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## Finding Aid for the Ottokar Malek family papers collection 528

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Prepared by Jennifer Andrew

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids History Center
<b>Source - dnr:</b>	Rothman, Steven H.
<b>Source - dnr:</b>	Brown, Karen A.
<b>Title:</b>	Ottokar Malek family papers
<b>ID:</b>	collection 528
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1868-1944
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Linear Feet
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English , German , Czech , Hungarian .
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Ottokar Malek (1885-1923) was a critically acclaimed concert pianist, music instructor, and director of the Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the origin of today's Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra. From 1914 to 1919 Malek and his family lived in the historic Sweet House in Grand Rapids where he operated the Malek School of Music. This collection of his family's papers include scrapbooks and photographs highlighting his career, along with that of his wife, Florence Krumme Malek (1890-1963), also an accomplished concert pianist and teacher. Born in Bohemia, Austria, Ottokar attended the Prague Conservatory from 1892 until 1897. He relocated to the United States in 1902 and settled in Chicago where he performed and taught. In 1908 he married one of his students, Florence Krumme (b. 1890). Together they had three children; Ottokar Jr., Anita, and Eleanor. Ottokar died in 1923 of pneumonia. Florence remarried and passed away in 1963. This collection would be useful to the researcher interested in Ottokar Malek and his family, the Malek School of Music, the history of musical performance and instruction in Grand Rapids, or the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra in particular.</p>

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## Biographical / Historical

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In 1875 Ottokar Malek was born in Budweis, Bohemia, Austria, to Joseph and Anna (Koneck) Malek. His music training began when he was six years old. In 1892, at age 15, Ottokar was admitted to the Prague Conservatory where he studied until 1897, graduating with honors. After graduation Ottokar toured Europe, Russia, and neighboring countries, as a concert pianist. He simultaneously held instructor, professor, and conductor positions. A traumatic romantic breakup prompted Malek to leave for America in 1902 where he joined family in Chicago. In December 1903, he held his first concert at the Studebaker Theater. Immediately following the concert he scheduled a tour of the United States and Canada.

In 1908, after many years of touring and performing, Malek began teaching and preparing students for performance, attracting pupils from all over the United States. At age 32, that same year, Ottokar married one of his students, Florence Krumme. A talented pianist, Florence was born in Chicago in 1890 and married Ottokar at 18. Florence and Ottokar had three children; Ottokar Jr. (b. 1909), Anita (b. 1912), and Eleanor (b. 1914).

In 1914 Malek moved his family into the historic Sweet House in Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the invitation of Clara Davis, who was leasing the house for her music school. Davis merged her school with Ottokar's and the Malek School of Music was opened. The school was successful and employed a large faculty. Ottokar also continued to give concerts in the area, often performing piano duets with his wife, Florence. In addition to being a concert pianist, Florence also taught at the Malek School of Music.

Five years later it became necessary to close the school and return to Chicago for a short time. During that time Florence and Ottokar commuted to Grand Rapids to teach. Ottokar was also directing the new Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra. Founded in 1917, the St. Cecilia Orchestra began as a small ensemble of 25 instrumentalists. When the St. Cecilia Society decided to enlarge the orchestra in 1919 they asked Malek to be the director. In March 1920, the new Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra gave its first concert.

In 1922 Ottokar purchased 157 Benjamin Avenue Southeast in Grand Rapids and the family returned from Chicago. Ottokar continued to direct the orchestra. He and Florence also taught and regularly performed. The Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra had three successful seasons under Malek. Out of his efforts grew the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra, formally named in 1923. The same year Ottokar developed bronchial pneumonia and died on April 24, 1923, at the age of 47. After Ottokar's death, Florence Malek continued to teach and perform. In 1924 she married Peter Kleynenberg, a Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra cellist. Together they had a daughter, Joan (b.1925). Florence passed away in 1963.

The information in these biographical notes came from the collection itself and from *The Mayor, the Maestro, and the Mansion* by Carol Dodge.

