

Guide to the Collection of Geraldine Farrar Correspondence and Other Material

MSS 101



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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Gilmore Music Library
120 High Street
PO Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520
(203) 432-0497
musicsspecialcollections@yale.edu
<https://guides.library.yale.edu/MusicSpecialCollections>

CALL NUMBER: MSS 101

CREATOR: Farrar, Geraldine, 1882-1967

TITLE: Collection of Geraldine Farrar correspondence and other material

DATES: 1927-1967

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1 linear foot (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: This collection includes soprano Geraldine Farrar's handwritten correspondence, primarily to Charles Mills and William H. Seltsam; a large scrapbook by Charles Mills of Farrar clippings, photographs, and Christmas cards; photographs of Farrar; and miscellaneous programs, promotional material, and articles.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/music.mss.0101>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/music.mss.0101>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written

permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

MSS 101, Collection of Geraldine Farrar correspondence and other material, in the Music Library of Yale University.

Processing Information

Collection processed in 2014. Finding aid created in 2019.

Biographical Sketch of Geraldine Farrar

Soprano Geraldine Farrar was born in Melrose, Massachusetts, 28 February 1882. Her father, Sidney Farrar, was a baseball player.

Farrar studied in Boston, New York City, and Paris. Her teachers included Francesco Graziani, J. H. Long, and Emma Thursby. Farrar debuted at the Königliches Opernhaus, Berlin, as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*, 15 October 1901. Shortly after, she became a pupil of Lilli Lehmann, and sang Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Salzburg alongside Lehmann as Donna Anna. Farrar also performed at the Opéra de Monte Carlo in 1904, singing Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème* and Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, on several occasions alongside tenor Enrico Caruso.

After five years in Berlin, Farrar joined the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, where, in 1906, she first appeared as Juliette in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. She quickly became one of the leading stars of the company. In 1907 she also sang in the Metropolitan Opera's first production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Farrar created the title role in *Amicab* by Mascagni (Monte Carlo, 1905), *Goose Girl* in Humperdink's *Königskinder* (New York City, 1910), and the title role in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* (New York City, 1918).

Farrar was engaged in a seven-year love affair with the Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini. In 1915 her ultimatum to him, that he leave his wife and children and marry her, resulted in Toscanini's abrupt resignation as principal conductor of the Metropolitan Opera. Farrar then married cinema actor Lou Tellegen on 8 February 1916 and divorced in 1923.

Farrar remained at the Metropolitan until 1922, when she made her farewell performance in Leoncavallo's *Zazà* on 22 April. She sang nearly 500 times with the Metropolitan Opera and made many recordings. Later Farrar appeared in a number of films and in 1960 was awarded two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in the music and film categories. Farrar also published an autobiography in 1938 entitled *Such Sweet Compulsion*.

Farrar died of a heart attack in Ridgefield, Connecticut, on 11 March 1967 (age 85). She was buried in Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, New York. She had no children.

Scope and Contents

The material within this collection, including correspondence, photographs, promotional clippings, and articles, was primarily generated after Geraldine Farrar stopped singing operatic roles on stage. The bulk of the correspondence consists of handwritten and typed letters from Farrar to Charles Mills (1957 Nov 1–1967 Mar 15), and an extensive collection of similar letters between Farrar and William H. Seltsam (1930 Jun 25–1966 Jul 22). The letters to Charles Mills concern normal cordial matters and occasionally mention performances Farrar saw and listened to, such as Puccini's *Tosca*. The Mills letters also mention and describe performances Farrar worked with, befriended, or admired, including Mattia Battistini, Claudia Muzio, Emma Calvé, Nellie Melba, and her former teacher and colleague, Lilli Lehmann. The letters between Farrar and Seltsam primarily concern Farrar's many recordings. Paper materials include one leather-bound

book from Farrar to Marguerite Mills for her birthday in 1964, which contains a letter and a pencil sketch of an unknown face (perhaps Farrar or Mrs. Mills); other handwritten and typed letters, including those to Mr. Jerrold N. Moore, Mr. Howell, and Mr. Night; two ink sketches with a repertoire or program listing; a copy of Opera Newswith an article on Farrar's death; and several articles about Farrar and the various roles she performed on stage. The collection also includes photographs, both of Farrar in portraits and Farrar in costume for various roles.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series: I. Correspondence, and II. Photographs, articles, and ephemera.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1930-1967

b. 1, f. 1	Jerold N. Moore, Mr. Howell, and Mr. Knight	1951–1965
b. 1, f. 6	Charles Mills Envelopes.	1956 December 9–1966 January 9
b. 1, f. 4	Charles Mills	1957 January 6– 1960 September 30
b. 1, f. 5	Charles Mills Sylvia Blein on behalf of Farrar to Charles Mills.	1957 November 1–1967 November 15
b. 1, f. 3	Charles Mills	1960 February 13–1962 December 28
b. 1, f. 2	Charles Mills	1963 February 23–1966 May 21
b. 1, f. 7	Marguerite Mills Commemorative birthday letter with drawing.	1959 Feb 23
b. 1, f. 9	William H. Seltsam	1930 May 25– 1931 December 17
b. 1, f. 10	William H. Seltsam	1932–1934 November 28
b. 1, f. 11	William H. Seltsam	1935
b. 1, f. 12	William H. Seltsam	1936
b. 2, f. 13	William H. Seltsam	1937–1939 November 24
b. 2, f. 14	William H. Seltsam	1940 April–1953 December 3
b. 2, f. 15	William H. Seltsam	1954 March 8– 1959 February 19
b. 1, f. 8	Willian H. Seltsam	undated
b. 2, f. 16	Willian H. Seltsam; Miss Gardoni	1960–1966 July 22

Series II: Photographs, articles, and ephemera, 1927-1967

b. 2, f. 19	Photographs of Geraldine Farrar	1927–1948
b. 2, f. 20	Programs, articles, and clippings	1927–1967
b. 3, f. 21	Painting print and portrait photograph Oversize.	circa 1929
b. 2, f. 18	Opera News: article on Geraldine Farrar's death	1967 April 15
b. 3	Scrapbook of Geraldine Farrar by Charles Mills Oversize.	1967
b. 2, f. 17	Invitation to hospital benefit, two pen and ink sketches	undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Genres / Formats

Correspondence

Subjects

Sopranos (singers)

Names

Farrar, Geraldine, 1882-1967