

# **Ira Gershwin Files from the Law Office of Leonard Saxe**

**Guides to Special Collections in the Music Division of the Library of Congress**



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## Collection Summary

**Title:** Ira Gershwin Files from the Law Office of Leonard Saxe

**Span Dates:** 1935-1967

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1948-1967)

**Call No.:** ML31.S28

**Creator:** Saxe, Leonard Spier, 1899-1968

**Extent:** 8,250 items ; 34 containers ; 14.25 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** This collection consists primarily of correspondence and contracts related to the personal legal affairs of Ira Gershwin and the activities of the Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust from 1935-1967. It includes royalty and copyright materials for well-known Gershwin shows and films, most notably *Porgy and Bess*. In addition, this collection contains financial documents related to the Rose Gershwin Estate, litigation materials, programs, and press clippings.

## 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.

### People

Alexandre, Emmanuel--Correspondence.

Breen, Robert S.--Correspondence.

Gershwin, Arthur, 1900-1981--Correspondence.

Gershwin, George, 1898-1937. *Porgy and Bess*.

Gershwin, Ira, 1896-1983--Autographs.

Gershwin, Ira, 1896-1983--Correspondence.

Gershwin, Ira, 1896-1983.

Gershwin, Ira, 1896-1983. Ira Gershwin files from the law office of Leonard Saxe. 1935-1967.

Gershwin, Leonore, d. 1991.

Gershwin, Rose.

Goldwyn, Samuel, 1882-1974.

Lazar, Irving, 1907-1993--Correspondence.

Saxe, Leonard Spier, 1899-1968--Correspondence.

Saxe, Leonard Spier, 1899-1968.

### Organizations

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

Chappell and Co.

Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

Gershwin Publishing Corporation.

New Dawn Music Corporation.

New World Music Limited.

On-Stage Productions.

Palestine Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art.

T.B. Harms & Co.

Walden Records.

### Subjects

Copyright--Performing rights--United States.

Lyricists--United States--Correspondence.

Theater--Law and legislation--United States.

### Form/Genre

Financial records.  
Legal correspondence.  
Legal documents.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Provenance**

Gift, Robert and Steven Saxe, 2000.

### **Accruals**

No further accruals are expected.

### **Processing History**

The Ira Gershwin files from the law office of Leonard Saxe were processed in 2008 by Christopher Hartten and encoded for EAD by Janet McKinney in 2010.

### **Related Material**

The Music Division holds the George and Ira Gershwin Collection (ML31.G38) and the Gershwin Trust Archive.

### **Copyright Status**

Materials from the Ira Gershwin files from the law office of Leonard Saxe are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

### **Access and Restrictions**

The Ira Gershwin files from the law office of Leonard Saxe are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

### **Preferred Citation**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Ira Gershwin files from the law office of Leonard Saxe, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## **Biographical Note**

Ira Gershwin obtained the legal services of attorney Leonard Spier Saxe following the death of his mother, Rose Gershwin, on December 16, 1948. Saxe, a distant relative by marriage who owned an established general practice firm in New York City, provided personal legal counsel to Ira, Leonore, and Arthur Gershwin and managed their affairs with the Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust from 1948-1968. Ira and Leonard also shared a close friendship and corresponded frequently about non-legal matters, including investments, vacations, and real estate opportunities. His legal representation for the Gershwins ceased in 1968 following his own professional retirement and the subsequent change of Ira's legal representation to attorney Ronald Blanc in Los Angeles.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Ira Gershwin Files from the Law Office of Leonard Saxe spans the period 1935-1967. The collection includes contracts, correspondence, handwritten notes, financial documents, memos, pamphlets, programs, clippings, and other materials related to Saxe's legal representation of Ira Gershwin and his involvement with the Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust.

Saxe's efforts on behalf of Ira, Leonore, and Arthur Gershwin are recorded in extraordinary detail in a series of typescript logs entitled "Record of work done for the Gershwins." These entries contextualize the hundreds of handwritten notes that accompany many of the subject files and provide a thorough account of Ira's business affairs throughout the 1950's and 1960's. It is an invaluable tool, if not an ideal starting point, for navigating the contents of this collection.

Saxe arranged his office files principally by subject. His original folder headings have been used to organize the materials thematically by show title, organization, and other general categories. The subjects of these documents range from motion picture production contracts and copyright deposits to estate taxes and personal correspondence.

