

**Guide To The Alfred Bendiner Caricatures and Related Papers, 1929-1992**

\*T-VIM 1994-018

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
New York, New York

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## **Descriptive Summary**

Title: Alfred Bendiner Caricatures and Related Papers.

Collection ID: \*T-VIM 1994-018

Creator: Bendiner, Alfred

Extent: 1.6 lin. ft. (1 oversized box).

Repository: Billy Rose Theatre Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. 40 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-7498

Abstract: Architect, artist and author of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Alfred Bendiner (1899-1964) drew caricatures of concerts, the theater and other subjects for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* and other periodicals.

## **Administrative Information**

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notification may be required.

Preferred Citation: Alfred Bendiner Caricatures and Related Papers, \*T-Vim 1994-018, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

## **Biographical Note**

Architect, artist and author, Alfred Bendiner lived all his life in Pennsylvania, but travelled extensively gathering material for his widely published drawings. He was born in 1899 in Pittsburgh to a Hungarian family that soon moved to Philadelphia. After service in World War I, he earned a bachelors degree in 1922 and a masters of architecture in 1927 from the University of Pennsylvania while working as a draftsman for the architect, Paul P. Cret. He then joined the architectural firm of Habeson, Hough, Livingston, and Larsen in Philadelphia, and, in 1929, opened his own office. In the 1930s he began contributing gently satirical caricatures and scenes to many periodicals including *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *The Philadelphia Record*, and *The Washington Times-Herald*. He also wrote articles for *The Atlantic Monthly*, the *University of Pennsylvania Gazette*, and other periodicals and authored a slightly irreverent column for *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* entitled "Life in a Martini Glass." He was also a staff artist on two University of Pennsylvania archaeological expeditions: Iraq in 1936 and Guatemala in 1960.

Alfred Bendiner drew constantly and always had his miniature paint box, brush and tiny bottle of water tucked in his vest pocket. At times he painted on menus and napkins, and if he ran out of water, it is said, he used wine, coffee, or even his own saliva.

Bendiner was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and president of the Philadelphia chapter in 1952. He died in 1964 and was posthumously elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design. His work has been exhibited in many one-man and group shows and is in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Library of Congress, the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris and the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. Some of his caricatures of concerts and the theater for *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* were published, along with his comments, in his book, *Music to My Eyes*.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of 14 original drawings, 12 prints, 1 lithograph, and a few photocopies of Bendiner's caricatures of performing artists. The drawings are almost all undated, but research indicates they are primarily scenes from theatrical productions staged in Philadelphia in the early 1940s. Some of the drawings have pencil notations that are instructions for newspaper layouts. Almost all are signed with Bendiner's name and characteristic eyebrows and nose symbol. Actors depicted include Ethel Barrymore, Hume Cronyn, Helen Hayes, and Paul Muni.

The collection also contains photocopies of letters of thanks to his wife Elizabeth from libraries and museums for gifts of his drawings after his death, articles on the same subject, a single personal letter to the Bendiners, and programs and press releases for exhibits (1954-1990) of Bendiner's work.

### **Organization**

- Series I: Drawings
- Series II: Prints
- Series III: Other papers

## Series Descriptions and Container Listing

### **Series I: Drawings, 1944 and n.d.**

3 folders

Alphabetical by first actor in title or caption; if no actor named, by play title; if no performance title given, under untitled.

Drawings are ink or pencil on linen covered board, up to 11 in. by 14 in. One drawing illustrates use of the Benday process and ink. They are mostly scenes from plays and depict at least two characters.

- b. 1 f. 1 Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, 1944 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Original drawings by Bendiner are caricatures of actors in plays. All depict scenes with two actors and are filed by first actor mentioned (Jane Cowl to J. Pat O'Malley).
- b. 1 f. 2 Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, n.d.  
1 folder  
Original drawings by Bendiner are caricatures of actors in plays. They are alphabetical by the first name listed, S-W, or by play title, E-S (if no actor is identified).
- b. 1 f. 3 Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, n.d.  
1 folder  
Drawings by Bendiner are not identified by actor/singer or event.

### **Series II: Prints, 1945 and n.d.**

4 folders

Alphabetical by actor caricatured, followed by alphabetical by play title, then unidentified.

Prints are on light board, most ca. 7 in. x 7 in. They are mostly of a single person not depicted in a particular play. Also contains a few photocopies of Bendiner's drawings.

- b. 1 f. 4 Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, n.d.  
1 folder  
Prints by Bendiner are caricatures of performers, B-C. Includes Ethel Barrymore and Eddie Cantor, among others.
- b. 1 f. 5 Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, n.d.  
1 folder  
Prints by Bendiner are caricatures of actors, H-W. Includes Helen Hayes, Harpo Marx and Paul Muni, among others.

b. 1 f. 6            Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, 1945 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Prints by Bendiner are caricatures of unidentified actors under  
play title or no title. Also includes a four color lithograph of Le  
Coq d'Or (13 in. x 16 in.)

b. 1 f. 7            Drawings / Alfred Bendiner, n.d.  
1 folder  
Photocopies of undated drawings by Alfred Bendiner.

**Series III: Other Papers, 1954-1992 and n.d.**

4 folders

**Chronological**

This series contains publicity for exhibits of Bendiner's work, 1954-  
1990, letters and articles concerning posthumous gifts of his work, and  
one letter, 1963, to the Bendiners. It consists almost entirely of  
photocopies.

b. 1 f. 8            Papers / Alfred Bendiner, 1954-1990 and n.d.  
1 folder  
Programs and press releases for exhibits of Bendiner's work.

b. 1 f. 9            Papers / Alfred Bendiner, 1963.  
1 folder  
Photocopy of a letter and clipping of Bendiner.

b. 1 f. 10           Papers / Elizabeth Bendiner, 1974-1991.  
1 folder  
Photocopies of letters of thanks to Elizabeth Bendiner for her gifts  
of drawings by her husband, Alfred Bendiner, to museums and  
libraries.

b. 1 f. 11           Papers / Alfred Bendiner, 1987-1992.  
1 folder  
Articles on gifts of Bendiner drawings by the Alfred Bendiner  
Foundation.