



The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Henry Myers papers

1894-1975 [bulk 1922-1961]

*T-MSS 2012-016

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013. Detailed container list created by Valerie Wingfield, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Myers, Henry, 1893-1975

Title: Henry Myers papers

Date: 1894-1975 [bulk 1922-1961]

Size: 9.56 linear feet (26 boxes)

Source: Unknown donor.

Abstract: Henry Myers (1893-1975) was an American writer and lyricist who wrote in many genres of fiction including plays, musicals, motion pictures, revues, and novels. Before becoming a writer, Myers was a composer and classical pianist. The Henry Myers papers (1894-1975) document his long and prolific career as a professional dramatist, lyricist, and novelist, as well as his earlier career as a pianist. The collection consists of writings, production files, scrapbooks, and a small amount of personal material. To a lesser extent, his work as a screenwriter is represented.

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Processing note: Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013. Detailed container list created by Valerie Wingfield, 2016. The entire collection was foldered and rehoused. Some of the scrapbooks were removed from their bindings though they remain in their original order. The scrapbooks are fragile and care should be used when examining them.

Creator History

Henry Myers (1893-1975) was an American writer and lyricist who wrote in many genres of fiction including plays, musicals, motion pictures, revues, and novels. Before becoming a writer, Myers was a composer and classical pianist. Myers was born in Chicago but moved to New York City at the age of one and lived with his mother in Greenwich Village. At her encouragement, Myers studied piano and

composition at the Damrosch Music School and under the pianist and composer Rubin Goldmark. When he was nineteen, Myers went to Berlin to continue his studies but had to leave soon after due to the outbreak of World War I.

Upon his return to New York, Myers took a playwriting class at Columbia University. While at Columbia, he befriended lyricist Lorenz Hart, who produced Myers' first play, *The First Fifty Years*, at the Princess Theater in 1922. The play was moderately successful and ran for six weeks. Myers continued to write Broadway plays throughout his career including, *The New Yorkers* (1927), *Good Boy* (1928), *Garrick Gaieties* (1930), and *Gypsy Lady* (1946).

In 1930, Myers moved to California on a two-year writing contract with Paramount Pictures. He ended up remaining in California for almost two decades and wrote numerous screenplays. Notable films he wrote include *Her Wedding Night* (1930), *Million Dollar Legs* (1932), *The Black Room* (1935), and *Destry Rides Again* (1939), with James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. He often collaborated with screenwriter Jay Gorney. Together they wrote the films *College Holiday*; *The Heat's On*; and *Hey, Rookie*; the stage musicals *Kris Kringle Rides Again* and *Mona and Lisa*; and *Meet the People*, a popular revue that ran in Hollywood from 1939 to 1941. The revue also had a successful year on Broadway, and toured the United States and Canada. During this time, his first novel, *Our Lives Have Just Begun*, was also published.

While in Hollywood, Myers was a founding member of the Screen Writers Guild and served as a board member. He was also an active member of the Hollywood chapter of the League of American Writers. These activities precipitated his departure from Hollywood in 1947 due to McCarthyism. Myers returned to New York City and focused his energy on writing historical novels. His book *The Utmost Island* (1951), about Leif Ericsson, became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and his following novels *O King Live Forever* (1953), *The Signorina* (1956), and *The Winner of World War III* (1966), found modest success. Myers taught novel writing at New York University's School of Continuing Education. He also delved into production, producing the play *The Happiest Girl in the World* in 1961.

Myers was married twice. His first marriage, to Barbara Alexander, a political activist, was short-lived. He later married Marion Trabue, an actress whom he had first met in the 1920s. Marion's sister, Virginia Trabue, lived with the couple, and began her own relationship with Myers following Marion's death. All unions were childless. Myers died in 1975 in Los Angeles, while seeking medical treatment at the Motion Picture Country House and Lodge.

Scope and Content Note

The Henry Myers papers (1894-1975) document his long and prolific career as a professional dramatist, lyricist, and novelist, as well as his earlier career as a pianist. The collection consists of writings, production files, scrapbooks, and a small amount of personal material. To a lesser extent, his work as a screenwriter is represented.