"Royalties and copyrights" contains documents pertaining to the licensing and revenues of compositions by George and/or Ira Gershwin. *Porgy and Bess* accounts for much of this material, primarily because its acclaimed international productions generated additional licensing agreements. "Litigation" includes materials specifically related to courtroom settlements, the most notable being *Breen vs. Goldwyn, Lazar*. The voluminous series entitled "Estate of Rose Gershwin" documents Saxe's actions as liaison to the Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust, many of which are presented chronologically in his nineteen volume 'general file.' The remaining series, "Estate of Ira and Leonore Gershwin" and "Arthur Gershwin" describe personal affairs and litigation largely unrelated to musical compositions or royalties.

## Organization of the Ira Gershwin Files from the Law Office of Leonard Saxe

The collection is organized in 6 series:

- [Record of Work Done for the Gershwins, 1948-1966](#)
- [Royalties and Copyrights, 1935-1967](#)
- [Litigation, 1953-1964](#)
- [Estate of Rose Gershwin, 1937-1967](#)
- [Estate of Ira and Leonore Gershwin, 1950-1963](#)
- [Arthur Gershwin, 1950-1966](#)

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-2	<u>Record of Work Done for the Gershwins, 1948-1966</u>
BOX 3-16, 34	<u>Royalties and Copyrights, 1935-1967</u>
BOX 17-18	<u>Litigation, 1953-1964</u>
BOX 19-32, 34	<u>Estate of Rose Gershwin, 1937-1967</u>
BOX 33	<u>Estate of Ira and Leonore Gershwin, 1950-1963</u>
BOX 33	<u>Arthur Gershwin, 1950-1966</u>

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
<b>BOX 1-2</b>	<b>Record of Work Done for the Gershwins, 1948-1966</b>
<b>BOX-FOLDER 1/1-10</b>	1948 Dec. – 1964 Dec.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 2/1-3</b>	1965 Jan. – 1966 Sept.
<b>BOX 3-16, 34</b>	<b>Royalties and Copyrights, 1935-1967</b>
	<b>Shows, 1935-1967</b>
	American in Paris [film]
<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/1-4</b>	General materials, 1949-1952
	Funny Face
<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/5</b>	Ira Gershwin individually and as George Gershwin's next-of-kin, including agreements and D (1928), 1955-1957
	Girl Crazy
<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/6-7</b>	Agreements, contracts, correspondence, 1951-1965
<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/8</b>	General materials, 1958-1959, 1962
	Kiss Me, Stupid [film]
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/1-5</b>	Correspondence, music, contracts, copyrights, etc., 1964
	Lady, Be Good!
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/6</b>	1956 estate tax - closed 1961 Nov. 14
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/7</b>	Ira renewal assignment
	Lady in the Dark
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/8-10</b>	Chiefly stock license to Tams-Witmark Music Library Inc., 1965
	Of Thee I Sing
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/11-12</b>	General materials, 1951-1952
<b>BOX-FOLDER 4/13</b>	Stock amateur correspondence
	Oh, Kay!
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/1</b>	Bolton-Wodehouse agreements
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/2-3</b>	General materials, 1951-1960
	Porgy and Bess
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/4-6</b>	Breen contract
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/7-8</b>	Clippings, 1950-1953 and undated
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/9-10</b>	Contracts, 1957 Aug.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 5/11</b>	Colton – instructions re: album, 1965
<b>BOX-FOLDER 6/1-6</b>	Colton's letter of 1964 Mar. 1 re: instructions on distribution of income from U.S. phonograph record album after 1963 Sept. 28
<b>BOX-FOLDER 6/7-8</b>	Davis compromise
<b>BOX-FOLDER 6/9-12</b>	General materials, 1950-1951, 1955
<b>BOX-FOLDER 7/1-3</b>	General materials, 1954-1956
<b>BOX-FOLDER 7/4</b>	The Gershwin years (CBS) license, 1961 Jan. 15
<b>BOX-FOLDER 7/5-10</b>	Motion picture contract data with Samuel Goldwyn, 1957

## Royalties and Copyrights, 1935-1967

### Container

### Contents

---

<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/1-2</b>	New Dawn Music Corp. – U.S. renewal publishing rights sale agreement, 1965 July 1
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/3-6</b>	Papers, including Field 1963 and Summer 1963
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/7</b>	Reviews, 1955-1956
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/8</b>	Summer 1958 and 1963-1965 and city center
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/9</b>	Theatre Guild investment
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/10</b>	Waiver of cross accountings and agreement of beneficial interests, 1965 July 1 Strike up the Band
<b>BOX-FOLDER 8/11</b>	Ira renewal assignment

### Organizations, 1935-1967

	Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 9/1-4</b>	Contracts dated 1958 Apr. 28, etc. American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP)
<b>BOX-FOLDER 9/5</b>	Amended final judgement, 1950
<b>BOX-FOLDER 9/6</b>	Compromise agreement, 1952
<b>BOX-FOLDER 9/7-11</b>	General materials, 1949-1965
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/1</b>	Ira Gershwin – ASCAP list
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/2-4</b>	Proposed royalty agreements Chappell and Co.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/5</b>	Chappell/Gershwin movie mechanicals royalties modification, 1955 Oct. 31
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/6-7</b>	Leonore S. Gershwin agreement, 1965 July 1
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/8-10</b>	Royalty statements
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/11</b>	Selling agency agreements Columbia Artists Management, Inc.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 10/12</b>	General materials, 1951-1954 Gershwin Publishing Corporation (GPC)
<b>BOX-FOLDER 11/1-3</b>	Chappell and Co. agreements
<b>BOX-FOLDER 11/4-6</b>	Co-owner accounting for own use B accounting for license rights on renewals prior to their sale by the next-of-kin
<b>BOX-FOLDER 11/7-12</b>	Correspondence and memos
<b>BOX-FOLDER 12/1-2</b>	Deal miscellaneous memoranda
<b>BOX-FOLDER 12/3</b>	Deal royalties
<b>BOX-FOLDER 12/4</b>	Financial statements, 1949-1952
<b>BOX-FOLDER 12/5-6</b>	Personal holding company tax matter
<b>BOX-FOLDER 12/7-11, 13/1-2</b>	Used material, 1956-1965 Agreements, contracts, correspondence Includes documents related to establishment of G.P.C. New Dawn Music Corporation
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/3</b>	Agreement to sell motion picture renewals and 10% of net profits agreement
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/4</b>	Agreements of sale, 1965 Oct. 1 and 1966 July 1
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/5-6</b>	Complete set of deal photocopies given to next-of-kin, 1965 Sept. and additional agreements
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/7</b>	Dreyfus deal restrictive agreements
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/8</b>	General materials, 1965
<b>BOX-FOLDER 13/9</b>	Quarterly statements New World Music Limited

## Royalties and Copyrights, 1935-1967

### Container

### Contents

---

BOX-FOLDER 14/1-2	Annual statements
BOX-FOLDER 14/3	Royalty statements, 1951-1958
BOX-FOLDER 34/1-4	Royalty statements, 1958-1960
BOX-FOLDER 14/4-7	Royalty statements – also data on possible question of ownership of renewal payments taken from various other files
	On-Stage Productions
BOX-FOLDER 14/8	"Gershwin" [biographical film] Palestine Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Art
BOX-FOLDER 14/9	General materials, 1953-1954 T. B. Harms and Co.
BOX-FOLDER 14/10	Harms/New World Music agreements Walden Records
BOX-FOLDER 14/11	General materials, 1953-1960

### Miscellany, 1935-1967

BOX-FOLDER 15/1-3	Copyright renewal and capital gains data
BOX-FOLDER 15/4-6	Copyright renewals
BOX-FOLDER 15/7-8	Deal correspondence and data relating to Malino to 1965 Oct. 27
BOX-FOLDER 15/9	Gershwin copyrights
BOX-FOLDER 15/10	Gershwin correspondence, etc. re: television
BOX-FOLDER 16/1-2	Gershwin income for Leonard Saxe
BOX-FOLDER 16/3	Holograph envelope from IG to Leonard Saxe, 1965 Dec. 23
BOX-FOLDER 16/4	Index to work on deal, 1957-1965
BOX-FOLDER 16/5-6	Ira Gershwin's renewals, etc. – contract for Ira and Leonore with four publishing corporations, 1965 July 1
BOX-FOLDER 16/7	Open post-deal matters
BOX-FOLDER 16/8	Some more or less open Gershwin matters Agreements, contracts, correspondence
BOX-FOLDER 16/9	Working out manner for Ira, Arthur, and Frankie to report next-of-kin deal in 1965 income tax returns

### BOX 17-18      **Litigation, 1953-1964**

	Breen vs. Goldwyn, Lazar
BOX-FOLDER 17/1-3	18th report of the judicial council
BOX-FOLDER 17/4-8	General materials, 1953-1964
BOX-FOLDER 17/9-10	Porgy and Bess Gershwin vs. U.S.
BOX-FOLDER 18/1	Distribution of Gershwin vs. U.S., 1958 Gershwin vs. U.S. – The Shocking Miss Pilgrim
BOX-FOLDER 18/2	General materials, 1956-1957
BOX-FOLDER 18/3-6	Tax refund for 1945 and 1946 Schwartz vs. BMI
BOX-FOLDER 18/7-11	John Schulman correspondence, memoranda, and agreements Société de spectacles lumbroso vs. Hug and Sons

## Litigation, 1953-1964

### Container

### Contents

---

BOX-FOLDER 18/12 Zurich stuff  
Robert Breen contract for Porgy and Bess

BOX 19-32, 34 **Estate of Rose Gershwin, 1937-1967**

#### General files, 1949-1966

BOX-FOLDER 19/1-7 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #1, 1949-1950  
BOX-FOLDER 19/8-12, 20/1-2 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #2, 1950-1952  
BOX-FOLDER 20/3-7 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #3, 1952-1953  
BOX-FOLDER 20/8-10, 21/1-2 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #4, 1954-1956  
BOX-FOLDER 21/3-6 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #5, 1956  
BOX-FOLDER 21/7-8 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #6, 1957  
BOX-FOLDER 21/9-10, 22/1 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #7, 1957-1958  
BOX-FOLDER 22/2-5 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #8, 1958  
BOX-FOLDER 22/6-10 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #9, 1959  
BOX-FOLDER 23/1-5 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #10, 1959-1960  
BOX-FOLDER 23/6-9, 24/1-2 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #11, 1960-1961  
BOX-FOLDER 24/3-7 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #12, 1962  
BOX-FOLDER 24/8-10, 25/1-2 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #13, 1963  
BOX-FOLDER 25/3-6 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #14, 1964  
BOX-FOLDER 25/7-11 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #15, 1964  
BOX-FOLDER 26/1-4 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #16, 1964  
BOX-FOLDER 26/5-8 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #17, 1965  
BOX-FOLDER 26/9-11, 27/1-2 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #18, 1965  
BOX-FOLDER 27/3-7 Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust general file #19, 1966

#### Subject files, 1937-1967

BOX-FOLDER 28/1 Agendas and meetings in the 1950's  
BOX-FOLDER 28/2 Executor final account, 1952  
BOX-FOLDER 28/3-4 Federal estate tax  
BOX-FOLDER 28/5 Gershwin estate correspondence, 1937-1943  
BOX-FOLDER 28/6 Gershwin fee agreement  
BOX-FOLDER 28/7 Gershwin miscellaneous trust first intermediate accounting  
BOX-FOLDER 28/8-12 Income tax  
BOX-FOLDER 28/13 Ira Berlove claim  
BOX-FOLDER 28/14 Jewelry  
BOX-FOLDER 29/1-3 Leonard Saxe legal services for Gershwin Trust  
BOX-FOLDER 29/4-6 Miscellaneous law memos  
BOX-FOLDER 29/7 Miscellaneous memoranda of fact, drafts, agendas, etc.  
BOX-FOLDER 29/8 Miscellaneous open matters  
Agreements, contracts, correspondence

## **Estate of Rose Gershwin, 1937-1967**

### ***Container***

### ***Contents***

---

<b>BOX-FOLDER 29/9-12, 30/1-3</b>	New York County Surrogate's Court – account of proceedings
<b>BOX-FOLDER 30/4-7</b>	New York County Surrogate's Court – claims of Emmanuel Alexandre, Pollock, and Berger, 1948
<b>BOX-FOLDER 30/8-9</b>	New York County Surrogate's Court – memoranda
<b>BOX-FOLDER 30/10</b>	New York state estate tax
<b>BOX-FOLDER 34/5</b>	Rose Gershwin Hadassah bequest acknowledgement
<b>BOX-FOLDER 31/1-10</b>	Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust financial statements, 1948 Dec. - 1965 Dec.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 32/1-2</b>	Rose Gershwin Testamentary Trust financial statements, 1966 Jan. - 1968 Mar.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 32/3</b>	Royalties earned, four years ending 1952 Nov. 30
<b>BOX-FOLDER 32/4-7</b>	Tax forms, 1970-1972
<b>BOX-FOLDER 32/8-9</b>	Trustees first intermediate accounting
<b>BOX 33</b>	<b>Estate of Ira and Leonore Gershwin, 1950-1963</b>
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/1</b>	Gershwin material of some interest but to be left in N.Y.
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/2-4</b>	Ira Gershwin personal papers
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/5</b>	Leonore and Ira Gershwin trusts – law file
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/6-7</b>	Leonore and Ira Gershwin trusts – material for California
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/8</b>	Life and estate planning
<b>BOX 33</b>	<b>Arthur Gershwin, 1950-1966</b>
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/9</b>	General materials, 1955-1966
<b>BOX-FOLDER 33/10</b>	Gershwin vs. Gershwin separation and divorce