

The New York Public Library
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Music Division

Guide to the

Leo Reisman papers

1920-1961

JPB 11-9

Compiled by L. Reyman, June 2011

Summary

Creator: Reisman, Leo, 1897-1961

Title: Leo Reisman papers, 1920-1961

Size: 1.09 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Donated by Jane Jampolis, 1989

Abstract: Leo Reisman was a famous conductor, primarily of a dance orchestra, that gained fame during the 1920s and 1930s. He was also a violinist and radio star. The Leo Reisman papers (1920-1961) are composed of correspondence, ephemera, programs, publicity materials, and clippings.

Access: Permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Preferred citation: Leo Reisman papers, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Processing note

Due to preservation concerns about the fragility of the scrapbooks, they were disassembled and the acidic clippings held within were photocopied onto acid-free paper.

Related collections

Leo Reisman Recordings, 1932-1948. Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound. New York Public Library

Creator history

Leo Reisman was a famous conductor, primarily of a dance orchestra, that gained fame during the 1920s and 1930s. He was also a violinist and radio star.

Reisman was born in Boston on October 11, 1897. For his tenth birthday he was given a violin. He later studied at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1914, he briefly played with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as first violinist.

Reisman started his own dance band in 1919 and began playing at Boston's Brunswick Hotel in the famed Egyptian Room. Ten years later he and his band moved to New York City and began a long

engagement at the Central Park Casino. Reisman and his band moved to the Sert Room at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, in 1937, the same year that they traveled to Europe, playing at the Paris International Exposition and the Sport D'ete in Monte Carlo. In 1941, he and his band played at the Guatemala Fair and for the Inaugural Ball of the newly elected President Jorge Ubico.

Reisman's recording career began at Colombia Records in 1921. He signed with Victor Records in 1929, then Brunswick Records in 1933. But by 1937 he was back again on the Victor label. Then, in 1942, he signed with Decca Records and remained with them until his death. A couple of his more famous recordings include: "Night and Day" by Cole Porter and "Cheek to Cheek" sung by Fred Astaire and written by Irving Berlin.

On radio, he and his orchestra starred on the Pond's Cold Cream hour, the Schaefer Beer program, The Phillip Morris show, and the Lucky Strike Hit Parade, among many others.

The famous band leader was also instrumental in finding and promoting talented singers, composers and musicians. Lee Wiley, the well-known jazz singer, began her singing career with the Reisman orchestra during the 1930s. Bubber Miley, a former trumpet player with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, played with Reisman from 1930 to 1931. Eddy Duchin, played piano with Reisman's orchestra, and later conducted the orchestra for him, while Reisman was busy with other projects. Duchin went on to head his own orchestra. Reisman also worked with Harold Arlen, Fred Astaire, Dinah Shore (in her first public singing appearance), Noel Coward, Victor Borge and Eve Symington.

Reisman was married to the former Lillian Casler. The couple had two children, Jane (Jampolis) and Karl.

Leo Reisman died on December 18, 1961, at his home in Mid-town Manhattan after a long illness.

Sources:

Charosh, Paul, "Leo Reisman Story", Record Research, April 1964, 3

"Leo Reisman Dies; Led Dance Band", New York Times, December 19, 1961, 33

Reisman, Karl, <http://fadograph.wordpress.com/leo-reisman/>, retrieved June 3, 2011

Scope and content note

The Leo Reisman papers are composed of correspondence, ephemera, photographs, and printed material, such as programs, posters, promotional documents, as well as an extensive amount of clippings.

The ephemera contains programs of concerts and fundraisers. Some are souvenir programs featuring many photographs. The posters and promotional material are from various areas that Reisman and his orchestra played, including places in the United States, Central America, and Europe.

The photographs contain head shots, group shots of various orchestras, publicity shots used in promotional materials like souvenir programs, posters and table toppers. While the photographs are unidentified, they are all portraits of Reisman either posing with his various orchestras or by himself.

Key terms

Subjects

Big bands

Conducting
Dance orchestras

Names

Reisman, Leo, 1897-1961

Container list

- b.1 f.1 Advertisements, undated
 - b.3 f.1 Advertisements for Record Companies, undated
 - b.1 f.2 Autobiography, undated (hand-written, unpublished)
 - b.1 f.3 Biographical Statements, undated
 - b.1 f.4 Central Park Casino, New York City, undated (publicity material)
 - b.1 f.5 Cocoanut Grove, Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, undated (publicity material)
 - b.1 f.6 Contracts, undated
 - b.1 f.7 Correspondence, 1920-1954
 - b.1 f.8 Hotel Brunswick, Boston, undated (publicity material)
 - b.1 f.9 Imperial Artists Corporation, undated (publicity material)
 - b.1 f.10 Manuscript, undated (incomplete. untitled.)
 - b.1 f.11 Mayfair Room, The Blackstone, Chicago, undated (publicity material)
 - b.3 f.2 Persian Room, The Plaza, New York City, undated (publicity material)
 - b.1 f.12-15 Photographs, undated
 - b.1 f.16 Playlist and Routine, undated
 - b.1 f.17 Programs, undated
 - b.3 f.3 Programs, undated
 - b.3 f.4 Promotional Materials, undated
 - b.1 f.18 The Rainbow Room, Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, undated (publicity materials)
- Scrapbooks, 1920-1961
- The scrapbooks were unbound and there was no way to determine any original order. The scrapbook clippings were so fragile that each page was photocopied. The subsequent photocopies were arranged by decade. These clippings came mostly from a clipping service-the majority from newspapers around the country.
- b.2 f.1 1920-1929
 - b.2 f.2-4 1930-1939
 - b.3 f.1 1940-1961
 - b.2 f.6 Song List of Recorded Music, 1920-1941
Lists of songs recorded for Columbia Records (1920-1929), Victor Records (1929-1933 and 1937-1941) and Brunswick Records (1933-1937).
 - b.2 f.7 Sporting D'ete, Monte Carlo, undated (publicity material)
 - b.2 f.8 Symphony Hall, Boston, undated (publicity material)
 - b.2 f.9 Telegrams, 1920-1938
 - b.2 f.10 Trans-Atlantic Guest List, 1937
 - b.2 f.11 Victor Records, undated (publicity material)
 - b.2 f.12 Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City, undated (publicity material)
 - b.2 f.13 *Where Chicago*, 1951, 1960 (publicity material)
 - b.2 f.14 William Morris Agency (publicity material)