



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Simeon Gest papers**

1918-1959

\*T-Mss 1986-029

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Gest, Simeon

**Title:** Simeon Gest papers

**Date:** 1918-1959

**Size:** .84 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Robert Conrich, 1986.

**Abstract:** Simeon Gest (1890-1964) was a theater presenter, and the brother of the impresario Morris Gest (1875-1942). The Simeon Gest papers, dating from 1918 to 1959, hold letters, photographs, scripts, programs, and clippings documenting portions of Gest's career.

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**Preferred citation:** Simeon Gest papers, \*T-Mss 1986-029. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

**Related Materials:**

Gest, Simeon / [Photographs], \*MGZEA. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

## Creator History

Simeon Gest (1890-1964) was born in Vilnius, Russia (now Lithuania), but lived his youth and early adulthood in Odessa. He attended the University of Liège. Gest and his wife, the dancer Maria Bekefi, escaped the Russian revolution in 1918 and immigrated to the United States, where he lived in New York before moving to Los Angeles. There, he became a theatrical and film producer. His older brother was the impresario Morris Gest (1875-1942). Gest died in Los Angeles in 1964.

## **Custodial History**

The donor acquired some of the collection from a grandniece of Simeon Gest's widow, Maria Bekefi Gest.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Simeon Gest papers, dating from 1918 to 1959, hold letters, photographs, scripts, programs, and clippings documenting portions of Gest's career.

The letters date from 1923 to 1956. They are written to Gest from various figures in the theatrical and cinematic industries, including David Belasco; Cecil B. DeMille; Norman Bel Geddes; Morris Gest; Oliver Sayler and his wife, Marjorie Berkentin (Morris Gest's press agents); José Ferrer; Nance O'Neil; and the German film director Paul Leni. Some letters are to Maria Bekefi Gest or Morris Gest. Clippings and programs are included with some of the letters. Simeon Gest's 1923 United States certificate of naturalization is also among the letters.

Photographs date from 1918 to 1959. They include publicity postcards (dated from 1918 to 1923) from the Moscow Art Theatre picturing Russian actors; publicity photographs of Gest, including one of him with Sol Hurok; an image of Morris Gest; and an autographed portrait of Mary Costellie Berenson.

The scripts mostly date from 1928. That year, Gest made an arrangement with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to have the Russian playwright and producer Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko supervise the preparation of Russian stories and plays for cinematic production in the United States. Danchenko sent Gest scripts for consideration. Written by Danchenko, Mikhail Bulgakov, and other writers, some were originally produced by the Moscow Art Theatre. These scripts are in either English or Russian. Other scripts were sent to Gest for his consideration by American writers, including Frederic and Fanny Hatton. Some scripts contain letters to or from Gest regarding his or others' interest in them.

**Arrangement:** The collection is in three divisions: Letters, Photographs, and Scripts.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Impresarios

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Letters (correspondence)

Photographs

Scripts

### **Subjects**

Theatrical producers and directors

### **Names**

Nemirovich-Danchenko, Vladimir I. (Vladimir Ivanovich), 1858-1943

Moskovski\_ khudozhestvenny\_ akademicheski\_ teatr

## **Container List**

- b. 1 f. 1 Letters 1923-1956
- b. 1 f. 2 Photographs 1918-1959
- b. 1 f. 3-7 Scripts 1928, undated
- b. 2 f. 1-5 Scripts 1928, undated