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Guide to the

Barbara Baxley papers

1911-1988

*T-Mss 1991-003

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, March 2013

Summary

Creator: Baxley, Barbara, 1923-1990

Title: Barbara Baxley papers, 1911-1988

Size: 10.41 linear feet (26 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Barbara Baxley in 2011.

Abstract: Barbara Baxley (1923-1990) was an American theatre, film, and television actress. The Barbara Baxley papers document her professional and personal life through scripts, photographs, scores, correspondence, publicity materials, programs, notes, and ephemera.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photography and photocopying will apply. Advance notice maybe required. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Creator history

Barbara Baxley was born on January 1, 1923 in Stockton, California. She attended the University of the Pacific, where she acted in plays, and graduated with honors. She moved to New York, where she trained with Sanford Meisner and Martha Graham at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and with Elia Kazan at the Actors Studio.

Baxley made her Broadway debut as Sybil in the Tallulah Bankhead *Private Lives* (1948), and followed that with *Peter Pan* (1950), in which she understudied Jean Arthur in the title role. In 1951, she starred in a short-lived comedy, *Out West of Eight*, and in 1952, she replaced Julie Harris as Sally Bowles in *I Am a Camera*. Other Broadway appearances during the 1950s include Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real* (1953), the sex comedy *Oh Men! Oh Women!* (1953), Baxley's personal favorite: Clifford Odets' *The Flowering Peach* (1954), and William Inge's *Bus Stop* (1955), in which she replaced Kim Stanley as Cherie. Baxley also appeared in regional productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1955) in Chicago, and *A Palm Tree in a Rose Garden* (1957) in Cricket, New York. She starred in the National Tour of Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* in 1959.

In the 1960s Baxley continued to be active on Broadway in Tennessee Williams' *Period of Adjustment* (1960), the musical *She Loves Me* (1963), Chekov's *The Three Sisters* (1964), and Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite* (1968). Other New York appearances included *Brecht on Brecht* (1962) at the Theatre de Lys; *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black* (1967) at the Cherry Lane Theatre; and *Measure for Measure* (1966) at the Delacorte Theatre. Baxley appeared in regional productions, such as *Taming of the Shrew* (1962) at the University of Oklahoma; *The Misanthrope* (1964) at the University of Chicago; *The Grass Harp* (1966) at the Trinity Square in Providence, Rhode Island; and *The Merchant of Venice* (1967) at the American Shakespeare Festival.

Baxley's stage work in the 1970s included *Me Jack, You Jill and Best Friend* on Broadway in 1976; *The Scarecrow* (1975) at the Kennedy Center; *The Dream* (1977) in Philadelphia; *Past Tense* (1977) at Hartford Stage; *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been...?* Off-Broadway; and the National Tour of *Zorba* (1972-1973). Her stage work in the 1980s was primarily in regional theatre, appearing in, among others, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1982) and *Major Barbara* (1984) at Yale Repertory; and starring in *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1984) at Portland State University. She also developed a one woman show during the early 1980s, first under the title *Spooky Lady*, and later changed to *Wayward Wings*.

Though Baxley was mainly known for her stage work, she was also active in film and television. Highlights of her film career include *East of Eden* (1955), *The Savage Eye* (1960), *All Fall Down* (1962), *Nashville* (1975), and *Norma Rae* (1979). In 1984, Baxley was a visiting professor, teaching acting at both Carnegie Mellon University and Portland State University. An active member of the organization, Baxley won the Actors Studio Award for Achievement in 1980.

Baxley married actor and playwright Doug Taylor in 1961. She died of a heart attack on June 7, 1990, in her New York City apartment.

Scope and content note

The Barbara Baxley papers document the personal and professional life of American actress Barbara Baxley through scripts, photographs, scores, correspondence, publicity materials, programs, notes, and ephemera. Production files cover the theatre, film, and television projects Baxley appeared in over the course of her career. Production files include scripts, photographs, correspondence, notes, programs, publicity materials, and scores. This collection includes a small amount of personal files, documenting Baxley's personal life, to a certain extent, covering professional organizations she was involved in, and including items pertaining to prominent friends, such as actress Sandy Dennis and playwright William Inge. Materials include correspondence, notes, photographs, drawings, interviews, and childhood items.

Audio visual materials include one videocassette, two audiocassettes and two reel-to-reel tapes, pertaining to the productions *All That Glitters* and *Wayward Wings*, and to Baxley's teaching career. Audio/Visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Baxley's 1980 Actors Studio Award has been separated to the T-Cabinet and will be available to researchers on request.

