This catalogue contains our final selection of books from the library of lyricist Ira Gershwin (1896-1983). When his brother George (1898-1937), died Ira inherited George’s library, which was incorporated in his own. On Ira’s death the library became property of his widow Leonore (“Lee”) Strunsky Gershwin (1900-1991) and passed by descent to the present owner. Unless they were presented to him, George’s books were mostly unmarked, although he did write his name in a few. Ira frequently wrote his name in his books, and those have been scrupulously recorded here.

A bookplate, printed letterpress by Norman Clayton, is provided for these and other books which Ira owned but did not sign.

The collection emphasizes light verse, humor, works on language, and gifts from the Gershwins’ wide circle of acquaintance.

In addition, the library contains books, including some collectors’ pieces, that had belonged to Louis Paley (1887-1952) and his wife Emily Strunsky Paley. Emily Paley was the sister of Leonore Gershwin’s sister. Lou Paley was a teacher and owner of a Greenwich Village book shop. He was probably George Gershwin’s closest friend. The Paleys were hosts of a long-running Greenwich Village musical salon.

Ira’s always interesting commentaries, sometimes referencing books from his library, appear in his “Lyrics on Several Occasions”.

1. **Adams, Franklin P.** *Collection of 16 works by Franklin P. Adams*, comprising:

book’s dedicatees: "To Saintess Grayce with admiration from Ye Wight and eke Grape Nuttye Knoight / Sir Francis / November 1st, 1902".


[31881] **The collection:** $750


6. (Anthology). *Favorite Poems.* New York: Crowell, (1894). Red cloth, faded, light wear. Ownership signature of Max L. Abramson, a Paley cousin who was a drama critic in the teens and became a friend of George Gershwin. With frequent annotations or marks of emphasis, of undetermined authorship, possibly Ira's; two pages (containing Hood's "Bridge of Sighs") removed. [32059] $200

7. (Anthology). *Yanks. A.E.F. Verse.* New York: Putnam's, 1919. First trade edition. Blue cloth, near fine. Signature of Carl Hovey. This is one of a group of the works of verse which have the bookplate (by Benda) and or signature of the screen writer Sonya Levien Hovey or her husband, editor Carl Hovey. It was her original story that became the script for "Rhapsody in Blue" (1945) the film biography of George Gershwin. [31893] $25


17. Bacon, Peggy. *Off With Their Heads!* New York: McBride, (1934). First edition. Cloth, spine a little faded, in the scarce dust jacket, which is chipped at the ends and split on a joint. George Gershwin’s portrait is included among the fifty reproduced. $100

18. [Barham, Richard Harris]. *The Ingoldsby Legends.* Oxford University Press, 1921. Cloth, marginal tear affects a few leaves, very good otherwise. With George Gershwin’s pencil ownership signature on the front endpaper. [Together with]

19. [Barham, Richard Harris]. *The Ingoldsby Legends.* Cassell, 1908. Reprint. Cloth backstrip torn. With Ira Gershwin’s pencil ownership signature and address on the front endpaper, and with his extensive underlining of rhymes in the verse sections, sometimes with dates of his reading of parts, e.g. "A Lay of St. Dunstan," which he has dated Nov. 17, 1921. This book appears to be the most heavily annotated, or at least marked-up, of any in his library. $2,500

The two volumes, perhaps relics of dramatic readings in the Paley circle: $2,500


22. Barton, Ralph. *God’s Country.* A Short History. With a number of explanatory diagrams by the author. New York: Knopf, 1929. First trade edition. Two-part cloth binding, blocked in silver, light fading, otherwise fine. The only prose work written by Barton, whose illustrations were among the most popular of the 1920s. $25


33. **Benchley, Robert.** *Of All Things.* New York: Holt, 1921. First edition. Blue cloth, a very good copy. Benchley's first book, illustrated by Gluyas Williams. Without the four pages of advertisements at the end. No priority has been established for copies with or without advertisements. The publisher claimed ten there were printings in the first year. With Carl Hovey's ownership signature. [32030] $75


