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Digital Library of Georgia

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People, Libraries and Agencies **IN THE NEWS**

Digital Library of Georgia

Scrapbooks From the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Documenting the Civil Rights Era Are Now Available Online

In partnership with the [Georgia State University \(GSU\) Special Collections and Archives](#) (Music and Broadcasting Collections) the [Digital Library of Georgia](#) (DLG) has digitized 24 scrapbooks from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) Collection dating from 1945–1985 that are now

available online as part of the [Atlanta Symphony Orchestra \(ASO\) Collection](#).

This work was done as part of a [competitive digitization grant](#) intended to broaden partner participation in the DLG and provide digitization services costing up to \$7,500 for historic collections from collections from nonprofit Georgia cultural heritage institutions.



Image courtesy of Georgia State University Special Collections and Archives

In 2017, the ASO donated its institutional records to GSU Special Collections and Archives. Among these records were the scrapbooks, which include newspaper clippings of concert previews; reviews; highlights of guest performers, composers, and conductors; photographs; advertising materials; and

organizational records such as memos and correspondence.

Kevin Fleming, the popular music and culture archivist at Georgia State Libraries Special Collections describes the significance of this material that documents the arrival of

the ASO's Music Director Robert Shaw in the late 1960s and the effects of the Civil Rights movement on the orchestra: "The few scrapbooks from this time period show similar changes as it relates to the orchestra."

Nick Jones, ASO's former program annotator, indicated that:

[...] under Shaw's leadership, the ASO worked to improve its connections with minority communities, including actively seeking African American instrumentalists to fill vacancies in the orchestra. There are few Black soloists, instrumental or vocal, who did not perform with the ASO during Shaw's tenure, and the Spelman and Morehouse College Glee Clubs had frequently been heard. In connection with Morehouse, in 1972 the orchestra gave the world-premiere staging of the first surviving opera by a Black composer, Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*. Additionally, T. J.

Anderson was the ASO's Composer-in-Residence for the 1969–1970 season and works by African American composers including Anderson, Ulysses Kay, and George Walker were performed.

Kerry Brunson, a Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, described the importance of having these materials freely available online to her students:

My students have created award-winning projects that pull from the ASO Archive's digitized collection of photographs and concert programs. The addition of the scrapbooks would help provide context—not only would students have access to the rare ephemera within the scrapbooks themselves, but they would also be privy to what was deemed important by the people who compiled them.

[\[View the entire collection online\]](#)

New Collection About Pro- and Anti-LGBTQ+ Activities in Cobb County, Georgia Circa 1995 Available Freely Online

Pro- and anti-LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender and sexuality minorities) activities and demonstrations in Cobb County circa 1995 are the main component of a new digital collection belonging to Georgia State University (GSU) Special Collections, funded by a [competitive digitization grant](#) awarded by the Digital Library of Georgia (DLG). GSU Special Collections received a service grant awarded in 2020 to broaden the DLG's engagement with diverse institutions and collections across the state of Georgia.

The [Carol Brown Papers, 1993-2012 \(bulk 1993-1994\)](#) document pro- and anti-LGBTQ+ activities and legislation in Cobb County. The collection belongs to the [Georgia State University Special Collections' LGBTQ Digital Collection](#).

In July of 1993, in response to complaints by residents, Cobb County Chairman Bill Byrne challenged county funding for Marietta's Theatre in the Square, particularly as two of its plays—David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* and Terrence McNally's *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*—included gay themes.

In August, Cobb County Commissioner Gordon Wysong led the Cobb County Board of Commissioners to two anti-LGBTQ+ resolutions: one specifying that funding would only be provided for art that promoted "strong community, family-oriented standards" and the other stating that "lifestyles advocated by the gay community should not be endorsed by government policymakers, because they are incompatible with the standards to which this community subscribes; and that gay lifestyle units are directly contrary to state law."

Marietta civic leader and activist Jon Greaves and local community members immediately

responded by organizing together as the Cobb Citizens Coalition (CCC) to challenge the resolutions.