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## Content Description

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The Ottokar Malek family papers consist mainly of scrapbooks with newspaper clippings and concert programs highlighting the music career of Ottokar Malek and material related to the Malek School of Music dating from the late 1880s through the mid-1930s. A program from the first concert given by the Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra can be found in the collection along with one from the memorial concert performed for Malek after his death. In addition to scrapbooks, these papers include family photographs and documents such as birth and baptismal certificates. Notable is a photo album given to Anita Malek by her mother that includes well identified photographs of many family members and the homes they lived in, including the Sweet House.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Conditions Governing Use

This collection is open and available for researcher use.

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by Steven H. Rothman and Karen A. Brown, children of Eleanor Malek Rothman and grandchildren of Florence and Ottokar Malek; 2024.045

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

St. Cecilia Music Society records-collection 453

The Women's City Club-collection 454

The Grand Rapids Symphony-collection 337

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Musicians -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Music -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Rothman, Steven H.
- Brown, Karen A.
- Malek, Ottokar

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## Collection Inventory

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### Photographs

Title/Description	Instances	
Malek family portrait; Florence, Ottokar, Ottokar Jr., Anita and Eleanor, 1915	Box 1	Folder 8
Silhouette of Ottokar conducting	Box 1	Folder 10
Photo album given to Anita Malek by her mother, Florence; includes family photos and pictures of houses the family lived in, 1908-1942	Box 6	

### Scrapbooks

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>
Photos, performance programs, newspaper clippings, and postcards , 1884-1923	Box 1
Concert programs, including some for the Malek School of Music, 1885-1923	Box 3
Concert programs and newspaper clippings mostly related to Florence Krumme Malek-Kleynenberg's concert and teaching career, 1900-1932	Box 4
Programs of concerts, many Grand Rapids Symphony, likely attended by Eleanor Malek, 1921-1938	Box 4
Grand Rapids Civic Orchestra; newspaper clippings and programs beginning with the founding of the orchestra; constitution and bylaws in the back, 1921-1933	Box 5
Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra newspaper clippings and programs, 1932-1935	Box 6

## Documents

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Confirmation certificate of Friedrich Carl Albert Krumme, April 5, 1868	Box 1	Folder 1
Baptism record of Ottokar Malek, Sept 15, 1886	Box 1	Folder 2
Ottokar Malek's school reports, 1887-1889	Box 1	Folder 3
Certificate of piano instruction completion for Ottokar Malek, Aug, 1892	Box 1	Folder 4
Ottokar's certificate of completion of piano studies at the Prague Conservatory, 1897	Box 2	Folder 1
Legal document written in Czech, addressed to Josef Malek, 1899	Box 2	Folder 1
Florence Krumme's birth certificate in German, 1890	Box 2	Folder 3
Florence Krumme's grade school graduation diploma, 1903	Box 2	Folder 3
Certificate of Marriage for Mr. Peter Kleynenberg and Florence Malek, August 22, 1924	Box 2	Folder 2

## Papers and letters

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Letter from a school in Prague, written in Czech, 1900	Box 1	Folder 5
Handwritten contract in German, 1902	Box 1	Folder 5
Newspaper clipping from a Czech paper in Chicago about Malek's arrival in America, 1902	Box 1	Folder 6
Florence Krumme's music workbook in German, undated		

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	Box 1	Folder 7
Family history notes by Florence Malek, 1924	Box 1	Folder 9
Letter to Eleanor Malek on her 13th birthday from her Grandfather Krumme, written in German, Nov, 1927	Box 1	Folder 11
Czech newspapers clippings about Ottokar's death translated into German and sent to Florence Malek, August, 1924	Box 1	Folder 12
Musical composition, a piano duet, dedicated to Regina Malek. Title translated to English is "Golden Age.", 1895	Box 3	
Death notice, in German, for Franz Malek, the adoptive father of Ottokar's father, 1868	Box 2	Folder 2
Death notice, in Hungarian, for Ottokar's maternal grandfather, Miklos Koneck, 1903	Box 2	Folder 2
Letter to Ottokar from the Berlin Tonkünstler Orchestra written in German, 1901	Box 2	Folder 4
Waybill for shipping things from Vienna to Berlin, 1902	Box 2	Folder 4