

## ELEANOR STEBER / ROSEMARY FRONT COLLECTION

**Provenance:** OCPL received the collection of Eleanor Steber recordings and pictures through the estate of Rosemary Front, in 2009.

**Size:** 6 linear feet, in 4 boxes, plus additional items (records and books are not in boxes).

**Summary:** Consists of most, if not all, of the recordings of Eleanor Steber on 78 and LP, plus a few VHS tapes. Additionally there are reel-to-reel tapes, presumably of off-air recordings. The photographs include publicity shots and costume pictures, and numerous informal and candid shots apparently taken by Rosemary Front and her family, and pictures of the 1960 Homecoming celebration.

### **Eleanor Steber:**

Eleanor Steber was born in Wheeling, West Virginia, where she grew up in a musical family. Her mother was a singer and taught her voice and piano, took her to concerts, and arranged for coaching. She later studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston. At the beginning she did a lot of radio, oratorio, and church work, but made then her debut on stage in 1936, appearing as Senta (!) with the Commonwealth Opera. In 1939, Steber went to New York to study with Paul Althouse who had a great influence on her. In 1940 she won first prize at the Met Auditions, earning a Met contract. Her first role there was Sophie in Strauss' Der Rosenkavalier. During the next years she benefited from conductors such as Bruno Walter, Sir Thomas Beecham, Erich Leinsdorf and George Szell. She was a versatile artist and appeared in Italian, French and German operas. Things began to change for her at the Met when Rudolf Bing took over the company in 1950. By this time, her career extended well beyond New York (San Francisco, Glyndebourne, Chicago and Bayreuth). At the Met, though, she began to feel that she was being passed over for mainstream Italian roles in favor of Tebaldi and Callas. She occasionally sang Tosca, Elisabetta, Desdemona and Manon Lescaut, but her best opportunities were the great Mozart roles. She was also the company's first Arabella in 1955 and its first Marie in Wozzeck in 1959. In 1958 she created Barber's Vanessa (but it was first offered to Callas and Jurinac who both declined). She was not very happy in private life either, two marriages had fallen apart and she got into problems with alcohol and asthma. In 1961, when Bing offered her a contract that only provided "covering" roles, she declined. Thereafter she sang concerts, appeared in musicals and taught subsequently at The Juilliard School of Music. She died in Pennsylvania in 1990 -- [http://www.cantabile-subito.de/Sopranos/Steber\\_Eleanor/hauptteil\\_steber\\_eleanor.html](http://www.cantabile-subito.de/Sopranos/Steber_Eleanor/hauptteil_steber_eleanor.html)

### **Rosemary Front:**

Rosemary Front was born in Wheeling, the daughter of the late Peter T. and Margaret L. Front.

Rosemary attended Wheeling Country Day School, was a graduate of Triadelphia High School; she received a BS from the Southern Illinois University and she went on to receive her master's from Wayne State University, an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Wheeling Jesuit University.

She was a Speech Pathologist at the former Wheeling Society for Crippled Children from 1966-1968; the first professional CEO at the Wheeling Society for Crippled Children and the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center, from 1969-1998. Rosemary was an Executive Director of the West Virginia Easter Seal Society for three years.

She built a small, non-profit charity (Wheeling Society for Crippled Children) consisting of four staff members into a professional rehabilitation business with over 55 staff members; implemented programs

and services for children with special needs and oversaw the construction of a state-of-the-art rehabilitation facility in 1975 housing the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center. Rosemary was a member of the Temple Shalom and the Junior League of Wheeling.

(*Wheeling News-Register*, April 30, 2009)

(Many of the records and videos have their own catalog records)

## RECORDS

### LPs

Christmas songfest with Eleanor Steber, friends and family

Così fan tutte

Eleanor Steber at Carnegie Hall, 1958

Eleanor Steber sings Mozart

Eleanor Steber sings sacred solos.

Eleanor Steber sings favorites from the Firestone hour

Faust

Fidelio

Hymns of Mary Baker Eddy: Eleanor Steber sings in the Mother Church.

