



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Otto Harbach papers, additions

1923-1979

*T-Mss 1993-038

Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2019.

Summary

Creator: Harbach, Otto, 1873-1963

Title: Otto Harbach papers, additions

Date: 1923-1979

Size: 1.58 linear feet (5 boxes)

Source: Donated by Lisa Setos (granddaughter of Otto Harbach), 2018.

Revision History: Added identification of production photographs in Box 4, folder 20. --SL

Abstract: Otto Harbach (1873-1963) was an author, librettist and lyricist, best known for songs such as "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Love Nest," "Indian Love Call," and "The Night Was Made For Love;"; and for musicals and plays such as No, No, Nanette; Roberta; The Firefly; and The Cat and the Fiddle. These additions to the Otto Harbach papers, dating from 1923 to 1979, are comprised of an oral history, writings, scores, scripts, lyrics, photographs, a scrapbook, home movies, and other sound and moving image recordings.

Conditions Governing Access:

Sound, film, and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

Preferred citation: Otto Harbach papers, additions, *T-Mss 1993-038. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2019.

Related Materials:

Otto Harbach papers, *T-Mss 1993-038, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Creator History

Otto Harbach, author, librettist and lyricist, was born in Salt Lake City on August 18, 1873. His parents, Adolph Julius Hauerbach and Hansena Olsen, were Danes who had converted to Mormonism and migrated to the United States in 1863 (Harbach changed the spelling of his name in 1917). Encouraged by his family, Harbach headed east to Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. There he distinguished himself, becoming first the oratorical champion of the college, and then winning the state championship in 1895 in a contest for which William Jennings Bryan was one of the judges. After graduation Harbach accepted a professorship in English at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. In 1901 he arrived in New York to work on a Ph.D. at Columbia, but a lack of funds soon led him to work as a journalist and later as an advertising copywriter.

During his years in New York, Harbach began to think of Broadway as a career and while office work occupied his days, his free time was spent working with Karl Hoschna, his first collaborator, trying to create and sell a musical. It wasn't until 1908, after the success of *Three Twins*, for which Hoschna was the composer, that Harbach quit his job and devoted himself to writing. Over the course of his career Harbach had more than 50 works produced on Broadway. He was also well-known as a "script doctor", rewriting and revising plays for various producers. Harbach's own works were, for the most part, musicals for which he provided both the book and the lyrics. His contributions were not only memorable lyrics and credible plots, but also a new style of musical, where the songs were an integral part of the story. Among his collaborators were the composers Karl Hoschna, Rudolf Friml, Jerome Kern, Louis Hirsch, Herbert Stothart, Vincent Youmans and Sigmund Romberg, and the lyricists Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Caesar, Frank Mandel, and John Murray Anderson. Harbach's most well-known works include the songs "Love Nest," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Indian Love Call," "One Alone," "Rose Marie," "The Night Was Made for Love," and the plays *The Firefly*, *Roberta*, *Rose Marie*, *No, No, Nanette*, *Desert Song*, *Kid Boots*, *The Song of the Flame*, and *The Cat and the Fiddle*. Harbach also wrote several non-musical plays including *Up in Mabel's Room* and *The Silent Witness*.

Harbach worked with major Broadway figures of his day on a creative basis to enhance the profession as a whole through the American Society of Composer's Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). Joining as a charter member in 1914, he worked with ASCAP for more than 40 years as a director, and served as president from 1950-1953. By all accounts his colleagues not only admired his work, but respected the man. Socially, Harbach belonged to the Lambs, the Friars and the Dutch Treat Club, but much of his time was spent with his family at their home in Mamaroneck, New York, where Harbach also did much of his work.

Harbach married Ella Smith Dougall in Salt Lake City in 1918. They had two sons, Robert and William. The family also included Ella's children from her previous marriage, Bernard and Virginia Dougall. Otto Harbach died in New York in 1963.

Scope and Content Note

The Otto Harbach papers, additions (1923-1979), are comprised of writings, scores, scripts, lyrics, photographs, a scrapbook, home movies, Harbach television appearances, and audio recordings of Harbach's work.

Writings consist primarily of *The Life Of Otto Harbach*, the transcript of an extensive oral history conducted by Harbach's son William shortly before his father's death. William Harbach prefaced the transcript with a short memoir of his father by Oscar Hammerstein II. Also present in the writings are the text of an award-winning speech Harbach wrote while at Knox College, "The Hero Of Compromise,"

and a later article, "When Music Marries Drama."

Scores hold vocal/chorus parts for two Harbach projects, *Choose Your Partners* (music by Peter De Rose), and *Hayfoot-Strawfoot* (music by Jerome Kern).

Scripts (all typed) are present for five Harbach plays or musicals, including *Kitty's Kisses*, *The Three Twins*, and *The Firefly*. The typed lyrics, arranged by production, include songs from *Criss Cross*, *Dr. Deluxe*, *High Jinks*, and *Katinka*, among others. The lyrics also contain a list of songs Harbach registered for copyright as of 1927.

