



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Stephen M. Silverman papers

1941-1995

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Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013

Summary

Creator: Silverman, Stephen M.

Title: Stephen M. Silverman papers

Date: 1941-1995

Size: 12.13 linear feet (31 boxes); 104.448 kb (9 computer files)

Source: Donated by Stephen M. Silverman, in 1993, 1995, 1996, and 1998.

Abstract: Stephen M. Silverman (1951-) is an American biographer, journalist, editor, and an adjunct professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City. This collection includes research materials and drafts of books, articles, and one musical by Silverman.

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:

Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Conditions Governing Use: For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

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Processing note: Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013

Creator History

Stephen M. Silverman was born on November 22, 1951, in Los Angeles, California. He received a B. A. from the University of California, Irvine and a M. A. from Columbia University, in 1975.

For many years, Silverman worked as a writer, critic, and editor for such publications as American Film, Cosmopolitan, Esquire, New Woman, New York Magazine, The New York Times, Playboy, The Village Voice, and Vogue. He was chief entertainment correspondent for the New York Post from 1978 to 1988.

Silverman's first book, *Public Spectacles*, was an anecdotal account of his interactions with celebrities, published in 1981. He followed that with *The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days Of The Zanuck Dynasty At Twentieth Century-Fox* (1988), a tell-all behind the scenes look at the demise of one of Hollywood's major motion picture studios, and the mogul at its center, Daryl F. Zanuck; *David Lean* (1992), a combined biography and critical study of a director whose career began with film versions of Charles Dickens novels (*Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*) and collaborations with Noel Coward (*This Happy Breed*, *In Which We Serve*, *Brief Encounter*) and culminated in a streak of blockbuster epics, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *Doctor Zhivago*; *Where There's a Will...: Who Inherited What and Why* (1992), an examination and analysis of celebrity wills; *Dancing On the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and His Movies* (1996, a biography and critical study of the director choreographer famous for directing film musicals such as *Singin' in the Rain* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and comedies like *Charade* and *Bedazzled*); *Funny Ladies: 100 Years of Great Comediennes* (1999); *Movie Mutts: Hollywood Goes to the Dogs* (2001); and *Envy, Anger and Sweet Revenge: Hey, It Works in Hollywood!* (2006).

Silverman has been an editor at *People Magazine* since 1996, and is also currently an adjunct professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Stephen M. Silverman papers document Silverman's career as a journalist, non-fiction writer, and playwright/lyricist through research materials, notes, interviews, and writings created and collected by Silverman. This collection illuminates Silverman's process of conducting research, writing, and publicizing a non-fiction book. The four books covered in this collection are: *Dancing on the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and his Movies*; *David Lean*; *The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days of the Zanuck Dynasty at Twentieth Century-Fox*; and *Where There's a Will...: Who Inherited What and Why*. These papers hold drafts of Silverman's manuscripts; contractual negotiations and agreements; correspondence with agents, journalists, editors, and publishers; and research files. Research files consist of clippings, articles, interview transcripts, correspondence with interviewees, notes, biographical information, and photographic prints and slides. One musical Silverman wrote in collaboration with Jabbo Smith and Vernel Bagneris, *Fresh Air Taxi*, based on the popular radio/television characters, Amos 'n' Andy, is documented in this collection with scripts, sheet music, press coverage, market research, correspondence, and legal documents. There are also copies of newspaper and magazine articles written by Silverman from 1978 to 1986. This collection contains audiocassettes, and videocassettes of interviews, speeches and documentaries, and film reels of Amos 'n' Andy Episodes. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access. This collection contains two floppy discs, containing 9 computer files pertaining to David Lean, *The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days of the Zanuck Dynasty at Twentieth Century Fox*, and Newspaper and Magazine Articles.

