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Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the
Dale Wasserman papers
1940-2008
*T-Mss 1996-027

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, May 2012

Summary

Creator: Wasserman, Dale

Title: Dale Wasserman papers, 1940-2008

Size: 15.96 linear feet (38 boxes)

Source: Donated by Dale Wasserman in 1996, 2002, 2005 and 2008.

Abstract: Dale Wasserman (1914-2008) was an American playwright, television writer and screenwriter, working from the 1950s-the 1990s. He is best known for his play, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1963) and his book for the musical *Man of La Mancha* (1966). The Dale Wasserman papers document his entire writing career with scripts, correspondence, notes, programs, clippings, research materials and photographs from his productions.

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

Copyright information: For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Preferred citation: Dale Wasserman papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: The Wasserman papers have been arranged from five separate accessions into order by production title. Original folders have been maintained where they existed. Loose materials have been foldered.

Related collections

Dale Wasserman collection [sound recordings]. Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, The New York Public Library.

Creator history

Dale Wasserman (1914-2008) was an American playwright, television-writer and screenwriter, working from the 1950s to the 1990s. He is best known for his play, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1963) and his book for the musical *Man of La Mancha* (1966).

Wasserman was born in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. After the early death of his parents he was raised in an orphanage. In his youth, he traveled around the United States on freight trains, living on the hobo circuit. He also started working in show business from the age of nineteen. His early forays into theater include work as a lighting designer, director and producer. In the 1940s he worked for the Katherine Dunham Dance Company as a director and stage manager in Haiti and in New York.

Around 1955 he began his writing career, writing scripts for such television series as Ponds Theater, Armstrong Circle Theater, The Alcoa Hour and Kraft Television Theatre. His work for the Dupont Show of the Month included the award winning television plays *The Lincoln Murder Case* and *I, Don Quixote*, on which he based his book for the award-winning, acclaimed and wildly popular musical *Man of La Mancha*, which had a score by Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion.

Besides *Man of La Mancha*, Wasserman's most notable stage project was his adaptation of Ken Kesey's novel, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* into a hit play. Other stage projects of Wasserman's which were not produced in New York include, *An Enchanted Land*, *Western Star*, *A Walk in the Sky*, *J.F.K.*, *Shakespeare and the Indians* and a revamp of John La Touche's original book for *Beggar's Holiday*. Many of these projects were mounted in regional or London productions.

Wasserman's motion pictures include *The Vikings*, *Cleopatra*, *Quick Before it Melts* and *A Walk with Love and Death*.

In 2003 Wasserman published a memoir on his experiences as the writer of *Man of La Mancha*, called *The Impossible Musical*.

Wasserman's first marriage to actress Ramsay Ames ended in divorce in 1980. He was married to Martha Nelly Garza from 1984 until his death in 2008.

Scope and content note

The Dale Wasserman papers document his entire writing career. They contain production materials on the film, theatre and television projects he worked on. These materials include scripts, correspondence, notes, programs, contracts and negotiations, legal disputes, clippings, reviews, posters, research materials and photographs.

Wasserman's two most successful works, *Man of La Mancha* and *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* are covered in the most detail, with multiple script drafts and materials on various regional productions. Both plays have been translated into and performed in dozens of languages. These foreign language productions are represented here with scripts, programs and other production materials.

There are also script drafts, correspondence, notes and research materials for later projects which were never produced, or produced outside of New York. Also included are materials documenting other aspects of Wasserman's career, including files on the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, research Wasserman conducted on an unknown project about Japan and research, drafts and correspondence pertaining to a non-fiction article Wasserman wrote on hobo culture.

This collection does not include personal material.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two sections: Production Files and Other Projects.

