

Collection #
SC 1865

**FABIEN SEVITZKY
PAPERS, 1939-1971**

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Re-processed by

Kate Scott
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 8 manuscript folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1939-71

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Nancy Simpson, Indianapolis

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Sevitzy and Spalding Family Papers. Manuscript Collection: M 1209; Indiana State Symphony Society Records. Manuscript Collection: M 0614; Booth Tarkington Collection. Manuscript Collection: M 0274; Clowes Family Collection. Manuscript Collection: M 1028

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1983.0415

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Fabien Sevitzy was born Fabien Koussevitzky in Vishnii Volochek, Russia, near Moscow on September 30, 1893. He later shortened his surname to avoid confusion with his uncle Serge Koussevitzky, also a well-known conductor and double bass virtuoso.

As a boy, Sevitzy intended to study violin or piano, but won a scholarship for the study of double bass at the St. Petersburg Imperial Conservatory of Music. He graduated with honors in 1911, and was the institution's first recipient of a gold medal for double bass. His ensuing musical career was interrupted by the First World War, but he returned to Moscow after the Revolution in 1917. He was forced to flee Russia for Poland in 1922.

In Poland he met and married soprano Maria Dormont. After the couple performed a concert tour in South America and Mexico, Sevitzy joined the Philadelphia Orchestra in the fall of 1923. By 1928, when he became a citizen, Sevitzy had realized that he wanted to conduct and so resigned his position in Philadelphia and moved to Boston. There he organized and conducted a number of the world's leading orchestras, and was invited to guest conduct several American orchestras, including the Indianapolis Symphony.

It was a result of this concert that Sevitzy was appointed conductor of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1937. He extensively reorganized the ensemble and staged concerts in Indiana's principal cities, in addition to arranging numerous radio and recording engagements. While music director of the symphony, he followed a self-imposed rule of programming at least one American work in each concert. When events such as an all-Beethoven or all-Russian program made this impossible, Sevitzy planned an all-American program for a subsequent concert. He selected these American works by reviewing hundreds of compositions each year.

Sevitzy was particularly interested in creating a musical adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli stories with Indianapolis author Booth Tarkington, a friend since the composer's arrival in the city. Sevitzy also promoted the creation of American works by ardently supporting young musicians and composers. One such activity was his involvement in directing the Limberlost summer music camps in LaGrange, Indiana. Although sometimes criticized for establishing erratic tempi and engaging in arguments with the Indianapolis Symphony governing board, Sevitzy is credited with the transformation of a local ensemble into a major symphony orchestra of national standing.

Sevitzy left Indianapolis and its orchestra in 1955 in order to become the conductor of the University of Miami Symphony Orchestra, later called the Greater Miami Philharmonic. In 1956 he and his first wife divorced, and in April 1959 he married former Indianapolis Symphony harpist Mary Spaulding. Fabien Sevitzy died of a heart attack on February 3, 1967, while in Athens, Greece for a concert tour.

Sources: Text copied and edited from original collection guide

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Fabien Sevitzy Papers consist primarily of business correspondence from musicians, writers, and politicians, as well as between Sevitzy and his secretary Farrell Wagner.

The general correspondence folder is arranged chronologically, and includes letters from Vladimir Golschmann; Ray Elin; Frederick A. Stock; Paul V. McNutt; Artur Rodzinski; the Maharajahdiraj of Patiala State, India; Hans Kindler; Ferdinand Schaefer; Reginald Stewart; and Sir Ernest MacMillan.

Correspondents with four or more letters are arranged alphabetically in individual folders. The most abundant collections of letters are those related to Booth Tarkington and Farrell Wagner.

The Tarkington folder includes 17 pieces of correspondence, mostly letters from Tarkington to Sevitzy discussing the Mowgli project. They also discuss the Second World War, other news of the day, and personal activities. Other correspondence between Tarkington and individuals involved with the Mowgli project is also included in this folder.

The Wagner folder comprises 53 letters and cards, mostly from Sevitzy to Wagner. They discuss travel plans, performance engagements, communications with business associates, and personal activities. There are additional business letters from Wagner to other parties, and several letters to Wagner from Maria Sevitzy and Mary Sevitzy.

Also included are a folder of invitations to musical performances and receptions, and an essay by Tarkington titled "Indiana, Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra." The essay discusses and praises the development of the arts in Indianapolis, and at the end includes several pages of remarks on the Symphony's history by Dr. G.H.A. Clowes, then president of the Indiana State Symphony Society.

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