



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**John Edward Heys papers, Additions**

1930s-2011

\*T-Mss 1998-045

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013.

## Summary

**Creator:** Heys, John Edward, 1948-

**Title:** John Edward Heys papers, Additions

**Date:** 1930s-2011

**Size:** 6.7 linear feet (13 boxes, 2 tubes); 8.09 mb (131 computer files)

**Source:** Donated by John Heys in 2012.

**Abstract:** John Edward Heys is an actor, writer, and director who performed with numerous performance groups including the Angels of Light and Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. He knew and worked with numerous artists including Charles Ludlam, Ethyl Eichelberger, Jackie Curtis, Cookie Mueller, Bill Vehr, Tomata du Plenty, and Gary Indiana. Heys also created several one man shows including his portrayal of Diana Vreeland and La Mamounia; directed Alba Clemente in Rene Ricard's translation of Jean Cocteau's *A Human Voice*; and created a documentary about Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. The John Edward Heys papers, Additions cover Heys' personal and professional life from 1938 to 2011. Most of these materials pertain to his later life and work in Berlin, Germany. Types of materials present include diaries and engagement books, photographs, posters, publicity materials, research materials, costume pieces, personal ephemera, published books, correspondence, notes, and other writings.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:  
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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**Preferred citation:** John Edward Heys papers, Additions, \*T-Mss 1998-045. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013.

**Related Materials:**

John Edward Heys collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.  
John Edward Heys Papers, ca. 1962-2001. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Creator History**

John Edward Heys was born in New Jersey and moved to New York in 1967. Heys is an actor, writer, and director who performed with groups such as the Angels of Light and Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Heys knew and worked with numerous artists including Charles Ludlam, Ethyl Eichelberger, Jackie Curtis, Cookie Mueller, Bill Vehr, Tomata du Plenty, and Gary Indiana.

Heys began his career as an usher then worked as a stage manager and designer for Ethyl Eichelberger. He was a member of the New York based Angels of Light and performed in several of the Palm Casino Revues in the 1970s. A onetime lover of Charles Ludlam, Heys acted in several Ridiculous Theatrical Company productions. He starred as Moderna 83 in *Le Bourgeois Avant-Garde* (1982), Aristotle Plato Socrates Odysseus in *Galas* (1983), and as Schahabarim in *Salamambo* (1985).

In the 1980s, Heys acted in several shows with Cookie Mueller including *A Car Story* and *Two Chin People*. He acted in Gary Indiana's *The Roman Polanski Story* in 1981 and then in Indiana's *Roman a Clef*. In 1987, he was one of the celebrated ensemble members of *Excerpts from Champagne & Glamour, Glory, & Gold* by Jackie Curtis. Heys was also a favorite model of photographers including Peter Hujar.

Heys performed several one-man shows beginning with an autobiographical monologue in the 1980s, *The Childhood Show*. In 1982, he presented *La Mamounia (Crime Doesn't Pay Interest)*, an autobiographical show written and performed at the Open Gate Theatre at Bellevue Hospital. In 1983, he performed *La Mamounia in Berlin*. He presented his *Moroccan Bride*, based on his trips to Morocco and Spain, in New York in the 1980s and in Berlin in 1997.

His celebrated portrayal of Diana Vreeland was performed in New York at La Mama in the early 1990s, at Ellen Stewart's 30th anniversary celebration at La Mama in 1992, and in Berlin in 1997 as *The Empress V at Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung*. He also created *A Diana Vreeland Christmas* for La Mama in 1991.

In 1997, he directed Alba Clemente in Rene Ricard's translation of Jean Cocteau's *A Human Voice*, and his short documentary film co-created with Matthias Küntzel concerning Charlotte von Mahlsdorf premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival.

In the 2000s, Heys directed the films *Golden Earrings* (2000), *Alarm* (2001), *Cooch Dance* (2008), *The La Ronde Superclub* (2008), *Das Ende des Schweins ist der Anfang der Wurst* (2009), *Charlotte* (2009), *Warum Madam Warum* (2011), and *A Lazy Summer Afternoon* (2011). He has introduced many of these films at film festivals in Europe, most frequently at the Berlin Film Festival.

Heys currently lives in Berlin.

**Scope and Content Note**

The John Edward Heys papers, Additions (1938-2011) cover Heys' personal and professional life. Most

of these materials pertain to his later life and work in Berlin, Germany. Types of materials present include diaries and engagement books, photographs, posters, publicity materials, research materials, costume pieces, personal ephemera, published books, correspondence, notes, and other writings.

Correspondence consists of personal letters to and from Heys from 1956 to 2011. Heys' correspondents include Callie Angell, Penny Arcade, Annette Frick, Wilhelm Hein, Louis Laurita, Ann Magnusson, Tomata du Plenty, Mark Simon, Ingo Taubhorn, and Schwester Siglinde of St. Trudpert Cloister. Electronic records contain exports of personal and professional e-mails from 2008.

