

Running head: ALBERT RIEMENSCHNEIDER

A Portrait of Albert Riemenschneider:

An Alumna's Perspective

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Abstract

Albert and Selma Riemenschneider dedicated many years of their lives to fostering the growth of a small music program in Northeast Ohio at the turn of the 20th century.

Their efforts led to the creation of the Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music, the Baldwin-Wallace Bach Festival (the oldest collegiate Bach festival in the country)

and the Riemenschneider Bach Institute (a collection of over 33,000 items, including rare Bach manuscripts in his own hand). Today, the generations that followed them still

work diligently to explore the roots of their family history, and as a result, refine the details of the Conservatory's history as well.

History tends to come alive when the researcher is passionate about the subject being researched. Familiar names suddenly represent real people with real stories, and familiar traditions begin to make sense within the context of their time. My tenure as a Conservatory student at Baldwin-Wallace College made such an impression on my life that conducting archives research at the Riemenschneider Bach Institute was a task I looked forward to. I knew little about the roots of the Conservatory or the Riemenschneiders, and time flew by as I read through hard-copy oral histories and looked through family photographs.

My goal was to gain a greater understanding of how one man, Albert Riemenschneider, changed a college and community so significantly because of his passion for music. I was interested in viewing the Conservatory traditions I value today through the lens in which they were originally created. And, having heard mention of Selma Riemenschneider many times in conjunction with her husband Albert and the Conservatory, I desired to better understand her involvement in the process as well. This project is a summation of those factors and a product of loyalty to an institution that created profound change in the life of one of its alumna.

Albert

Charles Albert Riemenschneider (1878-1950) was born to Karl H. and Emilie Riemenschneider on August 31, 1878. His father, Karl, immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty-four from Germany to serve as Professor of Ancient Languages at German Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. Karl and Emilie (Smith) were married in 1870, and took up residence in an apartment in the men's dormitory, where they served as

proctors (Riemenschneider, 2001). Albert and his siblings were born and reared in that apartment (See Appendix A, figure 1).

Albert and his brother Carl both studied music with their father at an early age. The piano in the dormitory (now Kohler Hall) was practiced frequently by either Albert or Carl; Selma Marting Riemenschneider once said: “one heard the [Riemenschneider] piano played at all hours of the day, beginning at six o’clock in the morning and continuing until ten at night” (Barber, 1998). Albert also had an affinity for athletics, specifically for football, baseball, and basketball (Riemenschneider, 1963).

As a young college student, Albert enjoyed mathematics and considered pursuing an engineering career; as skilled and passionate as he was about music, he was not certain he wanted to train to become a professional musician (Riemenschneider, 1963). However, at the age of nineteen, it was suggested by the College Treasurer, John C. Marting, that Albert be appointed director of the German Wallace College music department. He accepted the position and began teaching piano, organ, and theory, among other subjects.

In 1902, Albert spent a year in Vienna studying piano and composition, while his brother Carl, temporarily served as director of the music department in his place. Upon his return, Albert and Selma Marting (the daughter of John C. Marting) were married in 1904 in the Lindsay-Crossman Chapel on campus. A month later, they departed to Paris for a year-long honeymoon that allowed them refine their musical training: Albert on organ and in composition, and Selma in voice (see Appendix A, figure 6).

During his lifetime, Albert Riemenschneider took seven trips abroad, a few of them for the primary purpose of studying the organ with Charles Marie Widor in Paris (Barber, 1998). Also during these European adventures, Albert began collecting rare editions of Bach manuscripts, some in Bach's own hand; the economic issues that occurred between World War I and World War II allowed Albert to obtain these valuable editions at an especially low price because the original owners sold them to increase personal cash flow (Vacha, 2008).

In 1927, "Prof Al", as students often referred to him, began offering organ master classes, which gained popularity very quickly. Offered during the summer months, some classes were held in Berea, while others allowed students to travel with Albert to San Diego or Paris; in the case of Paris, his organ students had the opportunity to study with renown organist Marcel Dupre at his home while Albert continued studying with Widor (Barber, 1998). The target audience for his master classes was church organists, and these individuals came from all over the country to participate. One participant helped Albert arrange for use of the Austin Organ in San Diego, known as "the pavilion organ" because of its unique outdoor setup (Riemenschneider, 1963).

