

# **Guide to the Lawrence Tibbett Papers, 1916-1960**

**JPB 06-66**

## **Music Division**

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
New York, New York**

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## Descriptive Summary

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Lawrence Tibbett Papers</b>
<b>Collection ID:</b>	<b>JPB 06-66</b>
<b>Creator:</b>	<b>Tibbett, Lawrence</b>
<b>Extent:</b>	<b>3.25 linear feet; 5 boxes</b>
<b>Repository:</b>	<b>Music Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts</b>

**Abstract:** The papers of the American baritone singer Lawrence Tibbett consist primarily of photographs; they also include clippings and poems from admirers.

## Administrative Information

### Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

### Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division.

### Preferred Citation

Lawrence Tibbett Papers, JPB 06-66, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2006.

## Biographical Note

Lawrence Mervil Tibbett (November 16, 1896 - July 15, 1960) was acknowledged as the greatest American opera singer in his day. Born Tibbet he alternately spelled his last name with two t's at the end, the spelling he approved on his first contract with the Metropolitan Opera.

Lawrence Tibbett was born in Bakersfield, California, but was raised in Los Angeles where he first began vocal studies with Basil Ruysdael. By 1921, he was appearing as a concert singer and, in 1923, began coaching with Frank La Forge in New York City. Also in 1923, he auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera. His debut took place on November 24, 1923 in the small role of Lovitsky in *Boris Godunov*.

Lawrence Tibbett continued to gather experience and grow as an artist during the next few years singing such roles as Marullo (*Rigoletto*), Fleville (*Chenier*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), the Herald (*Lohengrin*) and Escamillo (*Carmen*). His career took a tremendous upward swing when he first performed Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff* on January 2, 1925, and was given a fifteen-minute ovation and front-page newspaper coverage the next day. During the next few years the smaller roles he had been concentrating on were replaced with major roles such as: Tonia (*Pagliacci*), Alfio (*Cavalleria*), Telramund (*Lohengrin*), Amonasro (*Aida*), the elder Germont (*Traviata*). His most often performed roles were Jonny (*Jonny Spielt Auf*), Jack Rance (*Fanciulla*), and in January of 1932 probably his most famous characterization, Simon Boccanegra.

During the 1930s and 1940s, he continued to display his versatility as Falstaff, Iago (*Otello*), Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*) and the villains in *Hoffmann*.

Tibbett was also instrumental in the world premieres in a number of operas including Taylor's *The King's Henchmen* (1927), *Peter Ibbetson* (1931), Gruenberg's *Emperor Jones* (1933), Hanson's *Merry Mount* (1934) and Seymour's *In A Pasha's Garden* (1935). The 1939 performance of *Boccanegra* is considered by historians to be one of the finest broadcasts given by the Metropolitan Opera and has been commercially released by the Metropolitan Opera Guild. All these performances show Tibbett's individual style and beautiful timbre, artistic probity and his ability to communicate with the subtlest inflections. Although Tibbett based his career at the Metropolitan Opera, he made numerous operatic and concert appearances throughout the world as well as radio broadcasts and recitals. He was the first internationally known artist to appear in full-length motion pictures and was extremely successful in this medium: *Rogue Song* (MGM 1930), *New Moon* (MGM 1930), *The Southerner/Prodigal Son* (MGM 1931), *Cuban Love Song* (MGM 1931), *Metropolitan* (20th Century Fox, 1935), and *Under Your Spell* (MGM, 1936).

He had a radio program on which he sang formal music; his sponsor was the Packard Motor Car Company. When the firm wanted to sell even less expensive cars, they had him add popular tunes to his repertoire.

Lawrence Tibbett died in 1960 in New York City as the result of a fall in his apartment.

## Scope and Content Note

The Lawrence Tibbett Papers consist of material dating from 1916-1960. They consist primarily of photographs of Lawrence Tibbett, his family and friends. They also include graphic sketches, poems from his fans and clippings. There is no substantial amount of correspondence or materials regarding the professional career of Lawrence Tibbett.

## Organization

The collection is organized into 3 series. They are:

Series I. Professional Papers.

Series II. Photographs

Series III. Oversized Materials

## Series Descriptions

### **Series I: (Professionals Papers).**

**1 box**

The series consist of poems from the singer's admirers, graphic sketches, a Metropolitan Opera House program, clippings, postcards and one music sketch.

### **Series II: (Photographs).**

**3 boxes**

The series consist of photographs of Lawrence Tibbett, his family, friends, scenery, two albums and unidentified persons.

### **Series II: (Oversized Materials).**

**1 box**

The series consist of two folders with a Lawrence Tibbett photograph and his pencil portraits.

## **SERIES I: PROFESSIONAL PAPERS (1935-1960)**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Burgard, Marston. <i>Beautiful Spring</i> . Poem, undated
	2	Clippings, 1939-1960
	3	Graphic sketches, 1939 (With autograph by unidentified author)
	4	Hartman, Howard A. Letter, 1939
	5	Invitation to the fifth anniversary of L.Tibbett wedding, undated
	6	Metropolitan Opera House. Program, 1935
	7	Postcards. The Cripple Creek trip, undated
	8	Ricci, Elettra. Poem <i>Al baritono Tibbet</i> and postcard, undated
	9	Sketch. R.Wagner. Tristan, undated

## **SERIES II: PHOTOGRAPHS (1916-1943)**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
2	1-2	Album, 1916-1919 On the first page note: Property of Jennie F.M.Adams
3	1-2	Album, 1934-1937, undated
4	1	Audience, undated
	2	Ella and Marie, 1932
	3	Eva, undated
	4	Interior, undated
	5	Mexico, undated
	6	Scenery, undated
	7	Signed photographs, 1936-1946, undated
		Tibbett, Lawrence, 1943-1946, undated
	8	Undated
	9	At his home bar, undated
	10	CBS, undated
	11	Metropolitan Opera, undated
	12	NBC, undated
	13	<i>The National Cyclopedica of American Biography</i> , undated
	14	On stage, undated
	15	With child, undated
	16	With dog, undated Note on the picture: Lawrence Tibbett shaking hands with "Emperor Jones" - dog given him in Paris by an admiring friend
	17	With friends, undated
	18	With orchestra, undated
	19	With Robert Lawrence, 1946 Note on the picture: Roma, 21 Maggio 1946. Lawrence Tibbett, celebre baritono americano (a sinistra) ed il Maestro Robert Lawrence studiano la partitura del "Porgy and Bessy" che sara' eseguita nel concerto che caranno il 30 Maggio a Roma. Il debutto avra' luogo Domenica 26 Maggio al Teatro Reale dell'Opera. Foto USIS.
	20	With wife, 1943, undated
	21	With wife and friends, undated
	22	Wife of L.Tibbett, undated
	23	Unidentified, undated

**SERIES III: OVERSIZED MATERIAL (1938, undated)**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   |   | Tibbett, Lawrence   |
| 5 | 1 | Graphic portraits, 1938   |
|   |   | Dedication: To Lawrence Tibbett to remind you of your captivation of Australia. |
|   |   | 1938 Athol Thompson.  |
|   | 2 | With unidentified couple, undated   |