The bulk of the collection is made up of writing and production files. These files consist of typescripts, notes, correspondence, and programs regarding plays, musicals, and novels. Most of the material is undated. Also included are notebooks containing holograph notes on unidentified projects. There is a small amount of original scores, as well as royalty statements and agreements for various productions and songs.

Produced and unproduced stage plays and musicals are represented in the papers. Plays include *The 100-Yard Dash*, *Casta Diva*, *The Death of Death*, *The End of the Book*, *The First Fifty Years*,

Hallowe'en, What a World, With This Ring, Work is For Horses, and You. Musicals include Adrianna, The Banker's Daughter, Kris Kringle Rides Again, and Mona and Lisa, as well as the musical revue Meet the People.

Drafts of all five of Myers' novels can be found in the collection. Additionally, there are fan letters for The Utmost Island that demonstrate the popularity of the book after it became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. The collection also contains three unpublished novels: Tune on a Silver String, a thinly veiled account of Myers' own childhood; The Night Hath a Thousand Eyes; and The Hound of Ulster.

Other writings include the short story 3 Cons; three comedic long poems titled A Second Childhood's Garden of Verse, Lady of the Leak, and In Search of the Great Mistake; and a memoir of Lorenz Hart called Portrait of Larry Hart. A documentary proposal by Myers, and publicity books on documentarian Eugene Jones, suggest that Myers also held an interest in documentaries. Other material includes a sketch of an unidentified set, and large format, dry-mounted photographs of a staged production.

The collection holds nine scrapbooks that reflect the entirety of Myers' professional work, including early musical performances, his work as a playwright and lyricist, his time in Hollywood as a screenwriter, and his career as a novelist. The scrapbooks are composed of news clippings, photographs, programs, and telegrams. Personal material in the collection is fragmentary. It consists of letters Myers wrote to Virginia Trabue shortly before his death; invitations and cards addressed to Marion Trabue or Myers; two posthumous memorial speeches about Myers; and a sketchbook of Virginia Trabue's. Also included are photographs of Myers throughout his life, and photographs of various family members.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by document type.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings
Manuscripts for publication
Photographs
Programs
Scrapbooks
Scripts
Sheet music
Sketchbooks

Subjects

Dramatists, American
Lyricists -- United States
Novelists, American
Screenwriters -- United States

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)

Container List

Writing and Production Files

- b. 1 f. 1 *Adrianna, or Angelina* 1958
Alice In Wonderland 1947
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1947-1948
- b. 1 f. 3 Epilogue Shooting Script No. 3
- b. 1 f. 4 Screenplay
Co-writers Albert E. Lewin and Edward Elisou.
- b. 1 f. 5 Partial Drafts
- b. 1 f. 6 Proposed Plan 1947
- b. 1 f. 7 Set Up Plans For Shooting Script
- b. 1 f. 8-10 *Babes In Toyland* 1951
A new libretto revised (with copy) along with an earlier version in a binder labeled prompt book.
- b. 1 f. 10 *Ballad Of October*
Part of the text of single page item is missing.
The Banker's Daughter
Play and lyrics by Myers and Elisou.
- b. 1 f. 12 Typescript
 - b. 25 Lyrics
- b. 1 f. 13 *Blood On The Trumpet* 1951
- b. 2 f. 1 *The Boom*
- b. 2 f. 2-6 *The Buccaneers* 1956-1957
The files contain correspondence and several scripts from the television series that formed part of a trilogy. See also: Myers, Marion.
- b. 2 f. 7-8 *Darling, I'm Growing Young*
Co-writer Louis Solomon. Two versions of the play.
- b. 2 f. 9-11 *The Death Of Death*
Two versions accompanied by a copy of one of the typescripts.
- b. 2 f. 12 *Defense Of New York*
- b. 3 f. 1 *Fangs*
- b. 3 f. 2-3 *The First Fifty Years* 1922
The prompt book of the typescript is fragile.
- b. 3 f. 4 *Hallowe'en* 1936
Myers wrote on the typescript that the play was re-revised. The file also contains an invitation to the opening of the play at the Vanderbilt Theatre.
- b. 3 f. 5-7 *The Happiest Girl In The World* 1961
Clippings, playbills and telegrams only.
- b. 3 f. 8-9 *Here Is My Life* 1951
Myers adapted the work of Rita Weiman's work for Studio One. Original and copy.
The Hound Of Ulster
- b. 3 f. 10-12 I-III
Copies of illustrations for publication were inserted into the typescript. The typescripts were arranged by the author into four parts.
- b. 4 f. 1 IV