Albert Riemenschneider had an active presence in the greater-Cleveland area as well. He opened a piano studio in downtown Cleveland's "Old Arcade", where his brother Carl also had a studio. He was also the organist at several local churches, including Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, which was known locally as John D. Rockefeller Sr.'s church (Riemenschneider, 1963); he was one of five laymen appointed by the Methodist Church to commission a hymnal (Riemenschneider, 2001). Albert held

major leadership roles in national organizations (the Music Teacher's National Association and the National Association of Schools of Music, an accreditation organization, are a couple worthy of mention), and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from the Sherwood School of Music in Chicago.

Dr. Riemenschneider retired from his responsibilities as Director of the Conservatory in 1947 and, for a brief time in 1948, assumed the role of Acting President for Baldwin-Wallace College. As he and Selma were preparing to relocate to San Diego, Albert quickly grew ill, presumably from a heart issue, and died in Akron, Ohio on July 20, 1950. The Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music was deeply affected by its loss, and quickly established the Albert Riemenschneider Bach Festival Endowment Fund in his memory (see Appendix B, figure 3). The annotated program for the annual Bach Festival each spring also pays tribute to his many efforts for the Conservatory community.

The Conservatory of Music

John C. Marting was the College Treasurer when Albert Riemenschneider was a student at German Wallace College. Since Karl H. Riemenschneider was the new president of German Wallace College, and their families interacted on a personal level even before the presidency, Marting was well aware of Albert's musical capabilities. He was concerned for the financial stability of the institution and its struggling music department, as it had only one instructor and a few students (Riemenschneider, 2001). Dr. J. O. Berr had grown ill and was retirement-bound, so the trustees at the College wanted offer Albert the position. He was opposed to accepting it, since he was also

considering a career in engineering, and his father was also opposed, as he did not want it to appear as though Albert had been favored for the position.

Eventually Albert agreed, on the condition that if the plan were successful, he could have the opportunity to substantially enhance his own musical education (P. Riemenschneider, 2001). His opportunity came four years later, in 1902, to travel to Vienna and study composition and piano. After his marriage in 1904, Albert and his new bride Selma Marting Riemenschneider also spent a year in Paris, in conjunction with their honeymoon, to continue musical study. Study abroad opportunities were very uncommon at this time, so Albert's musical reputation had become greatly enhanced by his European study. This caused enrollment in the music department increase significantly (Riemenschneider, 1963).

In 1913, German Wallace College and Baldwin University merged to create the new Baldwin-Wallace College, and the Conservatory of Music was officially brought to fruition. The faculty body was increased to better serve the additional student population, and a plan of study was created that would lead to a music degree. Over time, with continued growth, Albert relinquished some of his initial teaching responsibilities (he continued to teach organ) and took on an executive administrator role. Ground was broken for the Kulas Musical Arts Building in 1946 as another way to ease the growing pains the Conservatory continued to experience (see Appendix A, figure 8). As a result of Albert's leadership, Baldwin-Wallace College is recognized today as one of few liberal arts institutions with a nationally and internationally known Conservatory of Music (Riemenschneider & Unger, 2007).

Selma

Selma Marting was born on July 21, 1882 to the family of John C. Marting. The Martings moved to Berea from Indianapolis when John accepted the position of treasurer of German Wallace College. Selma was in the eighth grade when they moved, and recalled that her father's office was located in the men's dormitory where the Riemenschneiders resided. Albert and Carl's sister Clara was often Selma's playmate, and instead of attending Berea High School, she was placed in the Preparatory Department at the College (Riemenschneider, 1963). She studied the piano, first with then-director of the music department Dr. J. O. Berr, and began to study piano with Albert after he took the director position within the department. Selma was, in fact, the first graduate (with a music diploma) of the music department under its new director. After receiving her diploma, she became an assistant piano teacher under Albert.