Arrangement: This collection is arranged alphabetically by project title.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Audiocassettes
Clippings
Correspondence
Manuscripts
Research files
Scripts
Videocassettes

Occupations

Biographers
Critics
Editors
Journalists
Librettists
Lyricists
Professors

Subjects

Biography -- 20th century
Celebrities -- United States -- Biography
Film criticism
Motion picture producers and directors -- Great Britain -- Biography
Motion picture producers and directors -- United States -- Biography
Motion Pictures -- 20th century
Wills -- United States

Names

Bagneris, Vernel
Donen, Stanley
Lean, David, 1908-1991
Smith, Jabbo, 1908-1991
Zanuck, Darryl Francis, 1902-1979
Zanuck family
Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation

Container List

Series I: Dancing On the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and His Movies 1985-1995 (3 boxes)

This series contains documents created or collected during the writing of *Dancing on the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and His Movies*, including correspondence, copies of information sources, notes, and drafts of the book. Correspondence contains letters with publishers, agents, and documentary film makers, pertaining to publicity on the book and Donen, and documentaries, tributes, and salutes on Donen. Also present is Silverman's correspondence with Stanley Donen, and with his son, Mark Donen, about Donen's life and career, and Silverman's process of researching, writing, and publishing the book. There are letters to prominent Donen collaborators requesting interviews; to family members requesting photographs; and to film companies requesting screening copies of Donen's films. A response from Larry Gelbart includes his written answers to Silverman's interview questions.

Copies of original materials kept by Silverman include clippings, excerpts from autobiographies and biographies, 1955 assistant director's reports from *Kismet*, *Handbook of Production Information on The Little Prince*, and programs for *The Red Shoes on Broadway*, and for the Edinburgh Film Festival's 1995 Donen Retrospective. There are full transcripts of Silverman's interviews with Gwen Verdon, and Billy Wilder, as well as notes on his interview with Deborah Kerr. There is a transcript of Silverman's interview with Donen, on the film *Funny Face* and a transcript of Donen's 1983 Oral History.

Other information collected is documented in Silverman's hand-written notes on specific actors and films, such as *On the Town*, *Royal Wedding*, *Elizabeth Taylor in Love is Better Than Ever*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Give a Girl a Break*, *It's Always Fair Weather*, *Ray Walston in Kiss them Goodbye*, and *Indiscreet*. He also kept notes on his attempts to contact interview subjects and their responses. The writing process is documented with Silverman's original book proposal, and with full drafts of, and excerpt from his manuscript, with comments showing his corrections and revisions. There are also reviews and clippings, documenting the critical reception of the book. The original order of this series has been maintained.

- b. 1 f. 1-34 Correspondence, Notes, Interviews and Other Research Files 1985-1995
- b. 2 f. 1-21 *Production Files: Give a Girl a Break-The Red Shoes, Research Notes* 1985-1995
- b. 3 f. 1-4 Manuscript Drafts and Press Coverage 1985-1995

Series II: David Lean 1942-1992 (8 boxes. 26.5 Kilobytes (1 computer file))

The David Lean series contains correspondence between Silverman and friends, editors, publishers, discussing the manuscript; correspondence with Lean and his wife Sandra Cooke about Lean's life and career, and the book as Silverman was preparing it; and correspondence with Lean collaborators requesting and arranging interviews. Some of these interviews are held in this collection. There are transcripts of Silverman's interviews with Lean, Katharine Hepburn, John Mills, and cinematographer Freddie Young. Silverman's notes on his interviews with Alec Guinness, Maurice Jarre, Sarah Miles, Michael Powell, Omar Sharif, and Fred Zinnemann are also present. In addition to the transcript of Silverman's interview with Lean, there are transcripts of earlier interviews Lean gave to Melvyn Bragg and Barry Norman.

Other research materials collected or created by Silverman include his notes on Lean's films, usually accompanied by some publicity materials; photographic slides of production stills from all of Lean's major films; and photocopies of photographs for the book. Also present is a copy of Lean and Robert Bolt's 1989 script for a film version of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, which they were working on at the time of Lean's death. There is an inventory of Lean memorabilia, maintained by Lean collector, archivist, and biographer, Ron Paquet with the photographs Paquet sent Silverman of the original posters from Lean's films.

