

## Cello Music Collections at Jackson Library Support Performance, Teaching, and Research

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### **Abstract:**

If there is a patron saint of UNCG's magnificent Cello Music Collection, her name is Elizabeth Cowling (1910-1997). In fact, it is safe to say that if not for Cowling there would be no Cello Music Collection at UNCG. From the time of her arrival at Woman's College in 1945 until long after her retirement from UNCG in 1976, Professor Cowling's comprehensive endeavors as a cellist, pedagogue, scholar, and collaborator laid the groundwork for the establishment of the massive repository of cello music now housed in the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives at UNCG.

**Keywords:** Cello Music | Elizabeth Cowling | UNCG

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

# Cello Music Collections at Jackson Library Support Performance, Teaching and Research

## Elizabeth Cowling Celebration to be Held March 24-26, 2011

*By Mac Nelson, Cello Music Cataloger*

If there is a patron saint of UNCG's magnificent Cello Music Collection, her name is Elizabeth Cowling (1910-1997). In fact, it is safe to say that if not for Cowling there would be no Cello Music Collection at UNCG. From the time of her arrival at Woman's College in 1945 until long after her retirement from UNCG in 1976, Professor Cowling's comprehensive endeavors as a cellist, pedagogue, scholar, and collaborator laid the groundwork for the establishment of the massive repository of cello music now housed in the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives at UNCG. So, when the curtain goes up on the Elizabeth Cowling Celebration, March 24-26, it will

hardly be the first time that Cowling has figured centrally in a cooperative venture involving the University Libraries and the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance.

The year 1963 stands out in



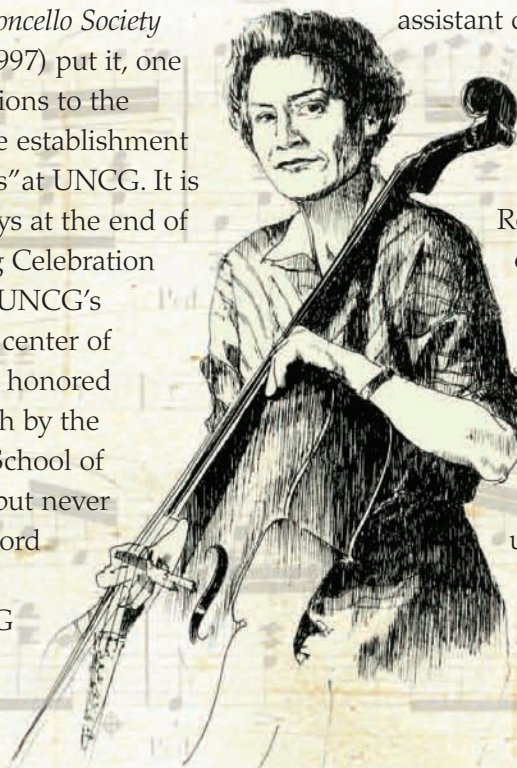
this regard, as this was when Cowling, with the support of an astute library administration, persuaded the Friends of Jackson Library to purchase the extensive music collection of famed cellist Luigi Silva. Cowling had met Silva in 1946 while studying at the Eastman School of Music, and

thus began what was to become a long professional association with him. By the time of Silva's unexpected death in 1961, Cowling was aware not only of the great value of his library but also of his prominence in the musical world and of the potential influence his stature might have on future development of the Cello Music Collection. In 1976, Cowling herself donated the first installment of her vast music library to the Collection, followed in 1977 by a second installment of music, and in 1988 by her collection of books. Happily, she lived long enough to see the Cello Music Collection achieve unparalleled size and international renown: the eventful period from 1986 to 1994 saw three distinguished donations, the personal music libraries of Rudolf Matz, Maurice Eisenberg, and *continued on page 7*

**Cowling Celebration**

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Janos Scholz. By the time of Cowling's death, the presence of the Collection at UNCG was firmly a part of her legacy. As the *Violoncello Society Newsletter* (Spring/Summer 1997) put it, one of Cowling's "major contributions to the cello world was helping in the establishment of the Cello Music Collections" at UNCG. It is fitting, then, that for a few days at the end of March, the Elizabeth Cowling Celebration will place the patron saint of UNCG's Cello Music Collection at the center of the cello world. She has been honored publicly before, of course, both by the University Libraries and the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance—but never on the scale implied by the word celebration. Following the tradition established at UNCG by the Luigi Silva Centennial Celebration (2004), the Bernard Greenhouse



Celebration (2005), and the Laszlo Varga Celebration (2007), the Cowling Celebration will be a major event. UNCG cello professor and Celebration director Alexander Ezerman, and assistant director Brian Carter, will welcome an exceptional group of performers to the stage, among them Bonnie Hampton of the Juilliard School, Felix Wang of Vanderbilt University, Robert Jesselson of the University of South Carolina, and Jonathan Kramer of NC State University. Also appearing will be the international performing artist Christine Walevska and former UNCG cello professor Brooks Whitehouse, now of the UNC School of the Arts, under whose visionary leadership the wonderful UNCG tradition of "cello celebrations" was first established. Mark your calendars now! For more information, watch <http://www.facebook.com/CowlingCelebration>. 

## Cello Music Collections in Jackson Library Influence Graduate Student's Decision to Come to UNCG

*Tell me about your interest in the cello, and how you chose to come to UNCG for your education.*

I played many instruments early in life (I started piano when I was three, switched to violin when I was seven, added cello in fifth grade, viola in sixth grade, and so on). I gravitated toward the cello when it came time for me to focus on playing one instrument well because of its tone and its stability, resting as it does on the floor (violin and viola were always difficult for me to stabilize). I was torn between the sciences and music in high school, fell in love with music the summer after my sophomore year, and decided to make a career of it around that time. As an undergraduate pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, I became interested in the historical performance practice movement, and various circumstances led me to develop an interest in music for unaccompanied cello.

I was initially attracted by the UNCG collection's rare cello manuscripts from the Baroque era, namely the Colombi *Chiacona*, which I discovered with the help of the research librarian at my undergraduate institution, who found that the only copy of Colombi's *Chiacona* in the United States was in Special Collections at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. That was when I learned about the cello music collection here, and I decided to visit to get a copy of the Colombi manuscript, have a lesson with cello Professor Dr. Alex Ezerman, and visit an old friend of mine who had begun studies at Duke the year before. All this took place in the space of a three-day-round-trip



**Cellist and Graduate Student Leigh Rudner**

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