Key terms

Subjects

Musical Theater
Television
Theater

Occupations

Playwrights
Screenwriters
Television writers

Names

Darion, Joe, 1917-2001
Friedman, Alan Jay
Kesey, Ken
Leigh, Mitch, 1928-
Wasserman, Dale

Special formats

Clippings
Correspondence
Photographs
Posters
Programs
Scripts

Container list

Production Files, 1951-2008

- b.1 f.1 *Aboard the Flying Swan*-Screenplay, 1958 August 15
- b.1 f.2-3 *American Primitive*-Scripts, 1956 May 1, undated
Amistad, 1992, undated
Materials contained here include a script, correspondence with Leslie Bricusse and Allan Jay Friedman, publicity materials and research materials for a musical based on the life of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Research materials include biographical clippings on Kennedy's life and assassination, as well as Wasserman's research notes used in the development of the script.
- b.3 f.7-8 Research Materials
- b.4 f.1 Research Materials
- b.4 f.2 Proposal
- b.1 f.4 *An Arrangement of Animals*-Script, 1997
- b.1 f.5 *Baba Yaga*-Treatment, undated
Beggar's Holiday
- b.1 f.6 Programs, 1994, 2004
- b.1 f.7-8 Scripts, 1995, 2004
- b.1 f.9 *The Bequest*-Scripts, undated
- b.1 f.10 *The Blue Angels*, 1960 April 27
- b.2 f.1 *Boys Will Be Boys*-Script, 1955 January 26
- b.2 f.2 *Brotherhood of the Bell*-Script, 1957 December 8
- b.2 f.3 *Burden of Proof*-Script, 1977 February 8
- b.2 f.4 *Cafe Crown*-Program and Flyers, undated
Regional production, produced by Wasserman
- b.2 f.5 *Circle of Death*-Script, 1962 August 23
- b.2 f.6-7 *The Citadel*-Scripts, 1960
- b.2 f.8 *Cleopatra*-Script, 1960 January 11
- b.3 f.1 *Collision*-Script, undated
Conquest
- b.3 f.2 Correspondence, 1979
- b.3 f.3 Outline, 1979
- b.3 f.4-5 Scripts, undated
- b.3 f.6 *Cress Delahanty*-Script, undated
The Day the Sun Died
Materials include script, treatment, step outline, notes and research materials for a dramatization of the events at Wounded Knee. Research materials include copies of letters and original transcripts of reports and eyewitness accounts of the Wounded Knee Massacre.
- b.4 f.3-4 Outlines and Notes, 1989, undated
- b.4 f.5-18 Research Materials, 1988
Dracula: the True Story, 1978
- b.4 f.19 Notes and Outlines
- b.5 f.1 Research
- b.5 f.2 Script

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

- b.5 f.3 *Drop on the Devil*-Script, undated
Dynamite
- b.5 f.4 Outline, 1961
- b.5 f.5 Research, 1973
- b.5 f.6 Script, undated
- b.5 f.7-8 *Eichman Story: Engineer of Death*-Scripts, 1960
- b.5 f.9 *Elisha and the Long Knives*-Script, undated
An Enchanted Land
- b.6 f.1-2 Notes and Production Information, 1996-1998
- b.6 f.3 Program Notes, undated
- b.6 f.4 Programs, 1997
- b.6 f.5 Publicity, 1997
- b.6 f.6-7 Script, 1999-2000
- b.6 f.8 Script-French Translation, undated
- b.6 f.9 Slides, undated
- b.6 f.10-11 *Fiddlin' Man*-Scripts, undated
- b.7 f.1-2 *A Fine American Family*-Scripts, 1987 (Alternate title *The Benson Murders*)
- b.7 f.3 *Flight and Pursuit*-Script, 1981 September
- b.7 f.4 *The Fog*-Script, 1956 August
- b.7 f.5 *The Fool Killer*-Script, 1956 March 7
- b.7 f.6 *The Forger*-Script, undated
- b.8 f.1 *The Game* (Lawyer Movie)-Script, 1997
- b.8 f.2 *The Gentle Grafter*-Script, undated
- b.8 f.3-4 *The Girl from Botany Bay*-Scripts, 1990, 1992 (Alternate title *Mary Bryant*)
- b.8 f.5 *The Grand Deception*-Script, 1961 July 6
Alternate title *Master Maker of the Queen*
Great Big River, 1981 (Alternate title *Livin' the Life*)
- b.9 f.1-5 Scripts
- b.9 f.6 Slides
Hannibal
- b.9 f.7-8 Notes, 1991
- b.10 f.1-3 Research, undated
- b.10 f.4-5 Scripts, 1992
- b.11 f.1 Treatments, 1992
- b.11 f.2 *High Time*-Programs and Publicity, 1951, 1953
- b.11 f.3 *How I Saved the Whole Damn World*-Script, 1995
I, Don Quixote (See *Man of La Mancha*)

