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Billy Rose Theatre Division**

Guide to the
Edward Padula papers
1952-2001
*T-Mss 2003-050

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, May 2012

Summary

Creator: Padula, Edward, 1916-2001

Title: Edward Padula papers, 1952-2001

Size: 7.77 linear feet (19 boxes)

Source: Donated by Elise Quimby, 2003

Abstract: Edward Padula (1916-2001) was an American producer, director and writer of stage plays and musicals from the 1940s to the 1990s. The Edward Padula papers contain production materials and personal ephemera.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photography and photocopying will apply. Advance notice maybe required.

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Preferred citation: Edward Padula papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: There was a very loose organization in the collection when it arrived, with material for certain shows grouped together. The production files were organized alphabetically, by title and the personal files alphabetically, by category. Most of the collection was loose, but some materials were in folders. Where possible, original folders were retained, though many were damaged and had to be replaced.

Creator history

Edward Padula (1916-2001) was an American producer, director and writer of stage plays and musicals from the 1940s to the 1990s. Padula, the son of Italian immigrants, was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. He enrolled in college at the University of Pennsylvania, but later transferred to Yale University's School of Drama, where he completed his degree.

Padula's career in show business began during his summer vacations from Yale, when he worked at the Westport Playhouse. Other early jobs included a stint at the Theatre Guild and another working in NBC's development of musicals and plays for the burgeoning field of Television. Padula's first Broadway credit was an early musical by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, called *The Day Before Spring* (1945). He also worked in Hollywood as a dialogue coach for Paramount in the forties.

He continued to work in regional theatre and television until getting back to Broadway as an assistant director on the musical *Seventh Heaven* (1955). He worked as a stage manager on plays *No Time for Sergeant* (1955) and *God and Kate Murphy* (1959); and musicals *Rumple* (1957) and *Saratoga* (1959).

In 1960, Padula's career and life changed forever when he envisioned a musical about teenagers and their dating lives. To fulfill his vision he got a pair of untried young songwriters, Charles Strouse and Lee Adams to write the score, and a talented movie star dancer who was gradually making the transition into choreographing and directing for the stage, Gower Champion, to stage it. As the producer, Padula had to work tirelessly to get the show put on, but it turned out to be the tremendously popular show, *Bye Bye Birdie*.

After *Bye Bye Birdie*, Padula produced Strouse and Adams' next show, *All American* (1962) as well as the musicals *Bajour* (1964) and *A Joyful Noise* (1966). He also produced the play, *Red White and Maddox* (1969), the musical *Park* (1970); and a revue called *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope* (1972).

Although Padula's official credits stop in the early seventies, he continued to be professionally active. He turned to writing musicals, none of which made it to Broadway. One project he devoted a lot of time to was a musical about Lizzie Borden. He worked on this project, under various titles from the sixties to the nineties.

Padula's 25 year marriage to Thelma Prescott ended in the late sixties or early seventies. After his divorce, Padula was in a relationship with Robert Moeser until Moeser's death in 1993. Edward Padula died in Water Mill, New York on November 1, 2001.

Scope and content note

The Edward Padula papers contain production materials and personal ephemera. The production files concern plays Padula worked on as a producer, director, assistant director and stage manager, from the mid-fifties to the mid seventies. These files also concern the many unproduced projects Padula devoted the final thirty years of his life to. Produced shows include the monster hit musical *Bye Bye Birdie*, which Padula conceived and produced. Unproduced projects include *Lizzie*, a musical about Lizzie Borden Padula worked on for decades and *Nighthawks*, a dramatization of Edward Hopper's famous painting. The production files consist mainly of scripts, but also contain correspondence, notes, outlines, contracts, research materials, programs and publicity materials.

This collection also has a small amount of personal ephemera. This includes personal correspondence, family history materials and files on friends Ira Harrington Smith and Robert Moeser. The photographs include a few of Padula and various friends, and several of his wife Thelma Prescott, but the majority of the photographs here are of an unidentified children's theater production. The personal files also contain information from professional organizations Padula was involved in, most notably the Dramatists' Guild. There are also writings and ideas for writing projects by Padula, including drama, poetry, prose and songs.

