



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Jeanne Button and MacDonald Eaton designs and papers**

1950-2015

\*T-Vim 2018-012

Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2019.

## Summary

**Creator:** Button, Jeanne

**Title:** Jeanne Button and MacDonald Eaton designs and papers

**Date:** 1950-2015

**Size:** 14 linear feet (48 boxes, 7 oversize folders)

**Source:** Donated by Raphael Sbarge, 2018.

**Abstract:** Jeanne Button (1930-2017) designed costumes for Broadway and Off-Broadway productions, as well as for dance, opera, film, and television. Her second husband, MacDonald Eaton (1929-2013), was a set and production designer for television and stage, as well as a painter. The Jeanne Button and MacDonald Eaton designs and papers, dating from 1950 to 2015, document Button's and Eaton's designs, careers, and art, as well as the career of Button's son, actor Raphael Sbarge.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Inquiries regarding moving image materials in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division ([theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org)). Moving image materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

**Preferred citation:** Jeanne Button and MacDonald Eaton designs and papers, \*T-Vim 2018-012. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2019.

## Creator History

Jeanne Button (1930-2017) was a costume designer for Broadway, Off-Broadway, university, and regional theater productions, as well as for dance, opera, film, and television. Born in Cincinnati, she

graduated at her parents' urging with a degree in home economics from the Carnegie Institute of Technology (later Carnegie Mellon University). Button decided instead that she wanted to learn costume design, and taught herself to draw, earning a scholarship at the Yale School of Drama.

She launched her career in 1967 with her designs for *Macbird!*, an Off-Broadway production which earned her the Henry Hewes Design Award from the American Theater Wing. Other Off-Broadway productions she worked on were *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* for The Public Theater (1989); *The Crucible*; and many others.

Button's first job on Broadway was for *The Watering Place* (1969). Numerous productions for Broadway as well as regional theaters followed, including *Henry V* (1969), *The Robber Bridegroom* (1975-1976), *Wings* (1979), *Richard III* (1979), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1986), and *The Twilight of the Gods* (1993). Button worked with theater companies around the country, including The Acting Company, Yale Repertory Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Alley Theatre (Houston), and the American Shakespeare Festival. Button also designed for opera (*La Bohème* and *The Ring*), and ballet, including Trey McIntyre's productions of *Aliss In Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* for the Houston Ballet in the early 2000s.

In later years, Button was a professor of costume design at Tulane University in New Orleans.

Button married Stephen SARGE, a playwright she met at Yale, but the couple divorced; they had a son named Raphael, who became an actor. Her second husband, MacDonald Eaton (1929-2013), whom she married in 1981, was a production designer and painter. After receiving his B.F.A. in drama from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1952, he served in the U.S. Army Pictorial Center before he began designing for Off-Broadway productions. From the mid-1950s to 1962, Eaton worked at ABC as a production designer before moving to CBS. He returned to ABC in 1975 to be the scenic artist for the soap opera *One Life To Live*, a job he held for 15 years. During this time he was an active painter and exhibited his work in group shows, as well as in three one-man shows. Eaton moved to New Orleans with Jeanne Button and was an adjunct professor of production design and scenic art at Tulane University. He also taught painting privately, and designed the sets for the Houston Ballet's production of *Aliss In Wonderland*.

## Scope and Content Note

The Jeanne Button and MacDonald Eaton designs and papers, dating from 1950 to 2015, document Button's and Eaton's designs, careers, and art, as well as the career of Button's son, actor Raphael SARGE. They are arranged in two series.

Series I: Jeanne Button Files comprises the bulk of the collection. It represents her work for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theaters around the United States, ballet, film, and television. These files hold sketches, drawings, complete designs, fabric swatches, costume bibles, photographs, letters, programs, clippings, posters, and other documentation. Extensive material exists for productions such as *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Big River*, *La Bohème*, *Equus*, *Macbird!*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, and *Twelfth Night*. The files for the Trey McIntyre ballet *Peter Pan* include a video of rehearsals.

Also present are Button's personal files of letters, resumes, family photographs, and clippings, including memorabilia of Raphael SARGE's career.

Series II: MacDonald Eaton Files includes Eaton's stage and television designs; photographs and

reproductions of his paintings; and a scrapbook containing a biography, clippings, and his writings.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Ballet -- Costume  
Costume design  
Costume designers  
Theater -- United States

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Blueprints (reprographic copies)  
Clippings (information artifacts)  
Drawings (visual works)  
Letters (correspondence)  
Photographs  
Posters  
Programs (documents)  
Swatches

### **Occupations**

Painters.  
Set designers

### **Names**

Button, Jeanne  
Eaton, MacDonald  
McIntyre, Trey  
Sbarg, Raphael  
Acting Company (Theatrical group)  
Alley Theatre (Houston, Tex.)  
American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy  
Great Lakes Theater Festival (Cleveland, Oh.)  
Houston Ballet  
Roundabout Theatre Company  
Yale Repertory Theatre

## Container List

### Series I: Jeanne Button Files 1952-2015 (46 boxes, 2 oversize folders 13.02 linear feet)

This series is in three divisions: Production Files, Personal Papers, and Raphael Sbarge Files.

