

**The New York Public Library
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center
Billy Rose Theatre Division**

Guide to the

Richard Hughes collection

1942-1993 (bulk 1960-1978)

*T-Mss 2000-032

Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, July 2013

Summary

Creator: Hughes, Richard J., 1924-1996

Title: Richard Hughes collection, 1942-1993 (bulk 1960-1978)

Size: 7.05 linear feet (18 boxes)

Source: Gift of Walt Witcover, 2000.

Abstract: Richard John Hughes, Jr. (1924-1996) was a stage manager, director, set designer, and actor in regional theatre, touring companies, and off-Broadway productions. The Richard Hughes collection dates from 1942 to 1993 and documents his training at the University of Texas, his participation in regional theatre and off-Broadway productions, and his work as production stage manager for the national tours of *Man of La Mancha*, *Lovely Ladies—Kind Gentlemen*, *Irene*, and *Pippin*.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying and photography will apply. Advance notice may be required. Sound recordings may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Preferred citation: Richard Hughes collection, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Original folder titles were retained, and all loose items were placed in folders. Duplicate programs and unannotated scripts were removed. Scrapbooks were disbound and pages were placed into folders.

Creator history

Richard John Hughes, Jr. (1924-1996) was a stage manager, director, set designer, and actor in regional theatre, touring companies, and off-Broadway productions. He was born in Dallas, Texas to Agatha and Richard J. Hughes, Sr. and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1941. Hughes attended the University of Texas at Austin from 1941 to 1943, where he participated in regular productions of the Curtain Club, a campus theatrical group, and studied theatre under Margo Jones, a pioneer of the regional theatre movement. Jones was also a professional associate of Tennessee Williams, and some of Hughes's earliest theatrical work at the university was on the first stagings of Williams's one-act plays. Hughes left Texas for Los Angeles, California in the mid-1940s, continuing his training at the University of Southern California and the Pasadena Playhouse. He began his career at Twentieth Century Fox Films as an assistant in the art department.

Hughes followed Jones's path into regional theatre, joining the Red Barn Theatre of Westboro, Massachusetts in 1947 as a stage manager. Between 1947 and 1967, Hughes was employed by more than ten regional and summer stock theatres in the United States, primarily along the Eastern seaboard, including the Mountain Playhouse in Jennerstown, Pennsylvania (1950-1952); Rye Music Theatre in Rye, New York (1958); Colonie Musical Theatre in Latham, New York (1959); and Atlanta Municipal Theatre's Theatre Under the Stars (1962-1964, 1966-1967). As a stage manager and production stage manager, director, set designer, technical director, production director, and occasionally, actor, Hughes participated in the staging of popular mid-century comedies, dramas, and musicals such as *Born Yesterday*, *My Fair Lady*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, and *The King and I*. In off seasons, Hughes lived in New York City, working at R.H. Macy's and FAO Schwarz as a sales clerk and buyer. He was also appointed assistant director of the Hudson-Champlain 350th celebration commission, coordinating the visit of Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands to the Hudson Valley of New York in 1959.

Throughout his tenure in regional theatre, Hughes also worked off-Broadway: as technical director at the Theatre de Lys during the 1953 season; as stage manager for the Equity Library Theatre's 1956 production of *Man of Destiny*; and as production stage manager for the 1960 production of *Oh, Kay!* at the East 74th Street Theatre. In 1964, Hughes was hired as the production stage manager for the national tour of *Little Me*, starring Sid Caesar. *Little Me* proved to be a catalyst in Hughes's career, and after the 1967 season at Theatre Under the Stars, he left summer stock theatres for national touring companies. From 1968 to 1971, Hughes was the production stage manager for *Man of La Mancha* during its first national tour, starring José Ferrer. He subsequently worked as production stage manager for touring companies of *Lovely Ladies—Kind Gentlemen* (1970-1971), *Irene* (1974-1975), *Pippin* (1979), and returned to *Man of La Mancha* from 1976 to 1977 as director.

In 1965, Hughes met longtime partner Walt Witcover, who later founded Masterworks Laboratory Theatre in New York City. Hughes served as a Coordinator for Masterworks from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, during which time he fundraised, promoted, and produced shows for the company, in addition to managing Masterworks Laboratory Theatre's Loft Studios. Hughes also directed productions for Masterworks, notably the play *Boubouroche* starring Jerry Stiller.

Richard Hughes died in 1996 in Franklin Square, New York.

Scope and content note

The Richard Hughes collection dates from 1942 to 1993 and documents his career from early training at the University of Texas to his participation in regional theatre, off-Broadway productions, and national theatre tours. The bulk of the collection consists of production files, identified by theatre name or show title, containing programs, annotated scripts, set designs, stage diagrams, cast rosters, contracts, schedules, daily production reports and diaries, clippings, correspondence, and photographs. Files for regional and summer stock theatres hold less documentation of Hughes's individual work on productions, as these files primarily contain programs and clippings, though some files include set designs, casting notes, and annotated scripts. Shows from regional theatres may be represented in files for both the theatre company and the production name, so researchers should check both locations. University of Texas files contain set designs, scripts, programs, photographs, and clippings related to assignments and student-led productions, particularly the first staging of some Tennessee Williams one-act plays. Hughes's work on touring productions is well documented, and the corresponding production files detail casting, costumes, set design, lighting and technical cues. In particular, Hughes's production reports, diaries, and correspondence during his time touring with *Man of La Mancha* provide insight into the daily management of a touring theatre company, and the interpersonal conflicts experienced by the production team. While Masterworks Laboratory Theatre Company is not well represented, the collection does contain a small file on the production of *Boubouroche*, starring Jerry Stiller; in addition, Hughes's

promotion and fundraising efforts for Masterworks are discussed in his professional correspondence.

