



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Beatrice Lillie papers**

1919-1989

\*T-Mss 1990-025

Processed by Rosalie Spar and Mary Ellen Rogan.

## Summary

**Creator:** Lillie, Beatrice, 1894-1989

**Title:** Beatrice Lillie papers

**Date:** 1919-1989

**Source:** Bruce Laffey, 08/--/1990

**Abstract:** Beatrice Lillie was an actress and comedian. The collection was created by Bruce Laffey, her biographer, and contains correspondence and photographs documenting Beatrice Lillie's career. Most of the correspondence is either to Bruce Laffey from Beatrice Lillie or about her.

**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:**

Photocopying prohibited.

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

**Preferred citation:** Bruce Laffey - Beatrice Lillie Collection, \*T-Mss 1990-025, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Processing note:** Processed by Rosalie Spar and Mary Ellen Rogan. The collection arrived in good condition and was processed and cataloged in 1991. In 2000 the collection was reprocessed with a finding aid made available on the Web.

## Creator History

Beatrice Lillie, stage star, was born in Toronto, Canada on May 29, 1894. Her first appearances on stage were in 1914 in Canada and in England in musical revues. She made her Broadway debut in

*Andre Charlot's Revue of 1924*. Miss Lillie's most notable Broadway performances were in *The Seven Lively Arts*, *Inside U. S. A.*, *Ziegfeld Follies of 1957* and *High Spirits*. She toured the world in *An Evening with Beatrice Lillie* from 1952 to 1956. Miss Lillie appeared in films and on television. She married Sir Robert Peel in 1920. Beatrice Lillie retired to England in 1977. She died January 20, 1989.

### **Custodial History**

The Beatrice Lillie Collection was donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, August 27, 1990 by Bruce Laffey, Miss Lillie's biographer.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Beatrice Lillie papers consist of clippings, correspondence, programs and photographs. The collection spans from 1919 to 1989 and includes materials on her professional and personal life. The correspondence is primarily to her biographer, Bruce Laffey.

**Arrangement:** Series I: Correspondence and Personal Papers Series II: Photographs

### **Key Terms**

#### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings  
Photoprints  
Playbills

#### **Subjects**

Musical theater

#### **Names**

Lillie, Beatrice, 1894-1989  
Laffey, Bruce

## Container List

### Series I: Correspondence and Personal Papers 1937-1989 (10 folders)

This series consists of correspondence, programs, clippings and biographical materials about Beatrice Lillie. The correspondence includes letters written by Beatrice Lillie to Bruce Laffey as well as letters to Bruce Laffey about Beatrice Lillie for his research. Of special note is the program from her funeral requiem.

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence / Beatrice Lillie 1954-1968 (1 folder)  
Correspondence to Bruce Laffey from Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 2 Christmas cards / Beatrice Lillie (1 folder)  
Christmas cards to Bruce Laffey from Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence / Lillie family 1954-1989 (1 folder)  
Letters from members of the Lillie family.
- b. 1 f. 4 Correspondence / Billie Burke 1957 (1 folder)  
Telegram from Billie Burke to Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 5 Correspondence about Beatrice Lillie ca. 1989 (1 folder)  
Letters to Bruce Laffey about Beatrice Lillie for his book.
- b. 1 f. 6 Funeral requiem program / Beatrice Lillie January 30, 1989 (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 7 Biographical materials / Beatrice Lillie (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 8 Clippings / Beatrice Lillie 1954-1989 (1 folder)  
Clippings documenting the life and career of Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 9 Programs / Beatrice Lillie 1937-1960 (1 folder)  
Programs featuring Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 10 Unsorted ephemera / Beatrice Lillie (1 folder)

### Series II: Photographs (20 folders)

This series contains personal and professional photographs of Beatrice Lillie with her friends and in her various roles. Other photographs include pictures of her husband, Sir Robert Peel and her son, Bobbie. Of special note are some photographs taken of Beatrice Lillie and Brandon De Wilde at Coney Island, New York. Production photographs include *Beasop's Fables*, *High Spirits*, *Inside U.S.A.*, *The Seven Lively Arts* and *Walk a Little Faster*.

- b. 1 f. 11 Publicity photographs / Beatrice Lillie (1 folder)  
Publicity photographs of Beatrice Lillie at various events.
- b. 1 f. 12 Photographs of Beatrice Lillie and Brandon De Wilde at Coney Island (1 folder)  
De Wilde, Brandon, 1942-1972  
Photographs taken at a Coney Island booth.
- b. 1 f. 13 Photographs of Beatrice Lillie and friends in Monte Carlo (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 14 Photographs of Beatrice Lillie with friends (1 folder)  
Snapshots of Beatrice Lillie with her friends, some color.
- b. 1 f. 15 Photographs of Beatrice Lillie's grave, her home and the Beatrice Lillie Building dedication (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 16 Photograph / Muriel Lillie (1 folder)  
Photograph of Beatrice Lillie's sister, Muriel.
- b. 1 f. 17 Photograph / Sir Robert Peel (1 folder)  
Photograph of Beatrice Lillie's husband, Sir Robert Peel, 5th baronet.
- b. 1 f. 18 Photographs / Sir Robert Peel (1 folder)  
Photographs of Beatrice Lillie's son, Robert Peel, 6th baronet.

Series II: Photographs (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 19 **Photographs / Maude Fane** (1 folder)  
Photographs of Maude Fane, 1st wife of Sir Robert Peel, 5th baronet.
- b. 1 f. 20 **Photographs of Bea Lillie's artwork** (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 21 **Photographs of miscellaneous artwork** (1 folder)  
Includes 2 images of Beatrice Lillie.
- b. 1 f. 22 ***Beasop's fables (Revue)*** 1956 (1 folder)  
Photographs from the production of *Beasop's Fables*. Includes backstage photographs.
- b. 1 f. 23 **Dr. Rhythm (Motion picture) 1937** (1 folder)  
Crosby, Bing, 1907-1977  
Photographs from the production of Dr. Rhythm. Includes photograph of Bing Crosby.
- b. 1 f. 24 ***An evening with Beatrice Lillie*** 1953-1956 (1 folder)  
Photographs from the production *An Evening With Beatrice Lillie*. Includes candid backstage snapshots.
- b. 1 f. 25 ***High spirits (Musical) / Hugh Martin.*** (1 folder)  
Photographs from the production *High Spirits*.
- b. 1 f. 26 ***Inside U.S.A. (Revue) / Arthur Schwartz*** 1948-1949 (1 folder)  
Photographs from the production *Inside U.S.A.*
- b. 1 f. 27 **Set to music (Revue) / Noel Coward** 1939 (1 folder)  
Vandamm Studio  
Vandamm photographs from the production Set to Music.
- b. 1 f. 28 **The seven lively arts (Revue)** (1 folder)  
Darby, Eileen, photographerLahr, Bert, 1895-1967  
Eileen Darby photograph from the production The Seven Lively Arts.
- b. 1 f. 29 **The show is on (Revue)** (1 folder)  
Lahr, Bert, 1895-1967Gardiner, Reginald, 1903-1980  
Photograph from the production The Show is On.
- b. 1 f. 30 **Walk a little faster (Revue) / Vernon Duke** 1932-1933 (1 folder)  
Clark and McCullough  
Photograph from the production Walk a Little Faster.