



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

C.K. Alexander papers

1943-1980

*T-Mss 1989-011

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013

Summary

Creator: Alexander, C. K., 1923-1980

Title: C.K. Alexander papers

Date: 1943-1980

Size: 2.6 linear feet (7 boxes)

Source: Donated by Mrs. Margaret Alexander in 2005.

Abstract: C.K. Alexander (1923-1980) was an Egyptian actor, director, and composer. The C.K. Alexander papers date from 1943 to 1980 and document Alexander's acting career in the United States, and to some extent, his work as a director. The collection holds photograph albums and scrapbooks, scripts, and professional files.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatrediv@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: C.K. Alexander papers, *T-Mss 1989-011. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013 Original order and folder titles were maintained.

Creator History

C.K. Alexander (1923-1980) was an Egyptian actor, director, and composer. Born Charles Khalil Saad in Cairo, Egypt, he changed his name to Charles Khalil (C.K.) Alexander after he moved to the United States in 1942.

Alexander made his acting debut in a production of *The Merry Widow* at the Cairo Opera House in 1942. Following his first Broadway performance in *Hidden Horizon* in 1946, Alexander went on to direct summer stock theater in Duxbury, Massachusetts. He returned to New York in 1950, where he continued to act, write, and direct Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regional theater productions. Among his more notable Broadway performances were *Can-Can* (1953) and *Threepenny Opera* (1976). His

dual performance in a regional production of *An Evening with Chekhov* (1976) was particularly well received. Alexander also acted for television, and appeared in *The Defenders* (1961), and *The Scarlett Letter* (1979), among other shows. He founded two nonprofit theater repertory groups in the 1960s: Company of 12, and Theater Explorations Inc.

In 1979, Alexander directed his last work, *Viaduct*, at the New Vic Theater in New York City. C.K. Alexander died in 1980.

Scope and Content Note

The C.K. Alexander papers date from 1943 to 1980 and document Alexander's acting career in the United States, and to some extent, his work as a director. The collection contains professional files; photograph albums and scrapbooks; and scripts. The bulk of Alexander's career is represented in this collection.

The professional files in this collection document Alexander's acting and directing career. The files are arranged alphabetically by title of production or subject, and hold newspaper clippings, correspondence, production budgets, programs, press releases, and photographs. In addition to productions, subjects of the professional files include Alexander's non-profit theater company, A Company of 12; Alexander's personal publicity files; and letters to newspapers. The amount and content of the files varies per production or subject, though the majority of them contain correspondence and reviews. *An Evening with Chekhov* (1975), *The Cherry Orchard* (1977), and *The Miser* (1979) are among the better represented productions. Correspondence generally reflects the successes of Alexander's performances; good-luck telegrams and thank-you cards are also included. Correspondence relating to Company of 12 reveals Alexander's efforts in seeking endorsement for the repertory company, which successfully staged *The Campbells of Boston* at the Library and Museum of Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in 1967. A lecture file contains materials gathered by Alexander in preparation for a lecture he gave at Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1969. Clippings and programs relating to his work with Company of 12 are included here. A source file contains brochures and fliers relating to Alexander's sources of supplies for productions, such as costumes and props. C.K. Alexander's more general publicity files hold press releases, programs, photographs, and drawings of Alexander. The programs represent works that Alexander acted in and/or directed. The press releases are translated from Italian and relate to the production of *Oklahoma!* at the Quattro Fontane Opera House in Rome. Alexander's inclusion in *Who's Who in Theatre* is documented through correspondence and drafts of biographical essays.

The scrapbooks contain photographs, clippings, correspondence, and ephemera documenting Alexander's acting career. Alexander's Broadway performances in *Threepenny Opera* (1976) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1977) are well represented. Several of his Off-Broadway and regional productions are documented in the scrapbooks, primarily through newspaper clippings. The majority of the correspondence in the scrapbooks consists of good-luck cards or notes of congratulation. The early stages of Alexander's career are represented through photographs and clippings, particularly his role as Ali Hakim in a touring production of *Oklahoma!* in Rome. Photographs documenting Alexander's direction of summer stock in Duxbury, Massachusetts are present. The photograph album contains photographs of productions that Alexander directed, such as *Night Must Fall*, *Francesca da Rimini*, and *My Sister Eileen* (all circa 1960s-1970s). Alexander's obituaries are also included in one of the scrapbooks.

