Finding aid for the Igor Stravinsky correspondence on The Rake's Progress 0302

Finding aid prepared by Sue Luftschein
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Doheny Memorial Library 206
3550 Trousdale Parkway
Los Angeles, California, 90089-0189
213-740-5900
specol@usc.edu
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Title: Igor Stravinsky correspondence on *The Rake's Progress*
Collection number: 0302
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Language of Material: English
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Date (inclusive): 1950-1951
Abstract: The Igor Stravinsky correspondence on *The Rake's Progress* consists of correspondence, dated May 1950 to May 1951, between Stravinsky and his lawyer in New York, L. Arnold Weissberger, concerning the mounting of his opera, *The Rake's Progress*. The letters discuss business matters pertaining to the production of the opera, financial support for the work, where to stage the premier (including discussions about a possible staging at USC), locations for the opera's American debut, problems associated with Italian singers performing in English, and various other financial and administrative matters pertaining to the completion and production of the work.

creator: Kirstein, Lincoln, 1907-1996
creator: Ricketson, Frank H., (Frank Henry)
creator: Stravinsky, Igor, 1882-1971
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Preferred Citation
[Box/folder# or item name], Igor Stravinsky letters on *The Rake's Progress*, Collection no. 0302, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Related Materials
See also the scores of *The Rake's Progress*, USC Special Collections.

Historical note
Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*, set to the libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, was inspired by William Hogarth's series of paintings. Stravinsky had wanted to write an English-language opera since arriving in the United States in 1939, and was inspired to do so by seeing the paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago on May 2, 1947. The opera premiered in Venice on September 11, 1951.

Scope and Content
The Igor Stravinsky correspondence on *The Rake's Progress* consists of correspondence, dated May 1950 to May 1951, between Stravinsky and his lawyer in New York, L. Arnold Weissberger, concerning the mounting of his opera, *The Rake's Progress*. Also included are copies of letters to F. H. Ricketson of the Central Civic Opera House Association, Denver, Colorado; Lincoln Kirstein; Howard Taubmann of the New York Times; and Betty Bean and Dr. E. Roth of Stravinsky's publishers, Boosey & Hawkes, London. The letters discuss business matters pertaining to the production of the opera, financial support for the work, where to stage the premier (including discussions about a possible staging at USC), locations for the opera's American debut, problems associated with Italian singers performing in English, and various other financial and administrative matters pertaining to the completion and production of the work. Stravinsky's letters to Weissberger are on his personal letterhead with his Los Angeles address, "1260 N. Wetherly Drive, Hollywood 46, California."

Acquisition

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers. -- Correspondence
Kirstein, Lincoln, 1907-1996 -- Correspondence
Ricketson, Frank H., (Frank Henry) -- Correspondence
Stravinsky, Igor, 1882-1971 -- Archives
Stravinsky, Igor, 1882-1971 -- Correspondence
Weissberger, L. Arnold, 1907-1981 -- Correspondence
### Box 1, Folder 1  
**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 May 18**

**Scope and Content**
Mentioning his collaboration with Aaron Sapiro and his dislike of La Scala as a venue for the opera.

### Box 1, Folder 2  
**Correspondence with F. H. Ricketson, Jr 1950 May-June**

**Scope and Content**
Discussion of possibility of Denver's Central City Opera House Association producing the Rake's Progress in 1951 and Stravinsky's hope of finishing the work by the beginning of 1951.

**General note**
Copies.

### Box 1, Folder 3  
**Letters from Stravinsky to Weissberger, Lincoln Kirstein 1950 June 2**

**Scope and Content**
Note regarding forwarding of Stravinsky's letter to Lincoln Kirstein; discusses firming up Kirstein's interest in producing the opera.

**General note**
Kirstein letter is a copy.

### Box 1, Folder 4  
**Correspondence with F. H. Ricketson 1950 June 14, 19**

**Scope and Content**
Ricketson relays his conversation with Ralph Hawkes regarding the latter's interest in a Denver production of the opera; asks Stravinsky if he will be visiting Denver in July; Stravinsky assures Ricketson of his intention to work with him on the artistic side of the production.

**General note**
Copies.

### Box 1, Folder 5  
**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 June 8**

**Scope and Content**
Discusses the stalling of the project with Kirstein, negotiations with Ricketson.

### Box 1, Folder 6  
**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 June 29**

**Scope and Content**
Discusses contract with Boosey & Hawkes regarding the opera, negotiations with Ricketson, financial compensation.

### Box 1, Folder 7  
**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 July 21**

**Scope and Content**
Discusses complications with Ricketson; Boosey & Hawkes; La Scala.

### Box 1, Folder 8  
**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 September 13**

**Scope and Content**
Discusses "shocking" news of Ralph Hawkes' death; potential new patronage for the opera.
Box 1, Folder 9  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 September 22
Scope and Content
Discusses potential patronage of Blevin Davis; concerned that he has not received any news from his publishers regarding the handling of his business.

Box 1, Folder 10  Letter from Stravinsky to Harold Taubmann 1950 November 3
Scope and Content
Relative to a letter Stravinsky sent to the New York Times regarding publication of this letter and clarification for Olin Downes of various iterations of the Firebird--ballet, and 1919 versus 1945 symphonic excerpts.
General note
Copy.

Box 1, Folder 11  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 November 6
Scope and Content
Discusses collapse of Sher-Hartford deal, Ricketson deal, and includes copy of the "expose" sent to Betty Bean; discusses with Betty Bean the collapse of the Ricketson deal, possible premier of the opera at USC in 1951, and financial arrangements for that premier.
General note
Betty Bean letter is a copy.

Box 1, Folder 12  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 November 17
Scope and Content
Discusses copy of letter to [Erich] Leinsdorf, Ricketson letter, Rochester, and USC.

Box 1, Folder 13  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1950 December 19
Scope and Content
Discusses break down of USC performance planning; contract issues with Boosey & Hawkes regarding the completion of the opera, the world premier, and his creation of the "tradition" of his work; and his willingness to sacrifice some financial gain for more control over a potential production.

Box 1, Folder 14  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1951 January 30
Scope and Content
Discusses problems with Boosey & Hawkes and Covent Garden premier against his wishes, Venice festival, and expresses appreciation for Weissberger's help.

Box 1, Folder 15  Letter to Weissberger, correspondence with Lincoln Kirstein 1951 February-March
Scope and Content
Letter to Weissberger that discusses the enclosed correspondence with Kirstein: Kirstein discusses possibility of new backer, possible costs for New York production, ways to save money by using Venice cast in New York, and asks how much Stravinsky would need in financial compensation for conducting? Stravinsky's reply discusses difficulties in using Venice cast, quotes a price for his conducting services. Stravinsky's letter to Weissberger expresses confusion regarding subsequent developments in the New York production of the opera.
General note
Copies.

Box 1, Folder 16  Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger 1951 April 11
Scope and Content
Discusses meeting potential backers Cowles and Farrell, possibility of conducting New York premier, role of Kirstein in the production.
Box 1, Folder 17

**Letter from Stravinsky to Weissberger, Dr. E. Roth 1951 May 9**

**Scope and Content**

Describes letter written to Dr. Roth, of Boosey & Hawkes in London (and of which he encloses a copy) regarding Betty Bean's lack of enthusiasm for the New York premier at a Broadway theater.

**General note**
Roth letter is a copy.