



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.

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>

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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