



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Abraham Mandelstam papers

1911-1969 [bulk 1930-1949]

*T-Mss 2012-068

Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2014.

Summary

Creator: Mandelstam, Abraham, 1886-1969

Title: Abraham Mandelstam papers

Date: 1911-1969 [bulk 1930-1949]

Size: 17.12 linear feet (7 boxes, 18 volumes)

Source: Unknown.

Abstract: Abraham Mandelstam (1886-1969) was a New York-based theater producer and photographer, and director of Camp Wigwam and Camp Hiawatha in Maine. The Abraham Mandelstam papers date from 1911 to 1969 and contain certificates, correspondence, photographs, and scripts that document his camp work, theater production endeavors, and his relationship to various people in the arts.

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Processing note: Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2014.

Creator History

Abraham Mandelstam (1886-1969) was a New York-based theater producer and photographer, and director of Camp Wigwam and Camp Hiawatha, both in southwestern Maine. In 1910, Mandelstam and Arnold Lehman founded Camp Wigwam for Boys. In 1920, Mandelstam also established Camp Hiawatha for Girls. "Mandy," as he was known, was well established in the theater community of New York City. Some of his prominent art friends were frequent visitors of Camp Wigwam, such as the pianist Josef Hofmann. In 1933, Mandelstam created the Intimate Revue Group, a theatrical organization that created experimental productions for a limited and select audience. His goal was to present established talent and the discovery of new artists who showed promise. In 1964, Mandelstam sold Camp Wigwam to Ned and Helen Strauss. He died October 14, 1969, in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Abraham Mandelstam papers date from 1911 to 1969 (bulk dates 1930-1949) and contain certificates, correspondence, photographs, and scripts that document his camp work, theater production endeavors, and his relationship to various people in the arts.

The bulk of the collection is photographs that primarily document theatrical performances. Most of the photographs are in albums, but there are several loose photos. The majority of the photographs are labeled, but a few are unidentified. Each photo album contains a single production, while loose photographs in file folders are from several plays. All of the photographs have been arranged chronologically. A few photos have been engraved with "Photographed by Abraham Mandelstam," and many others have his stamp on the back. However, it is not clear if Mandelstam was affiliated with every production included in this collection or if he was merely a patron of some. There is no indication whether any of the photographs come from Intimate Revue Group productions. In addition to the stage photography, there are some photos from the camps and a few personal photos of Mandelstam's prominent friends such as Albert Einstein (Box 3, Folder 1).

Correspondence in the collection is predominately incoming but there are several outgoing letters. The correspondence primarily documents the development of the Intimate Revue Group, and includes brochures, response letters, and some subscriber information. There are a few letters about the potential purchase of the Deertrees Theatre in Maine (Box 1, Folder 2). There are also many letters related to Camp Wigwam and Camp Hiawatha, as well as camp brochures and camp articles written by Mandelstam, such as "The Value of Dramatics in Camp" and "The Recent Eclipse of the Sun Best Observed from Camp Wigwam in Maine." Additionally, there are letters from prominent people such as writer Arthur Guiterman and musician Josef Hofmann. Guiterman shared his creative process and several poems with Mandelstam, while the Hofmann letters document his visit to Camp Wigwam. The personal correspondence includes some photographs and postcards. There is also a letter from President Richard M. Nixon asking Mandelstam for recommendations of individuals to bring into his administration (Box 1, Folder 2).

There are two certificates in the collection, one from the Actor's Fund for lifetime membership, and the other from the American Theatre Wing War Service for volunteer work. There are also several scripts, a few of which are authored or co-authored by Mandelstam, such as "Dog Gone----Child!", "Bonfire," and "Hope Deferred." There are a few letters about a "Bonfire" production in Bridgton, Maine, and a solicitation note about "Hope Deferred" in the correspondence (Box 1, Folder 2). There is no other contextual information about the scripts.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by document type: certificates, correspondence, photographs, and scripts.

Key Terms

Subjects

Camp sites, facilities, etc

Camps

Experimental theater -- United States -- History -- 20th century

Stage photography

Theater -- Production and direction

Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Letters (correspondence)

Photographs

Scripts

Occupations

Theatrical producers and directors

Names

Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955

Guiterman, Arthur, 1871-1943

Hofmann, Josef, 1876-1957

Camp Hiawatha (Kezar Falls, Me.)

Camp Wigwam (Harrison, Me.)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Certificates 1941-1961
- Correspondence 1911-1969
- b. 1 f. 2-8 1911-1969
 - Folder 7 previously cataloged as MWEZ + n.c. 19, 474.
- b. 2 f. 1-2 Camp Wigwam and Camp Hiawatha 1944-1966
 - Previously cataloged as MWEZ + n.c. 20, 381.
- b. 2 f. 3 Guiterman, Arthur 1931-1953
- b. 2 f. 4 Hofmann, Josef 1936-1953
- b. 2 f. 5-6 Intimate Revue Group 1933-1946
 - Folder 6 previously cataloged as MWEZ + n.c. 12, 298.
- Photographs 1938-1957
- b. 2 f. 7 Camp 1940s
- b. 2 f. 8 Personal 1938-1958
- b. 3 f. 1-2 Personal 1940-1958
 - Plays 1936-1957
- b. 3 f. 3-5 1936-1938
 - v. 1 The Boys From Syracuse 1938
 - v. 2 Hamlet 1938
- b. 4 f. 1-5 1938-1950s
- b. 5 f. 1-2 1940s
 - v. 3 1940s
 - v. 4 1940s
- b. 4 f. 3-5 1940s-1950s
 - v. 5 1940-1941
- b. 5 f. 6 1940-1957
 - v. 6 Arsenic and Old Lace 1941
 - v. 7 Let's Face It 1941-1943
- b. 6 f. 1 1941-1945
 - v. 8 Lively Arts 1944-1945
 - v. 9 Lively Arts 1944-1945
 - v. 10 Bloomer Girl 1944-1946
 - v. 11 Bloomer Girl 1944-1946
 - v. 12 Bloomer Girl 1944-1946
 - v. 13 Bloomer Girl 1944-1946
 - v. 14 The Day Before Spring 1945-1946
 - v. 15 Up In Central Park 1945-1946
 - v. 16 Up In Central Park 1945-1946
 - v. 17 Up In Central Park 1945-1946
 - v. 18 Up In Central Park 1945-1946
- b. 6 f. 2-5 1945-1951

Photographs (cont.)

Plays (cont.)

b. 7 f. 1 1951-1957

Scripts 1937-1946

b. 7 f. 2 Dog Gone----Child! 1937

b. 7 f. 3-4 Bonfire 1947

b. 7 f. 5 Hope Deferred 1940s

b. 7 f. 6 For Dear Life 1946