Hymns from the Christian Science hymnal. Volume no. 6

Knoxville, summer of 1915: for soprano and orchestra, op. 24; Four excursions: op. 20 (10 in. LP)

Knoxville: summer of 1915 (12 in.)

Lohengrin

Love's old sweet songs

Madame Butterfly

Mass in B minor

New moon (abridged) (10 in. LP)

Les nuits d'été: op. 7; La captive: op. 12; Le jeune pâtre Breton: op. 13, no. 4; Zaïde : op. 19, no. 1

Les nuits d'ete, op. 7; Knoxville, Summer of 1915

Oklahoma

Operatic arias

Oratorio arias

Sacred arias by the great masters

Songs at eventide

Songs of American composers

Songs of Victor Herbert

Steber in recital

Syracuse Music Festival: Vol. 1

Syracuse Music Festival. Vol. 2

Vanessa

7 in. flexible disc:

Eleanor Steber. The Friendly Beasts (St/And records) (2 copies) – in “BOX 1”

12 inch 78s:

Die Rosenkavalier (13 records) (not Eleanor Steber)

Ein deutsches Requiem (9 records) (2 copies)  
Mozart operatic arias (2 records)  
Depuis le jour; Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante  
In a record album marked "Great Operatic Musical Masterpieces:"  
The merry widow waltz; Vilia  
Summertime; Stardust  
Ah. I feel to grief and sadness; Batti, batti, o bel Masetto  
Valse: je veux vivre dans ce rêve; Voi che sapete  
Ballade: il était un roi de Thulé; Air des bijoux  
Porgi amor; Dove sono  
Chanson triste; Chère nuit

10 inch 78s in album:  
By a lonely forest pathway; Rapunzel  
Stars in my eyes; The touch of your hand  
Vienna in the springtime; Roses in wintertime  
Auflosung; Canto di primavera  
The old rugged cross; Beautiful isle of somewhere  
Whispering hope; Abide with me  
Stars in my eyes; The touch of your hand [broken]

Books mentioning Eleanor Steber (these are represented with catalog records) :  
A Pictorial Treasury of Opera in America / Blum  
The bel canto cookbook, for all opera lovers and gourmets / Gravina  
Opera caravan; adventures of the Metropolitan on tour, 1883-1956 / Eaton.  
Opera stars in the sun; intimate glimpses of Metropolitan personalities / Phillips-Matz

### **BOX 1:**

Obituary of Rosemary Front

Correspondence with Marcia Sloat, co-author of Eleanor Steber's autobiography.

Costume Photos

Number: 25

Size: 8 ½ x 10

Comments: some are annotated. Two are signed. The Manon series of 4 taken by James Abresch of New York early in her career may be of special interest.

Roles: Madam Butterfly (3), Desdemona (2), Fiordiligi (4), Margareta (2), Marschallin (4), Manon (5), Constanza (1), Vanessa (1), Violetta (2), Elsa (2), Eleanor (1), Donna Anna or Elvira (1). There is a composite photo of her in the roles of Tosca, Butterfly, and Elsa that were taken onstage when she was giving a concert.

General Photos

Number: 29

Size: most are 8 ½ x 10

Comments: Steber in a variety of situations but not on stage. There is one of her and her first husband, Edwin Biltclift. Her second husband, Major Gordon Andrews, is in several. There is one of her

receiving an honorary degree from West Liberty State College. Plus a charming photo of her waltzing with Van Cliburn.

Publicity Photos (in 2 folders)

Number: 28

Size: most are 8 ½ x 10 (one could be trimmed down)

Comments: A nice series of Hollywood starlet shots. Some very svelte recording company publicity photos. 5 are signed. Most of these date from early in her career.

Photographs of artists other than Steber

Number: 27

Size: mostly 8 ½ x 10

Comments: there are 5 autographed photos of Jerome Hines (always accompanied by a New Testament quote). These are probably artists who appeared with or without the Wheeling Symphony.

Photos from an "old album" that have been pinky sheared,

Number: 52

Size: 4 x 5

4 8/10 pictures of Steber with Front (and others) at 1960 homecoming, taken by Kossuth.

3 pictures from 1960 homecoming concert (?)

