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Emily Gresser Papers12979142

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Rare Book and Manuscript Library

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Creator:	Gresser, Emily
Title:	Emily Gresser Papers
ID:	12979142
ID:	MS#1884
Date [inclusive]:	1880s-2004
Date [bulk]:	1910-1919
Physical Description:	4 linear feet Two record storage cartons (boxes 1-2), one manuscript box (box 3), two tall manuscript boxes (boxes 4-5)
Language of the Material:	English , French , German .

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Emily Gresser Papers; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

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Biographical / Historical

Emily Gresser was born on March 11, 1894, in Newark, New Jersey to Fania Pallant Gresser and Joseph Gresser, who had immigrated from czarist Russia to the US for political reasons. She was the eldest of four children, all of whom were musically gifted; her brothers Albert, Willie, and Eddie would go on to become a businessman, physician and lawyer, respectively. Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, the family moved to Brooklyn, NY, and their social circle comprised a wide variety of freethinkers, artists, and intellectuals.

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Biographical / Historical

When Emily was about 8 years old, she started violin lessons, and by age 9 began playing recitals in local churches and schools; around this time, she played Schumann's "Traumerei" for the Teacher's Society of the Norwegian Church in Brooklyn, and was well received. She was referred for lessons to Mr. Riderich, the first cellist in the Metropolitan Opera orchestra, but her parents felt Emily was too young to travel alone into Manhattan. She began studying instead with Mr. Schradick in Brooklyn, and, noting Emily's talents, he demanded that she leave school and focus entirely on her violin. This was not to the Gressers' liking, either, and Emily was referred on to Mr. Sam Franko (1857-1937), who was both a composer and violinist, and whose brother Nahan was a conductor at the Metropolitan Opera. Due to Franko's renown, and Emily's ardent desire to pursue her violin studies, her parents finally granted permission for Emily to commute to Manhattan for violin lessons, where she studied with Franko twice a week, and in 1906, at age 12, she became a member of the Children's Orchestra at the Educational Alliance on East Broadway and Jefferson Street.

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Biographical / Historical

Emily's graduation from Brooklyn Manual Training High School was marked by a recital given at Mendelssohn Hall, after which she was called out for six or seven curtain calls. Many notable individuals attended her concerts, including Professor Charles Eliot (the future President of Harvard University, Booker T. Washington and Mark Twain. Fania, Emily's mother, recalled that Twain came up to Emily after a performance, congratulating her and stating "My child, you do not know how much joy this evening gave me, how I enjoyed your playing." The consensus of critical acclaim was such that Emily was encouraged to pursue her musical training abroad, and she soon departed for Europe, declining full scholarships to both Barnard and Vassar Colleges.

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Emily spent the next 4 years based in Germany, but also performing in important musical centers throughout the Continent. She continued studying with Sam Franko, who had just been appointed head of the Violin Department at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, where Gustav Hollaender (1855-1915), the head of the Conservatory, was responsible for moving it to the

Berlin Philharmonic Concert Hall. Hollaender attended all of Emily's concerts, taking a great interest in her playing, and recommended that she also study harmony and theory with his brother, Alexis Hollaender (1840-1924).

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Biographical / Historical

During her time in Europe (1910-1915), Emily traveled extensively in Germany giving recitals and concerts. Well equipped with a comprehensive and vast repertory, she played with orchestral accompaniment under Steinbach in Cologne, Busoni and Franko in Berlin, Prill in Munich, and Gille in Hanover. She met with enthusiastic success in Dresden, Leipzig, and Munich, as well as Prague, Amsterdam and The Hague, to name only some of the cities included in her tours.

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Biographical / Historical

In the spring and summer of 1914, Emily was in Switzerland, but her family in America had not received any letters for more than six weeks and was very worried, as news of war in Europe was pressing. After contacting officials in the U.S. government, Fania and Joseph read in The New York Times that "the Gresser family (instead of Emily Gresser) was safe in Nuremberg" and a family friend who had met Emily in Nuremberg confirmed this. Emily then traveled back to Berlin, where with the aid of Mr. Gerhard, the American ambassador in Germany, she was put on a train to Rotterdam, and from there was sent on to London, where, age 21 and alone, she finally was able to get passage on steamer back to New York. She returned to America in the spring of 1915, and played her first recital at home at Aeolian Hall, after which the New York press gave her rave reviews and praise, confirming reports of her remarkable playing abroad.