The Production Files, which comprise the bulk of the collection, primarily document the projects on which Button worked as a costume designer. The content for each production varies, but most files contain at least sketches or drawings of costumes for characters in pencil, ink, chalk, or paint. Additional content includes fabric swatches; costume bibles; letters or correspondence with directors and producers; photographs of actors in costumes, or on stage; programs and season brochures; and clippings. The clippings contain images of research or inspiration for Button as well as reviews or articles about productions.

Notes in the container list specify the producer or the venue of the production, when known. (These are sometimes the same, for example, the Great Lakes Theater Festival and the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas). Some, particularly the Acting Company, were touring productions. In some cases, Button worked on multiple productions of plays with different producers. Productions with the most documentation are *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Big River*, *La Bohème*, *Broadway*, *The Crucible*, *Equus*, *Henry V*, *Inherit The Wind*, *Macbird!*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, and *Twelfth Night*, as well as the Trey McIntyre ballets *Aliss In Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*. The best-represented producers include The Acting Company, Yale Repertory Theatre, Great Lakes Theater Festival, and the Alley Theatre.

Three items or files contain material from multiple productions: Button compiled a portfolio of her work in the 1990s; a slidebook holds images of productions, as well as research photographs; and there are posters for 14 productions. See the container list for details on all three.

Personal Papers include a set of clippings about Button's career; programs for productions which may not be otherwise documented in the collection; resumes; diplomas and honors from stage unions; letters from colleagues, friends, and family; and family photographs.

The Raphael Sbarge Files, compiled by Button, document Sbarge's acting career through clippings, programs, photographs, and letters. The letters are from Sbarge to Button.

Production Files are arranged by title. The Personal Papers are arranged by format.

#### Production Files 1966-2004

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| b. 1 f. 1-2 | <i>Aliss in Wonderland</i> 1999                                   |
| b. 2 f. 1   | A Trey McIntyre ballet performed by the Fort Worth Dallas Ballet. |
|             | <i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i>                                       |
| b. 1 f. 3-4 | 1986  |
| b. 3 f. 1-2 | Great Lakes Theater Festival.                                     |
| b. 2 f. 2   | 2000  |
| b. 1 f. 5   | <i>As Bees in Honey Drown</i> 2000                                |
| b. 1 f. 6   | <i>As You Like It</i> 1966-2004                                   |
| b. 3 f. 3   |   |
| b. 1 f. 7   | Ballet Memphis 1998   |
| b. 2 f. 3   | Unidentified production.  |
| b. 1 f. 8   | <i>Big River</i> 1992   |
| b. 3 f. 4-5 | Box 4 contains a costume bible and swatches.                      |
| b. 4 o. 1   |   |
| b. 3 f. 6-7 | <i>Blood Wedding</i> 1988   |
| b. 5 f. 1-2 | Great Lakes Theater Festival.                                     |

Series I: Jeanne Button Files (cont.)

Production Files (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 1-4      *La Bohème* 1986-1988
- b. 7 f. 1-4      San Francisco Opera and television film.
- b. 8 f. 1-3
- b. 9 f. 1
- b. 5 f. 3
- b. 2 f. 4-8
- b. 10 f. 1-3
- b. 5 f. 4      *Booth is Back in Town* 1983
- b. 8 f. 4
- b. 9 f. 2-4
- b. 8 f. 5-6      *Broadway* 1987
- b. 11 f. 1-5      Great Lakes Theater Festival.
- b. 12 f. 1
- b. 5 f. 5-6
- b. 10 f. 4-5
- b. 5 f. 7      *Camino Real* 1977
- b. 13 f. 1      The Acting Company.
- b. 13 f. 2      *Coppélia* 1998
- b. 12 f. 2-4      *The Crucible* 1989-1990
- b. 13 f. 3-4      Roundabout Theatre Company.
- b. 13 f. 5      *The Dresser* 1981
- b. 9 f. 5      *Donna Rosita the Spinster* 1966-2004
- b. 14 f. 1
- b. 10 f. 6-7      *The Durango Flash* 1976
- Yale Repertory Theatre.
- b. 12 f. 5      *Elvis: An American Musical* 1978
- b. 13 f. 6-9      See also posters.
- b. 15 f. 1-5
- b. 17 f. 1
- b. 16 f. 1      *Equus* 2000-2001
- Alley Theatre, Houston, Texas.
- b. 16 f. 2      *Eurydice* 1990
- b. 18      *A Flea in Her Ear* 2000-2001
- Alley Theatre, Houston.
- Contains a costume bible.
- b. 17 f. 2-3      *The Freaking Out of Stephanie Blake* 1967
- See also posters.
- b. 17 f. 4      *The Frogs* 1974
- b. 19 f. 1      Yale Repertory Theatre.
- b. 9 f. 6      *General Gorgeous* 1976
- b. 17 f. 5      Yale Repertory Theatre.
- b. 16 f. 3      *Get Thee to Canterbury* 1968
- Sheridan Square Playhouse.
- See also posters.
- b. 20 f. 1      *Harrison, Texas* 1966-2004
- b. 9 f. 7      *Hay Fever* 2000
- Alley Theatre, Houston.
- Hedda Gabler*
- Both productions at Alley Theatre, Houston.
- b. 16 f. 4      1986
- b. 17 f. 6      1998-1999