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

J.F.K.

Materials contained here include a script, correspondence with Leslie Bricusse and Allan Jay Friedman, publicity materials and research materials for a musical based on the life of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Research materials include biographical clippings on Kennedy's life and assassination, as well as Wasserman's research notes used in the development of the script.

- b.11 f.4 Correspondence, 1991
- b.11 f.5-6 Notes and Outlines, 1991
- b.11 f.7 Publicity, 1991
- b.11 f.8-10 Research Materials, undated
- b.11 f.11 Script, 1988
- b.12 f.1 *King of the Hill*-Script, undated
- b.12 f.2-3 *The Lincoln Murder Case*-Scripts, 1960-1961
Alternate title *The Web of Conspiracy*
- b.12 f.4 *Long After Summer*-Script, undated
- b.12 f.5 *Look What's Going On*-Script, 1958 February 6
- b.12 f.6 *Love and Larceny*-Script, undated
- b.12 f.7 *The Luck of Roaring Camp*-Script, undated

Magic Shadows

Alternate title *What Ever Happened to Hollywood*

- b.13 f.1 Notes, 1985
- b.13 f.2 Proposal, 1985 May 4
- b.13 f.3 Research, undated

Man of La Mancha

I, Don Quixote, 1959-1960

Wasserman's television play, *I, Don Quixote*, presented by the Dupont Show of the Month, was the basis for *Man of La Mancha*.

- b.13 f.4 Correspondence
- b.13 f.5 Publicity
- b.13 f.6 Reviews
- b.13 f.7 Scripts

Original Production

Also includes material on the show itself, not restricted to specific productions

- b.14 f.1-12 Correspondence, Contracts and Agreements, 1962-1991
Includes Wasserman's general correspondence, correspondence with Wasserman's literary agent Elizabeth Marton, correspondence with music publishers; contracts between Wasserman, Darion and Leigh; and documents, transcripts and court papers regarding arbitration and litigation between Leigh, Wasserman and Darion.
- b.15 f.1 Correspondence, Contracts and Agreements, 1991
- b.18 f.9-11 Fan Mail, 1965-1972
- b.22 f.2 Fan Mail, 1965-1984

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

Man of La Mancha (cont.)

Original Production (cont.)