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Biographical / Historical

Mme. Yvette Guilbert (1865-1944) attended Emily's recital at Aeolian Hall, and was most impressed with the young violinist. Guilbert, at first a chanteuse in Parisian café society, went on to become a renowned concert vocalist and scholarly authority on French song, and

Sam Franko, a good friend of Guilbert's husband, Max Schiller, and made the appropriate introductions. Emily was invited to join Mme. Guilbert at once, as much for her beautiful violin playing as for her excellent schooling and genial temperament, and she accompanied Guilbert on concert tours throughout the United States and Canada from 1915-19.

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Biographical / Historical

In the 1915-16 season, Emily gave more than twenty concerts in New York alone, and also played in Boston, Washington, and Quebec. From 1916-1919, her itinerary carried throughout eastern Canada; Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, Toledo, and Cleveland; Milwaukee, Grand Rapids, St. Louis, Denver, and Colorado Springs; and Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Fresno, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco. These coast-to-coast tours continued over the next few years. For the young Emily the tour was a great adventure, but also quite arduous: every morning was spent practicing her violin repertoire, and then, after lunch, she prepared for the evening's performance. In 1919, Guilbert returned to Europe, and Emily remained in New York.

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Biographical / Historical

Emily's violin studies continued and she played numerous solo recitals and concerts in the New York area. It was around this time that Jascha Heifetz made his American debut in Carnegie Hall on October 27, 1917; Emily was present at this concert along with her friends and fellow violinists Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman, and Sam Franko. A clear sign that their professional and social circles soon intersected is a photograph dated May 27, 1919, of the handsome young Heifetz and inscribed "To Emily Gresser, in kind remembrance." In addition to Heifetz, Emily played music and maintained close personal friendships with many other talented artists over the years, in particular Yehudi Menuhin, Mischa Elman, Walter Damrosch, and Fritz Kreisler. Later, Emily's young daughter Bettina (Liebowitz Knapp) would collect autographs from these great musicians when they came to visit and play violin with her mother. (These are currently framed on the wall in a barn on the grounds of Heifetz's former Connecticut country estate, now owned by Emily's grandson, Dr. Albert Knapp and his wife, Dr. Ruth Oratz.).

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Biographical / Historical

On November 2, 1920, Emily Gresser married David Liebovitz, a son of Simon and Fanny (Unterberg) Liebovitz, and soon thereafter their son Daniel (1921-2013) was born, followed by daughter Bettina (1926-2010); for the latter's arrival, Sam Franko, composed a lullaby "Cradle Song" and presented it to Emily as a baby gift. In 1930, the family left New York to live in Europe, based in France, but also traveling and summering in Switzerland. With Europe again on the brink of war, though, the family returned to the United States in 1939 and bought an old farmhouse in Ridgefield, CT, where they spent summers and holidays while living permanently in New York. Emily frequently visited Heifetz's nearby home in Redding, CT, during the 1940s for weekend and summer concertizing in his "music barn." Emily Gresser Liebovitz died in 1981.

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Summary

The archive, totaling approximately 4 linear feet, comprises material ranging from scrapbooks, photographs, and correspondence, to books, theatrical scripts, and sheet music, all reflecting Emily Gresser's life in music both in the United States and abroad from the late 1890s to the 1960s, with the majority centered on her professional performing career of 1910-1919.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchase from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2017. Gift from Albert B. Knapp and Ruth Oratz, 2017.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Catherine Carson Ricciardi and Ariana Csonka Kaleta, St. John's University 2018. Finding aid written on 1st December 2017. Processing completed by Kevin Schlottmann, January 2022.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Music
- Scores (documents for music)
- Musicians
- Music -- France -- 19th century
- Music -- France -- Paris -- 20th century
- Violinists
- Guilbert, Yvette, 1865-1944
- Franko, Sam, 1857-1937

Collection Inventory

Series I: Manuscript Material, 1890s-1960s

Title/Description	Instances	
David Liebowitz, 1921 - 1960 Scope and Contents Correspondence with and letters of recommendation for David Liebowitz, 2 posters announcing "the Canvas Sky" by David Liebowitz, four photos from 1960.	box 1	folder 1
Emily Gresser, 1918 Scope and Contents Article on Liebowitz Publix Shirt Co., 2 Schirmer bills, thank you note.	box 1	folder 2
Performance Programs, 1916-1919 Scope and Contents Arion Erstes Konzert; Friday Musicales - Hotel Statler, Cleveland; Brooklyn Academy of Music; Mme. Guilbert, Massey Hall; Stadium Symphony Orchestra CUNY; Philadelphia Philharmonic Review; University of Southern California; Carnegie Hall; Mendelssohn Hall; Steinway Hall.	box 1	folder 3
Photographs, 1890s-1960s Scope and Contents Photographs of Emily Gresser and David Liebowitz. B/W negative of stage production (Freud in Guilbert's act).	box 1	folder 4
Photographs, circa 1900-1910 Scope and Contents Photographs inscribed to Emily Gresser from M. Schiller and R. W. Daly	box 4	folder 1
Creole Violin 1 Scope and Contents Hand notated sheet music	box 1	folder 5
Emily Gresser "Young Years" (scrapbook), 1910-1915 Scope and Contents Blue (international press clippings, mostly in German from 1910s)	box 1	folder 6
Emily Gresser: The American Violinist (scrapbook), 1915	box 4	folder 2
Touring USA with Yvette Guilbert and Gustav Ferrari (scrapbook), 1916	box 4	folder 3

