Robert Dumm interviewed more than 380 musicians over the course of fifty years. Together the recorded interviews provide an aural snapshot of pianism in the second half of the twentieth century. Mr. Dumm wanted not only to collect their stories about studying the piano, but also to preserve their unique voices and make them available to future musicians exactly as they were recorded.

The interview project evolved during Mr. Dumm’s tenure in a radio program in Boston called ‘The Pulse in Music’. He began the taped interviews in 1959 with Van Cliburn, Copland, and Stokowski (recorded on a Wollensak reel-to-reel recorder), skipped the decade of the 60’s, and resumed his passion with great vigor in the 1970’s.

Mr. Dumm’s travels in pursuit of meeting, hearing, and interviewing pianists (and others), led him to festivals, workshops, concerts, master classes, competitions, restaurants, homes, apartments, hotels, and sidewalks, here and abroad.

The Robert Dumm Collection
Stetson University 2007-2009

By 2007, Mr. Dumm had been living in Florida for three or four years, had finished most of his life’s work, and had recently donated his Steinway to the School of Music at Stetson University in Deland, FL. In making the decision to find a home for his beloved collection of interviews, he approached Stetson by way of the Music Librarian. After several meetings an agreement was made with the University, and the collection was delivered on August 24, 2007, including more than 550 cassettes representing 445 interviews with 383 individuals, mostly pianists. Thirty-three pianists were interviewed more than once, including Ashkenazy, Ax, Cherkassky, Curcio, Frager, Kentner, Lympany, Masselos, O’Conor, Ohlsson, Vasary, Webster, and Zayde. In 2008 and 2009, ancillary materials including items relating to his career were given to Stetson. These gifts included photos, letters, documents, and books. The tapes are in the process of being transferred to CD’s.

The Future of the Collection

Mr. Dumm had intended adding transcriptions but was unable to do so. Beginning in the fall of 2014, the Music Librarian began a collaborative project with the History Department, where they had just instituted a public history track, with internships available in oral history. One student began transcriptions of several interviews, which will be included in the Collection. This will be an ongoing part of the curriculum in History.

For further information, contact
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Areas of the world represented and number of interviewees

- English-speaking countries other than the U.S.: 39
- Central and South America: 10
- Europe: 43
- Russia: 22
- Asia: 2
- Africa: 2

Interviews by decade
- 1959
- 1970-1979
- 1980-1989
- 1990-2000
- 2001-2007

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