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ALBERTA MASIELLO

PAPERS, 1894-1990
4.5 Linear feet (12 boxes)

Call No.: JPB 03-13

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Abstract

The papers of Alberta Masiello document her career as an opera vocal coach, as well as her early performing years. A significant portion of the collection, however, is a record of the opera careers of her grandfather and mother – Giuseppe and Giuseppina La Puma.

Administrative Information:

Acquisition: Gift of Tammi Laurance

Access Restrictions: Collection is open to the public

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Biography

Alberta Masiello (c.1916-1990) was born in Milan, Italy, to a family of renowned opera singers. Her grandfather, Giuseppe La Puma, began singing at an early age, and worked with many famous opera singers and conductors (e.g. Caruso, and Toscanini). He had a repertoire of about 100 roles for the baritone voice. In addition to singing, he founded the Mascagni Center of Culture, where he taught piano and voice with his daughter (and Masiello's mother), Giuseppina La Puma. She inherited her father's gift for singing, and after his death in 1940, continued to prepare students for traditional Grand Opera performances.

Masiello was considered a child prodigy on piano, and earned a degree from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Milan in 1932. Although she intended to follow in her mother's footsteps as a singer in America, she first attended Juilliard for several years. She also taught there as an assistant instructor and accompanist, working with Paul Althouse and Mme. Anna Schoen-Rene, while doing private vocal coaching at home. During World War II she found some success in New York City as a folk singer, adopting a Spanish persona named "Yola." Her singing career continued after the war with major mezzo-soprano roles at the New York City Opera, Fort Worth Opera, and Wagner Opera Company. But within a few years she turned to the coaching and accompaniment side of opera, and worked for the Dallas Civic Opera and Chicago Opera (where she established a professional relationship with Maria Callas). She then began a long tenure (over 20 years) at the Metropolitan Opera House, and earned the title of Assistant Conductor. However, she remained a vocal coach, and did not conduct any operas for the Met. She continued to give private lessons, and taught master classes at the Mannes College of Music and Juilliard. But opera audiences perhaps best knew Alberta Masiello as a guest panelist on the Texaco Opera Quiz, a radio program that ran during intermission of Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts.

Source: *New York Times* Obituary, New York Times Company, January 14, 1991

Scope and Content Note

The Alberta Masiello Papers contain very little insight into her personal life. Approximately half the collection focuses on her mother and grandfather, and much of the other materials offer only short summaries about her early years. However, this is a comment on the English language material – there is a significant amount of material written in Italian, which may offer more information about Masiello. Also, while there is a record of her professional opera career, the collection does not contain any original work such as notes or preparatory items.

Organization:

The Alberta Masiello Papers are organized in the following series:

- Series I: Correspondence, 1940-1990, undated
- Series II: Personal and Family Papers, 1905-c.1989, undated
- Series III: Photographs, 1895-1943, undated
- Series IV: Scrapbooks, 1894-1962, undated
- Series V: Oversized materials, 1915-1940

Series Descriptions:

Series I: Correspondence, 1940-1990, undated

.625 linear feet (1.25 boxes)

Arrangement: alphabetical

The majority of this series dates from the 1970s and 1980s, and consists of fan letters to Masiello. Each letter usually garnered a reply, which was often brief or obligatory in nature, but occasionally resulted in multiple letters from the correspondent over the course of several years. For these cases, the correspondents have a folder devoted to them within the larger alphabetical arrangement. Masiello's business relationships are also documented in this series, but to a lesser extent. Of note here is a folder with three letters from Maria Callas, written in Italian.

Series II: Personal and Family Papers, 1905-c.1989, undated

.315 linear feet (.75 box)

This series brings together papers in the collection that did not fit in one of the other series. The majority of material relates directly to Masiello's career, with an exception being the first folder of clippings, which are photocopies of loose pages from scrapbooks kept by Giuseppe La Puma.

