

Daniel Catán:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Catán, Daniel, 1948-2011
Title:	Daniel Catán Papers,
Dates:	1949-2014
Extent:	14 document boxes, 24 oversize boxes (osb) (15.96 linear feet), 1 oversize folder (osf), and 546 electronic files (1.9 GB)
Abstract:	The Daniel Catán papers consist of audio files, awards, certificates, clippings, diplomas, electronic files, photographs, posters, printouts of web pages, programs, scores, scrapbooks, serial publications, sheet music, and video files documenting the career of Daniel Catán, Mexican-born composer of operas and other musical works.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-05283
Language:	English and Spanish
Access:	Open for research. Some materials restricted because of fragile condition; digital surrogates are available. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. To request access to electronic files, please email Reference .
Use Policies	Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
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and forensic disk images are restricted. Copying electronic files, including screenshots and printouts, is not permitted.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Daniel Catán Papers (Manuscript Collection MS-05283).
Acquisition:	Gifts, 2012 (12-05-005-G, 12-09-013-G), 2015 (15-01-016-G)
Processed by:	Richard Workman, 2013, 2016 Born digital materials processed, arranged, and described by Chance Adams and Brenna Edwards, 2015-2022.
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Daniel Catán was born April 3, 1949, in Mexico City. He owed his early interest in music to his parents: his mother encouraged him to take piano lessons, and his father was an enthusiastic admirer of popular music, particularly Cuban *sones*.

At the age of 14, Catán was enrolled in boarding school in England. He continued his studies in that country, receiving degrees in philosophy from the University of Sussex and in music from the University of Southampton. He then moved to the United States and in 1977 earned his doctorate in composition from Princeton University, where he studied under Milton Babbitt.

Following graduation, Catán returned to Mexico City, where he worked as a music administrator at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. During this period he founded and conducted the Camerata de la Nueva España, a chamber orchestra that gave concerts in Mexico City, including the premiere of his chamber opera, *Encuentro en el ocaso*, in 1980.

While he continued to write chamber works and orchestral and vocal pieces, opera steadily drew more and more of his creative energies. His second opera, based on an adaptation by Octavio Paz of the Nathaniel Hawthorne short story, "Rappaccini's Daughter," was *La hija de Rappaccini*, which premiered in 1991 in Mexico City. After a disappointing reception by critics, the work gained new appreciation when Paz won the Nobel Prize for literature, and a subsequent production in San Diego, California, brought Catán increasing visibility.

His next opera, *Florencia en el Amazonas*, was commissioned jointly by Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Seattle Opera, and premiered in Houston in 1996 to critical and popular acclaim. Houston also premiered *Salsipuedes: A Tale of Love, War, and Anchovies* in 2004. This was followed by the highly successful *Il postino*, based on the 1994 film of the same name directed by Michael Radford. The first performance was by Los Angeles Opera. The role of Pablo Neruda was written for and created by tenor Plácido Domingo.

Catán died suddenly on April 8, 2011, in Austin, Texas, where he was serving as composer in residence at the Butler School of Music of the University of Texas at Austin. At the time of his death he was working on a commission from the university to write a new opera based on the 1941 Frank Capra film, *Meet John Doe*.

Sources:

"Biography." Daniel Catán, <http://www.danielcatan.com/biography> (accessed 21 September 2016).

"Daniel Catán." Music Sales Classical,
<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/long-bio/Daniel-Catán> (accessed 21
September 2016).

Scope and Contents

The Daniel Catán Papers consist of audio files, awards, certificates, clippings, diplomas, photographs, posters, printouts of web pages, programs, scores, scrapbooks, serial publications, sheet music, and video files documenting the career of Daniel Catán, Mexican-born composer of operas and other musical works. The papers are arranged in two series: I. Musical Works, 1973-2012, undated; and II. Personal and Career-Related Materials, 1949-2014, undated.

The papers cover the entirety of Catán's professional career, from the period when he returned to Mexico after receiving his PhD until his death; however, the archive is not complete. For example, there are few materials relating to Catán's personal life and there is little correspondence. Also missing are the scores of a number of his smaller compositions such as his chamber works, his score for the film *I'm Losing You*, his work-related diaries, materials prepared for his published collections of essays, and the score for his last, uncompleted opera, *Meet John Doe*.

Series I. Musical Works is the largest portion of the archive and fills 24 oversize boxes plus four document boxes. It is divided into two subseries: A. Operas, 1973-2012, undated; and B. Other Musical Works, 1975-2007, undated. Within each subseries works are arranged in alphabetical order and within each title, insofar as possible, manuscripts are arranged chronologically. This arrangement has been made difficult by the fact that Catán almost never dated any of his manuscripts; internal evidence, such as the sequence in which corrections have been made to scores, has been used where dates are lacking. Dates following the titles of works are the dates given in the catalog of his works by his publisher G. Schirmer Inc./Associated Music Publishers, in *Grove Music Online*, and in Catán's own list of his compositions found in the folder titled 'Curriculum.'

Throughout this finding aid, the following terminology has been used. "Vocal score" refers to a score showing all vocal lines, but with the accompaniment arranged for keyboard. A "close score" is a score giving all the parts on a minimum number of staves, normally two, as with hymns. "Condensed score" refers to a score giving only the principal musical parts on a minimum number of staves generally organized by instrumental sections.

