



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Paul Muni papers

circa 1920-1967

*T-Mss 1967-005

Processed by Mary Ellen Rogan.

Summary

Creator: Muni, Paul, 1895-1967

Title: Paul Muni papers

Date: circa 1920-1967

Source: Gift, Bella Muni, 1967

Abstract: The Paul Muni papers span the years 1920 through 1967 and consist of correspondence, photographs, clippings, scrapbooks, personal papers and writings documenting his career as an actor of stage and screen. The correspondence contains letters from many notables of the day and often discuss Muni's political and professional opinions. Correspondents include: Maxwell Anderson, Sherwood Anderson, Rex Beach, Noel Coward, Albert Einstein, Lion Feuchtwanger, John Golden, Arthur Hopkins, Helen Morgan, Dick Powell, Billy Rose and Blanche Yurka. Personal papers contain many programs and personal photographs as well as a notebook written by Muni in Hebrew or Yiddish and a sketch of him by Staats Cotsworth. Scrapbooks in the collection are primarily clippings with reviews and articles about Muni and his roles in plays and movies. However three of the scrapbooks document trips taken by him and his wife to Paris, Vienna and Israel. Other items of note include autographed photographs from friends and a photograph of Muni with Amelia Earhart on the set of *THE WOMAN I LOVE*.

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:

Photocopying prohibited.

Conditions Governing Use: For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Preferred citation: Paul Muni Papers, *T-Mss 1967-005, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Language of the Material: Some material is in Yiddish

Processing note: Processed by Mary Ellen Rogan. The collection was reprocessed and recataloged with a finding aid written both for the repository and the Web between January and April 2000.

Separated Materials:

The Last Angry Man - 8-MFLP
The Last Angry Man- MFLM +
Nobel- MFLM +
Nobel- MFLM +
They Knew What They Wanted - NCOF 74-485
Inherit the Wind- NCOF +
Counsellor-at-Law-NCOF +
The Light of Heart- NCOF +
Home At Seven- NCOF + 74-123

Related Materials:

Lawrence and Lee Collection of Paul Muni Materials at the Harvard Theatre Collection

Creator History

Paul Muni (Mehilem Weisenfreund), actor of stage and screen, was born in Austria on September 22, 1895. Muni's early career on the American stage was in the Yiddish theater where he acted under the name Muni Weisenfreund. His first role was in the production *Two Corpses at Breakfast* in 1908. During the years 1908 through 1926 he toured in Yiddish theater productions becoming a member of the Yiddish Art Theatre in 1918. Paul Muni married Bella Finkel an actress of the Yiddish theater on May 8, 1921.

In 1926 he played Morris Levine in the play *We Americans* followed in 1927 by the play *Four Walls*. In 1930 he began using the name Paul Muni. Plays he starred in after that date include *Counsellor-At-Law*, *Key Largo*, *A Flag Is Born*, *They Knew What They Wanted*, *Death of a Salesman* and *Inherit the Wind* for which he won a Tony Award.

Muni was also a successful motion picture actor, appearing in many notable Hollywood films including *Scarface*, *I Am A Fugitive From a Chain Gang*, *Black Fury*, *Dr. Socrates*, *The Story of Louis Pasteur* for which he won an Oscar in 1936, *The Good Earth*, *The Woman I Love*, *The Life of Emile Zola*, *We Are Not Alone*, *Commandos Strike At Dawn* and *The Last Angry Man*.

Paul Muni had a great interest in the plight of European Jews and this can be seen in the correspondence with his friends and professional contacts. He starred in Ben Hecht's pageant *A Flag Is Born* which rallied support for Israel. Paul Muni died in California on August 25, 1967.

Custodial History

The collection was donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division sometime before 1969.

Scope and Content Note

The Paul Muni papers span the years 1920 through 1967 and consist of correspondence, photographs, clippings, scrapbooks, personal papers and writings documenting his career as an actor of stage and screen. The correspondence contains letters from many notables of the day and often discuss Muni's political and professional opinions. Correspondents include: Maxwell Anderson, Sherwood Anderson, Rex Beach, Noel Coward, Albert Einstein, Lion Feuchtwanger, John Golden, Arthur Hopkins, Helen Morgan, Dick Powell, Billy Rose and Blanche Yurka. Personal papers contain many programs and personal photographs as well as a notebook written by Muni in Yiddish containing an adaptation of a work by Sholem Aleichem and a sketch of him by Staats Cotsworth. Scrapbooks in the collection are primarily clippings with reviews and articles about Muni and his roles in plays and movies. However three of the scrapbooks document trips taken by him and his wife to Paris, Vienna and Israel. Other items of note include autographed photographs from friends and a photograph of Muni with Amelia Earhart on the set of *The Woman I Love*.

