



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Kevin Bradigan papers

1890s-1993 [bulk 1959-1993]

*T-Mss 1993-052

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

Summary

Creator: Bradigan, Kevin, 1951-1993

Title: Kevin Bradigan papers

Date: 1890s-1993 [bulk 1959-1993]

Size: 7.7 linear feet (19 boxes, 4 oversized folders)

Source: Donated by Agosto Machado, 1993.

Abstract: Kevin Bradigan was a photographer, actor, theater technician, and a member of John Vacarro's Play-House of the Ridiculous. The Kevin Bradigan papers primarily document Bradigan's personal life and involvement in the Play-House of the Ridiculous and other experimental theater from the late 1960s to the 1980s. The collection also holds some papers of performers Jackie Curtis and Douglas Fisher.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

Conditions Governing Access:

Inquiries regarding videorecordings in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatre@nypl.org). Videorecordings will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Processing note: Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

Creator History

Kevin Bradigan (1951-1993) was a photographer, actor, theater technician, and a member of the Play-House of the Ridiculous. Born in New Jersey, Bradigan moved with his parents to New York City in the early 1960s.

In 1967 and 1968, Bradigan followed Judy Garland on tour, working occasionally as a production assistant. In 1969, he became a member of the Play-House of the Ridiculous, an experimental theater company headed by director John Vaccaro. In addition to being an actor and technician for the Play-House, Bradigan photographed and filmed shows, including *The Magic Show of Dr. Ma-Gico* and *The 60 Minute Queer Show*. In the 1970s and 1980s, Bradigan also worked on other experimental theater productions in various capacities, working at venues such as La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club and Theater for the New City.

Scope and Content Note

The Kevin Bradigan papers (1890s-1993, bulk 1959-1993) document Bradigan's personal life and involvement in the Play-House of the Ridiculous and other experimental and Off-Off-Broadway theater from the late 1960s to the 1980s. The collection also holds some papers of performers Jackie Curtis and Douglas Fisher. Some of the material is accompanied by explanatory notes written after Bradigan's death in 1993.

Biographical papers contain one folder of resumes and chronologies of Bradigan's work with theater and film. The biographical papers also contain Bradigan's educational and medical records, documenting his treatment and institutionalization for mental illness as an adolescent in the 1960s.

Correspondence is with Bradigan's friends, family, and colleagues, and dates from 1967 to 1993. The subject matter is mostly personal, but promotional mailings regarding plays and performances are also present. Early letters include Bradigan's accounts of meeting Judy Garland and watching her perform.

Bradigan's writings consist of his personal journals, notebooks, and daily diaries; his college coursework; various drafts, notes, and poetry; and scripts and notes related to his unproduced screenplay, *Low: The President's Evil Sister*. A small number of materials from Bradigan's work on theatrical productions, and short letters and messages to Bradigan, are mixed in with his writings.

Some scripts are present in the collection. Among these are plays by Kenneth Bernard, Gary Indiana, and Melba LaRose, Jr. Many are for Play-House of the Ridiculous productions, and some are annotated.

Photographs in the collection are mostly taken by Bradigan and largely date from the late 1960s and 1970s. Bradigan's subjects include the Play-House of the Ridiculous, Madame Ekathrina Sobechanskaya (Larry Ree), *Vain Victory: The Vicissitudes of the Damned*, and the Cockettes during their 1971 trip to New York. Photographs include candid and backstage images, as well as images of performances. The collection also holds series of photographs that Bradigan took of performance artist Tom Murrin in 1978, and of Judy Garland performing at John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia in 1968. One early unidentified photographic portrait dates to around the 1890s.

Videorecordings of Play-House of the Ridiculous performances are also present. Inquiries regarding

videorecordings in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatre@nypl.org). Videorecordings will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Promotional materials consist mostly of posters, ranging from professionally printed posters to hand-made, photocopied fliers. Clippings, publications, and programs are also present. Shows by Madame Ekathrina Sobechanskaya's Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet Company, Jackie Curtis, and the Play-House of the Ridiculous are well-represented. Play-House materials include posters from tours in the Netherlands and France. Promotional materials also contain a collage of candid photographs from Jackie Curtis's Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit, mounted with a review of the show. Other artists and productions represented in the promotional materials include Holly Woodlawn, Penny Arcade, plays by Gary Indiana, and the Cockettes show at Anderson Theatre.

The collection contains some papers of Jackie Curtis and Douglas Fisher. Fisher, who sometimes performed as Estelle R. Dallas, was a member of the Play-House of the Ridiculous and co-founder of the Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet. Both Curtis and Fisher were friends of Bradigan. Fisher's and Curtis's papers include personal photographs, scripts, correspondence, and ephemera. Photographs and other material from Curtis's and Fisher's memorial services are also present.

Arrangement: The Kevin Bradigan papers are arranged in eight categories: Biographical Papers, Correspondence, Jackie Curtis Papers, Douglas Fisher Papers, Photographs, Promotional Materials, Scripts by Others, and Writings.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Photographs
Posters

Subjects

Experimental theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Female impersonators -- New York (State) -- New York
Transvestites -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

Curtis, Jackie, 1947-1985
Fisher, Douglas, 1947-1990
Garland, Judy
Cockettes (Theatrical troupe)
La Mama Experimental Theatre Club
Play-House of the Ridiculous
Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet Company

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-9 Biographical Papers
 - Correspondence
 - b. 9 f. 5-9 1966-1970
 - b. 10 f. 1-6 1967-1980s
 - b. 11 f. 1-7 1968-1993
 - b. 12 f. 1-6 1969-1992
 - b. 14 f. 1-2 1973-1979
 - b. 13 f. 1-7 1975-1993
- b. 15 f. 1-11 Jackie Curtis Papers 1959-1985
- b. 14 f. 3-8 Douglas Fisher Papers 1960s-1990
 - Photographs
 - b. 9 f. 1-4 1890s, 1970-1972
 - b. 7 f. 9-10 1966-1970s
 - b. 8 f. 1-8 1966-1993
 - Includes the Cockettes and Judy Garland.
 - b. 16 f. 1-14 1969-1970s
 - Includes Vain Victory and the Cockettes.
 - b. 17 f. 1 1971-1981
 - Promotional Material
 - b. 17 f. 2-3 Clippings 1971-1981
 - Mostly French and Dutch.
 - b. 7 f. 1-8 Clippings, Fliers, Posters, and Programs 1970s-1992
 - o. 1 Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit Collage 1969
 - LPA C12 Dwr #18
 - Posters
 - b. 18 f. 1-6 1968-1980, undated
 - Includes the Cockettes at Anderson Theatre and Alligator Girls Go to College.
 - b. 17 f. 4-14 1971-1985
 - Includes the Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet, Play-House of the Ridiculous, Vain Victory, and The Roman Polanski Story.
 - b. 19 f. 1-5 1969-1980
 - Includes Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet and Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit.
 - o. 4 Cabaret in the Sky 1974
 - LPA C12 Dwr #18
 - o. 3 The Palm Casino Revue; The Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet Company 1973-1982
 - LPA C12 Dwr #18
 - o. 2 Play-House of the Ridiculous 1967-1973
 - LPA C12 Dwr #18
- b. 6 f. 1-11 Scripts by Others 1965-1984
 - Writings
 - b. 2 f. 1-6 1965-1980s
 - b. 4 f. 1-7 1966-1991

Writings (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 10 1967-1977
- b. 3 f. 1-5 1968-1978, 1990
- b. 5 f. 1-6 1980s