Writing and Production Files (cont.)
The Hound Of Ulster (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 2-5 **I-II**
Myers produced two more versions/copies of his work in two parts with editing.
- b. 4 f. 6 ***How I Shall Kill Brown***
- b. 4 f. 7 ***The Incomparable Edoardo***
Co-wrote with Lou Solomon.
- b. 4 f. 8 ***In Search Of The Great Mistake*** 1974 (Copy book)
This is a unfinished hand-written manuscript. The first pages of the copy book were previously torn out by Myers. There is also a postcard with the manuscript.
- b. 5 f. 1 ***Jack Sheppard Came To London Town***
- b. 5 f. 2 ***Kris Kringle Rides Again***
- b. 5 f. 3-4 ***The Lady Of The Leak*** c. 1966
The files hold two typescripts. One typescript could be an earlier version.
- b. 5 f. 5 ***The Lion's Skin*** 1960
Myers adapted W. Somerset's work for television.
- b. 5 f. 6 ***A Little Blue Shoe***
Original manuscript.
- b. 5 f. 7 ***Love Can Settle Everything*** 1941
Co-writers were Edward Eliscu and Jay Gorney.
- b. 5 f. 8 ***Me*** c. 1940
Alternate title is *The Stolen Me*. The files also contains several draft pages not attached to the original typescript.
- b. 5 f. 9 ***Memoirs Of A Goddess***
- b. 5 f. 10-11 ***Mr. Bel-Canto*** 1961
The files hold a complete typescript and partial drafts.
- b. 5 f. 12-13 ***Mona And Lisa***
Myers wrote the libretto.
The Night Hath A Thousand Eyes c.1966
- b. 6 f. 1-7 **c. 1966**
The files contains several versions of the work.
- b. 7 f. 1-3 **Chapters I-III**
Another version or copy of the work.
- b. 7 f. 4 ***Night Of March 15***
O'King Live Forever
- b. 7 f. 5-8 ***The Lost Art Of Longevity***
- b. 8 f. 1-9 ***The 12th Tablet of King Ashur-Bani-Pal***
The files contain possibly three versions of Myers' work.
- b. 9 f. 1-9 ***O' King Live Forever***
The typescripts do not have sub-titles and may be later versions of Myers' work.
- b. 10 f. 1-6 ***Gilgamesh And George Smith In Search Of The Lost Art Of Longevity***
The title of the typescript could indicate the final title or continuing work by Myers. The box also holds chapters II and IV from the previous box.
- b. 10 f. 7 ***One Track Mind***
- b. 11 f. 1-4 ***The 100-Yard Dash***
Co-writer Lou Solomon. The file contains four versions with annotations. One of the typescript titles was changed to *The Young Man Said*.

Writing and Production Files (cont.)