40. **Borrow, George.** *Lavengro. The Scholar -- The Gypsy -- The Priest.* London: John Murray, 1851. First edition. Three volumes, original cloth with paper spine labels, no ads. A good set with fraying to the spines, worn hinges. The front endpapers have had mounted envelopes containing old clippings about Borrow from bookseller catalogues, etc. Bookplates of the sportsman Harry Worcester Smith. [31846] $350


52. **Caffin, Caroline** . *Vaudeville*. Pictures by Marius De Zayas. New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914. First edition. Cloth, worn at head, rear hinge cracked. On the back endpapers is written an extraordinary list of more than 100 vaudeville acts or performers' names, in pencil, in an unknown hand. Ira Gershwin spent a short while writing reviews of vaudeville performances for the New York Clipper, in 1917, but although he owned the book, the handwriting is not his. [31824] $150


61. Chanis, M. *There Are No Jews*. Columbus, Ohio: Jewish Trends, (1946). Wrappers, very good. 12 pp. $50


115. Faulkner, William. *Salmagundi and a poem by Ernest Hemingway*. Milwaukee: The Casanova Press, 1932. First edition. Original printed wrappers, spine faintly tanned, small spots on the back cover, internally a fine copy, without slipcase. With a handwritten letter of presentation from John and Dorothy Huston, to Lou and Emily Paley. Lou Paley was a friend of the Gershwins with whom he sometimes wrote lyrics, a school teacher and book shop owner; Emily Paley was Lea Gershwin's sister. $350


119. Firbank, Ronald. *The Flower Beneath the Foot*. New York: Brentano's, (1924). First American edition. Black cloth, used. From the library of George and Ira Gershwin, though without markings. The front endpaper has the inscription "I'm waiting / Ford Tarpley / Asheville School / North Carolina". Ford Tarpley. Tarpley published some songs and stories before the war and in 1924 he was teaching French at the Asheville School. He later became a designer and also worked as a store stylist for Macy's. He may have been involved in the effort to get George Gershwin to use a Firbank book as a source for his then-germinating idea for an African-American jazz opera. Carl Van Vechten's daybook for January 3, 1925 mentions a visit from Tarpley. Its editor Bruce Kellner identified him as a "collector, otherwise unremarked" (The Splendid Drunken Twenties: Selections from the Daybooks, 1922-30, p. 69). $200


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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Franklin, Benjamin</td>
<td><em>A Letter by Dr. Franklin to The Royal Academy of Brussels</em></td>
<td>New York: At the Sign of The Blue-Behinded Ape, 1929.</td>
<td>Boards, very good. Signed by Ira Gershwin.</td>
<td>[32013]</td>
<td>$35</td>
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<td>126</td>
<td>Freedman, Benedict and Nancy</td>
<td><em>Mrs. Mike</em></td>
<td>New York: Coward-McCann, 1947.</td>
<td>Cloth, very good. Inscribed from the Freedmans to Ira Gershwin. A romance of the Canadian Northwest, it was filmed in 1949.</td>
<td>[31379]</td>
<td>$75</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Gay, John; Bax, Clifford</td>
<td><em>Polly, an opera by Mr Gay</em></td>
<td>Being the sequel to The Beggar's Opera ... Freely adapted by Clifford Bax. London: Chapman and Hall, 1923. Second printing. Cloth backed boards, very good. Program for a contemporary production affixed to front pastedown.</td>
<td>[31419]</td>
<td>$25</td>
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135. **Gershwin, George and Ira.** *Porgy og Bess.* Copenhagen: Priors, 1946. Danish edition of the libretto. Pictorial wrappers, very good. Danish translation by Holger Bech. With a letter sending this to Ira Gershwin, and observing the omission of Ira's name from the credits, from Robert Breen, director and producer of the 1952 revival of "Porgy and Bess". [31370] $75


158. Harburg, E.Y. *At This Point in Rhyme* E.Y. Harburg's Poems. New York: Crown, (1976). First edition. Cloth backed boards, fine in dust jacket. Inscribed "For my oldest pal Ira 'who made me what I am today. I hope you're satisfied'. With love to you and Leanie / Yipper". Ira Gershwin is listed on the dedication page as "my first college partner in rhyme". Gershwin and Harburg became lifelong friends while attending Thompson Harris High School in Queens, N.Y. [31402] $750