Arrangement

The Barbara Baxley papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: Productions, 1940-1987

Series II: Personal Files, 1911-1988

Key terms

Subjects

American drama

Motion pictures

Musicals

Television

Theater -- 20th century

Occupations

Actresses

Names

Baxley, Barbara, 1923-1990

Dennis, Sandy, 1937-1992

Inge, William

Special formats

Correspondence

Notes

Photographs

Programs

Scores

Scripts

Container list

Series I: Productions, 1940-1987 (15 boxes)

Production files cover the theatre, film, and television projects Baxley appeared in over the course of her career. Production files include scripts, with Baxley's annotations, and in some cases, there are also extensive notes written by Baxley on her ideas about the plays and characters. There are also photographs of Baxley's productions, in rehearsal, backstage, and in production, as well as posed publicity stills. While most of the correspondence in this collection can be found in Series II: Personal Files, congratulatory letters and telegrams, fan mail, and other correspondence pertaining to specific productions will be found here. Also included in this series are programs and publicity materials, including reviews, interviews, feature articles, flyers, and posters. Baxley appeared primarily in straight plays, but there is sheet music in the production files for musicals she appeared in, such as *She Loves Me*, *The Grass Harp*, *A Little Night Music*, and *Zorba*.

Arranged alphabetically by show title.

- b.1 f.1 *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: "The Three Dreams of Mr. Findlater"*, 1957
- b.1 f.2 *All Fall Down*, 1962
- b.1 f.3 *All That Glitters*, 1977
- b.14 f.1 *All That Glitters*, 1977
- b.1 f.4 *Anatol*, 1958
- b.14 f.2 *Anatol*, 1965
- b.1 f.5 *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*, 1971
- b.1 f.6 *Awake and Sing*, undated
- b.1 f.7 *Best Friends*, 1975-1976
- b.2 f.1 *Brecht on Brecht*, 1962
- b.14 f.3 *Brecht on Brecht*, 1962
- b.2 f.2 *Bus Stop*, undated
- b.2 f.3 *Camino Real*, 1953
- b.2 f.4 *Come Along With Me*, 1980
- b.13 f.5 *Company*, 1970
- b.2 f.5 *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, undated
- b.2 f.6 *The Dream*, 1977
- b.2 f.7 *Fever for Life*, 1957
- b.3 f.1 *The Flowering Peach*, 1954
- b.3 f.2 *Follies*, undated
- b.3 f.3 *The Gingerbread Lady*, 1971
- b.3 f.4 *The Glass Menagerie*, 1987
- b.3 f.5 *The Grass Harp*, 1966
- b.14 f.4 *The Grass Harp*, 1966
- b.3 f.6 *Harvey*, 1971
- b.3 f.7 *A Hatful of Rain*, undated
- b.3 f.8 *In a Cold Hotel*, undated
- b.3 f.9 *Isn't It Romantic*, 1981

Series I: Productions, 1940-1987 (cont.)

- b.3 f.10 *Jazz, Poetry, Jazz/Joanne Woodward, Barbara Baxley, Darius Brubeck Together, 1974-1976*
- b.3 f.11 *Lady Windermere's Fan, 1940*
- b.3 f.12 *The Law, 1974*
- b.3 f.13 *Legend of Lovers, undated*
- b.3 f.14 *Life in a Love, 1976*
- b.4 f.1 *Listening, 1975*
- b.4 f.2-3 *A Little Night Music, 1986*
- b.4 f.4 *Major Barbara, 1983*
- b.4 f.5 *The Man Who Came to Dinner, 1940s*
- b.4 f.6 *A Marriage Proposal, 1946-1947*
- b.4 f.7 *Me Jack, You Jill, 1976*
- b.25 f.1 *Me Jack, You Jill, 1976*
- b.5 f.1 *Measure for Measure, 1966*
- b.5 f.2 *The Merchant of Venice, 1967*
- b.5 f.3-5 *The Misanthrope, 1966*
- b.14 f.5 *The Misanthrope, 1966*
- b.6 f.1 *Moonshot, 1966*
- b.6 f.2-3 *Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1982*
- b.6 f.4 *Much Ado About Nothing, 1956*
- b.6 f.5 *Mummer's End, 1977*
- b.6 f.6-7 *Nashville, 1975-1977*
- b.7 f.1-2 *Nashville, 1975-1977*
- b.7 f.3 *No Way to Treat a Lady, 1968*
- b.7 f.4 *Norma Rae, 1979*
- b.14 f.6 *Oh Men! Oh Women!, 1953*
- b.7 f.5 *Out West of Eighth, 1951*
- b.7 f.6 *Palm Tree in a Rose Garden, 1955*
- b.7 f.7 *Past Tense, 1977*
- b.7 f.8-9 *Period of Adjustment, 1960-1961*
- b.25 f.2 *Period of Adjustment, 1960*
- b.8 f.1 *Peter Pan, 1950*
- b.8 f.2-3 *Plaza Suite, 1968-1969*
- b.8 f.4 *Private Lives, 1948*
- b.8 f.5 *Richard III, undated*
- b.8 f.6 *The Savage Eye, 1960*
- b.9 f.1-3 *The Scarecrow, 1975*

Series I: Productions, 1940-1987 (cont.)