1960 homecoming concert program

5 postcards, 1 letter from Steber to Front (1961)

Photo album "extras" -- approximately 40 prints (these were originally sitting in the back of the photo album, and likely to fall out at any time)

Wheeling Symphony Programs, 1951-1960. Most autographed.

6 Programs from elsewhere. Autographed by Eleanor Steber, Eugene Conley, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Marian Anderson, Beatrice Lillie, Henry Mazer. 1958-1965.

7 in. flexible disc:

Eleanor Steber. The Friendly Beasts (St/And records) (2 copies)

Newspaper Clippings of 1960 event and 1976 Bicentennial Concert in Wheeling featuring Steber.

## **BOX 2:**

6" x 8" x 1" box marked "Old Steber Pictures from Album" containing approximately 130 photographs and around 50 negatives. These are primarily pictures from family visits with Steber, as well as some apparent publicity shots. Mostly b&w prints.

2 Photographs (in 10x13 in. mats) from 1963 inscribed to Rosemary and family.

A photo album, around 80 pages, devoted to Eleanor Steber. Many seem to be pictures taken by Front and her family, or at events the Fronts attended. Most are informal, 'candid' shots. There are approximately 400 pictures.

Photo album: "A Pictorial Record of the Eleanor Steber Twentieth Anniversary Homecoming Concert, Held at the Capitol Theatre, June 1, 1960" -- about 35 b&w prints, some 8x10, some smaller.

1963 and 1966 yearbooks from Southern Illinois University.

### **BOX 3**

7 inch Reel to Reel Tapes:

Interview 8/20/64

Person to Person, Ed Murrow

Vanessa

Don Giovanni, Dec. 14, 1957

Mozart; Requiem Mass in D Minor. Southern Illinois University Oratorio Chorus & University Choir

Bach Magnificat, Christmas, 1963

Eleanor Steber on The Woolworth Hour 9/22/57: Summertime; Depuis le jour

Tosca 3/16/58; Madame butterfly 3/29/58

Donald Steinfirist Opera Quiz; Christmas carols

Hansel & Gretel Dubbing #1 -- Washington Ballet; Casals, Boston Orch

Helen Kenny playing 'Around the world' 12/25/57; Ethel Merman 10/19/58

Festival of Music; Christmas carols

Don Giovanni 2/14/59

Don Giovanni, 1/14/61; Wozzeck

Der rosenkavalier, 3/22/58

Tosca

4 ¾ in reels:

Steubenville Interview; News of Bethany Graduation, 1960; Met Roundtable disc.

Firestone – One fine day, Visci d'arte, Addio

Uncle Charles talk about baby; Henry's concert; Popular records

Firestone: Eleanor Steber, Phil; Ormandy; John Daly

Firestone: Eleanor Steber: Joy to the world; Lo how a rose 'ere blooming; While shepherds watched;

Away in a manger; Bring a torch, Jeannette Isabella; Angels we have heard; Little town of Bethlehem;

Adeste Fidelis; Silent night; Panis Angelicus; Prayer from Hansel & Gretel (12/24/56)

Firestone 4/9/55 featuring Patricia Munsel

3 in. 'Living Letters" tape from Ellen Martin, Philadelphia, postmarked 1963

VHS Tapes:

Voice of Firestone Classic Performances:

Christmas with Eleanor Steber

Eleanor Steber sings Love songs

Eleanor Steber in Opera and song (2 copies)

Eleanor Steber in Opera and Song, Vol. 2

Eleanor Steber in Opera and Oratorio

**BOX 4:**

Books not directly connected with Steber: Joy of Music / Bernstein – Encounters with Stravinsky / Horgan – Milton Cross' Encyclopedia of Great Composers – Milton Cross' Complete Stories of the Great Operas – Interrupted Melody / Lawrence – The Musical Life / Kolodin – The Victor Book of the Opera.

Librettos: Vanessa – Tosca – La Fanciulla del West – Der Rosenkavalier – Ariadne on Naxos – Così Fan Tutte – Lucretia Borgia – La Traviata – The Ballad of Baby Doe – Wozzeck – La Bohème – Madame Butterfly – Fledermaus – Don Giovanni – Carmen – Manon – Barber of Seville – Faust – Otello.