Arrangement: Series I: Correspondence Series II: Personal Papers Series III: Scrapbooks Series IV: Oversized Materials

Key Terms

Subjects

Acting
Motion picture actors and actresses

Occupations

Actors

Titles

Black fury (Motion picture)
Bordertown (Motion picture)
Commandos strike at dawn (Motion picture)
Dr. Socrates (Motion picture)
Good earth (Motion picture)
I am a fugitive from a chain gang (Motion picture)
Juárez (Motion picture)
Last angry man (Motion picture)
Life of Emile Zola (Motion picture)
Scarface (Motion picture : 1932)
Seven faces (Motion picture)
Story of Louis Pasteur (Motion picture)
We are not alone (Motion picture)
Woman I love (Motion picture)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photoprints
Scrapbooks

Names

Muni, Paul, 1895-1967
Anderson, Maxwell, 1888-1959
Anderson, Sherwood, 1876-1941
Beach, Rex, 1877-1949
Cotsworth, Staats, 1908-1979
Coward, Noel, 1899-1973
Crawford, Cheryl, 1902-1986
Earhart, Amelia, 1897-1937
Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955
Feuchtwanger, Lion, 1884-1958
Golden, John, 1874-1955
Hopkins, Arthur, 1878-1950
Morgan, Helen, 1900-1941
Muni, Bella
Powell, Dick, 1904-1963
Rose, Billy, 1899-1966
Warner, Harry Morris, 1881-1958
Yurka, Blanche

Container List

Series I: Correspondence, ca. 1932-1962 (22 folders)

This series contains correspondence to Paul Muni from many friends, associates and business acquaintances. The letters are primarily from the 1930s and 1940s and reflect Muni's concerns for the war, the Jews in Europe and other timely issues of the era. Correspondents include Maxwell Anderson, Rex Beach and John Golden. Of special note is a copy of a letter from Albert Einstein with a translation included.

Alphabetical

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence / Maxwell Anderson 1939-1940 (1 folder (2 letters))
Correspondence to Paul Muni from Maxwell Anderson.
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence / Sherwood Anderson May 8, 1933 (1 folder (1 letter))
Correspondence to Paul Muni from Sherwood Anderson.
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence "A" ca. 1940-1949 (1 folder (3 letters))
- b. 1 f. 4 Correspondence / Rex Beach 1935 (1 folder (2 letters))
- b. 1 f. 5 Correspondence "B" ca. 1945-1949 (1 folder (5 letters))
- b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence "C" 1932-1958 (1 folder (3 letters))
Coward, Noel, 1899-1973Crawford, Cheryl, 1902-1986
Correspondence to Paul Muni from friends and business acquaintances, including Noel Coward and Cheryl Crawford.
- b. 1 f. 7 Correspondence "D-E",. 1939-1955 (1 folder (3 letters))
Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955
Correspondence to Paul Muni from friends and business acquaintances. Includes photocopy of a letter from Albert Einstein with an English translation.
- b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence / John Golden 1949 (1 folder (2 telegrams))
- b. 1 f. 9 Correspondence "F-G" 1933-1942 (1 folder (5 letters))
Feuchtwanger, Lion, 1884-1958
Correspondence to Paul Muni from friends and business acquaintances, including Lion Feuchtwanger.
- b. 1 f. 10 Correspondence / Arthur Hopkins 1941 (1 folder (4 letters))
- b. 1 f. 11 Correspondence "H" 1930-1946 (1 folder (5 letters with 2 enclosures))
- b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence "J-L" 1939-1942 (1 folder (4 letters))
- b. 1 f. 13 Correspondence / Marjorie Mills 1949 (1 folder (4 letters))
- b. 1 f. 14 Correspondence / Helen Morgan (1 folder (1 letter))
- b. 1 f. 15 Correspondence "M" 1934-1945 (1 folder (4 letters))
- b. 1 f. 16 Correspondence "N" 1936-1950 (1 folder (5 letters))
- b. 1 f. 17 Correspondence / Dick Powell 1962 (1 folder (1 letter))
- b. 1 f. 18 Correspondence "R" 1939-1943 (1 folder (4 letters))
Rose, Billy, 1899-1966
Correspondence to Paul Muni from friends and business acquaintances, including Billy Rose.
- b. 1 f. 19 Correspondence "S" 1938-1947 (1 folder (10 letters))
- b. 1 f. 20 Correspondence "T-U" 1940-1945 (1 folder (4 letters))
- b. 1 f. 21 Correspondence "W-Z" 1932-1941 (1 folder (4 letters))
Warner, HalWarner, Harry Morris, 1881-1958Yurka, Blanche
Correspondence to Paul Muni from friends and business acquaintances, including Blanche Yurka and Harry Warner.
- b. 1 f. 22 Unidentified correspondence ca. 1956 (1 folder (2 letters))

Series II: Personal Papers ca. 1929-1959 (13 folders)

This series contains awards given to Muni, programs from some of his productions, photographs, some personal, as well as production photographs, writings and other ephemera belonging to Paul Muni and his wife, Bella. Included as well are 2 pamphlets, one entitled *Fundamentalism vs Evolution at Dayton, Tennessee* and the other, *Medicine Under Mussolini*. Of special note is a sketch of Paul Muni done by Staats Cotsworth and a notebook written probably by Paul Muni in either Hebrew or Yiddish.

