

A Brief Description of New York Philharmonic's audio holdings and audio preservation plans.

The New York Philharmonic Archives is embarking on a ten-year project to digitize and preserve its vast radio broadcast and live-concert audio collection. The Orchestra first began live broadcasts of its concerts in 1922. In 1930, the Philharmonic was the first American orchestra to broadcast its concerts live coast-to-coast which took place every Sunday afternoon. Being the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States and the third oldest in the world, the Philharmonic has attracted nearly all of the great conductors and soloists throughout its history, and the audio collection has captured this experience. In addition, the radio broadcasts' "Intermission Features" record a wide variety of significant individuals talking about their own musical experience and background or simple topics of the day. Since the beginning of the digital age, the Philharmonic began recording nearly every concert in the best quality format of the moment. These now pose new preservation challenges and risks.

In early 2006, the Archives undertook a detailed study of the audio formats in its collection assessing its various weaknesses and assigning a risk factor to determine a priority for preservation. The overall results were more than 5500 items of varying formats accounting for approximately 7500 hours of concerts and interviews. In July the Philharmonic hired a full-time audio preservation specialist to begin work on the collection and to develop a long-range digitization/preservation/migration plan for the audio collection that incorporates and standardizes the past with the present recording operations.

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