Series I: Jeanne Button Files (cont.)  
Production Files (cont.)

*Henry V*

See also slides.

- b. 21 f. 1           1969
- b. 22 f. 1-3       American Shakespeare Festival.
- b. 16 f. 5           1995
- The Acting Company.
- b. 22 f. 4       *Huckleberry Finn* 1971
- The Juilliard School.
- b. 19 f. 2       *In A Pig's Valise* 1988-1989
- b. 21 f. 2-3
- b. 16 f. 6       *Inherit The Wind* 1991
- b. 21 f. 4-7       Alabama Shakespeare Festival.
- b. 22 f. 5       Box 21, folders 6-7 contain a costume bible.
- b. 23 f. 1       See also portfolio.
- b. 24 f. 1
- b. 22 f. 6       *The Isle is Full of Noises* 1982
- b. 22 f. 7       *Ivanov* 1976
- Yale Repertory Theatre.
- b. 23 f. 2       *Joan And Charles With Angels* 1984
- b. 40 f. 4 o. 2
- b. 22 f. 8       *King Lear* 1966-2004
- b. 23 f. 3
- b. 19 f. 3       *Kongi's Harvest* 1968
- Negro Ensemble Company.
- See also posters.
- b. 24 f. 2       *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* 1997
- b. 24 f. 3       *Long Day's Journey Into Night* 1998
- b. 42       Alley Theatre, Houston.
- See also slides.
- b. 20 f. 2-3       *The Losers* 1971
- The Juilliard School.
- See also portfolio.
- b. 23 f. 4       *Macbird!* 1967
- b. 19 f. 4-6       The Village Gate.
- b. 25 f. 1-2       See also posters.
- b. 26 f. 1-5
- b. 27 f. 1-2       *Man of La Mancha* 1995
- b. 24 f. 4       *Marat/Sade* 1971
- b. 41 f. 1       *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1996
- Tulane Summer Shakespeare Festival.
- Mother Courage and Her Children*
- See also portfolio.
- b. 24 f. 5           1977
- The Acting Company.
- b. 23 f. 5           1989
- b. 24 f. 6       Williamstown Theatre Festival and Great Lakes Theater Festival.
- b. 27 f. 3
- b. 28 f. 1       *Much Ado About Nothing* 1966-2004
- b. 27 f. 4-5       *Othello* 1966-2004
- National Shakespeare Company.
- See also portfolio.

Series I: Jeanne Button Files (cont.)  
Production Files (cont.)

*Peter Pan*

See also portfolio.

b. 23 f. 6  
b. 28 f. 2-4  
b. 29

1991-1993

Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Box 29 contains a costume bible.

1997-2004

Houston Ballet.

These files include a video recording of rehearsals for a 2002 version of this production.

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*Designs*

Box 30 contains a costume bible.

b. 23 f. 6-7  
b. 28 f. 5-6  
b. 30  
b. 31 f. 1  
b. 32 f. 1-4

*Richard III* 1979

See also posters.

b. 25 f. 3-4  
b. 31 f. 2-3  
b. 33 f. 1

*The Ring* 1986-1987

Artpark, Buffalo, New York.

b. 31 f. 4  
b. 32 f. 5  
b. 33 f. 2-4

*The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* early 1970s

Opera Society of Washington.

b. 31 f. 5  
b. 33 f. 5

*The Robber Bridegroom* 1975-1976

The Acting Company.

