



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Joseph Stein papers

1955-1993

*T-Mss 1993-010

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2014

Summary

Creator: Stein, Joseph

Title: Joseph Stein papers

Date: 1955-1993

Size: 10.29 linear feet (25 boxes)

Source: Donated by Joseph Stein in 1993 and 1994.

Abstract: Joseph Stein (1912-2010) was an American playwright and librettist, best known for his book for the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. The Joseph Stein papers (1955-1993) document Stein's professional life with scripts, a small amount of other production materials, and business correspondence. Stein's musicals *The Baker's Wife* and *Rags* are most extensively represented in this collection.

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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Processing note: Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2014

Related Materials:

Joseph Stein Papers, 1942-1969. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives / Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

Creator History

Joseph Stein was born in the Bronx, New York, on May 30, 1912. He graduated from City College of New York in 1934 and earned a master's degree in social work from Columbia University in 1937. He worked as a social worker for many years until a chance meeting with the comedian Zero Mostel led to Stein writing material for a radio show. He started writing sketches and landed one in the Broadway revue, *Lend an Ear* (1948).

Stein's first full-length play on Broadway was the 1949 comedy *Mrs. Gibbon's Boys*, a collaboration with Will Glickman. In 1950, he wrote sketches for the revue *Alive and Kicking*. During the next decade he wrote the librettos for the musicals *Plain and Fancy* (1955), *Mr. Wonderful* (1956), *The Body Beautiful* (1958), *Juno* (1959), and *Take Me Along* (1959).

In 1963, Stein adapted actor and comedian Carl Reiner's semi-autobiographical novel, *Enter Laughing* (1958), into a hit Broadway comedy. Stein wrote the screenplay for the 1967 film version of *Enter Laughing*, as well as the libretto for the 1976 musical version, *So Long, 174th Street*. During the 1950s and 1960s Stein also wrote material for several television shows, most notably Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*.

In 1964, Stein wrote the libretto for *Fiddler on the Roof*, one of the most critically and commercially successful musicals of all time, and he later wrote the screenplay for the 1971 film version. After *Fiddler*, Stein wrote librettos for such musicals as *Zorba* (1968), *Irene* (1973), *King of Hearts* (1978), *Carmelina* (1979), and *Rags* (1986). Stein wrote librettos for some musicals that were never produced on Broadway including the cult classic *The Baker's Wife*, and Kander and Ebb's *All About Us* (an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*).

Joseph Stein was married to Sadie Singer, with whom he had three sons, until her death in 1974. In 1975 he married actress and psychotherapist Elisa Loti. Joseph Stein died in New York on October 24, 2010.

Scope and Content Note

The Joseph Stein papers (1955-1993) document Stein's career as a playwright, librettist, and screenwriter, and the process of creating and revising his major stage and film works. *Rags*; *The Baker's Wife*; *Carmelina*; *Zorba*; and *So Long, 174th Street* are represented most extensively in this collection. Many unproduced film, television, and theatre projects are also contained in this collection, as well as shows to which Stein contributed as an unaccredited consultant or script doctor. These include *The Rothschilds*, *Sheep on the Runway*, and *Minnie's Boys*.

Production materials illuminate Stein's writing process with multiple drafts of revised and annotated scripts, excerpts, rewritten scenes, outlines and treatments. There are also photographs and a program from a Hebrew production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Production files pertaining to *Enter Laughing* include programs, reviews and a letter discussing weekly grosses.

This collection also contains a small amount of business correspondence. These letters document negotiations for professional projects between Stein and various collaborators, lawyers, potential producers, and agents. Correspondence frequently discusses film rights and later productions of such shows as *Rags*, *the Baker's Wife*, and *Zorba*.

This collection does not contain personal materials.