Arrangement

The production files in the Edward Padula papers are arranged alphabetically by title. The personal files are arranged alphabetically by category.

Key terms

Subjects

Film
Musicals
Television
Theatre

Occupations

Directors
Playwrights
Producers (managers)
Stage Managers

Names

Adams, Lee
Borden, Lizzie, 1860-1927 -- Drama
Padula, Edward, 1916-2001
Strouse, Charles

Container list

Productions, 1952-2001

- b.1 f.1-2 *All American*--Scripts, 1961, undated
- b.1 f.3-4 *Bajour*--Scripts, undated
- b.1 f.5 *Beloved*--Script, 1997 April 14
- b.1 f.6 *Big Hit on Main Street*--Outline, undated
- Biography*
Alternate titles *Life by Me* and *Bio*
- b.2 f.1 Business Files, 1999-2000 (Correspondence, Agreements, etc.)
- b.2 f.2 Contacts and Memos, 1998-1999
- b.2 f.3 Lyrics, 1998
- b.2 f.4-6 Scripts, 1999, undated
- b.2 f.7 *Birth of a Musical*--Outline
- b.2 f.8 *Black Orpheus*--Correspondence and Notes, 1968
- b.2 f.9 *Bring Back Birdie*--Script
- b.2 f.10 *Bronx Mikado*--Notes, undated
- The Brothers Shubert*
- b.3 f.1-2 Correspondence, Notes and Research, 1969-1971
- b.5 f.10 Script, 1995
- Bye Bye Birdie*
- b.3 f.3-6 Business Files, 1990-2001
- b.3 f.7 Reunion--35th Anniversary, 1995
- b.3 f.8-10 Scripts, 1960, undated
Includes early script under title *The Day They Took Birdie Away*
- b.6 f.4 Script, undated (Under title *The Golden Egg*)
- b.14 f.4 Scripts, undated (Under title *Love and Kisses*)
- b.4 f.1-5 Writings, 1992-2000
Padula's autobiographical writings about the development of *Bye Bye Birdie*.
- b.17 f.10 *Carribean/Islands Project*--Research, Notes and Correspondence, 1989
- Catfish Bend*
- b.4 f.6 Correspondence and Negotiations, 1976-1999
- b.4 f.7 Notes and Script Fragments, 2001
- b.4 f.8 Scripts, 2001
- b.5 f.1-3 Scripts
- b.5 f.4 *Chorus from Ajax*--Notes, 1952
- b.5 f.5 *The Closed Shop*--Background Research and Correspondence, 1958
- b.5 f.6 *Crack Up*--Scripts, undated
- b.5 f.7 *Disco Show*--Notes, 1979
- b.5 f.8 *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*--Programs, 1972
- b.5 f.9 *Dorian*--Script Excerpts, Budget and Notes, 1968-1969
- Dream Street* (See *The Brothers Shubert*)

Productions, 1952-2001 (cont.)

