



The New York Public Library Music Division

Guide to the

Frieda Hempel and William Kahn papers

1863-1957

JOB 91-45

Summary

Creator: Hempel, Frieda, 1885-1955

Title: Frieda Hempel and William Kahn papers

Date: 1863-1957

Size: .2 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donor unknown.

Abstract: Frieda Hempel (1885-1955) was a German soprano with the Metropolitan Opera. William B. Kahn (1882-1971) was a New York City business man and political writer who married Hempel in 1918, and who continued to serve as Hempel's business manager after their divorce in 1926. The collection primarily includes correspondence between Hempel and Kahn from the year 1950, including letters, cables, and postcards.

Preferred citation: Frieda Hempel and William Kahn papers, JOB 91-45. Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Creator History

Frieda Hempel (1885-1955) was a German coloratura soprano who sang at the Royal Court Opera of Berlin and Covent Garden, before making her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1912. In 1919, she shifted her focus from operatic to concert performance. In 1918, she married businessman and political writer William B. Kahn. The two remained married until 1926, at which point Kahn remained Hempel's business manager.

Scope and Content Note

The Frieda Hempel and William Kahn papers consist primarily of correspondence between Hempel and Kahn from the year 1950, including letters, cables, and postcards. Also included is correspondence

between Frieda Hempel and others, correspondence between William Kahn and Elizabeth Johnston (Hempel's caretaker during her final illness in 1955), correspondence between Kahn and others concerning the hanging of a portrait of Hempel in the Metropolitan Opera House. A small portion of the collection includes Kahn's 1914 pamphlet, *The Avoidance of War*, and correspondence about it, as well as miscellaneous documentation of Kahn's family. 19th century Kahn family correspondence from the 19th century and the 1920's ; clippings ; and miscellaneous items including a Kahn family tree.

Arrangement: The collection is organized by format, correspondent, or topic. Folder titles were supplied by the archivist.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Postcards

Subjects

Sopranos (Singers)
World politics -- 1900-1945

Names

Hempel, Frieda, 1885-1955
Kahn, William B., 1882-1971

Container List

Correspondence between Hempel and Kahn

- b. 1 f. 1 1950 July 5-29
- b. 1 f. 2 1950 August 4-30
- b. 1 f. 3 1950 September 4-October 7
- b. 1 f. 4 Undated letters from Hempel to Kahn
- b. 1 f. 5 Cables between Hempel and Kahn 1950 July 5-October 15
- b. 1 f. 6 Postcards
Includes postcards from or to Hempel or Kahn.

b. 1 f. 7 Correspondence between Hempel and others

Includes correspondence from Florence Widmer, from Rudi (her brother) and from Direktor Gruder-Gunstram of Vienna. Also includes a note from Hempel including her full signature.

Correspondence between Kahn and others 1955-1957

Includes letters from Elizabeth Johnston regarding Hempel's illness.

- b. 1 f. 8 Letters from Elizabeth Johnston regarding Hempel's illness 1955-1957
Correspondence with George Keating, Lauder Greenway, Langdon Van Norden, and Mrs. Artur Halmi regarding the hanging of Frieda Hempel's portrait at the Metropolitan Opera House
- b. 1 f. 9 1956 June 1-July 31
- b. 1 f. 10 1956 December 8-1957 January 28
- b. 1 f. 11 1957 February-May 11
- b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence between Kahn and Mrs. John DeWitt Peltz, Mrs. Albert (Jean) Parker, Sophie Tavarozzi, Joan Sutherland Bonyng, and others 1955-1961
- b. 1 f. 13 Pamphlet, The Avoidance of War, and correspondence about it 1914-1915, 1951

Kahn family correspondence

- b. 1 f. 14 Letters from William Kahn and Joseph Kahn to Dr. and Mrs. Herman Kahn 1920-1921
- b. 1 f. 15 Nineteenth century items 1863-1896
Includes check dated 1863 September 4 from Abraham Pastor to Moses Taylor, anonymous letter dated 1866 September 10, letter from Gutche Kahn dated 1896 October 2, and letter from Galleries Heilbronner dated 1896 October 1.
- b. 1 f. 16 Clippings 1914-1915
Includes photocopies of clippings, chiefly letters to the editor from William Kahn dated 1914-1915. Also includes Dorothy Kilgallen article mentioning the Kahn-Hempel business relationship after divorce.
- b. 1 f. 17 Miscellaneous 1943-1944, undated
Includes poem about the Kahn family, as well as six copies of a telegram used for a 1943-1944 holiday greeting, seven miscellaneous notes, two envelopes, and the Kahn family tree.