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Accordionist/composer Guy Klucevsek recently became the 500th figure to be added to Major Figures in American Music, the core collection of Oral History of American Music (OHAM) at Yale University Library. OHAM director Libby Van Cleve interviewed him on April 19 at his Staten Island home.

Major Figures in American Music, which was started in 1970 when Vivian Perlis interviewed Charles Seeger, consists of over 1,200 interviews with composers, performers, and other significant musicians. The first subjects were those most fragile in terms of age and health, such as Eubie Blake, Nadia Boulanger, Aaron Copland, Harry Partch, Claire Reis, and Virgil Thomson. Among other senior composers interviewed during OHAM’s first decade were John Cage, Lou Harrison, Ernst Krenek, Leo Ornstein, and William Schuman. As OHAM proceeded, composers actively involved in their careers were included and have been updated periodically. To name a few: John Adams, Anthony Braxton, David Del Tredici, Lukas Foss, David Lang, Steve Reich, and Julia Wolfe. OHAM’s program also includes oral histories with emerging young talents, with the plan to track their careers as they unfold in the future. In addition to interviews with primary subjects, the core unit includes testimonies from secondary sources about George Gershwin, Henry Cowell, Harry Lawrence Freeman, Percy Grainger, and Arnold Schoenberg. Interviewees in recent years include an increasing number of Jazz figures, such as Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny, Sonny Rollins, Larry Coryell, and Sue Mingus.

OHAM’s other collections include secondary-source interviews on Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, Duke Ellington, Paul Hindemith, and the Steinway Brothers, as well as video interviews with Yale School of Music composition students and numerous acquisitions. The complete OHAM archive includes more than 2,500 interviews.

A listing of OHAM’s interviews, along with selected transcript tables of contents, can be found at OHAM’s LibGuide [1].

Researchers may submit this form [2] to acquire transcripts and request free 30-day limited streaming.