



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

A. Robins papers

1908-1973

*T-Mss 2001-044

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2015

Summary

Creator: Robins, Adolf, 1886-1950

Title: A. Robins papers

Date: 1908-1973

Size: .21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donated by Phyllis Wollman, 2000.

Abstract: A. Robins (1886-1950) was a clown who performed in the United States and Europe from the 1900s until 1950. He was born Adolf Proper in Vienna, Austria. He took on the stage name A. Robins before coming to the United States in the early 1910s. In his early career, he performed as part of a duo, the Brothers Robins. He was known as the Banana Man for a trick he performed in which he pulled large numbers of bananas out of his pockets. Robins was known for making his own props. After his death, his act and stage name were adopted by Sam Levine. During the 1950s and 1960s, Levine appeared frequently on television as A. Robins or as the Banana Man. The A. Robins papers contain photographs, letters, and other papers dating from 1908 to 1950 documenting Robins' career, and a ledger that belonged to Sam Levine when he was performing as A. Robins. Photographs date from 1908 to about the 1940s and include promotional images of Robins in makeup, portraits of him out of costume, and portraits of unidentified individuals. One photograph is inscribed to Robins' niece, Phyllis Wollman. There are photographic postcards depicting the Brothers Robins, one of which has a note from Robins written on the back. The collection also includes a drawing of a clown signed "Krehan." Letters date from 1927 to 1948, and contain invitations to Robins to perform and thanks for his performances. The letters from 1928 concern Robins' work in England, where he was a popular performer. The collection also contains magazine articles about Robins, dating to 1950; certificates awarded to Robins for his charitable work; promotional brochures; piano-conductor scores; and a piece of writing about Robins' life and work, labeled "written by Harry Houdini for Robins." Sam Levine's ledger records his engagements, expenses, and income from 1951 to 1973.

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>

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Key Terms

Subjects

Clowning

Occupations

Clowns

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Letters (correspondence)

Photographs