- b. 1 f. 23 **Awards / Paul Muni 1936-1959 (1 folder)**
Best picture of the month Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America Actors' Fund of America Box Office Blue Ribbon Award
Awards given to Paul Muni from various organizations. Included are awards from Box Office, Hadassah and the Actors' Fund.
- b. 1 f. 24 **Benefit programs 1937-1957 (1 folder (2 programs))**
Screen Actors Guild
Benefit programs for the 4th Annual Screen Actors Guild Ball and the Clarence Darrow Centenary.
- b. 1 f. 25 **Ephemera / Paul Muni 1938-1967 (1 folder)**
- b. 1 f. 26 **Notebook in Yiddish containing adaptation of work by Sholem Aleichem / Paul Muni (1 folder)**
- b. 1 f. 27 ***Fundamentalism vs. evolution at Dayton, Tennessee / Winterton C. (Winterton Conway) Curtis* 1956 (1 folder)**
Pamphlet signed by the author to Paul Muni.
- b. 1 f. 28 ***Medicine under Mussolini / Mario Volterra* 1949 (1 folder)**
Pamphlet signed by the author to Paul Muni.
- b. 1 f. 29 **Photographs of friends and acquaintance of Paul Muni. (1 folder (18 photographs))**
The world changes (Motion picture) I am a fugitive from a chain gang (Motion picture) Siegel, Max LeRoy, Mervyn, 1900-1987 Robinson, Edward G., 1893-1973 Burnet, Dana, 1888-1962 Anderson, Maxwell, 1888-1959
Photographs, some autographed, of friends of Paul Muni. Included is a group photograph of Muni in Vienna, a group shot of the cast of Four Walls, an autographed photo of Max Siegel, a photo of Paul Muni and Edward G. Robinson, photos on the sets of The World Changes, I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang and Key Largo, and an autographed photo of Mervyn LeRoy.
- b. 1 f. 30 **Photographs / Paul Muni (1 folder (6 photographs))**
Muni, Bella
Personal photographs of Paul Muni, some at home with his wife and dog.
- b. 1 f. 31 **Programs (1 folder)**
At the Grand (Musical) Miller, Arthur, 1915-2005 Buchman, Sidney, 1902-1975 Gropper, Milton Herbert Anderson, Maxwell, 1888-1959 Lawrence, Jerome, 1915-2004 Wright, Robert, 1914-2005 Hecht, Ben, 1894-1964 Rice, Elmer, 1892-1967
Programs of productions starring Paul Muni. Included are: Death of a Salesman, The Man, Saul, We Americans, Key Largo, Inherit the Wind, At the Grand, A Flag Is Born and Counsellor-at-Law.
- b. 1 f. 32 **It might have happened (Scenario) / Paul Muni (1 folder)**
Muni, Bella
Scenario written by Paul and Bella Muni.
- b. 1 f. 33 ***The valiant (Screenplay) / Holworthy Hall* February 4, 1929 (1 folder)**
Second version of the working film script entitled *The Valiant*.
- b. 1 f. 34 **Sketch of Paul Muni / Staats Cotsworth May 20, 1955 (1 folder)**
- b. 1 f. 35 ***How can I tell? (Speech)* (1 folder)**
Speech written for Hadassah and given both live and on radio.

Series III: Scrapbooks 1927-1949 (8 volumes)

This series contains bound volumes of clippings and photographs documenting events in Muni's life as well as his career. Three of the scrapbooks are of trips which he and his wife took to Paris, Vienna and Israel. The remaining scrapbooks contain articles and reviews for plays and movies in which Muni starred. Included in these are the plays *Four Walls*, *Counsellor-At-Law*, *Key Largo* and *They Knew What They Wanted*. Films include *Black Fury*, *Bordertown*, *The World Changes*, *Seven Faces*, *The Valiant*, *The Life of Emile Zola*, *The Good Earth*, *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *Dr. Socrates*, *The Woman I Love*, *Juarez* and *We Are Not Alone*.