- b.6 f.1 *East Side Story*--Script, 1967
- b.6 f.2 *Electric God*--Script, 1973
- b.6 f.3 *Execution of Justice*--Budget, 1985
Fall River/The Fall River Tragedy (See Lizzie)
- b.6 f.5 *The Great White Way*--Negotiations, 1962-1963
- b.6 f.6 *I am a Guitar*--Script, undated
A Joyful Noise
- b.6 f.7 Photographs, undated
- b.6 f.8-11 Scripts, 1965-1966
- b.6 f.13 *King of Paris*--Correspondence, 1962
- b.6 f.12 *Legends*--Notes, 1994 March 3
- b.7 f.1-2 *Let's Go Steady*, 1958
- b.17 f.1-2 *The Lives and Times of the 20th Century's Classic New Yorkers*--Précis, 1999
Lizzie
- b.7 f.3-14 Chronological Files, 1970-1999
This chronological run includes correspondence and notes.
- b.8 f.1-4 Correspondence, 1980-1989
- b.8 f.5-8 Notes and Fragments, 1968-1987
- b.9 f.1-4 Notes and Fragments, undated
- b.9 f.5 Outlines, undated
- b.10 f.1-4 Prose Narratives and Film Treatments, 1971-1990, undated
- b.10 f.5 Reading, 1982
- b.10 f.6 Research, 1960s-1990s
- b.11 f.1-6 Scripts, 1968-1990
- b.12 f.1-10 Scripts, 1990-1997, undated
- b.13 f.1-7 Scripts, undated
- b.14 f.1-3 Scripts, undated
- b.14 f.5 *Madame Sarah*--Notes, 1967
- b.15 f.1 *Mirror for Witches*--Outlines, Notes and Script Excerpts, 1957-1961
- b.15 f.2 *Nana*--Notes and Correspondence, 1961
- b.15 f.3 *Newport*--Notes, 1958
Nighthawks, 2001
- b.15 f.4 Business Files
- b.15 f.5 Monologues
- b.15 f.6 Notes and Excerpts
- b.15 f.7-10 Scripts
- b.16 f.1 *Nijinsky*--Correspondence, 1962

Productions, 1952-2001 (cont.)

- b.16 f.2 *No Time for Sergeants*--Script, 1956
Once on this Island
 - b.16 f.3 Correspondence, 1991
 - b.16 f.4 Press Kit and Program, 1990-1991
 - b.16 f.5 Scripts, 1989
 - b.16 f.6 Theatre Rental Information, 1991
 - b.16 f.7 *Options*--Script, 1997
 - b.17 f.12 *Othello*--Correspondence and Notes, 1975-1976
 - b.16 f.8 *La Peregrina*--Notes, Correspondence and Script, 1958
 - b.16 f.9 *Rory and Dory*--Script, 1954
 - b.16 f.10 *The Second Coming*--Scripts and Research, 1971
 - b.17 f.1 *Sistersy (Under the Skin)/Song and Dance*--Scripts, Notes and Correspondence, 1979
 - b.17 f.2 *Spring Rain*--Outline and Notes, 1989
 - b.17 f.3 *Tahiti (Gauguin File)*--Research, 1970
 - b.17 f.4 *The Tenth Planet*--Notes and Excerpts, 1982
 - b.17 f.5-6 *Theme and Variations*--Notes and Scripts, 2001
 - b.17 f.7 *Vanity Fair*--Script, 1970
 - b.17 f.8 *Wit's End*--Script, 1989
 - b.17 f.9 *The World's Great Letters*--Proposal, undated
- Personal Files, 1961-2001
- b.17 f.13 Biographical Materials and Ephemera, 1984, undated
 - b.17 f.14 Correspondence, 1961-1980
 - b.17 f.15 Family History, 1992-1993
 - b.17 f.16 Friends--Robert Moeser, 1992-1994
 - b.17 f.17 Friends--Ira Harrington Smith, 1992
- Ideas and Writings
- b.18 f.1-3 Drama, 1979-1986
 - b.18 f.4-9 Poetry, 1977-1992
 - b.18 f.10-13 Prose, 1975-1979, undated
 - b.18 f.14 Songs, 1978
 - b.18 f.15 *Opera Guyed*, 1946
Book inscribed for Padula by author Newman Levy
 - b.18 f.16 Organizations--Dramatists Guild, 1979-2001
 - b.18 f.17 Organizations--Various, 1986
 - b.18 f.18-20 Photographs, 1960, undated
Included are a few photographs of Padula and various friends, and several of his wife Thelma Prescott. The majority of the photographs here are of an unidentified children's theater production.

Personal Files, 1961-2001 (cont.)

- b.19 f.1 Photographs, undated
- b.19 f.2 Programs, 1960s-1970s
- b.19 f.3 Publicity, 1964, 1968
- b.19 f.4 "To Do" Lists, 1988
- b.19 f.5 Miscellaneous Notes, 1961-1989