

The New York Public Library
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center
Music Division

Guide to the

Gerry Oestreicher papers

1929-1989 (bulk 1961-1969)

JPB 11-19

Compiled by Kate Jadwin, Pratt Institute, 2012, November 2011

Summary

Creator: Oestreicher, Gerry, 1916-1987

Title: Gerry Oestreicher papers, 1929-1989 (bulk 1961-1969)

Size: .88 linear foot (3 boxes)

Source: Donated by Larry Lowenstein, 2009.

Abstract: Gerard Oestreicher was a real-estate developer, investor, theatre owner and theatre producer in New York City. This collection documents Gerard Oestreicher's career as a theatre producer through scripts, press clippings, programs, a stage design blueprint, correspondence, telegrams, scrapbooks, posters, as well as theatre and box office records.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required. The five posters in the collection are restricted. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Music Division (musicdiv@nypl.org). Audio materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Copyright information: For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division, The New York Public Library.

Preferred citation: Gerry Oestreicher papers, Music Division, The New York Public Library

Custodial history: These materials arrived as part of a larger collection of combined materials belonging to Gerard Oestreicher and Harry Ruby. Although the two men were related through Oestreicher's marriage to Ruby's daughter, the consolidated material has been divided into two collections. Oestreicher and Ruby never collaborated professionally and had no documentation suggesting a personal relationship.

Processing note: Folders were created, as there was no original order. Due to deterioration, scrapbooks were dismantled and rehoused in folders. Proper handling procedures should be used when viewing any of the clippings, as many are in poor condition. Upon arrival, the five posters in the collection were framed individually. The poster frames have been removed, as they were large and cumbersome.

Related collections

Harry Ruby papers. Music Division, The New York Public Library

Stanley M. Isaacs papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Gerard Oestreicher was born on July 29, 1916 in New York to Carl and Lucille Oestreicher. Born in Germany, Carl Oestreicher immigrated to New York in 1893, finding success as a clothing retailer before moving on to real estate development. With a deep connection to his Jewish heritage, Carl was a community leader at his synagogue. He also founded the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, an organization his son would eventually lead.

After graduating from Columbia College in 1937, Gerard Oestreicher enlisted in the military to fight in World War II. His actions during the Battle of the Bulge were awarded with a Bronze Star Medal. After his military service, Oestreicher briefly worked in politics as the New York State finance chairman for Adlai Ewing Stevenson's 1956 presidential run. Following in his father's footsteps, Oestreicher began working in real estate after Stevenson's loss. Although his career in politics ended, his political interests never faded; he was a staunch supporter of Israel and a generous political investor until the end of his life. As his real estate career developed and blossomed, so did his philanthropic pursuits. While Oestreicher founded and chaired the Oestreicher Realty Companies, he also served as the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies' real-estate division, the president of Columbia University's Jewish Campus Life Fund and a board member for the Educational Alliance.

During the 1950s Oestreicher not only began investing in politics, but also started seriously supporting theatre arts. Providing financial support for the Broadway production of Don Appell's *Lullaby* (1954) led him to invest more frequently in theatrical productions. Before long, Oestreicher wanted to invest more than finances; after conceiving the idea for an Israeli inspired play he began moonlighting as a theatrical producer. Oestreicher was probably best known on Broadway as the producer of *Milk and Honey*, a 1961 romantic musical set in modern Israel that was written by the composer Jerry Herman and the playwright Don Appell. He went on to successfully produce *A Girl Could Get Lucky* (1964), *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1965) and *But, Seriously. . .* (1969). In 1972, Oestreicher and James Nederlander built and operated New York City's *Uris Theatre*, the largest of the Broadway theatres with over 1,900 seats. Now known as the *Gershwin*, the theatre houses the American Theatre Hall of Fame, continues to feature popular theatrical productions and still has the highest seating capacity on Broadway. Oestreicher continued to host and produce plays and musicals in New York City until the end of his life. He passed away on May 24, 1987.

Scope and content note

This collection documents Gerard Oestreicher's career as a theatre producer. The materials include correspondence and telegrams; theatrical scripts and musical scores; scrapbooks; theatre programs; financial records; a stage design blueprint; a watercolor sketch and theatrical posters. There are a small number of photographs in the collection representing Oestreicher and his work during his theatre years.

Notable items in the collection are the numerous materials related to *Milk and Honey* including original handwritten scores; an early draft script of *Shalom* (the original title of *Milk and Honey*); a blueprint illustrating the set design and a brightly colored, oversized watercolor sketch. Also notable are the draft scripts of *So Much of Earth*, *So Much of Heaven* and *La Belle* with marginalia and hand written edits. There is also a first draft script copy for the musical *Annie*.

The correspondence and telegrams are related to his work in theatre production, the majority of which are invitations, well wishes and congratulatory messages from friends, family and associates. Financial records consist of typed budgets, box office receipts and statements documenting *The Perils of Paul*, *When Do the Words Come True* and unidentified performances.

There are five posters in the collection. Four posters are for the Oestreicher produced shows *A Girl Could Get Lucky, But, Seriously . . .*, *When Do the Words Come True?*, and *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*. The poster for *Via Galactica* indicates the production played at Oestreicher's Uris Theatre.

The scrapbooks in this collection contain press clippings, magazines, reproductions of reviews and articles, photographs, typed reviews and ephemera such as playbills, programs, invitations and ticket stubs reflecting various plays and musicals with which Oestreicher was involved.

Audio recordings in the collection document Oestreicher's production career and consist of commercial recordings. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Music Division (musicdiv@nypl.org) in advance. Audio materials may be subject to preservation and migration prior to access.

Arrangement

Alphabetical by format.

Key terms

Names

Appell, Don
Herman, Jerry, 1931-
Oestreicher, Gerry, 1916-1987

Places

George Gershwin Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
Uris Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Special formats

Photographs
Programs
Scores
Scrapbooks
Scripts

Container list

- b.1 f.1 Correspondence, 1961-1964
- b.1 f.2 Correspondence--Telegrams, 1961-1969
- b.1 f.3 Financial Records, 1989, undated
 - Milk and Honey* Musical
- b.1 f.4 Programs and Songbooks, 1961
- b.3 f.1 Scores, 1961
- b.3 f.2-5 Scrapbook, 1961-1963
- b.1 f.5 Script--*Shalom*, undated
- b.1 f.6 Photographs, 1961, undated
 - Posters, undated
- b.1 f.7 Press Clippings, 1929-1969
- b.1 f.8 Programs, 1961-1969
- b.3 f.6 Scrapbook--Miscellaneous, 1961-1971
 - Scripts
- b.1 f.9 *Annie*, 1973
- b.2 f.1-2 *La Belle*, 1962, undated
- b.2 f.3 *So Much of Earth, So Much of Heaven*, 1965