Series III: Photographs, 1895-1943, undated

1 linear foot (2 boxes)

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The photographs found here represent a spectrum of popular opera singers from the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Many of the portraits are signed, and often include sentiments to either Giuseppe or Giuseppina La Puma. The size of these photographs range from postcards to cabinet cards, and condition varies as well (the more fragile ones are housed in mylar). The La Puma family is also well documented in this series, including photographs of Masiello's other relatives who helped to distinguish the family name. Please note that while a majority of the photographs date to before 1943, there are undated photographs and negatives that document Masiello's later career.

Series IV: Scrapbooks, 1894-1962, undated

2 linear feet (7 boxes)

The scrapbooks series contains two different types of scrapbooks: personal clippings and related posters or programs, and clippings from the periodical *Opera News*. Of the former type, the language is predominantly Italian, and most of the books are fragile (please handle with care). These scrapbooks were compiled either by or for Giuseppe La Puma and serve as a record of his vast number of performances.

Series V: Oversized materials, 1915-1940

0.165 linear feet (1 box)

This series consists of the oversize items from other series in this collection. There is one photograph, and two folders of loose scrapbook pages that belonged to Giuseppe La Puma.

Box/Folder Description

Box 1

Series I: Correspondence

- Folder 1 A, 1949-1984
- Folder 2 B, 1970-1988
- Folder 3 C, 1970-1990
- Folder 4 Callas, Maria, 1971-1975 (written in Italian)
- Folder 5 Chapin, Schuyler, 1972-1975
- Folder 6 Clark, Chris, undated (letterhead of Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions)
- Folder 7 Cruz-Romo, Gilda, 1973-1988, undated
- Folder 8 D, 1959-1988
- Folder 9 Davidson, Sylvia, 1971-1975
- Folder 10 E, 1973-1978
- Folder 11 F, 1940-1987
- Folder 12 G, 1957-1990 (includes newspaper clippings)
- Folder 13 Ginsberg, Sophie, 1970-1981 (in reverse chronological order)
- Folder 14 H, 1964-1981
- Folder 15 Ianuale, Albert, 1972-1975
- Folder 16 J, 1934-1990 (includes early Juilliard letter)
- Folder 17 K, 1967-1982
- Folder 18 L, 1970-1983
- Folder 19 Levine, James, 1978-1981, undated
- Folder 20 M, 1970-1987 (includes periodical clipping)
- Folder 21 McArthur, Edwin, 1970-1981
- Folder 22 Metropolitan Opera Association, 1960-1973, undated
- Folder 23 Metropolitan Opera Guild, Inc., 1962-1971
- Folder 24 Metropolitan Opera National Council, 1964-1976
- Folder 25 Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions, 1966-1972
- Folder 26 Mezger, Hans J., M.D., 1970-1979
- Folder 27 Morgan, Eleanor, 1964-1965 (correspondence between Morgan and Ken
Trotman regarding Masiello's grandfather, Ferdinando Masiello)
- Folder 28 N, 1974-1983 (includes clippings)
- Folder 29 National Opera Institute, 1978-1980
- Folder 30 O, 1973-1990 (includes clippings)
- Folder 31 P, 1963-1987
- Folder 32 R, 1956-1988

Box 2

- Folder 1 S, 1956-1990
- Folder 2 Sadowsky, 1970-1978
- Folder 3 T, 1974-1986
- Folder 4 U-V, 1970-1982
- Folder 5 W, 1972-1988
- Folder 6 X-Z, 1974-1981
- Folder 7 Unidentifiable, 1956-1977 (handwritten)

