Performing Artists Photograph Collection, circa 1890-1976, undated

Administrative Information

Creators
Berry, Zorah
De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935
Smith, Mai Davis

Call Number
RBR WNYO 1890.P46

Extent
4 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize box (2.25 linear feet)

Abstract
Black & white and sepia-toned photographs of renowned musicians, singers, dancers, actors and other performers that appeared in Buffalo from the late 19th through late 20th century. The bulk of the collection is photos personally collected by Marian De Forest, Mai Davis Smith, and Zorah Berry, circa 1900 to 1950. Others were donated to, or acquired by the Buffalo Public Library and later, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library.

Terms of Use
The Performing Artists Photograph Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
[Description and dates], Box/folder number, Performing Artists Photograph Collection, Rare Book Room, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library.

Acquisition
The Zorah Berry photographs are part of a collection of local concert programs, reviews, articles and images donated to the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library in February 1975 by William D. MacPherson, a friend of Mrs. Berry. The Marian De Forest and Mai Davis Smith photographs were donated to the Buffalo Public Library in February 1935 by De Forest shortly before her death.

Other donations included several photos given to the Buffalo Public Library in 1939 by William J. Neill, Jr. (as noted on the photo verso), another Buffalo concert promoter. Librarians also
actively collected photographs, sometimes requesting them directly from the performer, as indicated by correspondence, and autographs signed “To the Buffalo Public Library.”


2 “Miss De Forest presents Library photo collection.” Courier Express, February 9, 1935. Buffalo Public Library Scrapbook, 1932-1935, p.245

Processing Information
Collection processed by: Susan Cutrona, December 2008
Finding aid written by: Susan Cutrona, June 2013

Biographical History

The bulk of the photographs originated from the personal collections of three women who were early impresarios and important figures in Buffalo music history.

Marian De Forest (1864-1935) was a newspaperwoman, playwright, music promoter, and social leader. She began her professional career as one of the first female reporters in Western New York. De Forest was the drama critic and department editor for the Buffalo Courier Express for over 20 years.¹ She also wrote adaptations for the theater and radio, most notably a dramatization of Little Women in 1911.

Along with her partner, Mai Davis Smith (1860-1924), De Forest established the Buffalo Musical Foundation, bringing symphony orchestras and individual performers to Buffalo. According to her obituaries, Smith was the first person in Buffalo to earn a living as a concert promoter.² The two women were successful business partners, determined to offer Buffalonians the best in opera and classical music.

In 1919, De Forest founded the Zonta Club of Buffalo, later known as Zonta International, an organization of professional women dedicated to improving the status of women worldwide. She also served on the Board of the Buffalo Public Library, becoming the first female Library trustee.

De Forest and Smith’s collection of autographed photographs of performers were “personal tributes of friendship and appreciation” and evidence of widespread associations in the theater and music worlds.³ Photographs of De Forest are included in the collection.

Zorah Berry (1889-1969) was a concert promoter and entrepreneur who brought hundreds of musical performers to Buffalo during her 40-year career. The “Zorah Berry Presents” concert series began when she engaged world-renowned opera singer Amelita Galli-Curci in 1926. Over the years, her concerts attracted the “greats of music” to Buffalo, including Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Lily Pons. The concerts were enjoyed by many loyal local patrons; Berry estimated that more than 1,000, 000 people had attended her events.⁴

In 1957, Berry collaborated with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra to continue management of the concert series upon her retirement. Her last major project, a “Great Artists Series” in 1964, featured notable vocalists, musicians, and dancers.
Berry’s collection of autographed photographs and scrapbooks documenting performers and concerts were on display at her office at 32 Court Street. Her friend and collaborator William D. MacPherson acquired the collection after her death in 1969, and donated the material to the Library in 1975.  

1 “Reviving a legend,” Buffalo News, March 17, 2001, p. D1
3 “Marian De Forest” [Editorial, obituary], Courier-Express, February 18, 1935, p.8

Scope and Content

The collection is a chronicle of the nationally and internationally known performing artists that graced Buffalo stages from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth century. It contains black & white and sepia toned photos of musicians, singers, dancers, and actors that performed in Buffalo. Photo types include cartes de visite, cabinet cards, 8 x10 publicity shots, and modern headshots. Several later photos appear to have been used in press releases and newspaper articles. The dates on the photographs range from 1895 to 1976; the bulk is from 1900 to 1950.

