

LILLI WOLFF PAPERS, approximately 1870-1983
1999.A.0041

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Lilli Wolff papers

Dates: approximately 1870-1983

Accession number: 1999.A.0041

Creator: Wolff, Lilli

Extent: 0.5 linear foot (1 box)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The Lilli Wolff papers contain biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, playbills, and a clipping documenting Lilli Wolff's career as a costume designer and dressmaker in Köln and Vienna, her experience hiding in Vienna with the help of her friends, and her immigration to the United States. The papers also include poems and stories dedicated to Lilli Wolff by Max Meinecke.

Languages: German, English, French

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Lilli Wolff papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Klaus Driessen donated the Lilli Wolff papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1999.

Related materials: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also holds a copy of a manuscript by Klaus Driessen, "True Friends," which describes how his mother, Mati Driessen, helped rescue Lilli Wolff from Nazi persecution. The manuscript is cataloged as accession 1992.A.0077 and was donated by Klaus Driessen in 1992. The Library holds a copy of Peter Kunze's biography of Dorothea Neff, *Dorothea Neff: Mut zum Leben*, which Klaus Driessen also donated to the museum and which includes an inscription to Mati Driessen by the author.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, December 2012

Biographical note

Lilli Wolff (1896-1983) was born Wilhelmine Wolff in Köln to Richard and Regine Wolff. She operated a costume design and dressmaking shop with her business partner, Meta Schmitt (1890-1951), and her assistant, Martha (Mati) Driessen (1910-1990), but lost her ownership of the business following Kristallnacht. She moved to Vienna and hid in the home of her friend, actress Dorothea Neff (1903-1986). Schmitt and Driessen helped sustain her with parcels of food and eventually joined her and Neff in Vienna when the shop in Köln was bombed. She immigrated to the United States in March 1947, joining her sister and brother-in-law, Alice and Walter Schiff, in New York before settling in Dallas. In 1958 she sponsored the immigration of Mati Driessen and her son Klaus, who joined Wolff in Dallas. Meta Schmitt, Mati Driessen, and Dorothea Neff were recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem in 1979 for hiding Lilli Wolff during the Holocaust.

Scope and content of collection

The Lilli Wolff papers contain biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, playbills, and a clipping documenting Lilli Wolff's career as a costume designer and dressmaker in Köln and Vienna, her experience hiding in Vienna with the help of her friends, and her immigration to the United States. The papers also include poems and stories dedicated to Lilli Wolff by Max Meinecke.

Biographical materials include records documenting the lives of Lilli Wolff, her brother-in-law Walter Schiff, and her friend Mati Driessen. A birth certificate, business registration certificate, tenant registration certificate, application for Austrian citizenship, letters of recommendation, and a travel pass document Lilli Wolff's life in Germany and Austria and her immigration to the United States. Three narratives by Lilli Wolff describe her experiences in Nazi Germany and Austria: two published by the Baptist Church in Texas, which also describe her subsequent conversion to Christianity, and one accompanying her support for the designation of Dorothea Neff, Meta Schmitt, and Mati Driessen as "Righteous Among the Nations." A letter of recommendation and an appraisal of jewelry document Walter Schiff's emigration from Germany, and report cards and certificates document Mati Driessen's education and training in Germany.

Correspondence includes letters among friends and family members during and after the war. They describe hardships in Vienna, Köln, and Berlin during the war, the death of Wolff's father, Wolff's immigration to the United States, and the efforts of Wolff's friends to rebuild their lives after the war.

Photographs depict Lilli Wolff, her family, her parents' gravestones, and Mati Driessen.

Printed materials include a newspaper review and playbills for Viennese theatrical productions for which Lilli Wolff designed the costumes, including "Der Mond ging unter," "Überfahrt," "Faust," and "Lysistrata."

The poems and stories by Lilli Wolff's friend, theater director and stage designer Max Meinecke (1912-1972), were dedicated to Wolff and given to her in the spring of 1946.

System of arrangement

The Lilli Wolff papers are arranged as five series:

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1916-1979
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1939-1950
- Series 3: Photographs, approximately 1870-1983
- Series 4: Playbills and clipping, approximately 1946-1947
- Series 5: Poems and stories by Max Meinecke, 1930-1945

Indexing terms

Neff, Dorothea, 1903-

Jews – Germany – History – 1933-1945.

Jews – Austria – History.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) – Personal narratives.

Righteous Gentiles in the Holocaust.

Christian converts from Judaism.

Theater – Austria – Vienna – History.

German poetry.

Germany – Emigration and immigration – History – 1933-1945.

United States – Emigration and immigration – History – 20th century.

Berlin (Germany)

Cologne (Germany)

Vienna (Austria)

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1916-1979

Box	Folder	
1	1	Mati Driessen, 1916-1939
1	2	Walter Schiff, 1937-1938
1	3	Lilli Wolff, 1924, 1938, 1944-1947

1	4	Lilli Wolff, Narratives, approximately 1955, 1962, 1979
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Series 2: Correspondence, 1939-1950

Box	Folder	
1	5	Driessen, Mati, 1943-1948
1	6	Nef, Leonore, 1946-1948
1	7	Raphael, Helene, 1941
1	8	Schiff, Walter, 1941, 1946
1	9	Schmitt, Meta, 1946
1	10	Wolff, Lilli, 1941, 1946
1	11	Wolff, Richard, 1939-1941
1	12	Unidentified Friend, 1946-1950

Series 3: Photographs, approximately 1870-1983

Box	Folder	
1	13	Lilli Wolff, 1946, 1964, 1983
1	14	Lilli Wolff with Mati Driessen, 1939, 1982
1	15-17	Lilli Wolff's family, approximately 1870-1940 (3 folders)
1	18	Richard and Regine Wolff's Gravestones, approximately 1940s
1	19	Unidentified Stairwell, Room, and Objects, approximately 1930s

Series4: Playbills and clipping, approximately 1946-1947

Box	Folder	
1	20	Playbills and Clipping, approximately 1946-1947

Series 5: Poems and stories by Max Meinecke, 1930-1945

Box	Folder	
1	21	"Fruhe Gedichte," 1930-1934
1	22	"Gedichte aus dem Krieg," 1940-1945
1	23	"Tor und Mauer," 1940-1941
1	24	"Wie Ich Wurde," 1944