Scrapbooks in the collection contain clippings, photographs, programs and correspondence, and cover Hughes's arrival at the University of Texas to the early years of his career in the 1950s. Individual files for reviews, programs, and photographs supplement the scrapbooks and production files, and date from the late 1940s to the early 1990s.

While the collection contains correspondence within production files, there is also a small set of professional correspondence, which discusses Hughes's activities with Masterworks and more generally his activities in the theatre world. Other professional files include his resume, headshots, datebooks, and address books. The collection is rich in personal correspondence, primarily between Hughes and his parents. Hughes's personal letters, the bulk of which date from the 1960s to the 1970s, detail in sometimes weekly installments his current production and family news. Hughes wrote to his parents about perpetually searching for work in theatre, the founding and early years of Masterworks Laboratory Theatre, and his frequent travels with touring companies and for summer stock theatres. He also updated his parents regularly about his personal affairs, describing life in New York City, living in Greenwich Village, and he and Walt Witcover's social life, including dinner parties and theatre events with other members of Masterworks as well as Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara.

Two sound recordings of Irene and Man of La Mancha rehearsals and productions are included. Inquiries regarding sound recordings may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Sound recordings may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by name or document type.

Key terms

Subjects

Off-Broadway theater
Summer theater -- United States
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Traveling theater -- United States

Names

Hughes, Richard J., 1924-1996
Witcover, Walt

Special formats

Photographs
Sceneography
Scrapbooks
Scripts (documents)

Container list

- b.1 f.1-2 Addresses, undated
- b.1 f.3-4 *Can-Can*, 1962-1966
 - b.1 f.5 *Carousel*, 1959-1966
 - b.1 f.6 Colonie Musical Theatre, 1959
 - b.1 f.7 Correspondence--Personal, 1963-1968
- b.2 f.1-5 Correspondence--Personal, 1963-1980
- b.3 f.1-5 Correspondence--Personal, 1942-1978
 - b.4 f.1 Correspondence--Personal, 1955-1977
 - b.4 f.2-5 Correspondence--Professional, 1947-1996
- b.5 f.1-2 Datebooks, 1967-1972
 - b.4 f.6 *Desert Song*, 1958
 - b.5 f.3 *Guys and Dolls*, 1963
 - b.5 f.4 Headshots, circa 1980
- b.5 f.5-6 Hudson-Champlain Celebration Commission, 1959
 - b.5 f.7 *Irene*, 1973-1975
- b.6 f.1-6 *Irene*, 1972-1975
- b.7 f.1-3 *Irene*, 1973-1975
 - b.7 f.4 *The King and I*, 1966
- b.7 f.5-6 *Little Me*, 1963-1964
 - b.7 f.7 Little Theatre of Puerto Rico, 1958
 - b.7 f.8 *Lovely Ladies--Kind Gentlemen*, 1970
- b.8 f.1-2 *Lovely Ladies--Kind Gentlemen*, 1969-1970
 - b.8 f.3 Melody Fair, 1965
 - b.8 f.4-7 *Man of La Mancha*, 1968-1976
- b.9 f.1-7 *Man of La Mancha*, 1966-1976
- b.10 f.1-6 *Man of La Mancha*, 1966-1969
 - b.11 f.1 Masterworks Laboratory Theatre Company, 1971
 - b.11 f.2 Mountain Playhouse, 1950-1952
 - b.11 f.3 *The Music Man*, 1963
 - b.11 f.4 Nutmeg Playhouse, 1949
 - b.11 f.5 *Oklahoma!*, 1959
 - b.11 f.6-7 *Oh, Kay!*, 1960
 - b.11 f.8 Photographs, circa 1943-1959
- b.12 f.1-2 *Pippin*, 1974-1979
 - b.12 f.3 Pocono Playhouse, 1962-1963
 - b.12 f.4 Professional--General, 1982, undated
- b.12 f.5-7 Programs, 1959-1966
- b.13 f.1-2 Red Barn Theatre, 1947-1950
- b.13 f.3-4 Resumes, 1957-1991

- b.13 f.5 Reviews, 1947-1986
- b.13 f.6 Rye Music Theatre, 1958
- b.16 f.1-2 Scrapbooks, 1942-1944
- b.17 f.1-3 Scrapbooks, 1944-1952
- b.18 f.1-3 Scrapbooks, 1946-1954
- b.13 f.7 *Showboat*, 1965
- b.14 f.1 Solomon, Bea, 1961
- b.14 f.2-3 *Sound of Music*, 1965
- b.14 f.4 Starlight Theatre, 1961-1963
- b.14 f.5-7 Theatre Under the Stars, 1963-1967
- b.15 f.1 Theatre Under the Stars, 1966
- b.15 f.2-5 University of Texas, 1942-1945