



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Sherman Yellen papers

1957-2015

*T-Mss 2016-007

Compiled by Susan M. Kline, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Yellen, Sherman

Title: Sherman Yellen papers

Date: 1957-2015

Size: 6.68 linear feet (17 boxes)

Source: Donated by Sherman Yellen, 2016.

Abstract: The Sherman Yellen papers (1957-2015) document Yellen's career as a librettist, playwright, and screenwriter. The collection is primarily composed of scripts (both drafts and final scripts); a small amount of clippings, programs, and sound and video recordings are present. The Broadway musical *The Rothschilds* is the most well-represented work.

Conditions Governing Access:

Sound and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: Sherman Yellen papers, *T-Mss 2016-007. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Susan M. Kline, 2016.

Creator History

American screenwriter, playwright, and librettist Sherman Yellen (1932-) is best known for the 1970 Broadway musical *The Rothschilds* and as a collaborator of Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Richard Rodgers. Yellen's work includes biographical and period dramas, adaptations of literary classics, musicals, straight plays, and television dramas.

Born in New York City, Yellen studied creative writing and graduated from Bard College in 1953. *New Gods For Lovers*, one of Yellen's early plays, caught the attention of Hilliard Elkins, who asked Yellen to write a libretto based on Fred Morton's book *The Rothschilds*; this libretto became the first of three of Yellen's works to be produced on Broadway.

The Broadway production of *The Rothschilds* with music by Jerry Bock and lyrics by Sheldon Harnick opened in 1970 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre; it would be revived off-Broadway in 1990 at the American Jewish Theatre and reimagined as *Rothschild & Sons*. This revised version, staged at the York Theatre Company in 2015, featured a reduced cast and some new songs and lyrics.

In 1976, Yellen collaborated with Richard Rodgers and Harnick to bring *Rex*, a musical based on the last years of the life of Henry VIII, to Broadway. *Rex* was revived as a staged reading at the York Theatre Company in 2000, appeared at Stages!, the Chicago Festival of New Musicals in 2007, and was presented in Toronto in 2010. Yellen's play about Sinclair Lewis, *Strangers* was produced on Broadway in 1979.

Yellen also flourished as a television screenwriter. In the 1960s Hallmark commissioned *Cry of Angels*. He wrote the initial episodes of the 1976 PBS mini-series *Adams Chronicles* and won an Emmy Award for his writing; his adaptations of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Great Expectations* appeared on network television in the 1970s and 1980s.

His later works include *Say Yes* (also known as *This Fair World*), a musical set during the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair; *Esther Plays the Palace*, a 2012 collaboration with Richard Rodgers' grandson Peter Rodgers Melnick; *Josephine Tonight*, a musical based on Josephine Baker; and *Broadway Man* (originally titled *Jazz Singer*) about the life of Al Jolson.

Yellen is the recipient of two Emmy Awards, a Peabody Award, and a Christopher Award (for *Beauty in the Beast*). Bard College presented Yellen with a lifetime achievement award in Arts and Letters. He received a Tony Award nomination for *The Rothschilds*.

Scope and Content Note

The Sherman Yellen papers (1957-2015) document Yellen's prolific career as a playwright, librettist, and screenwriter. For many projects there are several drafts featuring changes and edits that provide insight into how the scripts were reworked before being produced, and how projects were revived and substantially changed years later (as was the case with *The Rothschilds* and *Rothschild & Sons*). Yellen's Broadway musicals *The Rothschilds* and *Rex* and his play *Broadway Man (Jazz Singer)* are the most well-represented works.

Files contain only scripts unless otherwise noted in the container list.

Arrangement: The collection is divided by type of project with sections for Yellen's musicals, plays, television and film projects, and sound and video recordings.

Key Terms

Occupations

Dramatists

Librettists -- United States
Playwrights -- United States
Screenwriters -- United States
Television writers -- United States

Subjects

Musicals
Playwriting
Television scripts -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Programs (documents)
Screenplays
Scripts