- b.15 f.2 Lyrics by W. H. Auden, undated
Unused lyrics (and in two cases including sheet music) written by W. H. Auden
- b.15 f.3-6 Programs, 1965-1970
Includes programs from ANTA Washington Square Theatre, Martin Beck Theatre and souvenir programs
- b.16 f.5-7 Publicity, 1967-1970
- b.15 f.7-10 Scores, Sheet Music and Orchestra Parts, 1965
- Scripts
- b.15 f.11-12 First Draft, 1963 June 1
- b.16 f.1 First Draft, undated
- b.16 f.2 Preliminary Draft, 1964 June 15
- b.16 f.3-4 Final New York Version, 1965 November 22
- Writings and Articles by Wasserman
- b.16 f.8 "Auden in Autumn"/"On Pink-Slipping a Poet Laureate", 1999, undated
Article by Wasserman, published in *Dramatist*
- b.16 f.9 "Dale Wasserman vs. Arthur Miller: A Letter Exchange", undated
- b.16 f.10 "Don Quixote as Theatre", 1997, 2001
Article by Wasserman, published in *Cervantes*
- b.16 f.11 "Long Time in La Mancha"/"About That Terrible Awful No-Good Travesty of a Theatre Which We Learned to Love", 1998, 2002
Article, correspondence and book proposal
- b.16 f.12 *A Metaphysical Smasheroo*, undated (Book proposal by Wasserman)
- Tours and Regional Productions-Programs and Publicity Materials
- b.17 f.1-6 1965-1967
- b.17 f.7-8 1976-1878
- b.17 f.9-17 1983-1989
- b.17 f.18-21 1993-2001
- b.17 f.22-31 Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University Spectrum Music Theatre, 1999
Includes budgets, casting notes, contact sheets, correspondence, images for projection, photographs, programs, publicity materials and a script
- b.18 f.1-5 2000-2006
- b.18 f.6 Various Stock and Amateur Productions, 1980-1990
- b.18 f.7-8 London-Correspondence and Programs, 1967-1968
- b.18 f.12 Film Adaptation, 1972-1983
Includes correspondence, contracts, publicity materials and souvenir program
- Broadway Revivals
- b.19 f.1-4 Richard Kiley Revival and Tour-Programs and Publicity, 1977
- b.19 f.5 Raul Julia Revival-Program, 1992
- b.19 f.6-7 Brian Stokes Mitchell Revival-Clippings and Correspondence, 2002

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

Man of La Mancha (cont.)

Foreign Language Productions

Includes scripts, programs, photographs and correspondence

- b.19 f.8 Austria, 1968
- b.19 f.9 Brazil, 1971-1973
- b.19 f.10-11 Chile, 1974
- b.19 f.12 Croatia, 2002
- b.19 f.13 Czech Republic, 1967
- b.19 f.14 Denmark, 2000
- b.19 f.15 Estonia, 1995
- b.19 f.16 Fiji, undated
- b.19 f.17 Finland, 1981-1998
- b.20 f.1-2 France, 1968, 1998 (Translated by Jacques Brel)
- b.20 f.3 Germany, undated
- b.20 f.4-5 Hungary, 1995, undated
- b.20 f.6 Israel, undated
- b.20 f.7-9 Japan, 1967-1995, undated
- b.20 f.10 Korea, 2005-2007
- b.20 f.11 Mexico, 1999
- b.21 f.1 Mexico, 1999
- b.21 f.2 Netherlands, undated
- b.21 f.3 Peru, undated
- b.21 f.4 Russia, 1970-1971
- b.21 f.5 Slovenia, 1987-1988
- b.21 f.6-9 Spain, 1960s, 1980, 1991
- b.21 f.10-12 Sweden, 1967
- b.21 f.13 Turkey, undated
- b.22 f.1 Various Countries, 1967-1972
- b.22 f.3 Various Productions-Publicity, 1971-1998
- b.22 f.4 *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg*-Script, 1957 November 11
- b.22 f.5 *The Medallion*-Script, undated
- b.22 f.6 *The Milwaukee Rocket*-Script, undated
- b.22 f.7 *Mister Buddwing*-Script, 1965 February 3
- b.22 f.8 *The Monster*-Script, 1975 August
- b.22 f.9 *Montparnasse*-Script, 1972 December
- b.22 f.10 *Mountain Hoe-Down: A Concert Review of American Folk Songs*-Programs and Poster, 1951, undated
- b.22 f.11 *Mozart: In Quest of the Man*-Concept and Outline, 1977 May

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

Murder Among the Saints, 1989

- b.23 f.1-2 Correspondence
- b.23 f.3 Notes and Research
- b.23 f.4 Outline
- b.23 f.5-9 Scripts
- b.23 f.10 *My L.A.*-Programs and Poster, 1951, undated
- b.23 f.11 *My Name is Esther*-Script, 1985 November 27 (Alternate title *The Queen of Trouble*)

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest

Original Production and Play

- b.24 f.1-2 Correspondence, 1963-1990
- b.24 f.3 Notes and Outlines, 1963
- b.24 f.4 Photographs, undated
- b.24 f.5 Programs, 1963
- b.24 f.6 Publicity Materials, 1963
- b.24 f.7-8 Research Materials, 1962
- b.24 f.9 Script, 1963
- b.25 f.1-3 Scripts, 1964-1964
- b.25 f.4 Writings by Wasserman: "A View from the Cuckoo's Nest", 1977
- b.25 f.5 Female Version-Script, undated
- b.25 f.6 London Production, 1978

Regional Productions

- b.25 f.7 Baltimore (Md.), undated
 - b.26 f.10 Chicago (Ill.), 1974 (Arlington Park Theatre)
 - b.25 f.8 Jupiter (Fla.), 1981 (Burt Reynolds Dinner Theatre)
 - b.25 f.9-14 Los Angeles (Calif.), 1965-1992
Huntington Hartford Theatre, Theatre Exchange and Players' Ring Gallery
 - b.26 f.1 Omaha (Neb.), 1981 (Fireside Theatre)
 - b.26 f.2 San Francisco (Calif.), 1972
 - b.26 f.3-6 Washington (D.C.), 1973 (Arena Stage)
 - b.26 f.7 Westport (Conn.), 1974 (Westport County Playhouse)
 - b.27 f.1-2 New York Revival, 1970, 1971
 - b.27 f.3-6 Steppenwolf/Broadway Revival, 2000-2001
- International/Foreign Language Productions
- b.27 f.7 Argentina, undated
 - b.27 f.8 Denmark, 1992, 2004-2008
 - b.28 f.1 Finland, 1979
 - b.27 f.9-10 France, 1973-1974, 1992

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest (cont.)

International/Foreign Language Prod... (cont.)

- b.28 f.2-3 Germany, 1976, 1996
- b.28 f.4 Hungary, 1989-1995
- b.28 f.5 Israel, 1972
- b.28 f.6 Italy, undated
- b.28 f.7-8 Japan, 1985-2001
- b.29 f.1 Netherlands, 2005
- b.29 f.2 Poland, 1975
- b.29 f.3 Romania, 2008
- b.29 f.4 Slovakia, 1998
- b.29 f.5 Spain, 2004
- b.29 f.6 Sweden, undated
- b.29 f.7 Thailand, undated
- b.29 f.8-10 Various Foreign Productions-Correspondence, Posters and Publicity, 1987-2003
- Various Productions
- b.26 f.8-9 Publicity Materials, 1970-1976
- b.26 f.11 Publicity Materials, 1980-1983, undated
- b.30 f.1 *The Pencil of God*-Script, undated
- b.30 f.2 *Perchance to Dream*-Script, 1962 December 5
- Play with Fire* (Alternate title *Players in a Game*)
- b.30 f.3 Poster, undated
- b.30 f.4-5 Scripts, 1978, undated
- b.30 f.6-8 *The Power and the Glory*-Scripts, 1961, 1984, undated
- b.31 f.1 *Princess*-Treatment, undated
- b.31 f.2 *The Queen of Trouble*-Script, undated
Alternate titles *Flight and Pursuit*, *Running and King of the Hill*
- b.31 f.3 *Quick Before it Melts*-Script, 1964 January 15
- b.31 f.4 *Red Sky*-Script, 1965 May 10
- b.31 f.5 *Running*-Script, undated
- b.31 f.6 *Scaramuche*-Script, undated
- b.31 f.7-8 *Scheherazade*-Scripts, undated
- b.31 f.9 *The Sea and the Shadow*-Script, 1961 January 5
- b.32 f.1-2 *The Seventh Dimension*-Scripts, 1984
- Shakespeare and the Indians*
Alternate title *Trouble on the Santa Fe Trail*
- b.32 f.3 Press Coverage, 1982-1987
- b.32 f.4-5 Scripts, 1991 June

Production Files, 1951-2008 (cont.)