- b. 11 f. 5-7 *Our Lives Have Just Begun* 1969-1971
The files contain the original typescript by Myers; a play entitled *Who Will Walk With Me*, adapted from the novel and co-written with E.Y. Harburg; an adaptation of Myers work entitled *The Children's Crusade*, co-authored with Harburg; and correspondence regarding rights.
- b. 10 f. 8 *The Pale Sergeant* c. 1951
- b. 12 f. 1-3 *Portrait of Larry Hart* c. 1968
The files contain a copy with similar annotations, and a related typescript about Hart entitled *Letter To A Dying Friend*.
- b. 12 f. 4-5 *The Prison Joseph*
The files hold a manuscript draft and a completed version.
- b. 26 *Red Riding Hood*
Fairy Opera in one act. Libretto and music by Myers.
- b. 12 f. 6 *A Second Childhood's Garden Of Verses*
Two drafts of the typescript.
- b. 12 f. 7 *Shake The Stars Down* 1951
Myers adapted the writing of Pamela Frankau for Studio One.
- b. 12 f. 8 *The Shewing-Up Of Blanco Posnet* 1962
Myers adapted G. Bernard's Shaw's work for the screen.
- b. 13 f. 1-6 *The Signorina* 1956
Typescript and Stage Adaptation.
- b. 12 f. 9-10 *The 3 Cons A Success Story* c. 1960
The file also holds a copy.
Tune On A Silver String
- b. 13 f. 7-8 I-II
The typescript was annotated and arranged in two parts by Myers.
- b. 14 f. 1 II
Incomplete typescript
- b. 14 f. 2 III (copy book)
The file is a copy book labeled "II" of a partial manuscript of Myers' work.
- b. 14 f. 3-4 Drafts and Notes
The Utmost Island 1939-1955
- b. 14 f. 5-8 Correspondence 1939-1951
- b. 14 f. 9-10 Typescript 1951
- b. 15 f. 1-2 Typescript 1951
Another revised version?
- b. 15 f. 3 Page Corrections
- b. 15 f. 4 Publicity and Reviews
- b. 15 f. 5 *Voulez Vous Mrs. Yifniz*
- b. 15 f. 6 *The War Of The Flowers*
- b. 15 f. 7 *What A World*
- b. 15 f. 8-9 *With This Ring* 1951
Partial drafts.
- b. 15 f. 10 *Work Is For Horses* 1937
- b. 15 f. 11 *Yes Dear, But When?*
- b. 16 f. 1 *You*
There are two typescripts. One is a possible copy.

Writing and Production Files (cont.)

- b. 16 f. 2-3 *Young Enough To Know Better*
- b. 16 f. 4-9 Partial Drafts
- b. 16 f. 10-14 *Myers, Marion. Sir Lancelot* 1957
Several drafts regarding the *Sir Lancelot* series.
Notebooks undated
The notebooks reflect the development of his work.
- b. 16 f. 13-15 Undated
- b. 17 f. 1-4 Undated

Assorted Files

- b. 17 f. 5 Correspondence Regarding Myers' Work 1935-1957
- b. 17 f. 6-7 Grant Applications 1969
Playbills
- b. 17 f. 8 *Meet The People* 1940, 1943
- b. 17 f. 9 *Sweetheart Time* c. 1931
- b. 17 f. 10 *Zero Hour* 1940
- b. 17 f. 11 *Other Printed Matter. Behind The Great Wall*
- b. 17 f. 12 Reference For Henry Myers
- b. 17 f. 13-16 Royalty Statements 1943-1948
- b. 22 Published Lyrics
Published lyrics of mostly others.. Some annotations indicate that he may have been studying,

Photographs and Artwork

Photographs

- b. 19 f. 1 Myers, Henry
- b. 19 f. 2-5 Play
Unidentified costume play with Lloyd Bridges as a member of the cast.
- b. 19 f. 6 *The Blond Beast* 1923 (Poster)
Special matinee production performed at the Plymouth Theatre.
- b. 19 f. 6 Sketch Book
- b. 19 f. 7 Unidentified Sketch of Interior Building

Scrapbooks

- b. 20 1915-1927
Represents Myers' career as a composer and pianist, and the beginning of his career as a playwright with the production of *The First Fifty Years*.
- b. 22 1923-1946
Contains material regarding *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Blond Beast*, *Fortune Teller*, and *Meet the People*.
- b. 23 1928-1930
Contains material regarding *Good Boy*, *Her Wedding Night*, and *Three's a Crowd*.
- b. 20 1930-1937
Contains material regarding *Work is For Horses*, *Garrick Gaieties*, *Murder by the Clock*, *Thirty Days*, and *Goose Hangs High*
- b. 21 1939-1941
Contains material about *Meet the People*
- b. 22 1939-1942
Contains material regarding *Meet the People* and *They Can't Get You Down*.

Scrapbooks (cont.)

- b. 24 **1939-1956**
Contains material relating to all four of Myers' published novels: O King, Live Forever; Our Lives Have Just Begun; The Signorina; and The Utmost Island.
- b. 23 **1951**
Contains material regarding The Utmost Island.
- b. 18 f. 1-5 **Personal Material 1934-1976**
 - b. 21 **Personal Material** undated
Includes sketchbook and photographs.