



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Sombrero Playhouse papers**

1961-1964

\*T-Mss 1997-002

## Summary

**Creator:** Charlton, Richard

**Title:** Sombrero Playhouse papers

**Date:** 1961-1964

**Size:** .25 linear feet (1 box)

**Abstract:** The Sombrero Playhouse, founded in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1949, was for many years a popular venue for touring productions featuring prominent performers, including a number of Hollywood luminaries. Founded by artistic director Richard Charlton, the Sombrero Playhouse became during its heyday perhaps the major performing arts center between Dallas and Los Angeles, attracting celebrity players such as Groucho Marx, Tallulah Bankhead, Ginger Rogers, Gloria Swanson, Bob Cummings, Celeste Holm, Shelley Winters, Margaret O'Brien, ZaSu Pitts, Pat O'Brien, Walter Pidgeon, John Raitt, and others. These actors usually toured in established works, but new plays were occasionally tried out at the Sombrero, such as William Inge's *NATURAL AFFECTION*, which premiered in Phoenix in 1962, a year prior to its Broadway run. The Sombrero Playhouse papers consist mostly of clippings from Arizona newspapers and magazines dated between 1961 and 1964, but primarily from 1962 and 1963, concerning current productions at the Sombrero Playhouse. Much of the material consists of feature stories on the star performer of the current show, usually including biographical information about the performer along with excerpts from a recent, local interview. There is also general information about the theater and its founding artistic director Richard Charlton, about the Galaxy Gallery, an art gallery adjacent to the theater operated by Richard's wife Helen Charlton, and the Backstage Club, a restaurant in the same complex which began as a club for actors appearing in Sombrero productions. The material from 1964 speaks of plans to build a new Phoenix Performing Arts Center.

**Preferred citation:** Sombrero Playhouse papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

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## **Scope and Content Note**

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## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings

### **Subjects**

Theater -- Arizona -- Phoenix

### **Names**

Charlton, Richard  
Bankhead, Tallulah, 1902-1968  
Cummings, Robert, 1908-1990  
Holm, Celeste, 1917-2012  
Inge, William  
Marx, Groucho, 1890-1977  
O'Brien, Margaret, 1937-  
O'Brien, Pat, 1899-1983  
Pidgeon, Walter, 1897-1984  
Pitts, ZaSu, 1898-1963  
Raitt, John, 1917-2005  
Rogers, Ginger, 1911-1995  
Swanson, Gloria, 1897-1983  
Winters, Shelley  
Backstage Club (Phoenix, Ariz.)  
Galaxy Gallery (Phoenix, Ariz.)  
Sombrero Playhouse (Phoenix, Ariz.)