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The Donation of an Important Collection and an Endowed Professorship Will Establish the Frederick R. Selch Center for American Music at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music

The Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History Contains Nearly 700 Musical
Instruments and Some 6,000 Books and Manuscripts, Including First Editions

OBERLIN, OHIO (December 8, 2008) — David H. Stull, Dean of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, is honored to announce that Patricia Bakwin Selch of New York City, widow of noted collector and music scholar Frederick R. Selch, has donated her husband's entire collection, which includes nearly 700 instruments and some 6,000 books—including rare first editions and important primary source material—to Oberlin. She has also pledged to endow a professorship in musicology; the new faculty position will expand American studies at the Conservatory. Her philanthropy lays the groundwork for establishing the Frederick R. Selch Center for American Music at Oberlin, America's oldest continuously operating conservatory. Students, faculty, and visiting scholars who are interested in organology—the history, design, materials, construction, and use of musical instruments—will soon be able to conduct research at Oberlin on the origins of American music.

"The gift of this magnificent and important collection—the Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History—combined with the generous endowment of the Selch Professorship of Musicology, will provide an unparalleled platform for the teaching and scholarship of American music that will be envied by all the finest institutions in the country," says Dean Stull. "Generations will benefit immeasurably from this extraordinarily generous donation from Patricia Selch."

The collection represents an enormous range, and reflects Eric Selch's lifelong obsession—he was passionately interested in music and its context. Among the holdings are manuscripts, printed and manuscript music, instruction manuals and tutors for playing instruments, paintings, prints, drawings, tintypes, paper photographs depicting instruments and music making, and other ephemera.

Selch initially collected European instruments and early European books and objects that explored the evolution of music, musical instruments, and music theory. Some of the volumes are among the rarest in these fields; for example, Heinrich Glarean's *Dodecachordon*, published in Basel in 1547, is included. Yet it was American music and musical instruments that fascinated Selch and commanded the ultimate focus of his collection. He was interested in the sources and influences on all types of American music—secular, religious, political and economic—that shaped its development. At the time of his death, in 2002, he was engaged in landmark studies on southwest and central native American instruments and culture.

Because the availability and dynamism of his collection of his collection was essential to her husband, Mrs. Selch was intent that a home for it be found at an educational institution, where it would be used and studied, rather than housed in a museum. "I am so pleased that his center will be realized at Oberlin," says Mrs. Selch.

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More information about the Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History, including photos, is available at www.oberlin.edu/con.

About Frederick R. Selch (1930—2002)

Frederick R. (Eric) Selch was a man of wide experience and many talents. In addition to a career as an advertising and broadcast executive, he was a stringed bass player, a musical instrument builder and restorer, a collector, a scholar, and a writer. He conceived, organized, and promoted many exhibitions in museums and historical societies of books and instruments drawn from his holdings, and wrote catalogues and numerous journal articles. He formed the Federal Music Society, an ensemble of professional and amateur players, and served as its artistic director. Between 1976 and 1983 they performed more than 70 concerts of a variety of early American music, often using instruments and music from his collection, and recorded on the New World Records label. He produced two musicals (on and off-Broadway), and a scholarly music festival. He was the publisher of *Ovation*, the magazine for classical music listeners, and he taught a course on the history of musical instruments at New York University, where, just prior to his death, he earned a Ph.D. in American Studies with a highly praised dissertation titled "Instrumental Accompaniments for Yankee Hymn Tunes." Many of the primary sources were drawn from his own collection. In addition to his Ph.D., he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamilton College and a Master of Music degree in music history from New York University.

About the Oberlin Conservatory of Music

The Oberlin Conservatory of Music, located in Oberlin, Ohio, was founded in 1865 and has been situated amid the intellectual vitality of Oberlin College since 1867. Oberlin College was founded 175 years ago, in 1833, and is the first college in the United States to grant undergraduate degrees to women and a historic leader in the educating of African Americans. The Oberlin Conservatory of Music is the oldest continuously operating conservatory in the United States. Renowned internationally as a professional music school of the highest caliber and pronounced a "national treasure" by the *Washington Post*, Oberlin's alumni have gone on to achieve illustrious careers in all aspects of the serious music world. Oberlin is located about 40 miles southwest of Cleveland. It is one of the last outposts of New England and was a major stop on the Underground Railroad. For more information, visit www.oberlin.edu/con

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