Subseries A. Operas contains material related to the composition of Catán's five completed operas. Catán frequently used sticky notes and flags to call attention to the locations of corrections in successive versions of his opera scores. For preservation reasons, these have been removed from his manuscripts. Where any of these tags bore writing, it has been photocopied in place and the photocopy inserted before the original manuscript page.

Subseries B. Other Musical Works contains the scores of his non-operatic output. Many of these scores are represented only as photocopies of the original manuscripts. Due to the age and condition of these photocopies, and the fact that the toner used has in some cases turned sticky over time, some portions of these scores have been interleaved to prevent pages from adhering together. Also, many of these scores were originally bound using plastic comb or coil bindings. Over time, many of these bindings have broken or deteriorated to the point where they were potentially harmful to the manuscripts. To better preserve the scores, many of these bindings, as well as any paper envelopes or ring binders that contained scores, have been removed; where the original cover bore any writing, a photocopy has been inserted in its place.

Series II. Personal and Career-Related Materials contains 10 boxes of awards, certificates, clippings, correspondence, diaries, diplomas, notebooks, posters, printouts of web pages, programs, scrapbooks, and serial publications. Much of this material arrived in file folders individually labeled. It is not certain that Catán had any part in arranging or labeling these folders, but their organization has been preserved, as have the folder titles, which are shown in single quotes.

Because the subject folder titles do not always clearly identify the contents, the following notes may be helpful. 'Actas' holds birth, naturalization, and divorce records. 'Basic Set' contains materials relating to the first performance of *Florencia en el Amazonas*. 'Curriculum' contains a biographical sketch and list of Catán's compositions. 'Family' contains medical records. 'Florencia' also contains materials relating to *Salsipuedes* and other works. 'Ind Round Review's relates to the revival of *Florencia en el Amazonas* in Houston in 2004. 'Journals' refers to periodicals, not to diaries. 'Visita Baja California' refers to a stint teaching orchestration at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in 1997. There is a great deal of overlap among the folders, with the same printed material often appearing in more than one file.

Files labeled 'Letters' contain correspondence to and from Catán, mostly having to do with his opera productions or the recommendations necessary for acquiring permission to work in the U.S. Included are copies of a number of letters from Catán to Octavio Paz, with whom he collaborated on the opera *La hija de Rappaccini*, as well as a photocopy of one reply from Paz.

Photographs primarily depict Catán himself and the staging of his operas *La hija de Rappaccini* and *Florencia en el Amazonas*, but there are also photographs of mostly unidentified groups of people.

The material cataloged as "Scrapbooks" consists of five albums containing clippings, copies of concert programs, and some photographs. Because these albums employed a system of adhesive-coated pages with clear plastic overlays that has deteriorated over time, the albums are fragile, and consequently their use requires permission from a curator. The albums have been digitized and printouts are available for viewing.

Separated Material

A small number of unmarked published scores and two published books by Catán were transferred to the Ransom Center Library and are listed in the University of Texas [Library Catalog](#).

A silver medal presented to Catán by the Academia Medalla Mozart in 2009 was transferred to the Center's Personal Effects holdings.

Digital media, including CD-ROMs and DVDs containing digital photographs of costume and production designs, and PDF and SIB (the format of the music notation software Sibelius) files of opera scores, have been transferred to the Center's Electronic Records Collection.

Unpublished DVDs containing video recordings of opera performances were transferred to the Moving Image Collection.

CD-ROMs, DVDs, and an LP containing unpublished audio recordings of various rehearsals and performances of Catán's operas and other compositions as well as a 2004 interview in Spanish and English were transferred to the Sound Recordings Collection.

Index Terms

People

Catán, Daniel.

Domingo, Plácido, 1941- .

Paz, Octavio, 1914-1998.

Organizations

Houston Grand Opera.

Los Angeles Opera.

Sarah & Ernest Butler School of Music.

Seattle Opera.

Subjects

Composers.

Music--Manuscripts.

Operas--20th century.

Operas--21st century.

Document Types

Awards.

Clippings.

Electronic documents.

Photographs.

Programs.

Scores.

Scrapbooks.

Sheet music.

Series I. Musical Works, 1973-2012, undated

Subseries A. Operas, 1973-2012, undated

Encuentro en el ocaso (1979)

Handwritten full score, including Preludio, bound, undated **Container**
26.2

Photocopy of handwritten full score without Preludio, bound, undated **Container**
1.1

Handwritten vocal score, incomplete, undated **Container** 26.5

Florencia en el Amazonas

Opera (1996)

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Handwritten corrections to score with cover letter signed 'Tim,' 1997 **Container**
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Arcadio's aria, 'New version'

Handwritten full score, 2006 **Container** 26.4

Photocopy of handwritten full score, undated **Container** 3.1

Arcadio's new aria. 1 electronic file: Sibelius Score, October 2005 **Disk-ID-No.**
1205005G_007

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4.1

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University of Illinois production. 337 electronic files: Adobe PDF, JPG, 2009	Disk-ID-No. 1205005G_008, 1205005G_009
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Series II. Personal and Career-Related Materials, 1949-2014, undated

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