



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Anna Sosenko papers

1860s-2000

*T-Mss 1995-017

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

Summary

Creator: Sosenko, Anna

Title: Anna Sosenko papers

Date: 1860s-2000

Size: 2.93 linear feet (3 boxes, 8 volumes, 2 oversized folders)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Anna Sosenko, 2001.

Abstract: Anna Sosenko (1909-2000) was a producer, artist manager, collector, and composer. She was best known for launching and managing the career of the cabaret artist Hildegarde, as well as for producing tribute shows to actors and other theatrical figures. The Anna Sosenko papers (1868-2000) document Sosenko's career through photographs, letters, subject files, scores, and posters.

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>

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Creator History

Anna Sosenko (1909-2000) was a producer, artist manager, collector, and composer. She was best known for launching and managing the career of the cabaret artist Hildegarde for almost 30 years, and wrote her most popular song, "Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup." Sosenko also assisted Alan Jay Lerner, Joseph Stein, and others in their early careers, and produced radio programs in the 1940s and

1950s, including Hildegarde's Raleigh Room (1945-1947).

Later in her career, Sosenko used her close connections with countless actors and theater figures to produce a series of all-star tributes to Dorothy Fields, Richard Rodgers, Joshua Logan, George Abbott, Ethel Merman, Mary Martin, Carol Channing, Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, Jule Styne, and others. Some of these events were benefits for the Theatre Collection of the Museum of the City of New York, while others were held as functions of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

Sosenko was also a collector and seller of art and theater memorabilia. She produced exhibitions of her holdings, such as her collection of material documenting the Shubert family at the Museum of the City of New York in 1976.

Scope and Content Note

The Anna Sosenko papers (1868-2000) document Sosenko's career as an artist manager, event producer, and collector of art and theater memorabilia through photographs, letters, subject files, scores, and posters.

Photographs comprise the bulk of the collection. They are divided into sections on Hildegarde and Sosenko. The loose photographs of Hildegarde mainly depict the singer, guest artists, and friends on her radio program Hildegarde's Raleigh Room (1945-1947). Guests shown include Tallulah Bankhead, Burgess Meredith, Roddy McDowall, Elaine Stritch, Paulette Goddard, Joan Fontaine, Clifton Webb, Ben Hecht, Gene Krupa, Hank Greenberg, Ned Sparks, Arthur Schwartz, Bert Lahr, and Elliott and Faye Roosevelt. There are also 1950 photographs of Hildegarde in Paris with Dorothy Kilgallen, Elizabeth Taylor, and Jacques Dumesnil; and an album of performance photographs in Chicago in the 1950s.

Sosenko's photographs contain images of events she produced, as well as of family and private events. Events with dedicated photo albums include tributes to Joshua Logan (1975); Mary Martin and Ethel Merman (1978); and Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe (1980). Also present are images of Sosenko's Shubert exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York (1976); unidentified events at the Museum; and the Songwriters Hall of Fame ceremony of 1977, which has a program signed by Howard Dietz, Jule Styne, Hoagy Carmichael, Oscar Brand, Harold Rome, Meredith Willson, and Louis Alter. The single scrapbook contains notes and clippings regarding the Shubert exhibit.

Sosenko's private photographs include her 1979 birthday party, as well as family events. Guests included Diana Rigg, Kitty Carlisle, Sylvia Fine, George Balanchine, Maureen O'Sullivan, Mary Martin, Martha Graham, Zero Mostel, Cyril Ritchard, Barbara Walters, Beverly Sills, Virgil Thomson, Placido Domingo, Agnes de Mille, Helen Hayes, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Laurence Olivier, Ethel Merman, and Myrna Loy.

Letters to Sosenko are from Bobby Short, Alan Jay Lerner, Edward Choate, Mary Martin, Ervin Drake, Frances Spingold, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Greer Garson, Fannie Hurst, Joshua Logan, Morton Gould, and Polly Bergen.

The papers also hold a small portion of Sosenko's collected letters and theater memorabilia. These include letters to the theatrical attorney L. Arnold Weissburger from Roald Dahl, Patricia Neal, Sammy Cahn, Hugh Wheeler, and Barbara Walters. Other collected letters are from Cornelia Otis Skinner, Mary Anderson, Rubin Goldmark, William Faversham, Ada Rehan, Joseph Jefferson, and P.G. Wodehouse. Sosenko's collection also holds photographs of the actors Julie Harris, Boris Karloff, Alfred Hunt, Jose

Ferrer, Mary Frances Scott-Siddons, Billy Dee Williams, and Maude Brauscombe. Some photographs date from the mid-19th century, as do collected theater programs. Sosenko's art collection (as well as Hildegarde's) is represented by photographs of works on public display, as well as in Sosenko's apartment.

