Guide to the
Flagstad-Cornell project files
1936-1985 [bulk 1960s-1970s]
*T-Mss 2010-009

Summary

Creator: Hamilton, Nancy, 1908-1985
Title: Flagstad-Cornell project files
Date: 1936-1985 [bulk 1960s-1970s]
Size: 1.7 linear feet (4 boxes)
Source: Unknown

Abstract: The Flagstad-Cornell project files date from 1936 to 1985 and document Nancy Hamilton’s project to preserve a collaboration between opera singer Kirsten Flagstad and actress Katharine Cornell.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in the NYPL's online catalog for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials

Conditions Governing Access:
Audiovisual materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access. Sound recordings available by appointment only.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.


Related Materials:
Creator History
Kirsten Flagstad (1895-1962) was a Norwegian opera singer.

Katharine Cornell (1893-1974) was an American actress and producer.

Nancy Hamilton (1908-1985) was an American actress, playwright, lyricist, director, and producer. Hamilton and Cornell were lifelong friends and companions who met Flagstad in 1951 after her return to the Metropolitan Opera.

In 1961, Kirsten Flagstad compiled, as a gift to Nancy Hamilton, a selection of her own recordings of Norwegian art songs and German lieder created between 1919 and 1950. Flagstad later sent Hamilton written English translations. To convince Flagstad that her translations were poetic, Hamilton persuaded Katharine Cornell to record the translations. Flagstad died before she was able to hear the collaborative project that came from her initial gift.

After Flagstad's death, Hamilton intended to make this private exchange between friends a public legacy. Hamilton's intentions were to arrange the Flagstad translations for publication in book form, and reissue the Flagstad recordings packaged with Cornell's readings of the translations. This project resulted in the 1977 publication of Songs without Music, donations of memorabilia to the Kirsten Flagstad Museum in Norway, and presentations and donations of the Flagstad-Cornell recordings at The Morgan Library & Museum.

Scope and Content Note
The Flagstad-Cornell project files date from 1936 to 1985 (bulk dates 1960s-1970s) and document Nancy Hamilton's project to preserve a collaboration between opera singer Kirsten Flagstad and actress Katharine Cornell. The project is based on the Flagstad-Cornell recordings and the Flagstad translations. Files are comprised of correspondence, notes, typescripts, drafts, recordings, legal and financial records, photographs, programs, publications, and clippings.

The Flagstad-Cornell recording files include a few extant recordings, lists and notes with timestamps, and correspondence. The correspondence discusses such matters as redistribution; Flagstad's daughter, Else Dusenberry's letter of approval for the project; and The Eliza Foundation, Inc. attempt to develop a book about the recordings after Hamilton died.

The Flagstad translation files contain several versions of traditional songs translated by Flagstad and typewritten by Hamilton. The Songs without Music publication of the translations is reflected through a draft of the text and jacket notes.

The Flagstad correspondence includes letters exchanged between Flagstad and Hamilton conveying their camaraderie throughout the last ten years of Flagstad's life. Hamilton typed Flagstad's letters, wrote notes about their relationship, and utilized these details to describe the project in future correspondence and presentations. The Flagstad correspondence also holds correspondence between Hamilton and Flagstad's family and friends.

The Morgan Library & Museum presentation files relate to Hamilton's 1977 presentation on the
Flagstad-Cornell project at the library, and are comprised of correspondence, extensive preparatory notes on her address, and the show outline.

Other project-related materials consist of Hamilton's correspondence with Flagstad's friend, Edwin McArthur, who offered encouragement; correspondence with the Kirsten Flagstad Museum about its establishment and the Flagstad memorabilia Hamilton donated; and legal and financial records, such as a copy of Hamilton's will where she bequeaths all the Flagstad-Cornell recordings to The Morgan Library & Museum.

The Kirsten Flagstad materials provide more details on Flagstad's personal life and career through photographs, programs, clippings, obituaries, and memorial tributes.

**Arrangement:** The collection is organized alphabetically by subject or file type.

**Key Terms**

**Occupations**
Actresses
Women singers

**Subjects**
Actresses -- United States
Women in opera

**Genre/Physical Characteristic**
Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Drafts (documents)
Financial records
Notes
Photographs
Programs (documents)
Typescripts

**Names**
Cornell, Katharine, 1893-1974
Flagstad, Kirsten, 1895-1962
Container List

Flagstad-Cornell Recording Files
  b. 1 f. 1-9  Correspondence 1962-1985
  b. 1 f. 10-14  Lists and Notes 1953-1976
    Includes Cornell Reading.

Recordings
  Sound recordings available by appointment only.

  1977
    origf.221015
  1977
    origf.221016
  1977
    origsr.221017
      Il Trovatore Intermission Feature 1971
        origsr.221018
        Metropolitan Opera Broadcast

b. 1 f. 15-20  Flagstad Translation Files 1961
b. 2 f. 1-3  Flagstad Translation Files 1977
  Songs without Music materials.

b. 2 f. 4-13  Flagstad Correspondence 1951-1984
b. 3 f. 1-7  Morgan Library & Museum Presentation Files 1977
  Materials contain the former “Pierpont Morgan Library” name.

Other Project-related Materials
b. 3 f. 8-14  Correspondence 1952-1984
  Includes Nancy Hamilton’s will.

b. 4 f. 6-12  Flagstad, Kirsten Materials 1930s-1969