This series contains complete and incomplete copies of manuscripts for Silverman's book, with comments and suggestions from Silverman and friends, editors, and colleagues. The book's critical and popular reception is documented with press releases, articles, and reviews. Silverman's connection with Lean and his works did not end with the book's publication, as is demonstrated by his correspondence with Sandra Cooke, publishers, and editors on Lean's death, his memorial service, and legacy. Silverman's involvement with Lean tributes and honors, both before and after his death, from such organizations as the British Film Institute, the American Film Institute, and The Great British Picture Show is documented with programs, invitations, publicity materials, and a transcript of a speech Silverman gave on Lean at the Smithsonian Institute in 1990. The original order of this series has been maintained .

This series holds one electronic record, a filmography of David Lean.

- b. 4 f. 1-18 Research Files, Interviews, Correspondence 1985-1992
- b. 5 f. 1-20 Interviews, Notes 1985-1992
- b. 6 f. 1-15 Publicity Materials, Notes, Drafts 1985-1992
 - b. 7 f. 1-4 Drafts, Movie Still Slides 1942-1992
 - b. 8 f. 1-5 Press Releases, Drafts, Photocopied Photographs 1985-1992
- b. 9 f. 1-14 Publicity, Tributes 1985-1992
- b. 10 f. 1-3 Publicity 1985-1992
 - b. 27 f. 2 Publicity 1985-1992
 - Filmography undated
 - er.0002 (26.5 Kilobytes (1 computer file))

Series III: The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days of the Zanuck Dynasty at Twentieth Century-Fox 1961-1990 (8 boxes. 63 Kilobytes (7 computer files))

Series III contains Silverman's files on *The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days of the Zanuck Dynasty at Twentieth Century-Fox*, such as research materials, notes, drafts, and publicity materials. For this book, Silverman collected even more original materials than for his others. This series also contains Silverman's proposal for the book, his notebooks, and several dated full drafts of the book. There are typed and hand-written fragments of the book, often filed with copies of the documents pertinent to that particular segment of the book. The many articles Silverman collected cover all aspects of 20th Century Fox in the 1960s and 1970s, from the studio's ever present financial problems, to gossip on Zanuck's feuds with his directors and stars, to critiques of his management of the studio.

Silverman was originally writing the book in collaboration with Henry de Meyer, who had at one time worked for the Stanford Research Institute (SRI). SRI was brought in by Fox in 1970, to analyze the operations of the corporation to attain maximum efficiency. Original documents from SRI include letters and memos between SRI staff and Fox staff, a report on 20th Century Fox's profits during the 1970s, and strategic plans and management action programs SRI created for Fox in the 1970s. Their suggestions included expanding into untapped international markets, acquiring a second television station, and making films on a lower budget.

Another source of information for Silverman was former Chairman of 20th Century Fox's Stockholders Protective Committee Charles M. Lewis, who wrote to Silverman, offering assistance and copies of documents he created or collected while serving in that capacity. These include minutes from the Stockholders Protective Committee meetings, stock reports, budgets, and correspondence between Lewis and Zanuck and other Fox executives. Other documents Silverman acquired are letters between Fox's Executive Vice President in charge of Finance, Dennis C. Stanfill and Zanuck, discussing the finances and management of the studio.

Original documents Silverman collected include souvenir programs for *Cleopatra*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, and *Hello, Dolly!* One item of note is a copy of a 1962 letter Zanuck wrote to *Cleopatra*'s director and producer, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, discussing the problems with the film. Silverman's process of publishing and publicizing the book is documented with correspondence and agreements with his original collaborator, Henry de Meyer, and with editors and publishers at his original publishing house, Warner Books and his eventual publisher, Lyle Stuart. Articles publicizing Silverman's book document the media attention the book received. This series has been left in original order.

Electronic records held in this series are Acknowledgments, Prologue, Part 1, another excerpt, and the Bibliography from *The Fox That Got Away: The Last Days of the Zanuck Dynasty at Twentieth Century Fox*.