The subject files include a folder of biographical information about Sosenko; Hildegarde souvenir books and letters written to the singer regarding Sosenko's death; published song scores and a manuscript by Sosenko; correspondence with the writer Irving Stone about possible adaptations of his work; Sosenko's proposals and plot synopses for television or stage production; and memorabilia regarding events she produced from the 1970s to the early 1990s. These include programs, clippings, letters, and posters (one of which is signed by Ethel Merman).

Arrangement: The papers are in four sections: Collections of Art and Theater Memorabilia; Letters; Photographs and Scrapbook; and other files.

Key Terms

Occupations

Collectors
Composers
Producers (managers)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs
Programs (documents)
Scores
Scrapbooks

Subjects

Theater -- United States -- 19th century
Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Names

Dahl, Roald
Hildegarde, 1906-2005
Museum of the City of New York. Theatre and Music Collection

Container List

Collections of Art and Theater Memorabilia

- b. 1 f. 1 Hildegarde Art Collection undated

Sosenko Collections

- b. 1 f. 2 Apartment Photographs undated
Photographs of works on Sosenko's walls.
- b. 1 f. 3 Auction Catalogs 1947-1993
- b. 1 f. 4 Galleries 1977, undated
Photographs of Sosenko in galleries with art and memorabilia.

Letters

- b. 1 f. 5 1897-1949
- b. 1 f. 6 Skinner, Cornelia Otis (letters from) 1954, 1967
- b. 1 f. 7-8 Weissburger, L. Arnold (letters to) 1957-1975
- b. 1 f. 9 Wodehouse, P.G 1972-1973
To Guy Bolton.

Theater Photographs

- b. 1 f. 10 1860s-1976, undated
- o. 1 circa 1900-1920
C12 Dwr #32
- b. 1 f. 11 Harris, Julie 1956
The Lark stage play and television adaptation, with Boris Karloff.
- b. 1 f. 12 Theater Programs 1868-1910

Letters to Sosenko

- b. 1 f. 13-15 1936-1995
- b. 1 f. 16 Bergen, Polly 1985

Photographs and Scrapbook

Hildegarde

- b. 1 f. 17 *Hildegarde's Raleigh Room* 1945-1947, undated
- b. 1 f. 18 Mannequin undated
Possibly in window of Plaza Hotel.
- b. 1 f. 19 Paris 1950
- b. 2 f. 1 Performance Album circa 1950s
Performance and back stage photographs in Chicago.
- b. 2 f. 2 Persian Room, Oklahoma City undated

Sosenko, Anna

- v. 1 1972
- v. 2 1979
- v. 3 1980
- v. 4 Undated
- b. 2 f. 3 Birthday Party 1979
- b. 2 f. 4 Caricatures undated
Photographs of drawings of Sosenko and Hildegarde by William Gropper.
- v. 5 *A Gala Tribute to Joshua Logan* 1975

Photographs and Scrapbook (cont.)
Sosenko, Anna (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 5 Lerner, Alan Jay, and Frederick Loewe Tribute 1980
 - v. 6 Martin, Mary, and Ethel Merman Tribute 1978
- b. 2 f. 6 Museum of the City of New York Events undated
Sosenko with Joshua Logan and Natasha Makarova.
Shubert Exhibit 1976
- b. 2 f. 7 Loose Photographs
 - v. 7 Album
 - v. 8 Scrapbook
- b. 2 f. 8 Songwriters Hall of Fame 1977
- b. 2 f. 9 Biographical Papers 1968-1993, undated
Clippings, press releases, exhibit programs.
- b. 2 f. 10 Copyright Registrations 1945-1946
- b. 2 f. 11 Hildegarde 1950s, 2000
- b. 2 f. 12 Scores 1930s-1950s
Published piano-vocal scores for songs by Sosenko associated with Hildegarde, published orchestral arrangement of Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup, and manuscript lead sheet for Rome By Moonlight.
- b. 2 f. 13 Stone, Irving 1949-1971
Correspondence with Stone, L. Arnold Weissburger, and others regarding Stone's books.
- b. 3 f. 1-2 Television and Drama Ideas 1956, undated
Tributes and Events
- b. 3 f. 3-4 1972-1992
 - o. 2 1976, 1984
C12 Dwr #32