The CCC gained important allies in February 1994, when Atlanta-based activists Pat Hussain and Jon-Ivan Weaver established Olympics Out of Cobb County (OCCC). Their mission was to persuade Atlanta's Committee for the Olympic Games not to hold the women's volleyball competition in Cobb County as planned. Their efforts succeeded: ultimately, the women's volleyball competition was held in Athens at the University of Georgia instead, and the Olympic torch bypassed Cobb County altogether.

While CCC was active, CCC member and Marietta resident Carol Brown documented the organization's activities and those of OCCC by recording protests, marches, and local news coverage, using audiocassettes, videotape, and photography. She also saved almost-daily newspaper reports, providing a wide range of coverage of events as they unfolded in Cobb County. The audiovisual materials have been

digitized and described by the DLG as part of its service grant, and the newspaper reports were digitized in-house at GSU.

Carol Brown also recounted her personal memories in an oral history that is part of the Activist Women's Oral History Project. Together, they provide a rich and powerful narrative about a small community's response to local discrimination that garnered international interest.

Carol Brown's materials are unique and significant to Georgia because so much of Georgia's recorded LGBTQ+ history has been Atlanta-focused. Carol Brown's materials focus on pro- and anti- LGBTQ+ activities in traditionally conservative Cobb County. They are also important because they highlight several challenging backstories about art censorship, community protest, and the 1995 Olympic Games that garnered national and international interest.

[\[View the collection online\]](#)

History Of the Rylander Theatre, President Jimmy Carter's Childhood Theatre in Americus, Georgia, Now Available Online

The Friends of the Rylander Theatre, winners of a [2021 Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council \(GHRAC\) grant](#), have partnered with the Digital Library of Georgia (DLG) to make materials documenting the Americus, Georgia theater's history from 1921 to 1957 available freely online.

[Rylander Theatre Special Collections](#) was digitized and described as part of the DLG's [competitive digitization subgrant program](#), broadening partner participation amongst nonprofit cultural heritage institutions across the state.

The items in this collection show the "first life" (1921–1951) of the Rylander Theatre and the various types of entertainment the establishment hosted, including live musicals, vaudeville shows, and movies (both silent and *talkies*). In addition, a 1929 school club card and a 1930 theatre coupon book show a detailed picture of Depression-era Americus, the popular tastes of this South Georgia town, and details of how local businesses sought to incentivize commerce in their communities during dire times.

Other materials, like photographs, programs, and fliers, provide factual information like names and dates on programs. They also provide visual and aesthetic information such as the design of movie advertisement floats in the lobby of the Rylander. The interior design



Image courtesy of the Rylander Theatre

and decoration of the soda shop owned by local businessman George Saliba attached to the Rylander Theatre (and identified in the [1937 Americus city directory](#) as “George’s Place”) are essential to researchers who wish to fill in details related to life in south Georgia. There are also key examples of rural southern movie theatre culture within the Jim Crow era, where establishments like the Rylander accommodated segregated audiences. Additionally, it further demonstrates the impact of the Hays’ Code (the motion picture industry’s self-imposed production code implemented between 1934 and 1968).

Researchers interested in the early life of young Jimmy Carter (the Rylander Theatre’s most famous local patron) will also find the materials in this collection enlightening. The collection contains [advertisements for Rylander Theatre programming](#) that appear in issues of the *Americus Times-Recorder* digitized for presentation in [Georgia Historic Newspapers](#). Carter researchers will be able to connect his lifelong enthusiasm in movies to his [presidential daily diary](#).

Jacob A. Ross, Park Ranger at the Jimmy Carter National Historical Park in Plains, Georgia, describes the importance of this collection:

As a park ranger for the Jimmy Carter National Historical Park, I consider the Rylander Theatre’s history of being part of President Carter’s history, as the young Carter would often attend shows at the theater during the same era these items were created. As a historian interested in southern American culture, this collection has been an enlightening and revealing addition to the unique entertainment and racial histories of theatre venues in southwest Georgia...These items also appeal to communities looking to perform a similar restoration of their local theater.

[\[View the entire collection online\]](#)



Image courtesy of the Rylander Theatre