Their romantic relationship developed shortly after she began teaching in the music department, in 1902. The courtship period was brief, and they became engaged during July of that year (S. Riemenschneider, 1963). Later that summer, Albert departed for his Vienna trip and she continued as an assistant piano teacher until his return. They were married on her birthday, July 21, 1904, in a fairly elaborate ceremony...it was *the* event of the summer (Barber, 1998).

Albert and Selma had three children (Paul, Edwin, and Wilma) who lived to adulthood, and they were very diligent to share their love for music and travel with them. In 1931, the Albert Riemenschneiders made one of their annual pilgrimages to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to attend the annual Bethlehem Bach Festival performance.

On this occasion, the couple became inspired to start a similar tradition in the Cleveland-area, and, with the children listening from the back seat, Albert and Selma conceptualized how an event of that caliber would succeed on a college campus (Riemenschneider & Unger, 2007); from those efforts, the oldest collegiate Bach festival in the country was born.

It is evident that Selma's commitment to the Conservatory ran as deeply as her husband's. Aside from the immense amount of development and executive support she provided for the annual Bach Festival, she completed and published Albert's final textbook after his death. She also donated his collection of more than 2,500 rare Bach manuscripts and documents to the College to found the Riemenschneider Bach Institute. Selma received an honorary degree from Baldwin-Wallace College in 1955, and retired in La Jolla, California. She died in 1971.

The Bach Festival

The First Annual Baldwin-Wallace College Bach Festival took place on Friday, June 9, 1933 (see Appendix B, figure 1). Albert and Selma had spent the previous year, after attending an inspiring performance by the Bethlehem Bach Festival Chorus, creating a collegiate equivalent in the greater-Cleveland area. Albert's responsibility as artistic director would be to select music, search out talented individuals from the Cleveland community to perform the solo portions, and to train the Conservatory students for performance. To complement his efforts, Selma decided that she would function as business manager by fundraising and caring for administrative details (Riemenschneider, n.d.). Initially, they determined that goals for the annual event

would include: 1) bringing quality performances of the music of Bach to the masses for a very minimal cost; and 2) allowing current Conservatory students to be exposed to as many of Bach's works during their college career as possible.

To accomplish these goals, Albert decided that the Bach Festival main concert would consist of one of Bach's major choral works: *The St. Matthew Passion*, *The St. John Passion*, the *Christmas Oratorio*, and the *B-minor Mass*. These four works would be rotated each year so that a student could be exposed to all of them before graduating from the Conservatory. Community members could be included in the choir (Albert's church choir was also nearby), so the ensembles became quite large. The orchestra was also composed of students and local professional musicians. The text was sung in English, which allowed the audience to understand it easily, and sing along if they wished (S. Riemenschneider, n.d.)

Selma began fundraising immediately; she found three guarantors for the first event, one of whom was her father. Each one donated \$100, and did so each year to follow. In her reflection of the founding of the Bach Festival, Selma noted several things: the event was always self-supporting (the only year of financial deficit was during World War II, and it was quickly repaid), there was no cost for general admission because the event was paid for by guarantors, and whatever funding remained purchased music for the following year (Riemenschneider, n.d.). Program notes about the works performed were written by Albert and the annotated programs were sold by the Boy Scouts for ten cents each, allowing the boys to keep a percentage of the profit.

In 1945, the annotated programs began include a printed repertory that noted what works were performed at each Festival. This tradition is still in place today.

The Bethlehem Bach Festival integrated the German tradition of playing brass instruments from a bell tower before their performances. Albert wanted to use this idea also, so the music director for the Berea Public School System, Richard Stocker, became the first Conservatory Brass Choir conductor. Chairs were set up on the lawn outside of Marting Hall, and the Brass Choir would perform Bach Chorales or other pieces from the bell tower, roughly an hour before each Festival concert. This tradition has also been repeated every year since.

Beginning in 1975, under new administration, a few changes were made to Albert's original plan. Choirs of Bach's time would have been much smaller, so community members were removed from the Festival. The practice of singing the text in the vernacular was also reversed so that current students could further develop their foreign language skills (English translations were printed in the program for the audience). Over time, the Festival has grown into a weekend-long celebration consisting of several concerts and presentations given by Bach scholars and Conservatory faculty. It continues to be well-attended each spring (Riemenschneider & Unger, 2007).

