

Register to Ethel Smyth: Letters and Scrapbook

Misc. Ms. 418



Compiled by Richard Boursy

1996-2007

120 High Street

PO Box 208240

New Haven, CT 06520

musicspecialcollections@yale.edu

<https://guides.library.yale.edu/MusicSpecialCollections>

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Collection Overview

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

CALL NUMBER: Misc. Ms. 418

CREATOR: Smyth, Ethel, 1858-1944

TITLE: Ethel Smyth: Letters and Scrapbook

DATES: 1877-1944?

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: Materials chiefly in English.

SUMMARY: Letters from the British composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) and a scrapbook of clippings and programs concerning Smyth's compositions

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/music.misc.0418>

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.misc.0418>.

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Most of this collection was purchased at Sotheby's in 1998. It has been augmented by later purchases.

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open to researchers by appointment. There are no restricted materials in the collection. Please contact the [Special Collections staff](#) to schedule an appointment. Some of the materials may be stored at the Library's off-campus shelving facility, so researchers should allow at least two business days to have the appropriate boxes paged.

Conditions Governing Use

The collection is the physical property of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University. Copyrights belong to the authors or their heirs and assigns.

Preferred Citation

Misc. Ms. 418, Ethel Smyth Letters and Scrapbook, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.

Biographical / Historical

Ethel Smyth was born in London on April 22, 1858. After receiving her early musical training in England, she entered the Leipzig Conservatory in 1877. She left the Conservatory in 1878, but continued her studies with Heinrich von Herzogenberg. During her years in Germany, she came to know many important musicians, including Brahms, Clara Schumann, and Grieg.

Smyth came to prominence in England in the early 1890s, with performances of her Serenade and *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1890 and the Mass in D in 1893. (These performances are the focus of the scrapbook in this collection.) She then turned her efforts to the stage. Over the next thirty years, she composed six operas: *Fantasio*, *Der Wald*, *The Wreckers*, *The Boatswain's Mate*, *Fête galante*, and *Entente cordiale*.

Beginning in 1910, Smyth was an important figure in the drive to gain women the right to vote in England, a movement led by her friend Emmeline Pankhurst. Smyth composed a suffragist anthem, and went to prison for throwing a rock through a window of the Colonial Secretary's home.

In the final three decades of her life, Smyth increasingly suffered from hearing loss. She continued to compose, but she devoted much of her time to a series of autobiographical books that vividly display her colorful and energetic personality. By the time of her death in Woking, England on May 8, 1944, she had long been recognized as the leading British female composer of her era.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains letters from Ethel Smyth, chiefly to her sister Alice Davidson. Their dates range from 1877 to 1939, but the largest number are from 1916 to 1919. The letters discuss Smyth's education in Germany, her career as a composer, her work as an activist for women's suffrage, and other matters. The collection also includes a scrapbook of clippings and programs concerning Smyth's compositions from 1890 to 1893, as well as a handwritten biographical notice.

Arrangement

In 3 series as follows: Series I. Correspondence. Series II. Other Items. Series III. Later Additions.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

Smyth's handwriting is often difficult to read, so in some cases the names and dates listed below must be regarded as provisional. In other instances, names or dates were inferred from the contents of the letter; these, too, should not necessarily be taken as authoritative. Certain items bear dates that appear to have been added later by someone other than Smyth; these are noted as "date in pencil."

Boosey, Mr. Date hard to read.	Mar. 8, 1939
[Camera?], Norman Postcard. Year in pencil; postmark date and surname hard to read.	1935
Coates, John, Sr Postcard.	Jan. 1, 1935
Davidson, Alice Year inferred from content. From Leipzig.	1877
Davidson, Alice Year in pencil. From Leipzig.	1878
Davidson, Alice Year inferred from content.	1889
Davidson, Alice Year inferred from content. From Munich.	Dec. 22, 1889
Davidson, Alice	July 6, 1900
Davidson, Alice Year inferred from content.	1911
Davidson, Alice Envelope also includes letter dated Sept. 22.	Sept. 14, 1916
Davidson, Alice Year in pencil; 2nd page of letter dated Oct 14.	Oct. 9, 1916
Davidson, Alice From Paris; year in pencil.	Nov. 30, 1916
Davidson, Alice From Paris.	Jan. 13, 1917
Davidson, Alice From Vichy.	May 3, 1917
Davidson, Alice From Vichy.	June 7, 1917

