



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Samuel Leve design files**

1930s-1994 [bulk 1930s-1950s]

\*T-Vim 2012-097

Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Leve, Sam

**Title:** Samuel Leve design files

**Date:** 1930s-1994 [bulk 1930s-1950s]

**Size:** 6 linear feet (11 boxes, 13 oversized folders, 5 tubes)

**Source:** Donated by Teri Leve, 2013.

**Abstract:** Samuel Leve (1910-1999) was a New York-based scenic designer. The Samuel Leve design files date from the 1930s to 1994 and contain designs, photographs and slides, scenic and rigging plots, course materials, correspondence, clippings, programs, and newsletters.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2015

## Creator History

Samuel Leve (1910-1999) was a New York-based scenic designer. Originally from Russia, the Leve family immigrated to the United States in 1920. In the 1930s, Leve worked at the Mercury Theatre in New York, creating scenic designs for the productions of *Julius Caesar* (1937) and *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1938). He also taught "Principles and Practice of Stage Design," a summer course held at the City College of New York.

Throughout his career, Leve designed for countless productions on Broadway such as *Beat the Band* (1942), *Dark Hammock* (1944), and *The Story of Mary Surratt* (1947); international productions at the National Theatre such as *It's a Gift* (1945) and *Dinosaur Wharf* (1951); and Metropolitan Opera House productions such as *The Warrior* (1947). He created scenic designs for television productions including *The Fred Waring Show* (1949-1953), *The Ford Theatre Hour*, and *The Nash Airflyte Theater* series; and presidential events such as birthday parties for Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, and a 1971 speaking engagement for Richard M. Nixon.

Leve also worked on productions such as *Let's Be Candid* (1937) and *The Big Blow* (1938) for the Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal project established in 1935 and sponsored by the Works Progress Administration. In 1990, he was honored at George Mason University's Federal Theater Tribute Luncheon in New York.

Leve was a member of the United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829. He died in 1999 in New York City.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Samuel Leve design files date from the 1930s to 1994 (bulk dates 1930s-1950s) and represent his career as a New York-based scenic designer. Files are composed of designs, photographs and slides, scenic and rigging plots, course materials, correspondence, clippings, programs, and newsletters.

The bulk of the collection consists of photographs and scenic and rigging plots that demonstrate the execution of Leve's designs. Photos are from various theater and television productions such as *Julius Caesar* (1937), *The Big Blow* (1938), *Dark Hammock* (1944), *Eleven Lives of Leo* (1948), *The Fred Waring Show* (1949-1953), and *Dinosaur Wharf* (1951). There are also a series of slides from the 1958 NBC television special of *Hansel and Gretel*. The scenic and rigging plots are from numerous theatrical productions such as *Beat the Band* (1942), *Clutterbuck* (1949), *Lace on Her Petticoat* (1951); and the television series *The Revlon Mirror Theater* (1953). Some of the plots have multiple productions within one roll, especially episodes in *The Ford Theatre Hour* and *The Nash Airflyte Theater* series such as *Little Women* (1949), *The School for Scandal* (1950) *A Double-Dyed Deceiver* (1950), *Portrait of Lydia* (1950) and *The Fiddling Fool* (1951). A few of the plot rolls also contain designs.

The majority of the designs included in this collection were either framed or mounted on poster board. There is an Uncle Sam design from a 1953 birthday party for Dwight D. Eisenhower; a presentation sketch from a 1971 Richard M. Nixon speaking engagement; presentation sketches for *Beat the Band* (1942); a design from the Federal Theatre Project's *Let's Be Candid* (1937); and designs for theatrical productions such as *The Story of Mary Surratt* (1947). Some of Leve's designs are very artistic, elaborate, and resemble collages. Some also have values listed on the back of the frames or mounting, such as the designs for *Eleven Lives of Leo* (1948) and *Solomon's Daughter* (1957).

Materials related to Leve's 1938 summer course at City College, "Principles and Practice of Stage Design," consist of a glossary of stage terms, bibliographies, and lecture notes.

Additionally, the collection contains items concerning the Federal Theatre Project, such as a program and correspondence from the 1990 tribute luncheon at George Mason University where Leve was honored. There are also correspondence, clippings, and newsletters related to the 1992 presentation of the Federal Theatre Project archival materials, housed at George Mason University, which were adapted into new theatrical productions.

Most of Leve's work includes a United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 stamp. Many of the photographs and designs are unidentified.

