



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Jess Richards papers

1943-1994

*T-Mss 1994-027

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

Summary

Creator: Richards, Jess

Title: Jess Richards papers

Date: 1943-1994

Size: 11.21 linear feet (28 boxes)

Source: Donated by the family of Jess Richards, 1994.

Abstract: Jess Richards was a stage actor who performed primarily in musical theater. The Jess Richards papers (1943-1994) document Richards' acting career through scripts, scores, photographs, and promotional materials.

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 in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatre@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.

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Creator History

Jess Richards was a stage actor who performed in musical theater. He was born Richard Sederholm in 1943. He studied acting at the University of Washington and made his Broadway debut in 1966 in *Walking Happy*. His other Broadway credits included roles in *Barnum* (1980), *Blood Red Roses* (1970), *Mack & Mabel* (1974), and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1989). Richards received a Theatre World award for his performance in *On the Town* (1971). He appeared in Off-Broadway and regional productions as well, and was part of national tours of *Hello, Dolly!* (1967) and *Irene* (1974). He also acted in the Theatre Guild's Theatre at Sea program and performed in numerous industrial musicals in the 1970s and 1980s. He worked frequently with director and writer Joshua Logan. Richards died in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1994.

Scope and Content Note

The Jess Richards papers date from 1943 to 1994 and document Richards' acting career and personal life.

General files contain unsorted personal and professional records such as clippings, programs, photographs, postcards, print advertisements featuring Richards, and ephemera from shows in which Richards appeared. Richards' résumés and other summaries of his career are also held here. Richards was a uniform collector and enthusiast, and the general files hold some materials related to this interest. These include issues of *Bullsheets*, a publication of the American Uniform Association, an organization for gay men interested in uniforms.

Photographs mostly consist of Richards' personal photographs of his friends, family, colleagues, and behind the scenes at productions. There are also professionally-shot photographs of productions, headshots and publicity shots of Richards, and headshots of other actors (some signed). Richards created chronological albums of production photographs, documenting his acting career from high school to 1979, which are held here.

Production files date from 1961 to 1993, and primarily contain scripts and scores. The files concern both produced and unproduced shows. Some of the scripts and scores are annotated, and some are accompanied by related material such as contact lists, programs, and clippings. Productions represented in the files include *Barnum*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Two by Two* (1970), a 1971 musical version of *Gone with the Wind*, the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre production of *The Tempest* (1971), *Theatre at Sea* (1978, 1983, and 1984), showcases featuring Joshua Logan, and industrial musicals such as J.C. Penney's *Calico Falls*. The files hold reproductions of manuscript scores of Seymour Barab's *Little Red Riding Hood* and of Conrad Susa's incidental music for *The Tempest*, as well as an original manuscript score of Susa's songs for *The Tempest*. A *Hello, Dolly!* scrapbook, given to Richards by Dorothy Lamour and containing notes from her, is present. Two scripts from the television show *Roseanne* are also held in the production files, along with a draft script intended for the show, possibly written by Richards.

In addition to the scores held in the production files, the collection holds unsorted scores for individual songs or unspecified productions. These scores largely date to the late 1960s and the 1970s, and include songs written by Richards. A small number of manuscript scores by Jule Styne are present.

Programs date from 1958 to 1983, and include theater programs from shows in which Richards appeared.

The collection holds audiorecordings related to various productions that Richards worked on. Inquiries

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

Arrangement: The Jess Richards papers are arranged in five categories: General Files, Photographs, Production Files, Programs, and Scores. Production Files are alphabetized by production title, with two exceptions: industrial musicals are filed together, and showcases featuring Joshua Logan are filed under "Logan."

Key Terms

Occupations

Actors

Subjects

Industrial musicals

Musical theater

Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

Uniforms -- Erotic aspects -- Periodicals

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Scores

Scripts (documents)

Theater programs

Names

Logan, Joshua

Container List

General Files

- b. 1 f. 1-11 1946-1994
- b. 27 f. 6-11 1953-1980s
Includes Theatre World award.
- b. 2 f. 1-8 1961-1991
- b. 3 f. 1-3 1984-1993
- b. 3 f. 4-8 Bullsheets 1980-1993
Issues 13-49, 51-53, 55-62, and 65.

Photographs

- b. 4 f. 1-7 1943-1980s
- b. 5 f. 1-6 1960s-1979
- b. 6 f. 1-6 1970s-1980s
- b. 8 f. 1-2 1980s-1990
- b. 7 f. 1-5 1980s-1990s
- b. 8 f. 3-6 Production Photograph Albums 1960-1979
- b. 9 f. 1-7 Production Photographs and Headshots 1963-1990s

Production Files

- b. 9 f. 8 Barbary Coast 1983
- b. 10 f. 1-8 Barnum - Blood Red Roses 1970, 1980s
- b. 27 f. 4 Barnum Art 1980s
- b. 11 f. 1-8 Blood Red Roses - The Drunkard 1966-1978, 1993
- b. 12 f. 1-8 Excaliber and Rose - Gone With the Wind 1970-1973, undated
- b. 13 f. 1-8 Gone With the Wind - Irene 1967-1990
- b. 21 f. 2-10 Industrial Musicals 1970s-1981
- b. 27 f. 1-2 Hello, Dolly! Scrapbook 1968
- b. 14 f. 1-7 Irma La Douce - A Little Night Music 1980s-1991, undated
- b. 15 f. 1-8 A Little Night Music - The Lullaby of Broadway 1966-1983
Includes shows featuring Joshua Logan.
- b. 28 f. 2 Little Red Riding Hood Score 1960s
- b. 16 f. 1-8 Meet Me in St. Louis - On a Clear Day You Can See Forever 1970-1989,
undated
- b. 17 f. 1-9 On the Town - Roseanne 1970s-1992
- b. 28 f. 6 Promised Valley Simplified Vocal Score 1961
- b. 18 f. 1-7 She Loves Me - Station JOY 1969-1989
- b. 19 f. 1-8 Station JOY - Theatre at Sea 1971-1984
- b. 27 f. 3 The Tempest Clippings 1971
- b. 28 f. 3-5 The Tempest Incidental Music and Songs 1971
- b. 20 f. 1-6 The Trouble with Harry - Walking Happy 1966, 1970, undated
- b. 21 f. 1 Walking Happy 1966

Programs

- b. 22 f. 1-6 Programs for Shows with Jess Richards 1965-1983

Programs (cont.)

Miscellaneous Programs

- b. 22 f. 7-8 1958
- b. 23 f. 1-5 1959-1974
- b. 21 f. 11-12 1960-1983
- b. 27 f. 5 How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying 1964

Scores

- b. 23 f. 6-9 1960s-1970s
- b. 24 f. 1-6 1960s-1970s
- b. 26 f. 1-2 1960s-1970s
- b. 25 f. 1-6 1960s-1981
- b. 28 f. 1 1970s