199. Johnson, James Weldon (editor). *The Book of American Negro Poetry.* Chosen and edited with an essay on the Negro's Creative Genius. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922. First edition. Cloth backed boards, spine label (slightly darkened). First edition of this seminal work; the first anthology of African-American poetry. Inscribed "To Mr George Gershwin, Sincerely yours, James Weldon Johnson / N.Y. City, Jan 24, 1925." The formality of the inscription suggests that this presentation marked the first meeting of the two; a critical moment at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. The event where this meeting happened was probably a party given by Carl Van Vechten, to which he referred in a letter to Scott Cunningham: "Saturday night...at a party here...Gershwin played....Also seven Negroes were present, all of them interesting in one way or another, (Letters of Carl Van Vechten, ed. Kellner, 1987, p. 74). Late in 1924 Van Vechten and Gershwin had "started talking about collaborating on an opera with a Negro cast....For a period Gershwin came [to Van Vechten's famous integrated parties] nearly every night.....[he] established a special closeness with brothers James Weldon Johnson...and J. Rosamond Johnson...[who] in earlier years had been a songwriting team much like the Gershwins...In 1925 and 1926, at the [Harlem Renaissance] movement's zenith, they brought forth two volumes of Negro spirituals, arranged by J. Rosamond and Lawrence Brown. [Almost every] spiritual bore a dedication to some friend or hero,...dedications that taken together helped chart the social terrain of the Harlem Renaissance... in the second volume, they dedicated the lively spiritual 'In Dat Great Gittin' Up Mornin'" to Gershwin," Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work.* [31319] $25,000


**PUT LOVE IN THE WHITE HOUSE**


214. **Knibbs, Henry Herbert.** *Songs of the Trail.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920. First edition. Cloth backed illustrated boards, small abrasion on cover, very good. Bookplate (by Benda) and signature of the screen writer Sonya Hovey. It was her original story that became the script for "Rhapsody in Blue" (1945) the film biography of George Gershwin. [31729] $35


230. Levy, Newman and John Held Jr. *Saturday to Monday*. New York: Knopf, 1930. First edition. Pictorial boards. Mild acid-burn from enclosures on endpapers, otherwise fine, in chipped dust jacket. Inscribed by both Levy and Held to Ira and Leonore Gershwin, "Week End of May 24, 1930". This is the same date as the inscription in a copy of the Gershwins' "Strike up the Band" presented to Levy, which was sold at Swann Galleries in 2010. [29520]$200


235. Lieberson, Goddard. *Three for Bedroom C*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1947. Boards, very good. Inscribed by the author to Leonore and Ira Gershwin. Lieberson was the producer of many original cast show recordings, and was responsible for the 1948 introduction of the long-playing record. He would go on to become the president of Columbia Records. [30250] $75


268. (Mencken, H.L.) ; Nietzsche, F.W. *The Antichrist.* Translated from the German with an introduction by H.L. Mencken. New York: Knopf, (1923). "Pocket Book Edition". Publisher's cloth, small edge chip from contents page; very good. With the early ownership signature of Lillian Hellman, dated 1924 (she was 21 years-old). [30231] $75


299. Odets, Clifford. *The Big Knife*. New York: Random House, 1949. First edition. Boards, very good in dust jacket. Source for the powerful 1955 film noir which starred Jack Palance and Rod Steiger. Inscribed by Odets to Leonore and Ira Gershwin, "little token, for so many hours and deeds" in August 1949. After having written an 800 page draft script for the movie about George Gershwin, "Rhapsody in Blue" (1945), Odets was booted from the project and not credited, (although portions of the script were recycled into another classic film noir, "Humoresque" (1946)). [31296] $1,250


302. **Osgood, Henry O.** *So This is Jazz*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1926. First edition. Red cloth, fine in scarce dust jacket lacking small chips at the ends of the spine. [31391] $300