- b. 10 f. 4-7 Publicity 1988-1989
- b. 11 f. 1-6 Drafts 1987
- b. 12 f. 1-5 Drafts 1986-1989
- b. 13 f. 1-6 Publicity, Research Files 1986-1989
- b. 14 f. 1-5 Drafts, Notes 1986-1989
- b. 15 f. 1-6 Drafts, Research Files 1986-1989
- b. 16 f. 1-4 Draft Excerpts, Research Files, Publicity 1970-1990
- b. 17 f. 1-6 Draft Excerpts, Research Files, Publicity 1961-1990
Draft Excerpts, Proposal, Acknowledgements 1986-1989
er.0001 (63 Kilobytes (7 computer files))

Series IV: Fresh Air Taxi (Unproduced Amos 'n Andy Musical) 1985-1992 (5 boxes)

This series documents a musical, *Fresh Air Taxi*, based on the radio and television characters Amos 'n' Andy (popular from the 1920s-1950s) which Silverman wrote with composer Jabbo Smith and playwright Verner Bagneris. There was a long, drawn-out legal dispute between CBS, which had produced the original show, and Silverman, as to the adaptation rights. The result was a 1989 ruling (*Silverman vs. CBS, Inc.*, United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit) that the two characters and their catch phrases were considered in the public domain. However, any material created after 1948 (including the television series, in its entirety) was still the intellectual property of CBS. The decision allowed Silverman to move forward with his musical, using the characters, as long as he didn't use any of the material written after 1948. This legal saga, which Silverman told the press had cost him \$80,000, is documented in this series with affidavits, contracts, interrogation records, court orders, correspondence with lawyers, legal decisions, and publicity covering the legal battle.

The musical which was workshopped in the early 1990s is also documented with multiple script drafts, a synopsis, and sheet music from the score. This series contains market research conducted on the name recognition of the Amos 'n' Andy characters in American households and estimated budgets for the show, if it made it to Broadway. Silverman's correspondence with potential producers and investors document his efforts to publicize the 1992 workshop in the theatre community. The original order of this series has been maintained.

- b. 17 f. 7-11 Publicity Materials 1985-1992
- b. 18 f. 1-15 Market Research, Correspondence, Publicity Materials, Legal Documents 1985-1992
- b. 19 f. 1-5 Scripts, Scores, Publicity Materials, Legal Documents 1985-1992
- b. 20 f. 1-4 Scripts, Publicity Materials, Legal Documents 1985-1992
- b. 21 f. 1-6 Scripts, Legal Documents 1985-1992

Series V: Newspaper and Magazine Articles 1978-1986 (6 boxes. 15 Kilobytes (1 computer file))

Silverman's career as a journalist and critic is documented in this series, with copies of his newspaper and magazine articles. There are scrapbooks and loose copies of articles Silverman wrote for *American Film*, *The Arts Line*, *Chicago Magazine*, *Family Circle*, *5th Avenue*, *New York Newsday*, *The New York Post*, *The New York Times*, *On Cable*, and *Variety*, between 1978 and 1986. These articles, which cover all aspects of the entertainment world, from film to television to theatre, show Silverman's versatility as a journalist, equally at ease with different types of pieces, including reviews, interviews, and news stories and even gossip pieces. Newspaper and magazine articles are arranged in chronological order.

This series holds one electronic record, an article Silverman wrote on Disney, called "Babes in Goyland."

- b. 22 1978-1981
 - b. 26 f. 1-5 1978-1986
 - b. 27 f. 1 1978-1986
 - b. 23 1982-1983
 - b. 24 1984-1985
 - b. 25 1986
- Article: "Babes in Goyland" undated
er.0003

Series VI: Where There's a Will...: Who Inherited What and Why 1988-1990 (5 boxes)

This series contains drafts and research files pertaining to Silverman's book, *Where There's a Will...: Who Inherited What and Why*. Research files consist of photocopies of wills, correspondence with estates of celebrities, court records of legally disputed wills, Silverman's notes on the individual, biographical sketches, and obituaries and other articles. There are files on all the individuals Silverman discusses in his book, as well as others he did not ultimately dedicate chapters to. Silverman's research files are arranged alphabetically by subject's name. Original order of drafts has been maintained.

- b. 27 f. 3-5 Drafts
- b. 28 f. 1-18 Bloomingdale, Alfred S.-Flynn, Errol
- b. 29 f. 1-18 Forbes, Malcolm-Maxwell, Elsa
- b. 30 f. 1-18 Mead, Margaret-Swanson, Gloria
- b. 31 f. 1-8 Tracy, Spencer-Woodward, Ann E