Chronological

- b. 1 f. 36 **Scrapbook of Paris trip / Paul Muni** November-December (1 folder)
Scrapbook commemorating the Paris visit of Paul and Bella Muni. Includes clippings and photographs.
- b. 2 **Scrapbook of Vienna trip / Paul Muni** December 1937 (1 volume)
Warner Bros. Pictures
Scrapbook from the Warner Bros. staff commemorating the Vienna visit of Paul and Bella Muni. Includes clippings, letters and photographs.
- b. 3 **Scrapbook of Israel trip / Paul Muni** February 1938 (1 volume)
Scrapbook commemorating the Israel visit of Paul and Bella Muni. Includes clippings in Hebrew and photographs.
- b. 4 **Scrapbook / Paul Muni** 1927 (1 volume)
Burnet, Dana, 1888-1962
Scrapbook of clippings about Paul Muni and the play *Four Walls*.
- b. 5 **Scrapbook / Paul Muni** 1929-1935 (1 volume)
Black fury (Motion picture)Bordertown (Motion picture)The world changes (Motion picture)Seven faces (Motion picture)The valiant (Motion picture)Rice, Elmer, 1892-1967
Scrapbook of clippings about the career of Paul Muni. Includes *The Valiant*, *Seven Faces*, *This One Man*, *Counsellor-At-Law*, *The World Changes*, *Bordertown* and *Black Fury*.
- b. 6 **Scrapbook / Paul Muni** 1935-1937 (1 volume)
The life of Emile Zola (Motion picture)The good earth (Motion picture)The story of Louis Pasteur (Motion picture)Dr. Socrates (Motion picture)The woman I love (Motion picture)
Scrapbook of clippings about the career of Paul Muni. Includes *Scarface*, *Dr. Socrates*, *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *The Good Earth*, *The Woman I Love* and *The Life of Emile Zola*.
- b. 7 **Scrapbook / Paul Muni** 1939-1940 (1 volume)
Juárez (Motion picture)We are not alone (Motion picture)Anderson, Maxwell, 1888-1959
Scrapbook of clippings about the career of Paul Muni. Includes *Juarez*, *Key Largo* and *We Are Not Alone*.
- b. 8 **Scrapbook / Paul Muni** 1948-1949 (1 volume)
Howard, Sidney Coe, 1891-1939
Scrapbook of clippings about the play *They Knew What They Wanted* starring Paul Muni.

Series IV: Oversized Materials (2 boxes)

This series is primarily oversized photographs of Paul Muni in his stage and motion picture roles. There are also some awards and press materials for the motion pictures *Commandos Strike At Dawn*, *Bordertown*, *The Valiant*, *The Life of Emile Zola* and *Scarface*. Of special interest is a photograph of Paul Muni and Amelia Earhart on the set of *The Woman I Love*.

- b. 9 f. 1 **Photographs / Paul Muni** (1 oversized folder)
The woman I love (Motion picture)Warfield, David, 1866-1951Hershfield, Harry, 1885-1974Earhart, Amelia, 1897-1937
Includes photographs of Paul Muni at home with his wife Bella, autographed photos of David Warfield and Harry Hershfield, and a photo of Muni with Amelia Earhart on the set of *The Woman I Love*.

Series IV: Oversized Materials (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 2 **Photographs / Paul Muni** (1 oversized folder)
Bordertown (Motion picture)The good earth (Motion picture)I am a fugitive from a chain gang (Motion picture)Juárez (Motion picture)Lawrence, Jerome, 1915-2004
Photographs of Paul Muni in Bordertown, The Good Earth, I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang, Inherit the Wind, and Juarez.
- b. 9 f. 3 **Photographs / Paul Muni** (1 oversized folder)
Last clear chance (Television program)The last angry man (Motion picture)The life of Emile Zola (Motion picture)The story of Louis Pasteur (Motion picture)Scarface (Motion picture : 1932)
Photographs of Paul Muni in Last Clear Chance, The Last Angry Man, The Life of Emile Zola, Scarface, and The Story of Louis Pasteur.
- b. 9 f. 4 **Photographs / Paul Muni.** (1 oversized folder)
Photographs of Paul Muni in unidentified productions.
- b. 9 f. 5 ***Commandos strike at dawn (Motion picture)*** (1 oversized folder)
Oversized souvenir book of photographs published by Columbia Pictures.
- b. 10 f. 1 **Press materials** (1 oversized folder)
Bordertown (Motion picture)The valiant (Motion picture)The life of Emile Zola (Motion picture)Scarface (Motion picture : 1932)
Press materials for motion pictures starring Paul Muni. Included are Bordertown, The Valiant, The Life of Emile Zola and Scarface.
- b. 10 f. 2 **Awards** (1 oversized folder)
Awards and citations presented to Paul Muni.
- b. 10 f. 3 **Ephemera 1932** (1 oversized folder)
I am a fugitive from a chain gang (Motion picture)
Letter from Floyd Gibbons to Paul Muni (written on the back of a Jack and Jills Chop House menu) about his performance in I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang.