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Guide to the Karl West Flaster papers

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Guide to the Karl West Flaster papers, 1837-1994

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Finding aid prepared by Melinda Michael

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biography of Karl West Flaster</u>	4
<u>Scope and Contents</u>	4
<u>Arrangement</u>	5
<u>Administrative Information</u>	5
<u>Related Materials</u>	6
<u>Search Terms</u>	6
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	8
<u>Professional papers</u>	8
<u>Poetry and short stories</u>	9
<u>Correspondence</u>	9
<u>Newspaper clippings</u>	10
<u>Personal memorabilia</u>	11
<u>Oversize materials</u>	12

Summary Information

Repository	University Archives and Special Collections
Creator	Flaster, Karl, 1905-1965
Title	Karl West Flaster papers
Date [inclusive]	1837-1994
Extent	5.0 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	This collection contains the professional and personal papers of the librettist and poet, Karl West Flaster (1905-1965).

Preferred Citation

[Item title.] Karl West Flaster papers, 1837-1994. University Archives and Special Collections, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

Biography of Karl West Flaster

Karl West Flaster was born Max West Flaster on February 8, 1905, in New York City. His mother, Ruth Reuck, was a Shakespearean actress and his father, Max Flaster, was a musician. His parents divorced when he was six years old, and his mother changed his name to Karl.

Karl grew up in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and began writing poetry at an early age. To earn a living, he became a newspaper reporter and feature writer for the *Atlantic City Press*, *Atlantic City Times*, and *Ventnor News*. However, after the stock market crash in 1929 and because of his alcoholism, he was unable to hold a permanent job. During this period he held several temporary jobs, including driving a truck, making deliveries, and serving as a public school principal for a short time.

On March 4, 1932, Karl married Gladys Caroline Wonderly, a nurse at the Atlantic City Hospital. Their only son, Karl Wonderly Flaster, was born in 1934 and graduated from the University of Dayton in 1959.

In the early 1920s, Karl met Vittorio Giannini while waiting for a trolley. He noticed Giannini's violin case and initiated a conversation. Commenting that his aunt owned a Stradivarius, Flaster invited Giannini to his home to see the violin. A fruitful partnership developed between the two men, with Flaster as the librettist for Giannini's musical compositions. Together they collaborated on many songs, including "Tell Me, Oh Blue Blue Sky," "Heart Cry," and "Love."

Flaster and Giannini also collaborated on three operas. The first, *Lucedia*, was first preformed at the Munich Opera House with great success. The following year the opera was performed by the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City, with Dusclina Giannini, Vittorio's sister, as the lead. Their second opera, *The Scarlett Letter*, premiered at the Vienna Opera House in 1936. Several decades later, in 1961, their third and final opera, *The Harvest*, premiered in Chicago. This opera was part of the Ford Foundation program for the promotion of American opera.

Between 1940 and 1941, Flaster again worked for the newspaper. His feature column of verse was entitled "This 'n' That" and appeared in *The Atlantic City Press-Union*. Although work was easier to find in the 1940s, Flaster held a variety of jobs. Beginning in 1942, he worked with the New Jersey Coast Guard patrol and later, at the Army supply warehouse in Atlantic City. In 1949, he resumed "This 'n' That" in *Grit* and also worked at Fisher's Florist in Linwood, New Jersey, until his death. "This 'n' That" generated the only steady income that Flaster ever received from his writings.

In 1954, Flaster became a reformed alcoholic and lived the last ten years of his life without drinking. He died on January 28, 1965.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes contracts, royalty statements, musical scores, poems, correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, and other materials related to librettist and poet Karl West Flaster. The majority dates to his adult life, circa 1920-1965, but some materials date to after his death in 1965; these include materials compiled by his son, Karl Wonderly Flaster, after his death and Jeffrey W. Price's book about Flaster's work with Vittorio Giannini, published in 1994.

Arrangement

The Karl West Flaster papers are divided into six series.

- Series 1: Professional papers
 - Series 2: Poetry and short stories
 - Series 3: Correspondence
 - Series 4: Newspaper clippings
 - Series 5: Personal memorabilia
 - Series 6: Oversize materials
-

Administrative Information

Publication Information

University Archives and Special Collections, 1990

Access to Materials

This collection is open and available to the public for research in the University Archives and Special Collections reading room. The materials are non-circulating.

Copyright Notice

The materials in this collection may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). The materials are available for personal, educational, and scholarly use. It is the responsibility of the researcher to locate and obtain permission from the copyright owner or his or her heirs for any other use, such as reproduction and publication.

Acquisition Information

The Karl West Flaster papers were donated to the University of Dayton Archives in 1990 by Flaster's son, Karl Wonderly Flaster. The literary copyrights were given to the University of Dayton Archives and Special Collections. At the time of donation, the donor requested to be notified when the collection was accessed and stated that he would be available for interviews by researchers interested in his father's collection. However, Karl Wonderly Flaster passed away in 1999.