Scripts in this collection further document Alexander's acting career. Annotated promptbooks are included for some productions. Titles include *The Happy Time* (1950), *The Matchmaker* (1955),

Harlequins and Mourners (1970), Threepenny Opera (1976), and Viaduct (1980), among others. All the scripts in this collection are bound typescripts. In addition to scripts, photocopies of sheet music for The Threepenny Opera are present. Viaduct is the most well-represented production here; the collection holds two drafts of scripts and a detailed promptbook.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged into three categories: professional files; scrapbooks and photograph albums; and scripts. Professional files and scripts are arranged alphabetically by title of production or project. The scrapbooks and photograph albums are arranged chronologically.

Key Terms

Occupations

Actors

Directors

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings (information artifacts)

Correspondence

Photographs

Scripts

Subjects

Theater -- United States

Container List

Professional Files

- b. 1 f. 1 Alexander, C.K. - Drawings and Art Work 1953
- b. 1 f. 2 Alexander, C.K. - Photographs 1946-1977
- b. 1 f. 3 *An Angel Comes to Babylon* 1979
- b. 1 f. 4 C.K. Alexander Personal Publicity, Notices 1940s
- b. 1 f. 5 C.K. Alexander Publicity 1974-1979
- b. 1 f. 6 *The Campbells of Boston* 1978-1979
- b. 1 f. 7 *Charlie, My Darlin'* 1971
- b. 1 f. 8 *The Cherry Orchard* 1977
- b. 1 f. 9 Company of 12 1967-1968
- b. 1 f. 10 *The Dragon* 1963
- b. 1 f. 11 *The Edge of Night* 1979
- b. 1 f. 12 *An Evening with Chekhov* 1975-1976
- b. 1 f. 13 *Falstaff* 1979
- b. 1 f. 14 *The Ghost Connection* 1970s
- b. 1 f. 15 *The Justice Box* 1971-1980
- b. 1 f. 16 Robert Kennedy Correspondence 1967
- b. 1 f. 17 Lecture Material 1968-1969
- b. 1 f. 18 Letters to Newspapers 1968-1974
- b. 1 f. 19 *Life with Father* 1970-1974
- b. 1 f. 20 *Love One Another* 1974
- b. 2 f. 1 Mailing List 1970s
- b. 2 f. 2 *The Miser* 1979
- b. 2 f. 3 *The Peachum Cup* 1976
- b. 2 f. 4 Programs 1952-1964
- b. 2 f. 5 *Rhinoceros* 1961
- b. 2 f. 6-7 Sources of Supplies 1968-1974
- b. 2 f. 8-9 *Viaduct* 1980

Scrapbooks and Photograph Albums

- b. 6 1945-1975
- b. 5 f. 5 1946-1971
- b. 5 f. 6-7 1965-1977
- b. 7 1976-1980

Scripts

- b. 2 f. 10 *Absolutely Everything on this Teeming Earth* 1968
- b. 2 f. 11 *An Angel Comes to Babylon* 1979
- b. 3 f. 1 *As Happy as Kings* 1960s
- b. 3 f. 2 *The Cherry Orchard* 1977
- b. 3 f. 3 *The Dragon* 1961

Scripts (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 4 *An Evening with Chekhov* 1975
- b. 3 f. 5 *The Gay Felons* 1959
- b. 3 f. 6 *The Ghost Convention* 1970s
- b. 3 f. 7 *The Happy Time* 1950
- b. 3 f. 8 *Harlequinades for Mourners* 1970
- b. 4 f. 1 *The Matchmaker* 1955
- b. 4 f. 2 *The Merry Widow* 1943
- b. 4 f. 3 *The Miser* 1979
- b. 4 f. 4 *Oklahoma!* 1940s
- b. 4 f. 5 *Poor Bitos* 1964
- b. 4 f. 6 *Rhinoceros* 1959-1960
- b. 4 f. 7-8 *The Threepenny Opera* 1969-1976
- b. 5 f. 8 *The Threepenny Opera* 1976
photocopies of sheet music for 4 songs
- b. 5 f. 1 *Tovarich* 1963
- b. 5 f. 2-4 *Viaduct* 1979-1980