**Arrangement:** The collection is organized by production.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Bibliographies  
Clippings (information artifacts)  
Correspondence  
Design drawings  
Glossaries  
Lecture notes  
Newsletters  
Photographs  
Preparatory drawings  
Programs (documents)  
Site plans  
Slides (photographs)

### **Occupations**

Set designers

### **Subjects**

Television -- Stage-setting and scenery  
Theaters -- Stage-setting and scenery

### **Names**

Federal Theatre Project (New York, N.Y.)  
United Scenic Artists. Local USA 829

## Container List

- Productions and Events
- b. 9 Afternoon at Home 1947
- b. 7 All in Favor 1941
- b. 9 All You Need is One Good Break 1949
- b. 7 Apology 1943
- t. 3 Arsenic and Old Lace 1949
- The Barker 1950
- b. 1 f. 1 Photos
- t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 1 f. 2 The Beautiful People 1941
- Beat the Band 1942
- b. 4 Presentation Sketches
- t. 1 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- The Big Blow 1938
- b. 1 f. 3 Designs
- b. 1 f. 4 Photos
- b. 1 f. 5 The Birth of Man 1930s
- b. 7 The Blackstone Company 1946
- t. 5 Borrowed Memory 1950
- t. 4 On Borrowed Time 1950
- t. 5 The Box Supper 1950
- b. 9 Buttrio Square 1952
- b. 1 f. 6 Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo 1967
- t. 5 The Case of the Calico Dog 1951
- b. 7 Cavalcade of Stars 1952
- b. 9 Clutterbuck 1949
- b. 7 Counsellor at Law 1936
- t. 5 The Crisis 1951
- Dark Hammock 1944
- b. 1 f. 7 Photos
- b. 9 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 9 Dark Memory 1947
- t. 4 Dear Brutus 1950
- b. 9 Dearly Beloved 1946
- b. 1 f. 8 Desert Song 1946
- b. 1 f. 9 Dinosaur Wharf 1951
- b. 9 The Distant City 1941
- t. 5 A Double-Dyed Deceiver 1950
- t. 3 Edward, My Son 1949

Productions and Events (cont.)

- b. 7 E.I. duPont de Nemours and Company 1952
- o. 5 Dwight D. Eisenhower Birthday Party 1953
- Eleven Lives of Leo 1948
- b. 5 Designs
- b. 1 f. 10 Photos
- b. 7 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 7 A Family Affair 1946
- t. 4 A Farmer Takes a Wife 1949
- b. 7 Fashion Show at the Astor 1946
- Father Malachy's Miracle 1950
- b. 1 f. 11 Photos
- t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 5 The Fiddling Fool 1951
- b. 9 The Fifth Season 1952
- b. 9 The Fred Allen Show 1952
- b. 1 f. 12 The Fred Waring Show 1952-1955
- b. 1 f. 13 Goethe 1930s
- b. 1 f. 14 The Good Fairy 1940s-1950s
- t. 3 Goodbye, New York 1948
- b. 7 The Greatest Show on Earth 1952
- b. 1 f. 15 The Hairy Ape 1930s
- Hand in Glove 1944
- b. 1 f. 16 Photos
- b. 10 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 1 f. 17-19 Hansel and Gretel 1958
- b. 6 Have I Got a Girl for You 1940s-1950s
- b. 10 The Heart of the Matter 1950
- t. 5 I Won't Take a Minute 1950
- It's a Gift 1945
- b. 5 Designs
- b. 10 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 3 Joy to the World 1948
- b. 1 f. 20 Julius Caesar 1937
- t. 5 A Kiss for Mr. Lincoln 1951
- t. 4 Laburnum Grove 1950
- b. 10 Lace on Her Petticoat 1952
- b. 7 A Lady's Hand Bag 1948
- b. 7 Lambs Gambol 1953
- b. 7 Last Stop 1944
- b. 8 The Legend of Lou 1947
- b. 6 Let's Be Candid 1937

Productions and Events (cont.)

- t. 3 The Life of Reilly 1942  
Light Up the Sky
- b. 1 f. 21 Photos 1948
  - t. 3 Scenic and Rigging Plots 1949
  - t. 5 The Lipstick 1951  
The Little Minister 1950
- b. 1 f. 22 Photos
  - t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
  - t. 4 Little Women 1949
  - b. 8 Love and the Census Taker 1944
- b. 1 f. 23 Macbeth 1941
  - t. 3 The Man Who Came to Dinner 1949
- b. 1 f. 24 McCormick Place 1963
  - t. 2 Medicine Show 1940
  - b. 8 Melody Fair 1950
- b. 2 f. 1 Merrill Summer 1950s
  - b. 9 Mikado 1940
  - t. 5 Molly Morgan 1950
  - t. 3 Mr. and Mrs. North 1949  
Mr. Sycamore 1942
- b. 2 f. 2 Photos
  - t. 2 Scenic and Rigging Plots
  - t. 5 Municipal Report 1950
  - t. 3 Night Must Fall 1948  
Richard M. Nixon Speaking Engagement 1971
  - b. 5 Designs
  - o. 1 Photos, Clippings, and Correspondence
- b. 2 f. 3 Photos
- b. 2 f. 4 No More Peace 1938
- b. 2 f. 5 The Nutcracker 1965  
Oh! Brother 1945
  - b. 5 Designs
  - b. 8 Scenic and Rigging Plots
  - b. 8 One More Spring 1934
  - t. 3 One Sunday Afternoon 1949  
Outward Bound 1949
- b. 2 f. 6 Photos
  - t. 3 Scenic and Rigging Plots
  - t. 5 Pearls are a Nuisance 1951
- b. 2 f. 7 Peer Gynt 1951
  - t. 5 Peggy 1951