307. **Peck, Samuel Minturn.** *Cap and Bells*. New York: White, Stokes, and Allen, 1886. First edition. Publisher's green cloth, gilt, light wear. L.M. Paley ownership signature. The first book by the first (and until 1954 the only) the only writer to be named "Poet Laureate of Alabama". [32039] $75


for Granz. OCLC records a single copy (as "Para Pablo"). Cover laminate peeled along the spine, else fine. Inscribed by Granz to Ira and Leonore Gershwin. [30235] $850


might be the writer Richard Sherman whose 1947 book "The Bright Promise" (q.v.) was published to much hype but unflattering reviews, but the handwriting comparison is inconclusive, $50


340. **Schwimmer, Franciska.** *Great Musicians as Children.* Illustrated by M. Louis Murphy. Garden City: Doubleday, 1929. First edition. Publisher's cloth; very good. Inscribed by the author "With compliments and the hope you will like the 'Gershwin' chapter", signed and dated August 1929. $100


342. **Seaman, Owen.** *In Cap and Bells.* London: John Lane, 1900. First edition. Green cloth, near fine. With E.C. Stedman's bookplate (his 1911 sale) and Ira Gershwin's ownership signature. $75


344. **Seldes, George (ed.).** *The Great Quotations.* New York: Lyle Stuart, 1960. First edition. Cloth backed boards, fine in dust jacket. Inscribed by Seldes to Ira Gershwin, who is mentioned in the acknowledgements as Seldes's "patron" who induced many others to subscribe. $300


346. **Shaw, Charles G.** *The Low-Down.* New York: Holt, 1928. First edition. Block cloth, front cover with inset Peter Arno illustration; very good. **Inscribed by Shaw to George Gershwin**, who is one of the twenty-four subjects of Shaw's profiles, each with an Arno portrait. Shaw would become a founding member of American Abstract Artists. $750


350. **Sitwell, Sacheverell.** *The Thirteenth Caesar and other poems.* London: Grant Richards, 1924. First edition. Yellow cloth, label, very good. **Inscribed by Sitwell to George Gershwin** "in homage", dated 21 August 1925. Sacheverell Sitwell, besides writing poetry,
wrote music and music criticism, and was a patron of the composers Constant Lambert and William Walton. [31367] $400


355. Smith, Harry B. *First Nights and First Editions*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1931. First edition. Cloth, very good. With Ira Gershwin's ownership signature. An interesting association, although Ira Gershwin was not a collector of rare books such as Smith, Jerome Kern or Paul Francis Webster. [31290] $50


366. **Stockton, Frank R. Ting a Ling Tales.** New York: Scribner's, (c. 1910). Original green cloth, fine and bright copy. [31935] $25


370. **Stokes, Richard L. Merry Mount.** A dramatic poem for music. Illustrated by Horace Raymond Bishop. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1932). First edition. Original cloth, good copy. **Inscribed by the author to George Gershwin.** Stokes's poem, based on a Nathaniel Hawthorne story, served as the libretto for Howard Hanson's opera, which opened at the New York Metropolitan Opera in February 1933. Although considered a success at the time it has seldom been revived. [31299] $500

371. **Street, Julian. The Need of Change.** Illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931. Cloth, fine. Author's signed compliments card on front endpaper. [32019] $30


fifty years after George's death, but there are no indications of ownership in this copy from Ira's library.  $75

375. Taylor, Bert Leston. *A Line-o-Verse or Two*. Chicago: Reilly and Britton, (1911). First edition. Stiff wrappers with yapped edges, a bit marked, small chip from the base of the spine. $30


384. Tomlinson, H. M. *All Our Yesterdays*. New York: Harper, 1930. First edition. Original cloth, extremities worn. Inscribed to Ira Gershwin "the great carom shark" on his birthday in 1930. Unfortunately we can't make out the surname of one his pool-playing friends "David". The other inscriber is theatre critic Gilbert Gabriel. $50


386. Twain, Mark. *Mark Twain's Jest Book*. Edited by Cyril Clemens. Mark Twain Journal, 1963. Second edition with new material. Wrappers, fine. Inscribed by Cyril Clemens to Ira Gershwin. In original mailing envelope on which Gershwin has noted his reply to Clemens, mentioning the use of Gershwin songs in a movie ("Kiss Me, Stupid"). $45


