

PERCY BRAND PAPERS, 1920-2003
2006.133.4

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

Title: Percy Brand papers

Dates: 1920-2003 (bulk 1945-1985)

Accession number: 2006.133.4

Creator: Brand, Percy, 1908-1985.

Extent: 3.92 linear feet (2 boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 6 book enclosures, 1 oversize folder)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the life and musical career of Percy (Perec) Brand, a violinist originally from Liepāja, Latvia, who was imprisoned in the Kaiserwald, Stutthof, and Buchenwald concentration camps during the Holocaust. The material primarily relates to his post-war life in the Kibbutz Buchenwald and Zeilsheim displaced persons camps, as well as his musical career in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Included are biographical materials, sheet music, programs, photographs, and audio recordings.

Languages: Hebrew, Yiddish, English

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), Percy Brand papers (2006.133.4), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Gertrude Brand in 2006. A separate collection donated by the Estate of Gertrude and Percy Brand in 2009. The collections were unified in 2017.

Related archival materials: The Papers of Percy Brand, P-865, American Jewish Historical Society

Related materials: 2006.133.2 a-j Violin, case and spare parts used by a Jewish Latvian musician while imprisoned in several concentration camps

2006.133.3 Striped bath towel embroidered with the inmate's prisoner number and used in Buchenwald concentration camp

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

Processing history: Adam Fielding, July 2017

Biographical note

Percy Brand (born Perec Brand, 1908-1985) was born 2 April 1908 in Liepāja, Latvia to Abram and Basia Brand. He had at least one brother, Carpel. He began playing the violin at the age of ten, and eventually became the concertmaster of the Riga Latvian Symphony Orchestra. Percy married Margit Reklar (d. 1941) and had two children, Judith Basya (1930-1941) and Mendel (1933-1941).

In August 1940, the Soviet Union annexed Latvia. In spring 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union and, by July 1941, Riga was occupied by German forces. SS Einsatzgruppen units [mobile killing units], assisted by the local population, rounded up and shot thousands of Jewish children, women, and the elderly. Percy's wife and children were among those taken and murdered. Percy was sent to the Riga ghetto. In 1943, he was sent to the Kaiserwald concentration camp outside Riga and then to the Stutthof concentration camp in Poland. On August 16, 1944, he arrived at the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. Percy kept his violin with him during the transports. It was confiscated then returned in each camp. In Buchenwald, the commandant summoned him daily to play for him and rewarded him with bread, meat, and coffee.

After Buchenwald was liberated on 11 April 1945, Percy stayed at the Kibbutz Buchenwald, part of a displaced persons camp in Fulda, Germany, and the Zeilsheim displaced persons camp. He performed for survivors in various displaced persons camps, and in 1947 became the first musician to play Jewish and Hebrew music on the Frankfurt-am-Main radio. At this performance he met Grunia Levine (Gertrude, d. 2008), who was also from Liepāja and a survivor of the Dachau concentration camp. They married and she became his manager. In February 1949, they immigrated to the United States and settled in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Percy continued to perform in the Boston area, with many appearances on radio and television.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the life and musical career of Percy (Perec) Brand, a violinist originally from Liepāja, Latvia, who was imprisoned in the Kaiserwald, Stutthof, and Buchenwald concentration camps during the Holocaust. The material primarily relates to his post-war life in the Kibbutz Buchenwald and Zeilsheim displaced persons camps, as well as his musical career in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Included are biographical materials, sheet music, programs, photographs, and audio recordings.

The biographical material includes an address book, clippings, a small amount of correspondence, his obituary, and a scrapbook of his career.

The sheet music consists of printed and handwritten scores. It is likely that the bulk if not all of the printed sheet music are previously published compositions. The programs include events performed in post-war Germany and the United States. Also included are publicity materials.

The photographs include depictions of pre and post-war family members, Zeilsheim, Percy and his wife Gertrude, and Percy's performances. The photograph albums primarily document Percy's life in the DP camps.

The audio recordings consist of audio cassettes of Percy's performances. Some appear to recorded radio broadcasts also featuring Ben Gailing, a contemporary of Percy.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as four series.