Many of the photo subjects are internationally renowned musicians and performers, including Harold Arlen, Katharine Cornell, Geraldine Farrar, Maurice Ravel, Camille Saint-Saëns, Pablo Casals, Walter Damrosch, Isadora Duncan, Max Fielder, Lillian Gish, Philip Glass, Gustave Mahler, Mitch Miller, Lily Pons, and Serge Rachmaninoff. Several musical trios, quartets, and other groups are also present. A few notable non-entertainers include Gisela Richter (archaeologist and art historian), Ivan Mestrovic (sculptor), Frances Perkins (Secretary of Labor under Franklin D. Roosevelt), and Leroy Lincoln (President of Metropolitan Life Insurance).

Most of the photographs are autographed to Davis Smith, De Forest, Berry, and others.

See librarian for a detailed Excel spreadsheet listing each photograph in the collection. It includes identifying information of subject, date, size, color, and photographer. Notes were taken from photograph verso annotations.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by individual’s last name or the name of the musical group.

Photograph subjects
Adonaylo, Raquel
Albeneri Trio
Alda, Frances
Alsen, Elsa
Amadeus Quartet
Amato, Pasquale
Antoine, Josephine
Arlen, Harold
Barbirolli, John
Barylli Quartet
Bauer, Harold
Beaux Arts String Quartet
Beaux Arts Trio of New York
Bentonelli, Joseph
Berkshire Quartet
Berlin Philharmonic Octet
Black, Frank
Bos, Coenraad
Brailowsky, Alexander
Brodsky, Vera
Brownlee, John
Budapest String Quartet
Busoni, Ferruccio
Butt, Clara
Bychkov, Semyon
Carreno, (Maria) Teresa
Casals, Pablo
Casella, Alfredo
Castagna, Bruna
Castle, Irene
Castle, Vernon
Cavalieri, Lina
Cayvan, Georgia
Cisneros, Eleonora de
Clarion Wind Quintet
Cleveland Quartet
Cornell, Katharine
Corona, Leonora
Crooks, Richard
Culp, Julia
Damrosch, Walter
Davis, Jessie Bartlett
De Forest, Marian
De Reszke Singers
Dillman, Hugh
Dorian Woodwind Quintet
Duchin, Eddy
Duncan, Isadora
Eames, Emma
Eddy, Nelson
Eger, Joseph
Elliott, Gertrude
Elman, Mischa
Enesco, Georges
Engel, Lehman
Farrar, Geraldine
Fiedler, Max
Fine Arts Quartet
Flagstad, Kirsten
Flonzaley Quartet
Francescatti, Zino
Friedman, Ignaz
Fuchs, Joseph
Gabrilowitsch, Ossip
Gadski, Johanna
Garrison, Mabel
Garrotto, Annunciata
Gerhardt, Elena
Gieseking, Walter
Gish, Lillian
Glass, Philip
Gluck, Alma
Godowsky, Leopold
Goodson, Katharine
Gorin, Igor
Guarneri String Quartet
Hackett, James K.
Hambourg, Boris
Hamlin, George
Haskell, Arnold
Heifetz, Jascha
Herbert, Victor
Hofmann, Joseph
Honegger, Arthur
Horowitz, Vladimir
Huehn, Julius
Humphrey, Doris
Hungarian Quartet
Hutcheson, Ernest
I Musici
I Solisti Veneti
Iowa String Quartet
Iturbi, Jose
Jagel, Frederick
Jepson, Helen
Johnson, Edward
Johnson, Hunter
Jonas, Maryla
Julian Bream Consort
Juliard String Quartet
Kaskas, Anna
Kindler, Hans
Koeckert Quartet
Koenen, Tilly
Koshetz, Alexander
Koussevitsky, Serge
Kroll Quartet
Kubelik, Jan
Kunwald, Ernst
La Forge, Frank
Langtry, Lillie
Laredo, Jaime
Laredo, Ruth
Levitzki, Mischa
Lehmann, Lottie
Lewis, Mary
Lhevinne, Josef
Lincoln, Leroy A.
Lindsay, Julie [Lillie]
Littlefield, Catherine
Ljungberg, Goeta
Loca, Adelaide De
London String Quartet
Lussan, Zelie De
McClosky, David Blair
McCormack, John
MacMillen, Francis
Mahler, Gustav
Maier, Guy
Markova, Alicia
Marlboro Trio
Martini, Nino
Mason, Edith
Masselos, William
Maynor, Dorothy
Melba, Nellie
Menuhin, Yehudi
Mercado, Angell J.
Mercado's Tipica Mexican Orchestra
Milgrim, Sally
Mestrovic, Ivan
Miller, Mitch
Mills, Walter
Mischakoff, Mischa
Mitropoulos, Dimitri
Monroe, Lucy
Monteux, Pierre
Mordkin, Michel
New Art Wind Quintet
New York String Sextet
New York Woodwind Quintet
Noble, Ray
Novaes, Guiomar
Oberhofer, Emil
Oelheim, Helen
Ozawa, Seiji
Pachman, Vladimir de
Paganini Quartet
Paris Chamber Orchestra
Parkening, Christopher
Patti, Adalina
Pattison, Lee
Paulee, Mona
Pavlova, Anna
Perkins, Frances
Pinza, Enzio
Pons, Lily
Pro Musica [New York]
Quartetto Italiano
Rachmaninoff, Serge
Rameau, Marjorie
Rampal, Jean-Pierre and Robert Veyron-Lacroix
Ravel, Maurice
Reiner, Fritz
Rhea, Hortense
Richter, Gisela M.A.
Ringwall, Rudolph
Robson, Stuart
Rodzinski, Artur
Roma, Lisa
Rose, Leonard
Rubinstein, Anton G.
Rubinstein, Artur
Rumford, Kennerly
Russell, Sol Smith
Sabanieeva, Thalia
Sabin, Florence R.
Saint-Saens, Camille
Salmond, Felix
Samaroff, Olga
Schelling, Ernest
Schnabel, Artur
Schneider, Edwin
Schumann-Heink, Ernestine
Schuster, Joseph
Seidl, Anton
Sembrich, Marcella
Senorita Sanchez
Serkin, Rudolf
Shawn, Ted & His Men Dancers
Shearer, Norma
Shure, Leonard
Slavenska, Mia
Slenszynski, Ruth
Sokoloff, Nikolai
Sothern, Virginia Laura
Sousa, John Phillip
Sovereign, Alice
Steber, Eleanor
Stock, Frederick
Stokowski, Leopold
Stueckgold, Grete
Swislowski, Jeno
Sylvester, Robert
Szigetti, Joseph
Tauber, Richard
Terry, Warren Lee
Teyte, Maggie
Thebom, Blanche
Thomas, John Charles
Tibbet, Lawrence
Tokyo String Quartet
Toscanini, Arturo
Traubel, Helen
Triggs, Harold
Trio Di Bolzano
Trio Italiano D'Archi
Ukranian National Chorus
Van Endert, Elisabeth
Vermeer Quartet
Vienna Octet
Wagner, Charles
Walsh, Blanche
Warfield, David
Warlich, Reinhold Von
Warsaw Quintet
Weisberg, Roslyn
Werrenrath, Reinald
Whiteman, Paul
Willard, Edward
Williams, Ralph Vaughan
Separated Materials