The photographs show scenes from *Ginger*, *Kid Boats*, *Rose Marie*, *Wild Rose*, and unidentified productions.

The scrapbook contains letters of condolence following Harbach's death, obituaries, and memorial programs; it also holds a program for a 1957 concert devoted to Harbach's work. Among the condolences are letters from President Kennedy, Nelson Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, Carl Sandburg, Steve Allen, Bob Hope, Irving Berlin, and other figures in the arts and government.

The letters from William Osteck (an artist representative) are to William Harbach, and concern a proposal for a televised tribute to Otto Harbach's collaborator, Rudolph Friml.

The sound and video recordings contain 15 home movies of Harbach and his children and grandchild, both at home and on vacations. A list of their contents, created by William Harbach, is in box 4, folder 22. Other contents include an excerpt of *The Steve Allen Show* featuring Otto Harbach, from 1959; an audio recording of Harbach's funeral; a 1957 interview with Oscar Hammerstein II; recordings of songs from *Bugles In April*, *The Cat and the Fiddle*, and *Roberta*; and a 1979 program at the 92nd Street Y in New York City titled "Lyrics & Lyricists - An Evening With Otto Harbach."

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Home movies
Motion pictures (visual works)
Oral histories (literary works)
Scores (documents for music)
Scrapbooks
Scripts
Sound recordings
Video recordings (physical artifacts)

Subjects

Librettists
Musical theater -- United States

Occupations

Lyricists.

Names

De Rose, Peter, 1900-1953
Hammerstein, Oscar, II, 1895-1960
Harbach, Otto, 1873-1963

Harbach, William O.
Kern, Jerome, 1885-1945

Container List

Writings

- b. 1 f. 1 "The Hero Of Compromise" 1895
An address delivered at Knox College. Typed reproduction.
- b. 1 f. 2-3 *The Life Of Otto Harbach* 1962-1963
b. 2
- b. 1 f. 4 "When Music Marries Drama" circa 1938
Published in the Sarah Lawrence College Alumnae Magazine.

Scores

- b. 3 f. 2-5 Choose Your Partner 1948
A play based on a story by Edward Boykin with music by Peter De Rose. The same story had served as a basis for *Hayfoot-Strawfoot* which Harbach had written with Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II. That play never opened in New York, and Kern and Hammerstein both removed themselves from the production, leaving Harbach free to use the story and his lyrics for the new work with Peter De Rose. Choose Your Partners was revised many times, but never produced. It was also known as "April Was Singing", "Born In April", "Bugles In April", "Counter Melody", "Hands Off", and "Meet Miss April". The scores here bear several of these titles.
- b. 1 f. 5-6 *Hayfoot-Strawfoot* 1942

Scripts

- b. 1 f. 7 *The Cat and the Fiddle* 1947
By Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach.
- b. 1 f. 8 *The Firefly* 1949
By Rudolf Friml and Otto Harbach.
- b. 4 f. 1 *Kitty's Kisses* 1926
Book by Harbach and Philip Bartholomae. Music by Con Conrad.
- b. 4 f. 2 *Roberta* 1955
By Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach.
- b. 4 f. 3 *The Three Twins* 1949
By Karl Roschna and Otto Harbach.

Lyrics

- b. 4 f. 4 *Betty Lee* 1924
- b. 4 f. 5 *The Blue Kitten* 1920s
- b. 4 f. 6 *Bright Eyes* 1910
- b. 4 f. 7 *The Cat and the Fiddle* 1931
- b. 4 f. 8 *Criss Cross* 1926
- b. 4 f. 9 *The Desert Song*
- b. 4 f. 10 *Dr. Deluxe* 1911
- b. 4 f. 11 *The Firefly* 1912
- b. 4 f. 12 *The Girl of My Dreams* 1910
- b. 4 f. 13 *Going Up* 1917
- b. 4 f. 14 *Golden Dawn* 1927
- b. 4 f. 15 *High Jinks* 1913
- b. 4 f. 16 *Jack And Jill* 1923
- b. 4 f. 17 *Katinka* 1915

Lyrics (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 18 **Unidentified Production**
Songs: "Aero Planing's Different," "Ain't It Funny What A Girl Can Make You Do," "Kitty's Wings Must Be Shorn," "Love's Own Call," "How to Find a Pretty Ending to This Story of Mine." Also contains a published reproduction of Harbach's lyrics for "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes."
- b. 4 f. 19 **List of Registered Otto Harbach Compositions 1927**
- b. 3 f. 1 **Photographs 1923-1926**
- b. 4 f. 20 *The Desert Song* 1926
 - b. 5 **Scrapbook 1957, 1963, 1973**
- b. 4 f. 21 **Osteck, William 1978**