



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the
Biff Liff papers
1906-2014
*T-Mss 2018-007

Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 2019.

Summary

Creator: Liff, Biff

Title: Biff Liff papers

Date: 1906-2014

Size: 6.05 linear feet (11 containers, 4 tubes, 1 folder)

Source: The collection was donated by Lisette Liff, 2018.

Abstract: Samuel "Biff" Liff (1919-2015) was a stage manager and agent. The Biff Liff papers mainly documents his career as a stage manager for productions in New York City and notably the international production of *My Fair Lady*. The files hold scripts, photographs, and printed matter.

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:

Audio and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

Preferred citation: Biff Liff papers, *T-Mss 2018-007. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 2019.

Creator History

Biff Liff (1919-2015) was a theatrical stage manager and agent. Known as Biff (birth name Samuel,

born in Boston). He was the son of Rose and Morris Liff, a restaurateur. Liff graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) with a bachelor's degree in theater.

After serving as an Army officer during WWII, Liff began his career as a stage manager for the production *Along Fifth Avenue* in New York City. Over the course of his career, Liff managed numerous shows including *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* starring Carol Channing. He also worked on many productions for David Merrick, notably *My Fair Lady*. In the 1970's, Liff became head of the Theatre Department of the William Morris Agency where he represented Julie Andrews, Angela Lansbury, Agnes De Mille, and Jerry Herman among others. Liff received a 2006 Tony honor for Excellence in Theater. Upon his death, the marquees of Broadway were dimmed for one minute.

He was survived by his wife Lisette Liff.

Scope and Content Note

The Biff Liff papers, dated 1906-2014, document the career of Biff Liff (1919-2015), a stage manager for theatrical productions.

The collection features calling scripts (recording all the cues and staging information) for the productions, most prominently *My Fair Lady* along with photographs, lighting and scenic designs, and a live recording of *My Fair Lady*.

Related material includes photographs (including pictures and letters from Pearl Bailey), historical playbills; posters, reviews, lyrics, technical designs and media.

The media originals also include several interviews of Liff with Peter Webb reminiscing about *My Fair Lady*.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs
Posters
Prompt books
Scripts
Sound recordings
Video recordings

Subjects

Stage managers -- United States
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Theater -- United States -- History -- 20th century
Theatrical agents -- United States
Theatrical productions -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

Liff, Biff
Loewe, Frederick, 1901-1988 -- *My fair lady*

Container List

Scripts 1946-1966

The scripts are arranged by the title of production.

- b. 1 f. 1-3 *Bravo Giovanni* 1962
- b. 1 f. 4 *Breakfast At Tiffany's* 1966
- b. 1 f. 5 *By The Beautiful Sea* 1954
- b. 1 f. 6 *The Girl Who Came To Supper* 1963
- b. 1 f. 7-9 *Here's To You*
- b. 2 f. 1-2 *The Matchmaker* 1955
- b. 2 f. 3-4 *My Darlin' Aida* 1952
- b. 2 f. 5-13 *My Fair Lady* 1961-1963
- b. 3 f. 1-2
- b. 3 f. 3 *Oliver!* 1965
- b. 3 f. 4 *Promises, Promises* 1968
- b. 3 f. 5 *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* 1966
- b. 3 f. 7-8 Tamiment Playhouse 1946, 1948
- b. 3 f. 9 Outlines For Productions

Photographs 1946-1960s

Productions

- b. 4 f. 1 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* 1949
- b. 4 f. 2 *The Little Hut* 1953
- b. 4 f. 3 *My Darlin' Aida* 1952
- b. 4 f. 4-8 *My Fair Lady* 1960s
- b. 5 f. 1-2 Folder 8 hold slides.
- b. 4 f. 9 *Nina* 1951
- b. 4 f. 10-13 *A Night In Venice* 1953
- b. 4 f. 14 *Water Circus* 1952
- b. 4 f. 15-21 Liff, Biff 1946-1960s
- b. 5 f. 3
- b. 4 f. 22 Assorted Images
- b. 5 f. 4

- b. 5 *Bailey, Pearl* 1970-1976

Album

Printed Matter 1906-1996

The Printed Matter is arranged by type.

Playbills 1906-1996

- b. 6 f. 1 *As You Like It* 1910
- b. 6 f. 2 *Bravo Giovanni* 1962
- b. 6 f. 3-4 *By The Beautiful Sea* 1954
- b. 6 f. 5 *The Champion* 1921
- b. 6 f. 6 *Chantecler* 1910
- b. 6 f. 7 *A Chorus Line* 1975
- b. 6 f. 8 *Clarice* 1906

Printed Matter (cont.)