In 1950, the 200th anniversary of Bach's death, there were two concerts planned for the Baldwin-Wallace community: the annual spring celebration, and a weekend-long event in November that featured music not typically performed at the Festivals. Ironically, "Prof Al" died in July of 1950, and November's event was quickly developed into a memorial to his honor (see Appendix B, figure 4).

The Riemenschneider Legacy

In 1953, Selma Riemenschneider fulfilled her husband's wish to donate The Bach Library to the Conservatory of Music, and be named the Emilie and Karl Riemenschneider Memorial Bach Library in recognition of his parents' invaluable personal support (Vacha, 2008). In September of 1969 the Riemenschneider Bach Institute (RBI) officially opened; it was intended to foster research and publication, and to house an ever-growing collection of rare scores and literature. Today, the RBI holds more than 33,273 items, including 12,499 bound books and musical scores (1,329 are vaulted), as well as sound recordings, periodicals, microfilms, and 100 boxes of archival material. T. Riemenschneider and Unger noted (2007) that "with the establishment of online directories of the library's rare materials, awareness of the collection's value is growing, and the legacy of Albert and Selma is expanding around the world" (p. 21).

On Saturday afternoon, May 26, 1962, in conjunction with the 30th annual Bach Festival, Baldwin-Wallace President A. B. Bonds, Jr., unveiled a bronze plaque on the Memorial Wall of the College honoring Dr. Albert Riemenschneider. It read:

Dr. Albert Riemenschneider, Class of 1899

Professor of Piano and Organ, 1897-1948

Founder of the Conservatory of Music and its Director, 1913-1948

Acting President of this College, 1949

In 52 years of outstanding and devoted service as teacher, musician, administrator, author, composer, editor, scholar, and as founder and director of the Conservatory, the Bach Festivals and the Bach Library, he

made a profound contribution to the development of this College. (as cited in Riemenschneider, n.d.)

Perhaps summarizing it best, Elinore Barber (1998), the founding director of the Bach Institute, states in her biographical sketch of Albert Riemenschneider:

Forty-eight years after Dr. Riemenschneider's death, it is, perhaps, possible to assess with some degree of objectivity his contributions to the development of music in this country. Nearly a century after its inception, the Conservatory which Dr. Riemenschneider founded in 1898 continues to grow and operate at a high performance level; his editions of Bach's works, no more than a half century old, continue to serve both teachers and students in many helpful ways; the annual Bach Festival which he originated sixty-seven years ago, is presently known as one of the best in America; and the Bach Library which he started seventy-nine years ago (now greatly expanded and a part of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute) is renowned as one of the world's great Bach repositories.

It may well be, however, that it was as a teacher and a performer that Albert Riemenschneider made his greatest contribution to the development of American music. In summing up his own philosophy of teaching, Dr. Riemenschneider once noted: "This, then, is the heart of [my] teaching: that, to a mastery of the fundamental principles which underlay the workings of each instrument, must be added the background of a

mature and developed musicianship. Only in this way can the student arrive at satisfactory results." Good advice, indeed! (p. 5)

Thoughts on Institutional Archives and Oral Histories

A major highlight of this project was being able to read two documents penned by Selma Riemenschneider after Albert's death. One detailed their efforts in creating the Baldwin-Wallace Bach Festival (spanning the first twenty-five years of the event) and the other was a biography of Albert. Reading her perspective on the events of their lives made the information far more real than any text book ever could have.

To me, the biography was more reflective of "our lives together": she shares about her first experience in meeting the Riemenschneiders as a young girl, and provided details about where Albert purchased her engagement ring. She included particulars about their wedding day and the reception, the food that was served, and setting up their first living space in her parent's home. She spoke with honesty the pain associated with losing a child, and later with losing her husband. It appeared to paint a very authentic picture of how the events in their personal lives affected the outcomes of their professional development and daily interactions at the Conservatory.