Box/Folder	Description
Series II: Personal and Family Papers	
Box 2 (cont.)	
Folder 8	Biographical information, 1949-1981 (includes clipping about Giuseppe and Giuseppina La Puma)
Folder 9	Diploma from R. Conservatorio di Musica, 1932 (torn)
Folder 10	La Puma Opera Workshop, 1952-1953 (record of conductors and productions)
Folder 11	Contracts, 1954-1980 Programs
Folder 12	1920-1936
Folder 13	1948-1987, undated Clippings
Folder 14	1905-1922
Folder 15	1924-1936, undated
Folder 16	1941-1943 (Masiello as Yola, a Spanish folk singer)
Folder 17	1944-1949
Folder 18	1954-1959
Folder 19	1964-c.1989, undated
Folder 20	Excerpts from books <i>The Carmen Chronicle</i> , and <i>The Evils of Music Management</i> , 1973-1975 (reproductions)
Folder 21	<i>The Voice Coach</i> , undated (annotated draft)(article?)
Folder 22	Research notes; article on Hans Pfitzner, undated (article not by Masiello)
Folder 23	<i>La Traviata</i> screenplay by Franco Zeffirelli, c.1980s
Series III: Photographs	
Box 3	
Folder 1	A-B portraits, c.1907-1927, undated
Folder 2	Brandt, Evelyn, undated
Folder 3	C-D portraits, 1908-1929, undated
Folder 4	D'Amico, Arturo, 1928, undated
Folder 5	E-G portraits, 1917, undated
Folder 6	Ferro, Onilla, 1927-1928, undated
Folder 7	Ferro, Onilla, undated (production portraits)(Barber of Seville, La Traviata; some photographs include Giuseppe La Puma)
Folder 8	K-M portraits, 1926-1931, undated
Folder 9	La Puma, Amalia, undated
Folder 10	La Puma, Amalia and Giuseppe, 1901 (one photograph with three reproductions) La Puma, Giuseppe
Folder 11	Portraits, 1895, undated
Folder 12	Production portraits and other photographs, 1900-1915, undated
Folder 13	Portraits of relatives and friends, 1909-1911, undated (includes group portraits; majority of photographs originally in album labeled "Giuseppe La Puma Relatives and Friends") La Puma, Giuseppina
Folder 14	Portraits at ages 5, 7, 8, undated
Folder 15	Portraits, 1901-1908, undated (includes school group portraits)
Box 4	
Folder 1	Early and mid-career portraits, undated
Folder 2	Group portraits, undated
Folder 3	Later portraits, undated

Box/Folder	Description
Photographs cont.	
Box 4 (cont.)	
Folder 4	Other La Puma relatives, 1926-1938, undated
Folder 5	Lodato, Mary, 1927 Masiello, Alberta
Folder 6	Early portraits, 1922, undated (includes school group portraits)
Folder 7	Early career portraits, 1933-1943, undated
Folder 8	Negatives, undated (unidentified – possibly of Masiello or relatives)
Folder 9	O-R portraits, 1911-1929, undated
Folder 10	Rippley, Bernice, 1928 Oct. 4
Folder 11	Rizzuto, Nina, 1928 Sept. 30
Folder 12	S-V portraits, 1926, undated
Folder 13	Spiezio, Mary C., 1928 June-Sept.
Folder 14	Verga, Giovanni, 1928-1931
Folder 15	Portraits from scrapbooks, 1899-1925, undated (multiple photographs per page)(includes portraits of Giuseppe La Puma and Masiello)
Folder 16	Unidentifiable, 1901-1931, undated
Folder 17	Unidentifiable, 1905-1916, undated
Series IV: Scrapbooks	
Box 5	Clippings from <i>Opera News</i>
Folder 1	Part one, c.1950s
Folder 2	Part two, c. 1940s (includes color clippings from unidentified periodical)
Folder 3	Part three, 1954-1957
Folder 4	Part four, 1956-1962
Folder 5	Part five, 1954-1957
Box 6	
Folder 1	Clippings and posters, 1912-1915
Folder 2	Clippings, 1894-1897
Box 7	
Folder 1	Clippings, programs, and portraits, 1902-1930
Folder 2	Clippings and posters, 1899-1928
Box 8	
Folder 1	Clippings, posters, and programs, 1909-1920
Box 9	
Folder 1	Posters and clippings, 1900-1909
Folder 2	Clippings, 1924-1931 (includes six pages of ms. notes on recordings)
Box 10	
Folder 1	Posters and clippings, 1910-1911
Folder 2	Posters, programs, and clippings, 1921-1924
Box 11	
Folder 1	Posters, clippings, and programs, 1912-1914
Box 12	
Series V: Oversized materials	
Folder 1	Photograph, 1922 (unidentified; possibly of Giuseppina La Puma)
Folder 2	Scrapbook pages, 1915-1929 (programs)
Folder 3	Scrapbook pages, 1919-1940 (programs, clippings)