



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Paul Lipson papers**

1932-1996

\*T-Mss 1996-013

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013

## Summary

**Creator:** Lipson, Paul

**Title:** Paul Lipson papers

**Date:** 1932-1996

**Size:** 4.38 linear feet (11 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

**Source:** Donated in 1996.

**Abstract:** Paul Lipson (1913-1996) was an American actor best known for portraying Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. The Paul Lipson papers (1932-1996) consist of production files, scripts, and a scrapbook that document Lipson's career acting in summer stock, Off-Broadway, and Broadway productions, with a particular focus on Fiddler on the Roof. There is a small amount of posthumous material consisting of a program and sound recording from his memorial service.

**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>

**Conditions Governing Access:**

Inquiries regarding audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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**Preferred citation:** Paul Lipson papers, \*T-Mss 1996-013. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013 The entire collection was foldered and

rehoused. One photo album, for the Westport Country Playhouse, was disassembled. Scripts were removed from plastic binders if deteriorating.

## **Creator History**

Paul Lipson (1913-1996) was an American actor best known for portraying Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Lipson was born in Pittsfield, M.A. and was involved in dramatics from a young age. He appeared in plays at Pittsfield High School, and with local theater groups including the Pittsfield Town Players and the Players of Temple Anshe Amunim.

Lipson made his New York City debut in 1942 when he played a minor role in Ben Hecht's *Lily of the Valley*. His acting career stalled soon after when he left New York to join the Army Signal Corps for the remainder of World War II. Lipson returned to New York in 1946 and quickly found work performing in summer stock companies in the Catskills and in Off-Broadway plays. He made his Broadway debut in *Heads or Tails* (1947), and consistently worked throughout the 1950s in *Remains to Be Seen* (1951), *I've Got Sixpence* (1952), *Carnival in Flanders* (1953), *The Vamp* (1955), *Bells Are Ringing* (1956), and *The Sound of Music* (1959). He also joined the touring companies for *Detective Story*, *My Three Angels*, *Fiorello!*, and *Wonderful Town*. Lipson was an original cast member for *Fiddler on the Roof* when it previewed in 1964. He held the minor role of Avram (the bookseller) while also acting as understudy for Zero Mostel, who originated the role of Tevye. When Mostel retired in 1977, Lipson took on the role and played Tevye in both Broadway and touring productions. In all, he played Tevye over 2,000 times.

Lipson was a member of the Actor's Equity Association from 1942 until his death, and a councilor of the Association for 25 years. He was also a member of SAG and AFTRA. He died in New York City in 1996 at the age of eighty two.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Paul Lipson papers (1932-1996) consist of production files, scripts, and a scrapbook that document Lipson's career acting in summer stock, Off-Broadway, and Broadway productions, with a particular focus on his portrayal of Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. There is a small amount of posthumous material that consists of a program and sound recording from his memorial service.

Production files are primarily composed of news clippings, photographs, and programs, but also contain a small amount of contracts, sheet music, telegrams, fliers and posters. The photographs document productions such as *Detective Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Fiorello!*, *I've Got Sixpence*, and *Wonderful Town*, and other unidentified productions. Also included are candid snapshots of Lipson backstage. Some photographs remain in the original mailer envelope sent to Lipson by the photographer or producer and also hold letters, programs, or news clippings. The programs reflect Lipson's work in summer stock and Off-Broadway productions in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as his Broadway roles. There are souvenir programs for original, replacement, and revival casts of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and for the touring productions of *Wonderful Town* and *Fiorello!*. The collection contains two posters for *Fiddler on the Roof*. Additional material includes telegrams sent to Lipson on opening night performances, contracts, sheet music, and a tour schedule for *Fiorello!*.

The scripts consist of sides, unpublished typescripts, and published works annotated by Lipson. There are sides for *Build with One Hand*, *Carnival in Flanders*, *Detective Story*, *Lily of the Valley*, and *Remains to Be Seen*. The scripts include *Anna Lucasta*, *The Appointment*, *Fiorello!*, *The Grand Distraction*, *Happy Birthday*, *I'm Not Rappaport*, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, *Noah*, *Social Security*, *The Tenth Man*, *Three Men on a Horse*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, and *Witness for the Prosecution*. The

scrapbook contains telegrams, news clippings, programs, and photographs that document Lily of the Valley and Heads or Tails on Broadway; the touring productions of Detective Story, Joan of Lorraine, and Remains to be Seen; and various New York state regional theater performances. It also contains a side for Remains to be Seen.

Paul Lipson's involvement in Jewish fraternal organizations is represented throughout the papers, from a 1941 program for The Great White Way, which Lipson directed for the Rudolph Grossman Society to a script for Song of Liberty, performed for the Greater New York United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in 1975.

Inquires regarding audio material in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio material may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

**Arrangement:** This collection is arranged by document type.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Actors -- New York (State) -- New York  
Actors -- United States  
Jewish actors.  
Off-Broadway theater

### **Geographic Names**

Broadway -- (New York, N.Y.)

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings  
Contracts  
Photographs  
Posters  
Programs  
Scrapbooks  
Sound recordings

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-5 Production Files 1932-1988
- b. 2 f. 1-5 Production Files 1936-1978
- b. 3 f. 1-5 Production Files 1942-1988
- b. 4 f. 1-5 Production Files 1951-1991
- b. 5 f. 1-6 Production Files 1958-1983
- b. 6 f. 1 Production Files 1964-1965
- b. 10 Production Files 1978
  - o. 1 Production Files 1983 (Posters)  
C12 Drawer #17.
- b. 11 Scrapbook 1942-195
- b. 6 f. 2-5 Scripts 1934-1987
- b. 7 f. 1-5 Scripts 1953-1964
- b. 8 f. 1-5 Scripts 1968-1975
- b. 9 f. 1-6 Scripts
- b. 9 f. 7 Memorial Service 1996