Arrangement: This collection is divided into two categories: Productions and Business Correspondence.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Photographs
Scripts

Occupations

Librettists
Playwrights
Screenwriters

Subjects

Motion picture authorship -- United States
Musical theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Musicals -- Librettos
Musicals -- Production and direction
Musicals -- Writing and publishing
Theater -- 20th century
Theater -- Production and direction -- United States -- 20th century

Names

Daniels, Stan
Ebb, Fred
Kander, John
Lane, Burton, 1912-1997
Lerner, Alan Jay, 1918-1986
Reiner, Carl, 1922-
Schwartz, Stephen
Strouse, Charles

Container List

Productions 1955-1988

The Baker's Wife

- b. 1 f. 1-7 1975-1976
- b. 2 f. 1-6 1976
- b. 3 f. 1-6 1976
- b. 4 f. 1-7 1976
- b. 5 f. 1-9 1979-1988
- b. 6 f. 1 1988
- b. 6 f. 2 *Before the Dawn* 1981
- b. 6 f. 3-5 *Call It Sleep*

Carmelina

- b. 6 f. 6 1975
- b. 7 f. 1-6 1978-1987
- b. 8 f. 1-2 *Enter Laughing* 1963, 1966
- b. 8 f. 3-5 *Fiddler on the Roof* 1969
- b. 8 f. 6 *Free Ride*
- b. 8 f. 7 Gilford, Jack -- Unidentified Project
- b. 8 f. 8 *God Knows* 1991
- b. 9 f. 1 *Good As Gold* 1978
- b. 9 f. 2-4 *Irene* 1972-1973
- b. 9 f. 5-8 *Juno* circa 1959, 1976
- b. 10 f. 1-5 *King of Hearts* 1978

Minnie's Boys

- b. 10 f. 6 1970
- b. 11 f. 1 1970
- b. 11 f. 2 *Mr. Wonderful* 1955
- b. 11 f. 3 *Mrs. Gibbons' Boys*
- b. 11 f. 4 *Pocketful of Rye* circa 1960

Rags

- b. 11 f. 5 1977
- b. 12 f. 1-7 1977-1982
- b. 13 f. 1-8 1982-1983
- b. 14 f. 1-5 1983-1984
- b. 15 f. 1-5 1984-1985
- b. 16 f. 1-6 1985-1986
- b. 17 f. 1-5 1986
- b. 18 f. 1-6 1986-1988
- b. 19 f. 1-6 1988
- b. 19 f. 7 *The Ramayana* 1965

Productions (cont.)

- b. 20 f. 1-3 *The Rothschilds* 1970
 - b. 20 f. 4-5 *Sheep on the Runway* 1969
 - b. 21 f. 1-7 *So Long, 174th Street* 1974-1976
 - b. 22 f. 1-2 *Take Me Along* circa 1959, 1984
 - b. 22 f. 3 *Three Bags Full*
Zorba
 - b. 22 f. 4-7 1968
 - b. 23 f. 1-3 1968, 1987
 - b. 23 f. 4 Unidentified Projects
- Business Correspondence 1964-1993
- b. 23 f. 5-12 1964-1969
 - b. 24 f. 1-8 1969-1993
 - b. 24 f. 9 *The Baker's Wife* 1966
 - b. 24 f. 10-11 *Call It Sleep* 1968-1974
 - b. 24 f. 12-13 *Enter Laughing* 1967-1973
Fiddler on the Roof
 - b. 24 f. 14-19 1967-1969
 - b. 25 f. 1 1977-1984
 - b. 25 f. 2-3 *Juno* 1973-1975
 - b. 25 f. 4 *King of Hearts* 1978
 - b. 25 f. 5 *Plain and Fancy* 1968
 - b. 25 f. 6 *The Ramayana* 1967
 - b. 25 f. 7 *The Rothschilds* 1971-1972
 - b. 25 f. 8 *Sleuth* 1970-1972
 - b. 25 f. 9 *So Long, 174th Street* 1973
 - b. 25 f. 10 *Summer in Dixie* 1966
 - b. 25 f. 11 *We Bombed in New Haven* 1968
 - b. 25 f. 12 *Zorba* 1969-1974