Related Materials

Related Materials

Vittorio Giannini, an American composer, partnered with Karl West Flaster on several musical projects. His estate is held in trust. All research material is located with and controlled by:

Joyce Adger, Vice President, Wachovia Bank and Trust, P.O. Box 3099, Winston-Salem, NC 27150-3099

Search Terms

Personal Name(s)

- Flaster, Karl Wonderly
- Flaster, Karl, 1905-1965
- Giannini, Dusolina, 1902-1986
- Giannini, Vittorio, 1903-1966
- Price, Jeffrey W., (Jeffrey Wallace), 1956-

Subject(s)

- Composers
- Librettists
- Lyricists
- Opera
- Poetry
- Poets, American

- Songwriters

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Professional papers, 1920-1994

Scope and Contents

This series contains contracts, royalty statements, musical scores, and programs from performances of Flaster's work. Also included is a book, *The Songs of Vittorio Giannini on Poems by Karl Flaster*, by Jeffery W. Price, published in 1994. There is also an audiocassette tape, *Hopelessly Romantic*, with recordings of Giannini and Flaster's work.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Contracts: G. Ricordi and Co., 1927-1962
1	2	Contracts: Anna Kliefkin, 1935
1	3	Contracts: Ernest Golding, 1937
1	4	Contracts: Elkan Vogel Co., Inc., 1944-1948
1	5	Contracts: Vittorio Giannini, 1953
1	6	Royalty statements: G. Ricordi & Co., 1929-1964
1	7	Royalty statements: Elkan Vogel Co., Inc.; Theodore Presser Co., Inc., 1945-1969, 1970-1972
1	8	Royalty statements: Galaxy Music Corp., 1954-1962
1	9	Royalty statements: Franco Colombo, Inc.; Belwin Mills, 1963-1969, 1969-1970
1	10	Royalty statements: foreign business relations, 1970
1	11	Rejection slips, 9 February 1925, undated
1	12	ASCAP documents, 1940-1983
1	13	Library of Congress Copyright Office documents, 1937-1944
1	14	Musical scores: Karl Flaster with Vittorio Giannini, 1927-1935
1	15	Musical scores: Karl Flaster with Vittorio Giannini, 1939-1950
1	16	Musical scores: Karl Flaster with Pedro Albani, 1944
1	17	Musical scores: Karl Flaster with Julia Smith, 1954-1955
1	18	Musical scores: Karl Flaster with William Madden, undated
1	19	Musical scores: Vittorio Giannini with Philander Johnson, 1920
1	20	Musical scores: Domenico Salvino with Harry R. Wilson, undated
1	21	Miscellaneous, 1943-1994

Scope and Contents

Papers and programs from performances where Flaster's work was featured. Includes Jeffrey W. Price's 1994 book, *The Songs of Vittorio Giannini on Poems by Karl Flaster*, and an

audiocassette tape entitled *Hopelessly Romantic: Songs of Vittorio Giannini on Poems by Karl Flaster*.

Series 2: Poetry and short stories, 1837-1965

Scope and Contents

This series contains original poetry by Karl Flaster, arranged in six categories: dated works, works with religious meaning, with love as a theme, works dedicated to a certain person or group, works with nature as a theme, and works that reflect Flaster's inner feelings and views. There is also a folder that contains extra copies of poems already filed. There is a booklet of poetry assembled by Flaster's son, Karl Wonderly Flaster, from Flaster's column, "This 'N That." Also included are two of his short stories; a notebook of poetry that belonged to his grandfather, Henry Reuck; copies of school publications containing his early work; and a copy of *The Atlantic City Mirror*, which features a prize-winning short story.

Box	Folder	
2	1	Karl Flaster poetry (dated), 1914-1965
2	2	Karl Flaster poetry with religious meaning, undated
2	3	Karl Flaster poetry with love as a theme, undated
2	4	Karl Flaster poetry dedicated to certain people or groups, undated
2	5	Karl Flaster poetry with nature as a theme, undated
2	6	Karl Flaster poetry that reflects his inner views and feelings, undated
2	7	Extra copies of Karl Flaster poetry already filed, undated
2	8	Booklet of "This 'N That" poetry from column, 1980
2	9	Short stories written by Flaster: "The Second Coming" and "The Verdict", undated
2	10	Notebook of poetry by Henry Reuck (Karl Flaster's grandfather), 20 December 1837-11 October 1915
2	11	Flaster's early work (high school); literary magazines where his work was featured, undated

Series 3: Correspondence, 1928-1985

Scope and Contents

This series contains letters from Vittorio Giannini; miscellaneous correspondence from people such as Norman Rockwell, Julia Smith, and Bill Madden; and one-time correspondence from people such as John Phillip Sousa, Euphemia Gregory, and others. There are also a few letters written by Karl Flaster to his son, to Vittorio Giannini, music companies, and others.