Davidson, Alice Year in pencil on letter and envelope.	July 31, 1917
Davidson, Alice Envelope only, contains no letter; postmarked Friedland.	Jan. 21, 1918
Davidson, Alice In same envelope as April 9 letter.	Mar. 31, 1918
Davidson, Alice From "Paris during bombardment."	Apr. 9, 1918
Davidson, Alice	Apr. 24, 1918
Davidson, Alice	May 7, 1918
Davidson, Alice	May 14, 1918
Davidson, Alice	June 22, 1918
Davidson, Alice	Nov. 26, 1918
Davidson, Alice	Dec. 17, 1918
Davidson, Alice	Feb. 6, 1919
Davidson, Alice	Feb. 14, 1919
Davidson, Alice Pages 1-2 ripped in half.	Mar. 27, 1919
Davidson, Alice	May 6, 1919
Davidson, Alice From Seine-et-Oise, France.	June 20, 1919
Davidson, Alice From La Bourboule, France. Year hard to read.	July 1, 1919
Davidson, Alice Postcard.	Jan. 19, 1938
Davidson, Alice Postmarked 22 Jan 1938.	Jan. 23, 1938
Davidson, Alice Salutation reads "Darling Ethel," but it is from Ethel Smyth.	Jan. 30, 1938
Davidson, Alice	Feb. 1, 1938
Godley, General	July 12, 1921
Hadley, Mrs. G.	Jan. 23, 1924
Hadley, Mrs. G.	Feb. 14, 1924

Harry No salutation or envelope, but recipient is twice addressed as "Dear Harry" in course of letter. From Grove House.	No date
Hattan, Mr.	Nov. 7, 1928
Lears, Mr. Name hard to read.	Oct. 24, 1929
Lyle, Watson	Feb. 24, 1937
Perceval-Hart, Mrs. E. Envelope only, no letter.	July 29, 1939
Marchesi, Madame See: Series III, Later Additions	
Newman, Ernest See: Series III, Later Additions	
[Smyth?], Bob Date in pencil on second page. Year not given. From Paris during wartime.	Mar. 24
[Smyth?], Bob From Bob to Alice. Date hard to read.	Feb. 14, 1918
Steen, Marguerite Postcard.	Jan. 11, 1934
Whelen, Mr. Year not given.	Mar. 5
No name Begins "My dear Madam."	Sept. 22, 1930
No name Begins "Dear Sir."	Oct. 15, 1930
No name Begins "Dear Sir."	Oct. 21, 1930

Series II: Other Items

Criticisms of E.M. Smyth's compositions from Oct. 1890

1890-1893

[c. 100 p.]; 24 cm.

Scrapbook consisting chiefly of clippings of reviews of works by Ethel Smyth. Also includes some concert programs.

Works discussed: Serenade, Antony and Cleopatra, and the Mass in D major.

Biographical notice

1 card (both sides); 15 x 10 cm.

Biographical notice; author unidentified.

Undated, but was written after Smyth's death in 1944.

In very small handwriting, in blue and red ink.

Newspaper photograph, dated 1934, pasted on.

Series III: Later Additions

The items in this Series were acquired after the initial purchase of Smyth materials in 1998, and they were not included in the initial microfilm.

Marchesi, Madame Date hard to read.	Aug. 4, 1941
Newman, Ernest	May 16, 1915
Newman, Ernest <i>Postcard.</i>	May 17, 1915
Newman, Ernest	Nov. 24, 1919
Newman, Ernest	Jan. 13, 1922
Newman, Ernest? The name on the envelope is Henry Newman, but the letter concerns music and is addressed to the Sunday Times, (where Ernest Newman was the music critic). Since this letter came to Yale with others from Ernest Newman, it seems likely that "Henry" was merely a mistake.	Feb. 22, 1927
Newman, Ernest	July 3, 1927

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.

Names

Davidson, Alice -- Correspondence
Smyth, Ethel, 1858-1944 -- Correspondence
Women composers -- Correspondence --
England