Touring America with Yvette and on her own (scrapbook), 1917	box 4	folder 4
Carrying On (scrapbook), 1918-1919	box 4	folder 5
Songs (scrapbook), 1922	box 4	folder 6
Scope and Contents		
Miscellaneous and final performance program		
Guilbert, Yvette, "Quitor", 1912	box 1	folder 7
Scope and Contents		
Manuscript of play		

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Series II: Printed Material, 1902-2004

Subseries II.1: Books by and about Yvonne Guilbert, 1902-1964

Title/Description	Instances
Guilbert, Yvette, "L'Art de Chanter une Chanson", 1928	box 1
Scope and Contents	
2 books	
Guilbert, Yvette, "La Chanson de Ma Vie (mes mémoires)", 1927	box 1
Scope and Contents	
4 books. Includes one copy of English translation "The Song of My Life"	
Guilbert, Yvette, "Les Demi-Vielles", 1902	box 1
Scope and Contents	
2 books	
Guilbert, Yvette, "How to Sing a Song", 1918	box 1
Guilbert, Yvette, "La Vedette", 1902	box 1
Scope and Contents	
2 books	
Guilbert, Yvette, "La Passante Émerveillée (mes voyages)", 1929	box 1

Knapp, Bettina and Myra Chipman, "That was Yvette: the Biography of the Great Disseuse", 1964	box 1
Laffont, Robert, "Autre Temps, Autre Chants" (avec une préface du Dussane), 1945	box 1

Subseries II.2: Books by and about Liebowitz/Gresser Family, 1946-2004

Title/Description	Instances
Gresser, Fania Pallant "Memoirs of Fania Pallant Gresser", 2004	box 1
Knapp, Bettina Liebowitz, "The Lewis Mumford/David Liebowitz Letters", 1983	box 1
Liebowitz, David, "The Canvas Sky", 1946	box 1
Liebowitz, David, "Yeah, I'm Jonesy"	box 1

Subseries II.3: Other, 1902-1938

Title/Description	Instances
"Arithmétique Illustrée" Bibliothèque Infantine Series C, 1930s	box 2 folder 1
Colette, "L'Envers du Music Hall"	box 2
Franko, Sam, "Chords and Dischords", 1938	box 2
"Les Filles de Ginette"	box 2 folder 2
"Les Idylles de Gessner: Orneées de Planches Gravées sur Bois" de P.E. Vibert, 1922, September 30	box 2 folder 3
"L'illustration Theatre 1902-1903", 1902-1903	box 2
"L'illustration Theatre 1919", 1932	box 2
"L'illustration Theatre 1920", 1920	box 2
"Potpourri! Livre d'Images", 1930s	box 2 folder 4
"The Story of Wagner's Lohengrin", 1932	box 2 folder 5
Les Trois Mousquetaires d'Alexandre Dumas. Le Film d'Art, 1912	box 2 folder 6
"Zig et Puce Millionnaires"	box 2 folder 7

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Series III: Music, 1880s-1950s

Scope and Contents

Primarily sheet music, with a small amount of manuscript material. Most of the items appear to have been used quite heavily, and are accordingly fragile.

Conditions Governing Access:**Conditions Governing Access**

Please handle with care. Much of the music is fragile and in poor condition.

Subseries III.1: Sam Franko, 1894-1944**Scope and Contents**

Printed and manuscript music, by or associated with composer and violinist Sam Franko (1857-1937), who was Gresser's teacher and friend.

Title/Description	Instances	
Music, 1894-1944	box 2	folder 9-10
Scope and Contents		
"Cradle Song for the Piano"; "Violin Transcriptions with Piano Accompaniment"; "Kenilworth" by Bruno Oscar Klein (inscribed to Franko)		
Music, 1899-1929	box 5	folder 1
Scope and Contents		
"Transcriptions for Violin and Piano"; Vivaldi "Concerto in G minor" (arrangements for organ, piano, and orchestra; and piano and orchestra); J. S. Bach "Arioso"; "16 Standard Works for the Violin" by Joseph Joachim; Mendelssohn "Song Without Words" (manuscript arrangement); Faure "Sonata for Piano and Violin"; "Werke alter Meister in neuer Bearbeitung fuer Violine mit Klavierbegleitung"		

Subseries III.2: Yvette Guilbert, 1911-1927**Scope and Contents**

Printed music by Yvette Guilbert.