Box	Folder	
3	1	From Vittorio Giannini, 1925-1926
3	2	From Vittorio Giannini, 1927-1928
3	3	From Vittorio Giannini, 1929-1931
3	4	From Vittorio Giannini, 1932-1934
3	5	From Vittorio Giannini, 1935-1941
3	6	From Vittorio Giannini, 1942-1947
3	7	From Vittorio Giannini, 1948-1964
3	8	From Vittorio Giannini, undated
4	1	From U.S. Government and Military officials, 1921, 1927
4	2	From Drei Masken Musik GMBH Berlin, 1934
4	3	From Mr. H.M. Schiffer, 1934-1950
4	4	From Hans Spialek, 1935, 1946
4	5	From Chappel & Co., Inc., 1935
4	6	From W.T.H. Howe, 1935
4	7	From Glendon Allvine, 1938
4	8	From the ASCAP, 1939
4	9	From Norman Rockwell, 1939-1945
4	10	From Philadelphia Orchestra Assn., 1939-1940
4	11	From Elkan Vogel Music Co., Inc., 1944-1968
4	12	From Arturo Somohano Records, Inc., 1945-1960
4	13	To and from Julia Smith, 1948-1966
4	14	From Granville English, 1949
4	15	From Bill Madden, 1949-1963
4	16	Karl Wonderly Flaster correspondence with Anne Simpson (University of S.W. Louisiana), 1984-1985
4	17	Concerning Gladys' incompetency, directed to Karl Wonderly Flaster, 1985
4	18	One-time correspondence, 1927-1961

Series 4: Newspaper clippings, 1920-1969

Scope and Contents

This series contains photocopies of newspaper articles by and about Karl Flaster and his work with Giannini, published poetry, and clippings illustrating Flaster's views. In addition, there are copies of Henry Reuck's two poems printed in a newspaper. Included in the 1960 file is a copy of *Lyric Opera of Chicago* (1961), which highlights *The Harvest*.

Box	Folder
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5	1	Newspaper clippings, circa 1920-1929
5	2	Newspaper clippings, 1930-1935
5	3	Newspaper clippings, 1936-1939
5	4	Newspaper clippings, circa 1940-1949
5	5	Newspaper clippings, circa 1950-1959
5	6	Newspaper clippings, including <i>Lyric Opera of Chicago</i> (1961), circa 1960-1969
5	7	Newspaper clippings, undated
5	8	Newspaper clippings on published works by Karl Flaster, undated
5	9	Newspaper clippings that illustrate Flaster's views, undated
5	10	Newspaper clippings on Henry Reuck's published works, circa 1900-1929

Series 5: Personal memorabilia, 1934-1984

Scope and Contents

This series contains personal papers, including the Flaster/West family tree, a notebook used for West family genealogy research, and a copy of Karl Flaster's birth certificate before his name change from Max Flaster. There are also articles pertaining to Flaster family members--the Flaster granddaughters, Gladys Flaster, Karl Wonderly Flaster, Ruth Reuck (Karl's mother)--and family friends; and photographs of Karl West Flaster, his great aunts, Gladys Flaster's cousin and grandmother, Vittorio and Dusolina Giannini, Karl Wonderly Flaster and his daughters, Jeffrey Price, Bill Madden, and scenes from *Lucedia's* opening night.

Box	Folder	
5	11	Flaster/West family tree and notebook used in West family background research, undated
5	12	Copy of Max West Flaster's birth certificate before name change to Karl, undated
5	13	Articles on family members: Flaster's granddaughters, 1962-1984
5	14	Articles on family members and friends: Gladys and Karl Wonderly Flaster, Ruth Reuck, and friends, undated
5	15	Photographs of Karl West Flaster (some autographed), undated
5	16	Photographs of Flaster's great-aunts (Lottie and Pet), Gladys' cousin (Kathryn), and Gladys' grandmother (Catherine Creamer), undated
5	17	Photographs of Vittorio and Dusolina Giannini (autographed), undated
5	18	Photographs of Karl Wonderly Flaster and daughters, undated
5	19	Photographs of scenes from <i>Lucedia's</i> premiere, 1934
5	20	Unidentified photographs, undated
5	21	Photographs of Jeffrey W. Price (researcher), undated
5	22	Photographs of Bill Madden (autographed), undated

Series 6: Oversize materials, undated

Scope and Contents

This series includes a large advertisement for various operas, such as *Lucedia*; *Lucedia's* original manuscript and a duplicate--both with handwritten corrections; a German copy of *Lucedia*; *Lucedia's* musical score; a synopsis of *Shakespeare's Sweetheart*; copies of *The Harvest* and *Beauty Pageant*; a manuscript of *The Scarlet Letter*; lyrics and a detailed synopsis of *Shakespeare's Sweetheart*; and a folder containing original material on *Christus*, including newspaper clippings on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Box	Folder	
6	1-2	<i>Lucedia</i> , with handwritten corrections, undated
6	3	German copy of <i>Lucedia</i> which belonged to Gladys Flaster, undated
6	4	Synopsis of <i>Shakespeare's Sweetheart</i> , undated
6	5	Copy of <i>The Harvest</i> , undated
6	6	Copy of <i>Beauty Pageant</i> , undated
6	7	Copy of <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , undated
6	8	Copy of <i>Shakespeare's Sweetheart</i> program; copy of the opera, <i>Venus in Seide</i> , undated
7	1-2	Original material on <i>Christus</i> , undated