Shubert Alley

Unproduced musical about the Shubert brothers

- b.32 f.6 Publicity Materials, 1980-1982
- b.32 f.7-8 Research Materials, 1981
- b.33 f.1 *Steps Going Down*-Script, undated
- b.33 f.2 *Stranger*-Script, 1963 June 21
- Survivors* (Alternate title *Look, We're Alive*)
- b.33 f.3 Correspondence and Negotiations, 1979-1984
- b.33 f.4-5 Notes and Outlines, 1979
- b.33 f.6 Publicity , 1979
- b.33 f.7 Research Materials, undated
- b.33 f.8-9 Scripts, 1964, 1979
- b.34 f.1 *Sylvester*-Script (Alternate title 998)
- b.34 f.2 *Tally Vengeance*-Treatment, undated
- b.34 f.3 *Time of the Drought*-Script, undated
- b.34 f.4 *Two Faces to Go*-Script, undated
- b.34 f.5 *The Vikings*-Script, undated (Script titled *The Viking*)
- b.34 f.6-7 *Wait for Me World*-Scripts, undated
- A Walk in the Sky*
- b.34 f.8 Posters, undated
- b.34 f.9-10 Scripts, 2001, undated
- A Walk with Love and Death*
- b.35 f.1 Correspondence and Negotiations, 1968
- b.35 f.2 Production Information, 1964-1967
- b.35 f.3 Publicity, 1969, 1980
- b.35 f.4 Research Materials, undated
- b.35 f.5 Script, 1967 June
- Western Star*
- b.35 f.6-8 Press Kit, Publicity and Reviews-Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities, 1995
- b.35 f.9 Production Information-Fairfield Civic Arts, 1993
- b.35 f.10-11 Scripts, undated
- b.36 f.1 *The Whole Truth*-Script, 1986-1987
- b.36 f.2 *World of Strangers*-Script, 1953 June 20 (Alternate title *The Larsen Story*)
- b.36 f.3 Various Shows-Photographs of Posters, undated

Other Projects, 1940-2006

Articles

Other Projects, 1940-2006 (cont.)

Articles (cont.)

“Flipping the Meat Train”/“Hobo Culture”

Appeared in *American Heritage* magazine, February/March 2001

- b.36 f.7 Contacts and Correspondence, 2000
 - b.36 f.8-9 Drafts, 2001-2002
 - b.36 f.10 Fan Mail, 2001
 - b.36 f.11 Notes and Research, undated
 - b.36 f.12 Submissions, 2000
 - b.36 f.13 “The Tip of the Iceberg”-Reproduction of Article, 2006 February
 Published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, December 2005/January 2006
 - b.36 f.4 Autobiographical Writings and Interviews, 1958-1994
- Concerts
- b.36 f.5 Barbizon Tuesdays--Programs and Flyers, 1946
 - b.36 f.6 Pelican Concerts--Programs and Publicity, 1947
- Katherine Dunham Dance Company, 1940-1985
Wasserman worked for Dunham’s company in Haiti as a director and as company manager
- b.37 f.1 Movie Project
 - b.37 f.2 Photographs
 - b.37 f.3-4 Programs
 - b.37 f.5 Scripts with Clippings and Correspondence
- b.38 f.1-10 Japan-Programs and Research Materials, 1985
 Compiled by Wasserman on a visit to Japan
- b.37 f.6 Midwest Playwrights Laboratory-Newsletters and Correspondence, 1978-1980
- b.38 f.11-12 Publicity on Wasserman, 1970-1990