395. **Vaughn, Stanton (ed.).** *Limerick Lyrics.* New York: George Sully, (1906). Several publishers issued printings of this book dated 1906. Cloth, cover label, ring mark but a good copy. The rear endpaper has a four-word rhyme experiment in Ira Gershwin's hand, and a telephone number. [32041] $150

396. **Verve.** Vol. 1, Nos. 3-4. Paris, 1938-1939. Publisher's cloth, original wrappers bound in, spine slightly faded and rubbed; one marginal tear from an untrimmed leaf, internally fine otherwise. American issue with Esquire/Coronet sticker on the title page, text in English. Issue 1 has a cover by Matisse, original lithographs by Léger, Miró, Rattner, and Borés, issue 2 contains two original lithographs each by Masson and Kandinsky with a cover by Braque, issue 3 has original lithographs by Chagall, Klee, Miro, and Derain, cover by Bonnard, issue 4 has four lithographs by Derain, one double-page by Matisse and covers by Roualt. [31399] $1,500


399. **Walker, John.** *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language....* To which is added a key to the classical pronunciation. New York: Collins and Hannay, 1827. Stereotype edition. Original sheep, black leather spine label, gilt. xii, 609, 103 pp. Binding worn, corner torn from flyleaf. [31565] $50

401. Warburg, James P. [Paul James, pseud.]. *And Then What*. New York: Knopf, 1931. First edition. Black cloth, fine, in lightly chipped dust jacket. Inscribed by the author (to Ira Gershwin) "All by reason of the rhyming dictionary / Jim". Warburg, member of a banking family and later a government official, was married to the song writer Kay Swift. They divorced in 1934 as a result of her long affair with George Gershwin. He was also a lyricist, writing songs such as "Can This Be Love?" and "Can't We Be Friends?" [30234] $150


407. Wells, Carolyn. *A Vers de Société Anthology*. New York: Scribner's, 1907. First edition. Red cloth, gilt, very good, minor staining. With Ira Gershwin's ownership signature and address, dated 1923. Ira Gershwin and Yip Harburg "shared a special interest in a long line of light, satirical poetry from Renaissance parodists and W.S. Gilbert to the latest newspaper verse of Franklin P. Adams, Bert Taylor, and the young Dorothy Parker. Carolyn Wells's anthology of society verse in particular became an indispensable resource as the two boys experimented with such classic forms as the ballad, limerick, ode, rondeau, and triolet. In time, these two friends ... would help usher in the so-called golden age of American popular song by applying the traditions light verse to modern lyric writing," (Pollock, p. 15) [32009] $1,750


512. Wells, Carolyn (ed.). *A Whimsey Anthology*. New York: Scribner's, 1906. First edition. Publisher's red cloth, gilt, very good. Inscribed in 1929 by Lou and Emily Paley "to Ira, who believes, modestly, that other light versifiers ply their Parkers with as light a touch as he does." $125


519a Wight, Frederick W. *Verge of Glory*. New York: Harcourt Brace, (1956). First edition. Cloth, some fading to spine. Inscribed by the author to Ira Gershwin and with a letter of presentation. A scarce novel centering on Modigliani. Wight was chairman of the art department and museum director at UCLA, as well as a novelist and painter. $25


Quoting Wikipedia: "In 1920, Palmer entered the "Fame and Fortune Contest" advertised in Motion Picture Magazine. She won the contest, and was heralded by the magazine as the "most beautiful girl in America." The magazine's publisher, Eugene V. Brewster, [whom she would marry in 1926] allowed Palmer significant publicity in the magazine, and began to promote her as she embarked on a film career. Between 1921 and 1923, Motion Picture Magazine published a total of twenty-three articles on Palmer, while its sister publication, Motion Picture Classic, published an additional story on the actress. Palmer also had a face powder named after her, created by the Wilton Chemical Company in New York City and also appeared on the cover of Beauty, a women's magazine. She made her film debut in the short From Farm to Fame, documenting her public notoriety after winning the contest, followed by an acting role in Her Second Chance (1926). After ending her acting career in 1931, Palmer continued to model cosmetics."