See also portfolio.

b. 31 f. 6  
b. 32 f. 6  
b. 33 f. 6  
b. 34 f. 1  
b. 35 f. 1-2  
b. 36 f. 1-3

*Sand Dancing* 1983

b. 40 f. 5

*Sherlock's Last Case* 1998

Alley Theatre, Houston.

b. 34 f. 2

*The Skin of Our Teeth* 1984

The Acting Company.

b. 31 f. 7  
b. 35 f. 3  
b. 36 f. 4

*Terra Nova* 1996

b. 34 f. 3

*The Three Sisters* 1966-2004

b. 34 f. 4

*The Threepenny Opera*

1972

b. 31 f. 8

1989-1990

Great Lakes Theater Festival.

b. 37 f. 1-2

*Travesties* 1999

Alley Theatre, Houston.

See also slides.

b. 34 f. 5-6  
b. 37 f. 3-5

*Twelfth Night*

1978-1979

American Shakespeare Festival.

b. 14 f. 2-3  
b. 37 f. 6

1984-1985

Great Lakes Theater Festival.

b. 36 f. 5-6  
b. 37 f. 7

1989

New York Shakespeare Festival.

b. 35 f. 4-5  
b. 38 f. 1-2

Series I: Jeanne Button Files (cont.)

Production Files (cont.)

- b. 37 f. 8     *The Twilight of the Golds* 1993
  - b. 39 f. 1
- b. 39 f. 2     *The Way of the World* 1966-2004
- b. 36 f. 7     *The Wild Duck* 1978
  - b. 39 f. 3     Yale Repertory Theatre.
- b. 34 f. 7     *Wings* 1978-1979
  - b. 39 f. 4     Yale Repertory Theatre.

See also portfolio and posters.
- b. 14 f. 4     Designs For Unidentified Productions 1966-2004
- b. 34 f. 8-12
  - b. 40 f. 6-7
  - b. 41 f. 2-5
  - b. 43 f. 1
  - b. 44 f. 1-4
  - b. 45 f. 1-2
- b. 40 f. 1-3     Portfolio 1990s

Samples of designs from *Peter Pan*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Elvis: A Musical Celebration*, *Inherit the Wind*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, *Broadway*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Wings*, *The Losers*, and *Macbird!*.
- b. 39 f. 5-7     Slidebook 1967-1988

Production photographs of *Peter Pan*, *Broadway*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Macbird!*, *Twelfth Night*, *Elvis: A Musical Celebration*, *Joan And Charles With Angels*, and *Hamlet* (unidentified production). Also contains research images.
- b. 45 f. 3-5     Posters 1966-1994

Includes *Ivanov*, *Macbird!*, *Glad All Over*, *The Freaking Out of Stephanie Blake*, *The Only Game In Town*, *Wings*, *Othello*, *The Curse of an Aching Heart*, *Elvis: An American Musical*, *Richard III*, *Get Thee to Canterbury*, *Now Is the Time for All Good Men*, *Kongi's Harvest*, and 1776.
- Personal Papers 1952-2015
- b. 41 f. 6     Clippings and Programs 1973-2008
- b. 41 f. 7     Resumes 1980s
- b. 19 f. 7     Diplomas and Union Memberships 1952, 1996, 2015
  - b. 41 f. 8
- b. 41 f. 9     Letters 1998-2008
- b. 46 f. 1-2     Family Photographs 1960s-2007
- b. 46 f. 3-4     Raphael Sbarge Files 1970s-2000



**Series II: MacDonald Eaton Files 1950s-2005** (4 boxes, 5 oversize folders 1.17 linear feet)

This series contains Eaton's set and stage designs and drawings; photographs of stages, sets, and Eaton's paintings; art created during Eaton's schooling at the Carnegie Institute of Technology; a scrapbook; and an annotated script for an unidentified production of *Death of a Salesman*.

The set and stage designs, in the form of drawings and blueprints, date mainly from the late 1950s and early 1960s, and are mostly for television. These include work for *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *American Bandstand*, *Directions*, and CBS News. Other work is for the U.S. Army Pictorial Center and the ballet *Aliss in Wonderland*.

Set photographs date from the same time period and include both stage and television productions. Among them, in box 44, folder 5, are shots of Helen Hayes on the set of *Directions* in 1961.

The Art Photographs and Reproductions contain prints and slides of Eaton's paintings.

The scrapbook, titled *The Life, Times, and Art of MacDonald Eaton*, holds a brief biography; art and set photographs; Eaton's writings on metaphysics and politics; and clippings.

Arranged by format.

- o. 3-6     **Set Designs 1956-1962, 2000**
- b. 44 f. 5     **Set Photographs late 1950s-early 1960s**
- b. 46 f. 5
- b. 47 f. 1
- b. 47 f. 2     *Death of a Salesman Annotated Script* 1950s-1960s
- b. 47 f. 3     **Art Photographs and Reproductions 1973-1987**
- o. 7     **Art Studies 1952**  
Work done at the Carnegie Institute of Technology.
- b. 44 f. 6     **Scrapbook, Programs, and Clippings 1962-2005**
- b. 48