- b.25 f.3 *The Scarecrow*, 1975
- b.9 f.4 *Second Love*, 1959
- b.9 f.5 *She Loves Me*, 1962-1987
- b.14 f.7 *She Loves Me*, 1963
- b.25 f.4 *She Loves Me*, 1963
- b.10 f.1 *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*, undated
- b.10 f.2 *Simple Simon*, circa 1945
- b.10 f.3 *The Single Woman*, undated
- b.10 f.4 *A Stranger is Watching*, 1981
- b.14 f.8 *Sweeney Todd*, undated
- b.10 f.5 *Sweet Bird of Youth*, 1984
- b.10 f.6 *talk, talk, talk...*, 1963
- b.10 f.7 *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1965
- b.10 f.8 *This is My Valley*, 1951
- b.10 f.9 *The Three Sisters*, 1964
- b.11 f.1 *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, 1969
- b.25 f.5 *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, 1969
- b.11 f.2 *To Hell the Rabbis*, undated
- b.13 f.6 *Torment*, undated
- b.11 f.3-6 *Wayward Wings/On Wayward Wings/Spooky Lady*, 1980-1984
- b.12 f.1-5 *Wayward Wings/On Wayward Wings/Spooky Lady*, 1980-1984
- b.13 f.1 *Whodunit*, 1983
- b.13 f.2-3 *Zorba*, 1972-1973
- b.14 f.9 *Zorba*, 1972-1973
- b.25 f.6 *Zorba*, 1968
- b.13 f.4 Unidentified and Various Productions, 1940s, undated
- b.14 f.10 Unidentified and Various Productions, 1940s, undated

Series II: Personal Files, 1911-1988 (12 boxes)

The bulk of this series consists of Baxley's personal correspondence. Though there are a few letters from friends and associates, the majority of this correspondence is between Baxley and her mother, Emma Tyler Baxley. This 30-year correspondence provides valuable insight into Baxley's life and career from the 1940s to the 1970s. There are also notes Baxley made for her lectures when she taught acting at Carnegie Mellon. She was an active member of The Actors Studio, and there are clippings and programs pertaining to her work with that organization. Baxley's childhood and family history are illustrated with photographs and documents, such as her birth certificate and a lesson book of her mother's. Baxley's friendship with actress Sandy Dennis is documented with photographs and a painting by Dennis. Baxley's long-standing professional association and personal friendship with the renowned playwright William Inge is represented here, with photographs, a drawing by Inge, a stack of hand-written reminiscences on Inge by Baxley, and correspondence, clippings, and programs relating to the William Inge Festival and the William Inge Collection, both in Independence, Kansas. Biographies, interviews, and general clippings on Baxley are also included in this series.

Arranged alphabetically by subject heading.

- b.22 f.4 The Actors Studio, 1980
 - Correspondence
- b.15 f.1-5 1942-1947
- b.16 f.1-5 1947-1949
- b.17 f.1-5 1950-1961
- b.18 f.1-4 1962-1964
- b.19 f.1-5 1965-1967
- b.20 f.1-5 1968-1969
- b.21 f.1-4 1969-1979
- b.22 f.1-3 1980-1989, undated
- b.22 f.5 Dennis, Sandy, 1976, undated
- b.25 f.7-8 Drawings of Baxley, undated
- b.22 f.6 Family and Childhood Documents and Photographs, 1911-1940s
- b.23 f.1-2 Inge, William , 1973-1980s
 - b.26 f.1 Inge, William , undated
 - b.23 f.3 Interviews and Biographies, 1948-1980
 - b.23 f.4 Miscellany, 1974, undated
- b.23 f.5-6 Photographs of Baxley and Friends, 1940s-1980s
 - b.24 f.1 Photographs of Baxley and Friends, 1940s-1980s
 - b.26 f.2 Photographs of Baxley and Friends, 1940s-1980s
- b.24 f.2-4 Teaching Notes on Acting and Career, 1963-1988, undated
- b.24 f.5-6 Theatrical Programs, 1936-1974
 - These are programs for productions Baxley did not appear in.