These documents were never published. *The History of the Baldwin-Wallace Bach Festival* did not even include the date it was written. Some of the writing seemed to be "stream-of-consciousness" and repeated itself several times. It was not always in chronological order and she mixed up a couple of Festival dates; it was very much like listening to stories as Grandmother shares from her old-fashioned rocking chair, which, I believe, made the documents that much more valuable.

Recently, I contacted two of Albert and Selma's grandsons, Tom and John Riemenschneider (Edwin's sons). They were both active participants, along with other family members, in planning the 75th anniversary of the Bach Festival. I asked them to briefly share about their experiences in researching their family history and contributing to college archives. The following summarizes their reflections (note: "I" in the communication refers to Tom Riemenschneider):

We have a strong family history of exceptional people, who have served others and contributed to their communities over generations. Our family has strong ties to Baldwin-Wallace, the Conservatory, and the Bach Festival; because of that ongoing relationship, much of our history is known, and can be researched. Five generations of our family- more than 200 Riemenschneiders (Albert) and Martings (Selma) have attended, graduated, taught, been administrators or served on the board of trustees at Baldwin-Wallace College. John and I have memories of our great-grandparents, and, as a family, we have shared our memories across six generations to our own grandchildren. I have some early childhood memories of watching and listening to my grandfather play the organ at Bach Festivals in the [Gamble Auditorium].

Our father, Edwin, volunteered to serve the College and the Conservatory for years: for the 50th Bach Festival, Dad worked with then Director, Warren Scharf, to present the Festival at Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. He continued his involvement until his death at age ninety. Dad had

a strong interest in our family history, and while still practicing as a physician, began to explore our genealogy and formally document our roots. He was able to document twelve generations of our family going back to Eubach, Germany. To celebrate our parents' 50th wedding anniversary in 1987, John led seventeen members of our family (four generations) in a three- week trip to Germany to find our roots. We visited the little town of Eubach, population of sixty-five people (all named Riemenschneider), and the birthplace of our great-great grandfather, Engelhardt, who immigrated to the US in the 1830s. We stood in the house where he was born, and in the little church, and saw the announcement of his birth, signed by his parents. The trip had a lasting impression on all of us, and we determined that we would continue to seek out, explore, and share with our family information about our history.

Since that time, we have become more involved with the College, the Conservatory, the Festival and the RBI [Riemenschneider Bach Institute]. John serves on the Board of Trustees. Tom served as the President of the Alumni Association, and returned to B-W to found and teach in the Healthcare MBA program.

As the 75th Bach Festival approached, we decided as a family that we should volunteer to help with planning a very special festival in honor of our grandparents: for more than a year before the festival, John and I, my wife Judy, and my cousin Betsy Riemenschneider Sales spent

approximately a day each week helping with preparations, learning more about our family history every week. To increase interest in the Festival, John and I participated in a series of meetings with most of the long-time contributors to the festival. Nearly every one of them had stories of their memories of the festival, often going back to grandfather and grandmother's time. We began to explore the holdings of the Bach Institute and, in addition to the rare manuscripts, found boxes of letters, papers, photographs, music programs and memorabilia of our grandparents' many trips to Europe to perform, to study with the masters in Europe, and to search out rare Bach Manuscripts. We found, for example, a whole package of correspondences with Albert Schweitzer, who had been a student of Vidor with grandfather, before he became a physician and a missionary. In addition, we found copies of a biography of Albert, and a history of the first twenty-five years of the Festival, both written by Selma; as well as a biography of Albert, written by Eleanor Barber, [the first] Director of the RBI. These were given to the Institute by Selma, as part of the donation of Albert's articles, books and artifacts. We supported the effort to hold the major work at Severance Hall, and to celebrate our 75th by combining with the Bethlehem Bach Festival Choir- who were celebrating their own 100th festival.