Performances and professional projects documented here are theatrical performance pieces, plays, films, short films, books, television shows and episodes, photograph exhibits, film festivals, and special events. Some of the projects documented here include Alarm, American Vision, Beirut Report, Berlin Film Festival, Cafe Schmidt, Charlotte in Sweden, The Childhood Show, Cooch Dance, The Empress V, Das End des Schweins Ist de Anfang der Wurst (The End of the Pig Is the Beginning of the Sausage), Fay Grim, The Friends Connection, The Future Has a Silver Lining, Homage to Ellen Stewart, The Human Voice, John Heys Sings, Live Film! Jack Smith, La Mamounia, The Moroccan Bride, Objects of Life, Oh! Jackie! Oh!, Ridiculous Theatrical Company: 25th Anniversary Gala, La Ronde Supper Club, Salambo, Sounds in the Distance, 2056: The World in 50 Years, Ulrich Gregor hat Geburtsag, Uncle Jack and the Lobster, warum madame warum (why madame why), The Woman with Pearls, Zazie & Sie, and Zazie de Paris. Materials on performances and professional projects include photographs, notes, scripts, posters, correspondence, props, flyers, and other publicity materials. There are also audio and video recordings of some of these productions. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at rha@nypl.org.

Personal materials consist primarily of photographs of Heys and various friends and companions, often taken during their travels to Morocco and other destinations. Personal materials also include photographs of the sisters of St. Trudpert Cloister, family papers and photographs, Gay Men's Health Crisis literature, architectural blueprints for a penthouse, stickers, blank postcards and passports.

Also included are multiple appointment books and a few diaries, documenting Heys' personal and professional life from 1979 to 2009. These books reveal appointments, addresses, friends' birthdays, memoranda of things to do, and notes.

Published books include both German (Edition diá, 1992) and English (Cleis Press Inc., 1995) editions of *I Am My Own Woman: The Outlaw Life of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, Berlin's Most Distinguished Transvestite*. There are also copies of *The Future Has a Silver Lining: Genealogies of Glamour* (Herausgeber, Holert & Munder, JRP Ringier/Migros Museum fr Gegenwartskunst Zurich, 2005), *D.V. (Vreeland, Knopf, 1984)*, *In the World: Selected Speeches of Bettino Craxi* (Craxi, Vantage Press, 1996), *Schwein Oder Nicht-Schwein* (Seyfarth, Palette Verlag, 1994), and *Schweine Mussen Nacht Sein* (Seyfarth, Edition diá, 1995). There are also catalogs for the Berlin Film Festival (2007-2009) and a photograph catalog for Phillips, de Pury & Luxembourg (2001).

Artifacts include a mask, a corset, makeup, earrings, Berlin film festival tote bags, and Heys' mother's bible. Please speak to reference staff to request artifacts.

**Arrangement:** This collection is divided into the following groups: Correspondence, Performances and Professional Projects, Personal Materials, Diaries, and Published Books. Within these groups, the materials are arranged chronologically.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actors  
Directors  
Female impersonators  
Performance artists  
Writers

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Diaries  
Ephemera  
Flyers  
Photographs  
Programs

### **Subjects**

Experimental theater  
Gays in popular culture -- United States -- 20th century  
Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin  
Performance art -- Germany -- Berlin  
Transvestites -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Names**

Ridiculous Theatrical Company

## Container List

### Correspondence 1956-2011

- b. 1 f. 1 1956-1999
- b. 1 f. 2-3 2000
- b. 1 f. 4-6 2001
- b. 2 f. 1 2001
- b. 2 f. 2 2002-2004
- b. 2 f. 3 2005-2006
- b. 2 f. 4 2007-2010, undated
- er. 0001 2008  
(8.08 Megabytes (131 computer files))

### Performances and Professional Projects 1984-2011

- b. 3 f. 1 1976-1992
- b. 3 f. 2 1997-2000
- b. 11 1998-2011
- b. 3 f. 3 2001
- b. 3 f. 4 2002
- b. 3 f. 5 2003-2005
- t. 15 2004, undated
- t. 1 2004, undated
- b. 3 f. 6 2006-2007
- b. 4 f. 1-3 2008
- b. 12 2009-2011
- b. 4 f. 4 2009-2011, undated

### Personal Materials 1930s-2011

- b. 11 1998-2011
- b. 5 f. 1 1930s, 1940s
- b. 5 f. 2 1970s
- b. 5 f. 3 1980s
- b. 6 1988-2009
- b. 5 f. 4 1990s
- b. 7 1995-2007
- b. 8 1998-2003
- b. 9 1999-2002
- b. 5 f. 5 2000s
- b. 10 2000-2009
- b. 5 f. 6 undated
- b. 13 Diaries 1979-2009
- b. 14 Published Books and Catalogs 1984-2009