Series 1: Biographical material, 1946-1995

Series 2: Sheet music, and programs, circa 1940s-1967

Series 3: Photographs, 1920-2003

Series 4: Audio recordings, 1970-1999 and undated

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

The accessions formerly cataloged as 2006.133.1 and 2009.291.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Indexing terms

Person:

Brand, Percy, 1908-1985.

Brand, Gertrude.

Corporate:

Zeilsheim (Displaced persons camp)

Topical Subject:

Jewish musicians--Latvia--Riga.

Concentration camp inmates as musicians--Germany.

Jewish refugees--Germany.

Refugee camps--Germany--Zeilsheim (Frankfurt am Main)--1940-1950.

Musicians.

Holocaust survivors--Latvia--Riga.

Geography:

Roxbury (Boston, Mass.)

Zeilsheim (Frankfurt am Main, Germany : Refugee camp)

Liepāja (Latvia)

Fulda (Germany)

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

Photograph albums.

Sound recordings.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical material, 1946-1995

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	Address and calendar book, 1965
1	2	Clippings, 1951-1954 and undated
1	3	Correspondence: Brand, Gertrude, 1994-1995
1	4	Correspondence: Brand, Percy, 1941-1979 and undated
1	5	Jewish National Fund memorial certificates, 1963-1964
1	6	Newsletters, 1953-1966
1	7	Naturalization booklet, 1953
1	8	Obituary, 1985
BE	1	Scrapbook, 1946-1947

Series 2: Sheet music, and programs, circa 1940s-1967

Box	Folder	Title
1	9	<i>Jewish Community Songster</i> , circa 1940s
1	10	Programs, circa 1947-1967 and undated
1	11	Publicity materials, circa 1950s
1	12	Sheet music, handwritten, circa 1940s-circa 1950s
1	13	Sheet music, handwritten in notebooks, circa 1940s-circa 1950s
1	14	Sheet music, printed, circa 1940s-circa 1950s
1	15	Sheet music, printed with folder, circa 1940s-circa 1950s

Series 3: Photographs, 1920-2003

Box	Folder	Title
1	16	Brand, Gertrude, circa 1950s-circa 1990s
1	17	Brand, Judith, circa 1939
		Brand, Percy:
1	18	Concert performances, circa 1940s-circa 1970s
2	1	Publicity, circa 1950s
2	2	circa 1920s-1974
2	3	Brand, Percy and Gertrude, circa 1950s-1976
2	4	Family and friends, 1920-1936 and undated
2 OS	5 1	Family and friends, circa 1948-2003 (2 folders)
2	6-7	Family and friends, bound photograph packs, 1954-1957 (2 folders)

2	8	Levine, Tamara, circa 1930s [reprint 1963]
2	9	Zeilsheim displaced persons camp and Buchenwald Kibbutz, 1945-1946
		Photograph albums:
3	1	Black "Photographs" album, circa 1946-1954
2	10	Black "photographs" album, loose photographs
BE	2	Grey album with red string, 1945-1946
2	11	Grey album with red string, loose photographs
BE	3	Striped album with black string, 1946-1947
2	12	Striped album with black string, loose photographs
BE	4	Striped album with white string, 1947-1948
BE	5	Small album, blue and black, circa 1946
BE	6	Small album, red and white, circa 1946
4	1-11	Empty slide boxes (Not Digitized)

Series 4: Audio recordings, 1970-1999 and undated (Not Digitized)

Box	Folder	Title
4	12	"Belz, May time/Mikhail Alexandrovich", undated
4	13	Ben Galing tribute to Percy Brand, circa 1990
4	14	"Ben Galing with Percy for Gertrude", 1991
4	15	"Dr. Zisago, Shubert serenade", undated
4	16	"For Gertrude", undated
4	17	"Margot Emery Mechanics Hall, Worcester", undated
4	18	Multiple songs, undated
4	19	Multiple songs, undated
4	20	Multiple song, undated
4	21	"Percy Brand", undated
4	22	"Percy Brand solos/Final show", undated
4	23	"Perry house: Labor Day", 1970
4	24	"Pizzicato/Piano music – intermediate level", undated
4	25	"Sad violin music", undated
4	26	"Selections by Percy Brand, violinist", undated
4	27	"Sivago, Fiddler, Pizzicato, My Melody of love, My birthday, 1980, Hebrew melody," illegible writing, 1980
4	28	Unlabeled, undated
4	29	WBUR Ben Galing radio special, 1999