Through all of these activities, we heard more and more stories about our grandparents, and all that they had accomplished. We felt that it was

important for us as Albert and Selma's grandchildren to gather all of this material together, and share it with our family. Accordingly, we worked to organize the information that we had accumulated into three pieces for the Festival Annotated Program: one on Albert and Selma, one on the history of the Festival, and one on the Riemenschneider Bach Institute. We decided to invite as many members of the Riemenschneider- Marting family to a family reunion as possible, associated with the Festival, to celebrate our family and our long connection with the College and Conservatory. Eighty-four of our family members came to the Festival, and joined in our family reunion. We shared stories of our grandparents, and our family. Many of the attendees were family we had not met before- but we all had similar values and aspirations, which traced back to our grandparents. We shared stories, pictures, reminiscences, and even Googled Eubach, Germany to see the little town where we came from. We had prepared a fourteen- generation Riemenschneider- Marting family tree, and handed it out to all the family. We video-taped the whole evening to help preserve our memories.

We have set up an annual Riemenschneider- Marting family dinner at the Bach Festival each year, and this year, we had a dozen members of the family, who shared wonderful stories about Albert and Selma, and our family. We plan to continue the dinner into the future. Our search for knowledge about our family history grew out of our relationships with B-

W, Dad's evolving interest in our family genealogy, our trip to Germany to learn more about our roots, and our participation in the 75th Bach Festival. As we go through our lives, and see our children and grandchildren coming behind us, we feel the enormous strength of our family. The values and the lives of our grandparents, handed down through our parents, continue to be the bedrock of our lives. We are now sharing their stories with our grandchildren, and introducing those values into the lives of the next generation. We hope to keep learning from their lives and passing it on to future generations of our family (personal communication, April 26, 2009)

I had the opportunity to read the above correspondence after my research was complete, so it was very helpful to receive an explanation about the origin of some of my resources. It was also wonderful to hear about how this family has embraced its history and continues to pass the legacy through generations.

Volumes have not been written about the Conservatory in the way that landmark institutions in American history have been, so primary sources and oral histories were key to documenting and preserving the Conservatory's history. The time spent in the Bach Institute Archives revealed to me, on a more personal level, the importance of maintaining archives and documenting historical events in the life of an institution. Without the thoroughness of family members like Tom and John Riemenschneider to continue exploring family roots and passing along the legacy to the generations that follow, the drive to continue genealogical research in the future could have

disappeared. Were it not for Selma's diligence to document their professional and personal experiences, many of the precious life details she shared would have been lost with her death in 1971. And the history of the Conservatory of Music at Baldwin-Wallace College could have been lost along with it.

Application to Higher Education Administrators

A lesson to be learned for administrators at colleges and universities rests in the value of keeping their archive collections up-to-date. As demonstrated by Tom and John Riemenschneider, personnel resources are simply a matter of networking and asking questions. Their proactivity in contacting Bach Festival donors led them to new stories about their grandparents that had yet to be shared. Be creative! Administrators can also be in contact with college archivists to ask how they can contribute to the effort. Those who are willing to spend a few minutes supplying copies of documentation that reflects and details important events on campus can make a big difference with even a little effort.

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Appendix A: Photographs

All photographs are courtesy of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute, Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, Ohio

Figure 1: From the B-W Grindstone Yearbook

Figure 2: (left) From the B-W Grindstone Yearbook; Figure 3: (right) newspaper clipping

Figure 4 (above): 1897, men's dormitory where Albert was born
Figure 5 (below): Riemenschneiders at home. Albert is playing chess, father Karl is to his immediate left

Figure 6: Albert and Selma Marting Riemenschneider, recently married, leaving for Paris, 1904

Figure 7: Albert at the organ

Figure 8: Groundbreaking ceremony for the addition of Kulas Hall, 1946 (Prof AI is in the middle).
Figure 9: Albert and Selma Riemenschneider

Appendix B- Annotated Program Highlights

All annotated programs are courtesy of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute, Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, Ohio

Figure 1: Front cover of Annotated Program from the 1st Annual Bach Festival

Figure 2: Front cover of The Festival with Spiritual Significance- Commemoration of Bicentennial of Bach's death.

Figure 3: From *Spiritual Significance* program: Announcement of A. Riemenschneider Memorial Bach Festival Fund.

Figure 4: From *Spiritual Significance* program: *In Memoriam: A. Riemenschneider*.