*Zorah Berry’s* seven volume scrapbook collection (Buffalo Stacks) spans June 1926 to September 1956. They include newspaper advertisements and articles for upcoming events, flyers, reviews of past performances, and other articles relating to Berry and the theaters and performers she worked with. Concert programs, 1927-1964, are also listed in the *Zorah Berry Index* card file arranged by composer, artist, and title of the piece.

**Marian De Forest** also donated typescripts of her plays which are now in the Rare Book Room collection:

- **RBR MSS. D44Z6 1900Z**
  *The Zonta zoo, or, The vision of Noah*
  De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935

- **RBR MSS. D44 M3 1900Z**
  *Mary 39: A play in three acts and four scenes*
  De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935

- **RBR MSS. D44 1900Z**
  *Mister man: A comedy in a prologue and three acts* [manuscript]
  De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935.

- **RBR MSS. D44 1930**
  *Erstwhile Susan: A play in three acts*
  De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935.

**Related Materials**

For more information on artists and musicians that performed in Buffalo in the early 20th century, see the *Famous Speakers and Visitors File* [card index] in the Grosvenor Room.

For further information on Marian De Forest, Mai Davis Smith, and Zorah Berry, see the following:

1. Buffalonia Music Vertical File (clippings, ephemera): De Forest, Marian

2. Buffalonia Music Vertical File (clippings, ephemera): Berry, Zorah

Search Terms

Authors
100 Berry, Zorah
100 De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935
100 Smith, Mai Davis

Subject terms
600 Berry, Zorah
600 De Forest, Marian, 1864-1935
600 Smith, Mai Davis
650 Musicians – 20th Century
650 Composers – 20th Century
650 Conductors – 20th Century
650 Actors – 20th Century

Genre terms
655 photographs