Title/Description	Instances	
Music, 1911-1927	box 2	folder 8-9
Scope and Contents		
Chansons de tous les Temps; "Le Fiacre"; "10 Chansons de Paul de Kock"; "Pastourelles of the XV Century"; "Chanson et Cantilenes"; "Bergers et		

Musettes" (2 copies); "Chanteries du Moyen Age" (3 copies); "Dix Chansons du VXIII Siecle"

Subseries III.3: Other Music, 1880s-1950s

Scope and Contents

This subseries consists primarily of violin and piano music. Some of the violin parts are heavily marked, and many of the pieces have her name written on the cover. Most of the music is undated, but was printed in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Conditions Governing Access:

Conditions Governing Access

Much of the music was heavily used and is quite fragile. Please handle with care.

Title/Description	Instances	
"Les Plus Jolies Chanson du Pays de France", 1888	box 2	
Scope and Contents		
Bound volume		
Music	box 3	folder 1
Scope and Contents		
Joseph Achron transcription of Mendelssohn Op.34.No.2 "On Wings of Song", "Hebrew Lullaby"; Leopold Auer "Concert Transcriptions" for Violin and Piano; F. v. Blon "Whispering Flowers"; Overtures pour piano à Deux Mains" by Cherubini; Elgar "Salut d'Amour"; Bouree and Gigue from Much ado about Nothing Pianoforte Solo by Edward German; Stephen Heller "Oeuvres Choisies pour Piano"; "Autumn Leaves" by Kosma/Mercer; Charles Lecocq's Miettes Musicales Vingt-Quatre Esquisses de Style pour le Piano; Mascitti, Michele "Prelude and Allegro" for Violin and Piano		
Music	box 3	folder 2
Scope and Contents		
Mendelssohn "Concerto for Violin"; Mozart "Concerto for Violin in A Major"; Mozart "Concerto in D Major"		
Music	box 3	folder 3
Scope and Contents		
Mendelssohn "Song Without Words"		
Music	box 3	folder 4

Scope and Contents

Lawrence "The Poor People fo Paris", Edith Piaf et les chanson de Henri Contet; Pinsuti "The Land Beyond"; "Chansons enfantines de notre pays"; Overtures for 2-handed piano (3 volumes); "Weitere Musil aus den Werken beruehmter Meister"

Music

box 5

folder 2

Scope and Contents

Bach, JS. Sonata in E Major; Concerto for Two Violins in D minor; Three Sonatas for Piano and Violin.

Music

box 5

folder 3

Scope and Contents

Becker, Mazurka; Beethoven, 11 trios; Bohm, Lizzie; Brahms, Quartet (violin 1 part, heavily marked); Chopin, Second Concert for Piano; DeBussy, Quartet for 1 Violins, Viola, Cello; Dvorak, Quartet in F Major; Duhamel, La Mie Du Soldat; Emer, L'Accordeoniste

Music

box 5

folder 4

Scope and Contents

German, Harvest Dance; Godard, La Vivandiere; Godard, Scene du Bal Jocelyn; Godard, Au matin; Gouvy, Schwedischer Tanz; Haynes, Westwood Gavotte; Lanner, Ungarischer Nationaltanz; Mendelssohn, Lorely; Mendelssohn, Song without words; Mozart, Menuet und Marcia alla Francese; Moszkowski, Der Schaefer putzte sich zum Tanz; Moszkowski, Sechs Stuecke; Moszkowski, Laurin; Paderewski, Selections; Pitt, Air De Ballet; Purcell; Saint-Saens, Gavotte; Saint-Saens, Recital Music

Music

box 5

folder 5

Scope and Contents

Scharwenka, Huldigungs Marsch; Schumann, Fantasiestuecke; Schytte, Forest Elves; Seiss, Intermezzo and Even Song; Staccati, Iris; Stiehl, Schneewittchen's Geburtstagfeier; Strauss, Wiegenlieder; Strauss, Taenze; Tschaikovsky, Marche Militaire; Tschaikovsky, Slavisher Marsch; Vivaldi, Concerto in a minor; Vogrich, Passepied; Vogrich, Album of ancient and modern dances; Wagner,

Meistersanger; Wagner, Parsifal; Westerbout, Works
for Pianoforte; various compilations.

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