Names

Bock, Jerry. Rothschilds
Harnick, Sheldon

Container List

Musicals

- b. 1 f. 1 *Josephine Tonight* 2009
- b. 1 f. 2-6 *Lucky in the Rain* 1997
- b. 1 f. 7 *Oh! Calcutta!* 1969, 1981
Programs only.
- b. 2 f. 1-7 *Rex* 1975-1976, 2000-2013
Includes programs, clippings, and photographs.
- b. 3 f. 1-8 *Rex* 2007-2014
Includes music.
- The Rothschilds*
- b. 4 f. 1-6 1969-1975
Includes first draft and programs.
- b. 5 f. 1-5 1990-1992
- b. 17 Scrapbook 1970-1971
- b. 5 f. 6-8 *Rothschild & Sons* 2013-2014
- b. 6 f. 1-3 *Rothschild & Sons* 2014-2015
Includes programs.
- b. 6 f. 4 *The Rothschilds and Rothschild & Sons* 1970-1971, 2013-2015
Clippings and photograph.
- b. 6 f. 5-9 *Say Yes! (This Fair World)* 1996-2002
Includes first draft.
- b. 7 f. 1-4 *Say Yes! (This Fair World)* 2002-2003
- b. 7 f. 5-6 *Treasure Island (Adventure!)* 1998, 2012
Includes programs and music.

Plays

- b. 8 f. 1-7 *Broadway Man (Jazz Singer)* 1999-2011
Includes programs.
- b. 8 f. 8-10 *Budapest* 2005-2006, 2013
- b. 9 f. 1 *Curious Bargains*
- b. 9 f. 2-4 *December Fools* 2005-2006
- b. 9 f. 5 *Esther Plays the Palace* 2012
- b. 9 f. 6-7 *Gin Lane (Persons of Interest)* 2009
- b. 9 f. 8 *Jacob's Dream* circa 1966
- b. 10 f. 1-2 *New Gods for Lovers* circa 1963
- b. 10 f. 3 *A Parcel of Fortunes* circa 1961
- b. 10 f. 4 *Quadrille* 1993
- b. 10 f. 5 *Ride Upon a Storm* circa 1957
- b. 10 f. 6-7 *Strangers* 1979-1980
Includes programs and clippings.
- b. 11 f. 1 *Time Out of Marble* circa 1958
- b. 11 f. 2 *Vicky* circa 1972

Television and Film

Television and Film (cont.)

- b. 11 f. 3-4 *ABC Afternoon Playbreak "The Aspern Affair"* 1973
- b. 11 f. 5 *The Adams Chronicles* circa 1976
Part I.
- b. 11 f. 6 *Adams: First Family* 1973
Episode 3.
- b. 11 f. 7 *Adolph and Eva: The Devil's Mistress*
- b. 11 f. 8 *Atlantic Crossing*
- b. 12 f. 1 *Beauty and the Beast* [1976]
- b. 12 f. 2 *Black Jack* 1993
Treatment.
- b. 12 f. 3 *Black Snow*
Annotation on title page states "written for young Whoopi Goldberg."
- b. 12 f. 4-5 *A Cry of Angels* [1960s]
- b. 12 f. 6 *The Day They Shook the Palm Tree*
- b. 12 f. 7 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: A Musical*
- b. 13 f. 1-2 *A Face in the Light* 1975
Based upon the life of Alexander Graham Bell.
- b. 13 f. 3-4 *Flesh & Blood (The Widowmaker)*
- b. 13 f. 5 *Great Expectations* 1973
- b. 13 f. 6-7 *Judith Krantz's I'll Take Manhattan*
Parts I and II.
- b. 14 f. 1-3 *Love Offerings* 1980-1981
First draft, revision, and episode 3.
- b. 14 f. 4 *My Mother's Murderer (Retribution)*
- b. 14 f. 5 *Norman Rockwell's Early Days*
- b. 14 f. 6-7 *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* 1989?
Episode 2 rehearsal script and Episode 3.
- b. 15 f. 1 *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* 1989?
Episode 4.
- b. 15 f. 2 *The Phantom of the Opera* 1981
- b. 15 f. 3 *A Prowler in the Heart* 1973
- b. 15 f. 4 *Raising Daisy Rothschild (The Last Giraffe)* 1978
- b. 15 f. 5 *The Romance of Nelly Bly*
- b. 15 f. 6 *Shaharazade*
- b. 15 f. 7 *Stolen Holiday*
- b. 16 f. 1-2 *Times Square* 1987
- b. 16 f. 3 *Women on the Case*

Sound and Video Recordings

- origsr.245282 *Lucky in the Rain*
Original Sound recording unavailable until digitized.
- origsr.245283 *Rex*
Original sound recording unavailable until digitized.
- origsr.245280 *Rex*
Original sound recording unavailable until digitized.

Sound and Video Recordings (cont.)

- origsr.245281 *Say Yes*
Original sound recording unavailable until digitized.
- origsr.245279 *This Fair World*
Original sound recording unavailable until digitized.
- origvid.245273 *Treasure Island*
Original video unavailable until digitized.