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Billy Rose Theatre Division**

Guide to the

Joe Darion papers

1954-1969

*T-Mss 1969-002

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, February 2013

Summary

Creator: Darion, Joe, 1917-2001

Title: Joe Darion papers, 1954-1969

Size: 3.57 linear feet (9 boxes)

Source: Donated by Joe Darion in 1969.

Abstract: Joe Darion (1917-2001) was an American lyricist most famous for the long-running musical, *Man of LaMancha*. The Joe Darion papers (1954-1969) consist of scripts, programs, clippings, reviews, and scores from his stage musicals *Ilya Darling*, and *The Megilla of Itzik Manger*, and the piece recorded under the titles *Archy and Mehitabel*, and *Echoes of Archy*, and produced on Broadway as *Shinbone Alley*.

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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Preferred citation: Joe Darion papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator history

Joe Darion (1917-2001) was an American lyricist most famous for the long-running musical, *Man of La Mancha*. Darion was born on January 30, 1911 in New York City and was educated at City College. In World War II Darion served in the Navy. In the 1950s he wrote lyrics for popular songs, including hits like "Ricochet," "Midnight Train," "The Ho-Ho Song" and "Changing Partners."

Darion's first theater piece was a jazz opera with music by George Kleinsinger, based on stories and vignettes by Don Marquis. Darion wrote the lyrics, but shared script credit with a young Mel Brooks. It was produced on Broadway in 1957, under the title *Shinbone Alley*. A 1954 concept album of the score, recorded as *Archy and Mehitabel*, preceded the stage production. This piece was also staged as a concert at Town Hall in 1955, and adapted for television as the *Play of the Week: Archy and Mehitabel*, which aired in 1960 and 1961. An animated film version was released as *Shinbone Alley* in 1971.

Darion's most notable work was his 1965 blockbuster musical, *Man of La Mancha*, for which he provided the lyrics to Mitch Leigh's music and Dale Wasserman's book. *Man of La Mancha* played 2,328 performances in its original Broadway run and won five Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Score for Leigh and Darion. Darion is most remembered for his lyrics for the iconic song "The Impossible Dream."

In 1967, Darion supplied lyrics for *Illya Darling*, a musical adaptation of Jules Dassin's film, *Never on Sunday*. The musical had a book by Dassin, and music by Manos Hadjidakis. Darion's next project was a bilingual (English and Yiddish) musical, *The Megilla of Itzik Manger*, which opened in 1968. The show featured music by Dov Seltzer and book and lyrics by Shmuel Bunim, Hayim Hefer, Manger, and Seltzer. Darion provided English commentaries.

Darion's later works include several collaborations with composer Ezra Laderman, such as the oratorio operas *And David Wept* (1971) and *Galileo Galilei* (1978), and the cantatas *The Questions of Abraham* (1973) and *A Handful of Souls* (1975). At the time of his death, Darion was working on a show called *Oswego*, with Jerome Coppersmith and William Goldstein.

With his wife, Hellen, Darion established a philanthropic organization, The Joe And Hellen Darion Foundation, Inc. Joe Darion died in Lebanon, New Hampshire, on June 6, 2001.

Scope and content note

The Joe Darion papers consist of scripts, programs, clippings, reviews, and scores from his stage musicals *Illya Darling*, *The Megilla of Itzik Manger*, and the piece recorded as *Archy and Mehitabel*, and *Echoes of Archy*, and produced on Broadway as *Shinbone Alley*. Production files on *Archy and Mehitabel/Shinbone Alley* include scripts, scores, programs, clippings, and reviews for every incarnation of the show. The bulk of the materials on this show are script drafts with handwritten notes and revisions. The *Illya Darling* folders contain many drafts of the script, some complete, others separated by scene, and some loose fragments and scenes. There are also programs, scores, clippings, and reviews. Materials on *The Megilla of Itzik Manger* consist of programs, script drafts, reviews, and clippings. This collection does not contain materials on *Man of La Mancha*, or any of Darion's later works and does not represent Darion's personal life.

This collection contains 18 reel-to-reel tapes of song demos. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at rha@nypl.org.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by show title.

Key terms

Subjects

Musical theater -- United States -- 20th century
Theater -- Israel

Occupations

Librettists
Lyricists

Names

Brooks, Mel, 1926-

Bunim, Shemu' el

Chatzidakis, Manos, 1925-1994

Darion, Joe, 1917-2001

Kleinsinger, George, 1914-1982

Manger, Itzik, 1901-1969

Seltzer, Dov

Special formats

Clippings

Programs

Scores

Scripts

Container list

Archy and Mehitabell/Shinbone Alley

- b.1 f.1-7 1954
- b.2 f.1-7 1956-1957
- b.3 f.1-3 1960
- b.3 f.4-8 1968-1969
 - b.4 f.1 1968-1969
- b.4 f.2-9 undated
- b.5 f.1-23 undated
- b.6 f.1-7 *Ilyya Darling*, 1966-1967
- b.7 f.1-33 *Ilyya Darling*, 1966-1967
- b.8 f.1-32 *The Megilla of Itzik Manger*, 1968
- b.9 f.1-3 *The Megilla of Itzik Manger*, 1968