Playbills (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 9 *Disraeli* 1912
- b. 6 f. 10 *Dreyfus In Rehearsal* 1974
- b. 6 f. 11 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* 1949
- b. 6 f. 12 *The Girl Who Came To Supper* 1963
- b. 6 f. 13-14 *Hello Dolly!* 1967
- b. 6 f. 15 *Here's To You* 1940s
- b. 6 f. 16 *I Was Dancing* 1964
- b. 6 f. 17 *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* 1976
- b. 6 f. 18 *Jule's Friends At The Palace* 1974
- b. 6 f. 19 *Kismet* 1912
- b. 6 f. 20 *The Lady Of Dreams* 1912
- b. 6 f. 21 *The Lion And The Mouse* 1906
- b. 6 f. 22 *The Little Hut* 1953
- b. 6 f. 23 *Lorelei* 1974
- b. 6 f. 24 *Loyalties* 1922
- b. 6 f. 25 *Madam Butterfly* 1907
- b. 6 f. 26 *A Man About Town* 1921
- b. 6 f. 27 *The Man Who Came To Diner* 1941
- b. 6 f. 28 *Mata Hari* 1967
- b. 6 f. 29 *The Matchmaker* 1955
- b. 6 f. 30 *The Merry Widow* 1907
- b. 6 f. 31 *Mr. And Mrs. Coburn* 1919
- b. 6 f. 32-34 *Moby Dick* 1962-1964
- b. 6 f. 35 *Modern Vaudeville* 1911
- b. 7 f. 1-6 *My Fair Lady* 1957-1964
- b. 7 f. 7 *A Night In Venice* 1953
- b. 7 f. 8 *Nina* 1951
- b. 7 f. 9 *Oh What A Lovely War* 1964
- b. 7 f. 10 *Oliver!* 1965
- b. 7 f. 11 *110 In The Shade* 1964
- b. 7 f. 12 *Pickwick* 1965
- b. 7 f. 13-14 *Promises Promises* 1968
- b. 7 f. 15 *The Red Mill* 1906
- b. 7 f. 16 *Richard III* 1926
- b. 7 f. 17 *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* 1967
- b. 7 f. 18 *A Severed Head* 1964
- b. 7 f. 19 *Sherlock Holmes* 1911
- b. 7 f. 20 *Sugar* 1972
- b. 7 f. 21 *Theatrical Celebration* 1996
- b. 7 f. 22 *Three Little Maids* 1913
- b. 7 f. 23 *Tiger Rose* 1918

Printed Matter (cont.)

Playbills (cont.)

b. 7 f. 24 *We Have Always Lived In The Castle* 1967

b. 7 f. 25 Assorted Playbills

Reviews

b. 8 f. 1 *Desire Under The Elms* 1962

b. 8 f. 2 *Don't Drink Water* 1966

b. 8 f. 3 *The Loves Of Cass McGuire* 1966

b. 8 f. 4 *The Matchmaker* 1955

b. 8 f. 5-9 *Moby Dick* 1962

b. 8 f. 10 *My Fair Lady* 1968

b. 8 f. 11 *Oh What A Lovely War* 1964

b. 8 f. 12 *Pickwick* 1965

b. 8 f. 13 *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* 1967

b. 8 f. 14 *A Severed Head* 1964

b. 8 f. 15 *We Have Always Lived In The Castle*

b. 8 f. 16 Interviews With Biff Liff

b. 8 f. 17-18 *American National Theatre And Academy Album* 1950-1951

b. 8 f. 19 *Hippodrome* 1917

Assorted Files

b. 8 f. 20 Actors Equity Association Contracts 1950s-1960s

b. 8 f. 21 Television Arts And Sciences 1987

Award.

b. 8 f. 22 General Correspondence 1960s-1970s

b. 8 f. 23 *My Fair Lady* Cast Signed Tribute

b. 8 f. 24-25 *My Fair Lady* Voice Parts

Assorted Historical Lyrics

o. 1 *Duncan Sisters in Topsy and Eva* 1923

o. 1 *Freckles*

o. 1 *I've Got A Ring On My Finger* 1909

o. 1 *Ja Da* 1918

o. 1 *Pretty Baby*

o. 1 *Put Your Arms Around Me Honey* 1915

o. 1 *Three Wishes For Jane* 1952

Posters 1953-1967

b. 9 f. 1 *Breakfast At Tiffany's* 1966

Mary Tyler Moore and Richard Chamberlain.

b. 9 f. 2 *Lady Of The Camellias* 1963

b. 9 f. 3 *Mata Hari* 1967

t. 1 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Royal Shakespeare Company

b. 9 f. 4-5 t. 1 *My Fair Lady* 1960s

b. 9 f. 6 *A Night In Venice* 1953

Technical Designs And Sketches

Technical Designs And Sketches (cont.)

Sketches

- b. 10 f. 1 Lahr, Bert As King Lear
- b. 10 f. 2-4 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
- b. 10 f. 5-8 Various Productions
- t. 2-5 Technical Designs For Productions
Ground plans for the production Hello Dolly are located in tube 5.

Audio and Moving Image

The audio and moving images are unavailable pending digitization.