

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

**CHARLES HAMBITZER
COLLECTION**

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu2005.wp.0012>

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Biographical Note

Charles Hambitzer was born in Beloit, Wisconsin (his birth year is variously given as 1878 and 1881), to a musical family; his great-grandfather was a violinist at the Russian court and his father owned a music store in Milwaukee. After studying with Julius Albert Jahn and Hugo Kaun, Hambitzer played in the orchestra of the Arthur Friend Stock Company, and taught piano, violin, and cello at the Wisconsin Conservatory. In 1908, he moved to New York City, where he joined Joseph Knecht's orchestra at the Waldorf-Astoria, frequently appearing as a piano soloist. At the same time, he opened a music studio on the Upper West Side, and among his many pupils was the fourteen year-old George Gershwin, who began his studies with Hambitzer in 1912. In 1914, Hambitzer's wife died of tuberculosis, and in 1918 he succumbed to the same disease, exacerbated by an emotional breakdown. It has been widely suggested that his death caused the young Gershwin to abandon his own budding career as a concert pianist.

Hambitzer's feverish approach to composition seems to reflect a prodigious musical talent. His works include orchestral tone poems, incidental music for plays by Shakespeare and others (his *Twelfth Night Suite* was used for a Sothorn and Marlow production), two operettas, and numerous songs and short instrumental compositions. Although a number of his tone poems were performed by the New York Philharmonic and his operetta, *The Love Wager*, toured the United States, few of Hambitzer's works were ever published, since he seems generally to have lost interest in a piece upon its competition. Although he was under contract to compose theatrical music for the Shubert Organization, nothing resulted from this arrangement; this uncharacteristic lack of productivity has been attributed to creative and personal differences. In the 1930s it was reported that a number of Hambitzer's manuscripts were in the possession of his family, although some relatives believed that his most significant scores had been retained by Joseph Knecht.

Processed by Linda B. Fairtile, August 1992

Scope and Content Note

The Charles Hambitzer manuscripts are housed in two sheet music boxes. The manuscripts consist of sixteen orchestral scores or part sets for tone poems and incidental music as well as several short pieces for various instruments and approximately twenty-five songs and stage numbers in piano-vocal format.

Sketches and miscellaneous fragments are also represented. Although George Gershwin once recalled that Hambitzer, his first significant music teacher, “wrote what I then considered the finest light music,” there appears to be no connection between these manuscripts and Gershwin’s own compositions.

The manuscripts were donated to the Library of Congress in 1991 by Marc George Gershwin and his mother, Mrs. Judy Gershwin, sister-in-law of George and Ira. Mrs. Gershwin found the manuscripts in a storage room in her Central Park West apartment, which had formerly been the home of her mother-in-law, Rose Gershwin; it is believed that George Gershwin left the manuscripts with his mother, Rose, when he moved to California in 1936. In the same trunk as the Hambitzer materials was a manuscript page of *Porgy and Bess*, datable to 1935 (this page has been retained by the Gershwin family). There is no evidence of just how George Gershwin, who was twenty when Hambitzer died, came to possess the manuscripts, although it is known that he corresponded with members of the Hambitzer family.

Linear feet of shelf space occupied:2

Approximate number of items:200

Number of containers:2

Container List

MUSIC

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Contents</i>
	Orchestral/Instrumental Materials (scores and parts)
1/1	The bedouins Score, parts
1/2	Chan toy: a chinese sketch Parts
1/3	First-born [incidental music] Parts
1/4	Hamlet [incidental music] Parts
1/5	If I were king [incidental music] Parts
1/6	[Introduction and Trio] For piano solo
1/7	(Mignonne) Petite valse Violin 1 part only
1/8	Mistress Nell [incidental music] Parts
1/9	Mosquito ballet Score (incomplete?)
1/10	Opening - Act I Score
1/11	Orientale For violin [?], piano (incomplete)
1/12	Out of the fold [incidental music] Piano part only
1/13	Prelude [to] Act III Score
1/14	Quartet Violin part 2 only
1/15	Quo vadis [incidental music] Parts Nero's Song No. 1 and 2 [voice and lute] [Terpsichore...] [voice and lute]

MUSIC

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Contents</i>
1/16	Romeo and Juliet selection Parts
1/17	The shaughraun [incidental music] Parts
1/18	Soupirs Parts
1/19	Sourire - Mazurka For piano, 2 violins, flute?
1/20	The three musketeers [incidental music] Parts
2/1	The twelfth night suite Viola Score, parts Malvolio Score, parts In Olivia's garden Score only
2/2	Waltz legends For piano solo
2/3	[Untitled parts] Nos. 9, 10, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21
2/4	[Untitled piece for treble instrument and piano]
2/5	[Unidentified instrumental parts and sketches]
2/6	[Unidentified orchestral scores: fragment and refrain]
2/7	[Unidentified piano music]
2/8	[Unidentified sketches for violin?]
2/9	Piano-vocal scores [After the heat and the toil...] Piano-vocal score
2/10	The belle of a garrison town Piano-vocal score
2/11	A doctor Piano-vocal score, (incomplete)
2/12	A factory girl Piano-vocal score
2/13	Good-night song [includes sketches for a stage work] Piano-vocal score

MUSIC

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Contents</i>
2/14	His little white delight Piano-vocal score
2/15	[Hurrah, hurrah...] Piano-vocal score
2/16	I prithee send me back my heart Piano-vocal score
2/17	I'm looking for a man Piano-vocal score
2/18	A man, a maid, and a telephone Piano-vocal score, (incomplete)
2/19	Opening - Act III Piano-vocal score
2/20	The song of the wind Piano-vocal score
2/21	Such is life Piano-vocal score
2/22	What do I care for a pedigree Piano-vocal score, (incomplete)
2/23	[From unidentified stage work] Grand entrance and recitative Piano-vocal score Maybe Piano-vocal score
2/24	[From unidentified stage work] [Come, come you lazy listless people...] Piano-vocal score Title is from first line of text. Finale Act I Piano-vocal score [Women's chorus part, unaccompanied], (incomplete)
2/25	[From unidentified stage work] Dainty lace and lingerie Piano-vocal score A fair exchange Piano-vocal score It's great to have a tete-a-tete Piano-vocal score
2/26	[Miscellaneous unidentified piano-vocal material]