Productions and Events (cont.)

- b. 8 Petroleum Show 1952
- b. 9 The Pirates 1947
- b. 9 Pirates of Penzance 1940
- t. 5 Portrait of Lydia 1950
- t. 5 Pot O' Gold 1951
- t. 5 The Professor's Punch 1950
- The Revlon Mirror Theater 1953
- b. 2 f. 8 Photos
- b. 10 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 8 Rialto Ballroom 1950s
- t. 4 Room Service 1950
- b. 10 Round Trip 1945
- The Royal Family 1950
- b. 2 f. 9 Photos
- t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 8 Rumba Room 1940
- b. 7 A Rustic Flower Pot 1948
- b. 8 Salt of the Earth 1952
- b. 10 Salute to Murder 1946
- t. 5 Scandalous Conduct 1951
- The School for Scandal 1950
- b. 2 f. 10 Photos
- t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 4 She Loves Me Not 1949
- t. 4 The Shining Hour 1950
- b. 10 Signor Chicago 1949
- t. 3 The Silver Cord 1949
- b. 2 f. 11 Simon Boccanegra 1930s-1940s
- b. 9 The Skin of Our Teeth 1946
- Skylark 1949
- b. 2 f. 12 Photos
- t. 4 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 11 Solomon's Daughter 1957
- b. 2 f. 13 Song of the Dreamer 1950s
- b. 9 Sophie 1944
- A Sound of Hunting 1945
- b. 2 f. 14 Photos
- b. 8 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 4 The Story of Mary Surratt 1946-1947
- o. 4 Designs
- b. 2 f. 15 Photos

- Productions and Events (cont.)
- The Story of Mary Surratt (cont.)
- b. 8 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 4 Subway Express 1950
- t. 5 Suppressed Desires 1950
- t. 3 Suspense 1949
- Thank You, Svoboda 1944
- b. 2 f. 16 Photos
- b. 10 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 9 They Should Have Stood in Bed 1942
- b. 10 A Thimble Full O'Comfort 1954
- This Fallow Ground 1935
- b. 2 f. 17 Photos
- b. 9 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- t. 5 Trial By Jury 1950
- t. 4 The Twentieth Century 1949
- t. 4 Uncle Harry 1950
- t. 3 United Nations 1940s-1950s
- b. 9 Uptown 1944
- b. 9 Wallflower 1944
- t. 5 Waltz Dream 1951
- b. 10 The Warrior 1946
- A Wee Diamond Ring 1933
- b. 2 f. 18 Photos
- b. 9 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- b. 8 A Wedding Ceremony 1947
- b. 10 The Wild Duck 1938
- t. 5 The Windfall 1950
- t. 2 WOR TV 1940s-1950s
- Years Ago 1948
- b. 2 f. 19 Photos
- t. 3 Scenic and Rigging Plots
- Unidentified Designs
- b. 2 f. 20-21 1930s-1940s
- b. 4 1930s-1950s
- b. 5 1930s-1950s
- b. 6 1930s-1950s
- o. 2 1930s-1950s
- o. 3 1930s-1950s
- o. 6 1930s-1950s
- o. 7 1930s-1950s
- o. 8 1930s-1950s
- o. 9 1930s-1950s



Productions and Events (cont.)

Unidentified Designs (cont.)

- o. 10 1930s-1950s
- o. 11 1930s-1950s
- o. 12 1930s-1950s
- o. 13 1930s-1950s
- b. 2 f. 22-24 Unidentified Photographs 1930s-1950s
- b. 3 f. 1-3 Unidentified Photographs 1930s-1950s
- b. 3 f. 4 Unidentified Slides 1930s-1950s
- b. 3 f. 5 Institute on the Federal Theatre Project 1991-1994
- b. 3 f. 6-8 Principles and Practice of Stage Design 1938
- b. 3 f. 9 United Scenic Artists 1937