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University of Memphis Libraries
Preservation and Special Collections Department

126 Ned R. McWherter Library
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Phone: (901) 678 - 2210
E-mail: lib_sc@memphis.edu

Cortese brothers papers

Title: Cortese brothers papers
Collection No: MSS.511
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1914-1973 and undated

Abstract: The collection mostly comprises copies of correspondence, contracts, programs and publicity, and clippings concerning the Cortese brothers as performers and impresarios.

Donor: Dr. Berkley Kalin, Memphis, Tennessee, August 1972.
Processed by: James E. Montague, August 2003; Gerald Chaudron, March 2014.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English, Italian
Preferred Citation: Cortese brothers papers, Preservation and Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: March 2014

Biographical information

Angelo (1886-1966), John (Jack) (1889-1977) and Joseph Cortese (1890-1969) grew up in London, Ontario, Canada, although Angelo was born in Italy and moved to Canada when he was 18 months old. Angelo played the harp, John the flute, and Joseph the violin. The brothers had successful individual careers as well as collectively as the Cortese Trio. Angelo visited Memphis, Tennessee, in 1911 and was sufficiently pleased with his reception that he moved to the city. Joseph followed in 1913 and John in 1926. In Memphis, they gave concerts, taught, and played at funerals conducted by J.T. Hinton & Son. As early as 1914, the Cortese brothers became impresarios, bringing soprano Nellie Melba and violinist Jan Kubilek to Memphis. Over the following decades, the brothers brought many opera and theatrical companies, as well as individual musicians, singers and dancers to Memphis, usually as part of tours of the South and Canada. Later, Angelo went into the real estate and insurance business while Joe and Jack opened a dry cleaning business.

Scope and contents

The collection comprises copies of correspondence, contracts, programs and publicity, and clippings concerning the Cortese brothers as performers and impresarios. Copies of four issues of the Memphis *Tri-State Musical Journal* of 1928-1929 are included. An original advertisement for the Cortese Trio is in Folder 6.

Related materials

MSS.78. Joseph A. Cortese papers.

Subject terms

Concert agents--Tennessee--Memphis.
Cortese, Angelo, 1886-1966.
Cortese, John, 1889-1977.
Cortese, Joseph, 1890-1969.
Cortese Trio.
Musicians--Tennessee--Memphis.

Inventory

Note: All materials in Folders 1-4 are photocopies.

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Correspondence, 1916 August 20-1924 February 7 and undated. (32)
Some letters are in Italian. Most pertain to theater bookings in the Mid-South and family news, including:
1923 August 13. On Ukrainian National Chorus: "It would...be folly to have them come to Memphis unless you feel that people, who heard them last year, were satisfied and will come to hear them again."
1923 August 25. Contract for John McCormack to appear in Memphis on January 28, 1924, and in Little Rock on January 30.
1924 February 1. From Meridian, Mississippi, referring to Haven Institute: "The negro college seems to be waiting for the tickets to 'reduce'...they are very enthusiastic over music."
- 2 Contracts, 1923 May 23-1924 January 26. (16)
- 3 *Tri-State Musical Journal*, Memphis, 1928-1929. (4)
Issues: Vol. 1, No. 6, 1928 March; Vol. 1, No. 11, 1928 September; Vol. 2, No. 3, 1929 January; Vol. 2, No. 4, 1929 February 1.
- 4 Programs and newspaper publicity, 1914-1960 and undated. (24)
Programs for Nellie Melba, Cortese Brothers, Galli Cucci, Tamaki Miura, John McCormack, Mischa Elman, Choir Masters' Guild of Memphis, Paul Althouse, Tito Schipa.
- 5 Program:
Ignace Paderewski, Lyric Theatre, 1928 April 3.
Maria Jeritza, Auditorium, North Hall, 1925 March 6. Donor: Mr. Roper, 1993.
- 6 Papers, undated. (2)
Letter from George Kesler including his reaction to hearing record of Angelo Cortese play; Cortese Trio advertisement with photograph of Angelo, John and Joseph, published by Central Musical Bureau, Memphis.
- 7 Newspaper clippings, 1914-1973 and undated. (9) Contain biographical information.