undated	box 3	folder 15
General, circa, 1950s	box 3	folder 16
Mimeograph Exercises, circa, 1950s	box 3	folder 17
Columbia University--Administration Materials, 1949-1968	box 4	folder 1 to 2
<u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)		
Columbia Department of Music		
General, 1952-1967	box 4	folder 3 to 4
<u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)		
Bartok Forum, 1950	box 4	folder 5
Mozart Festival, 1955-1956	box 4	folder 6
Sang Prize Submissions, 1969	box 4	folder 7 to 10
<u>Physical Description:</u> (4 Folders)		
Catalogs of Textbooks and Scores, 1950s-1960s	box 5	folder 1 to 2
<u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)		

### Subseries I.2: Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, 1949-1968

Title/Description	Instances	
Administrative Files--General, 1949-1969	box 5	folder 3 to 8
<u>Physical Description:</u> (6 Folders)		
Printed Materials, 1955-1968	box 6	folder 1
Centre d'Etudes Radiophoniques, 1953-1957	box 6	folder 2
Second International Commission on Acoustics Congress, 1956	box 6	folder 3
Preliminary Report to the Rockefeller Foundation, 1957	box 6	folder 4

Intellectual Content, 1950s-1960s	box 6	folder 5
Equipment Catalogs--Audio Fair Materials, 1955	box 6	folder 6
Equipment Catalogs--General, 1955-1969 (2 of 4 Folders), 1955-1969	box 6	folder 7 to 8
Equipment Catalogs--General, 1955-1969 (2 of 4 Folders), 1955-1969	box 7	folder 1 to 2

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## Series II: Professional Activities, 1932-1969

### Subseries II.1: Associations, 1938-1969

Title/Description	Instances	
Composer Organizations		
American Composers Alliance, 1955-1968	box 7	folder 3
MacDowell Colony, 1949-1969	box 7	folder 4
New Music Edition, 1948-1961	box 7	folder 5
General, 1949-1968	box 7	folder 6
Trip to Russia, 1961	box 7	folder 7
Programs of Others, 1938-1969 (1 of 3 Folders), 1938-1969	box 7	folder 8
Programs of Others, 1938-1969 (2 of 3 Folders), 1938-1969	box 8	folder 1 to 2
Programs--Conferences and Lectures, 1953-1966 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 8	folder 3 to 4
Press Releases of Others, 1960s	box 8	folder 5
Associations--General, 1951-1968	box 8	folder 6

### Subseries II.2: Publicity and Performances, 1949-1969

Title/Description	Instances	
Biographical Information, 1950s-1960s	box 8	folder 7
Press Releases and Articles, 1952-1967	box 8	folder 8
"Back to Methuselah"--Correspondence and Publicity, 1957-1958	box 8	folder 9
Programs, 1949-1969, Undated (1 of 5 Folders), 1949-1969, Undated	box 8	folder 10

Programs, 1949-1969, Undated (4 of 5 Folders), 1949-1969, Undated	box 9	folder 1 to 4
News Clippings, 1952-1967 <u>Physical Description</u> : (2 Folders)	box 9	folder 5 to 6
<b>Subseries II.3: Writings, 1932-1964</b>		
<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Articles--Published, 1958-1960	box 9	folder 7
Articles and Lectures--Drafts, 1950s-1960s	box 9	folder 8
"Tape Music"--Notes and Drafts, 1950s	box 9	folder 9
Writings by Others		
"Des Machines a créer de la Musique," by M.A. Moles, 1958	box 10	folder 1
"Systematic Musicology," by Charles Seeger, 1951	box 10	folder 2
"Preface to a Description of a Music," by Charles Seeger, 1952	box 10	folder 3
"Die informationstheoretisch," by VonFritz Winckel, 1964	box 10	folder 4
Conservatory Materials		
Piano Lessons, 1932	box 10	folder 5
General, 1932	box 10	folder 6
Sibelius Symphonies, 1936-1937	box 10	folder 7
General, 1938-1939 <u>Physical Description</u> : (2 Folders)	box 10	folder 8 to 9
Nef's Outline, 1930s	box 10	folder 10
General, 1930s	box 10	folder 11
Notes from Paul Henry Lang Course, 1952	box 10	folder 12

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### Series III: Compositions, 1937-1960s

#### Subseries III.1: Compositions, 1937-1960s

Title/Description	Instances	
"Jubilee Cantata," printed score, 1937	box 10	folder 13
"Piano Concerto," draft score, [1950s]	box 10	folder 14

Notes and Schematics for New York Philharmonic Concert, 1960	box 10	folder 15
Notes for Compositions--General, 1950s and 1960s (2 of 3 Folders), 1950s, 1960s	box 10	folder 16 to 17
Notes for Compositions--General, 1950s and 1960s (1 of 3 Folders), 1950s, 1960s	box 11	folder 1
Notebooks, 1950s and 1960s, 1950s, 1960s	box 11	folder 2
Score Notebooks, 1950s and 1960s, 1950s, 1960s <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 11	folder 3 to 4
Textual Sources		
"Mexican Christmas," 1941	box 11	folder 5
"The Creation," 1960s	box 11	folder 6
"Finian's Rainbow," 1960s	box 11	folder 7
"Material for Cantata," 1960	box 11	folder 8
"Mongolian Prince," undated	box 11	folder 9
General, circa, 1960s	box 11	folder 10
Untitled Draft Scores, undated	box 15	folder 1

### Subseries III.2: Compositions by Others, 1950s

Title/Description	Instances	
En Blanc et Noir by Claude Debussy, printed score	box 15	folder 2
Twelve Pieces for Piano by Keith Robinson, manuscript score, 1950s	box 15	folder 3
Holidays Symphony by Charles Ives, parts	box 15	folder 4
Students, circa, 1950s	box 15	folder 5
Printed Scores by Others, 1950s	box 11	folder 11

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### Series IV: Personal Files, 1934-1968

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence		
Special Correspondence, 1942-1964	box 11	folder 12
1936-1954	box 11	folder 13
College Lecture Tour, 1954-55	box 11	folder 14

1955-1957 <u>Physical Description:</u> (2 Folders)	box 11	folder 15 to 17
1958-1968 <u>Physical Description:</u> (4 Folders)	box 12	folder 1 to 4
Undated	box 12	folder 5
Family, 1955-1965	box 12	folder 6
By Others, 1942-1964	box 12	folder 7
Financial Documents, 1934-1967	box 12	folder 8
Personal Files--General, 1950s	box 12	folder 9
Holiday Cards, 1950s	box 12	folder 10
Photographs, 1950s-1960s	box 12	folder 11
Travel Memorabilia, 1949-1968	box 12	folder 12

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### Series V: Printed Materials, 1936-1969, (1949-1969)

Title/Description	Instances	
Journals		
American Composer Alliance Bulletin, 1955-1958	box 12	folder 13
A-D, 1958-1967	box 13	folder 1
D-I, 1956-1969	box 13	folder 2
Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 1957-1962 <u>Physical Description:</u> (3 Folders)	box 13	folder 3 to 5
Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 1962-1963	box 14	folder 1
J1954-1966	box 14	folder 2
J1955-1966	box 14	folder 3
J-M, 1936-1960	box 14	folder 4
M1951-1960	box 14	folder 5
Origin, 1961	box 14	folder 6
R1949-1967	box 14	folder 7
S-T, 1956-1967	box 14	folder 8
Foreign Language Journals		
Cybernetics and Music-Musik Revy, 1951-1963	box 14	folder 9

Technica, 1956

box 14

folder 10

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