

Inventory of the Higgins Family Papers, 1924-1971

*T-Mss 1997-032

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

New York, New York

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Higgins Family Papers, 1924-1971.
Collection ID: *T-Mss 1997-032
Creator: Higgins family
Extent: 3 lin. ft. (1 box; oversized photographs)
Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited.
Preferred Citation: Higgins Family Papers, *T-Mss 1997-032, Billy Rose Theatre Division,
The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Biographical Note

The Higgins family hails from Fall River, Massachusetts. Thomas R. Higgins was with Special Services during World War II. His father, Thomas H., was a flyman during the 1920s and 30s working with such notable performers as Maurice Evans, the Marx Brothers, and Eddie Cantor. His brother, Robert, was a writer and an actor in the 1950s appearing on television in *Omnibus*, *Lamp Unto My Feet*, and *Studio One*, in the national company of *Tea and Sympathy*, and on Broadway in *Auntie Mame*.

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the collection is correspondence to Thomas R. Higgins from his friend actress Evelyn Russell who entertained in and wrote soldier shows for Special Services in Europe from 1945-1948. Letters (mostly from Germany) give insight into itineraries and experiences of soldier show performers. In a letter dated August 8, 1947, Russell recreates for Higgins the skits and lyrics for a show called *Who's On First*. Also included are autographed photographs of Russell from the 1940s and headshots from the 1960s. Her letters dated 1960-1971 reflect her stage and television career and her life with her husband director/choreographer Joe Layton.

Photographs of casts and crews, hanging plots, contracts, and two letters from the Maurice Evans office document Thomas H. Higgins' career as a stagehand in the 1920s and 30s.

Actor Robert Higgins' career is represented by photographs from two plays: *Tea and Sympathy* and *Auntie Mame*.

Organization

- Series I. Thomas H. Higgins Papers
- Series II. Thomas R. Higgins Papers
- Series III. Robert Higgins Papers
- Series IV. Oversized Materials (Rose Bldg.:Drawer 7)

Container Listing / Series Description

Series I. Thomas H. Higgins Papers, 1924-1939

6 folders

This series consists of Higgins' IATSE contracts, hanging plots for some of the productions he worked on, two letters from Maurice Evans' office (one signed by Evans) regarding employment and a photograph of Evans autographed to Higgins.

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|------|------|--|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence / Maurice Evans, 1937
1 folder (2 letters, 1 photograph).
Two letters [1937-1938] from Maurice Evans Productions [one signed by Evans] to Thomas H. Higgins regarding Higgins' employment as a stagehand. Includes autographed photograph of Evans. |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Traveling stage employees' contracts / Thomas H. Higgins, 1928
1 folder
Thomas H. Higgins' contracts for some of the productions he |

worked on from 1928-1938. They include *Animal Crackers* (1928), *As Thousands Cheer* (1934), *Jubilee* (1935), *On Your Toes* (1936), *Richard II* (1937), and *You Can't Take It With You* (1938).

- b. 1 f. 3 *As thousands cheer* hanging plot, 1934
1 folder
Hanging plot, both handwritten and typed, for the musical revue *As Thousands Cheer*.
- b. 1 f. 4 *Face the music* hanging plot
1 folder
Hanging plot, both handwritten and typed, for the musical *Face the Music*.
- b. 1 f. 5 *Richard II* fly floor working plot, 1937.
1 folder.
Fly floor working plot for the Maurice Evans production of *Richard II*.
- b. 1 f. 6 Photographs / Thomas H. Higgins, 1924.
1 folder (6 photographs).
Photographs of stagehand Thomas H. Higgins with casts and crews of some of the productions he worked on: *Earl Carroll Vanities* (1924), *Mecca* (1927), and an unidentified Marx Brothers show. Included are a headshot of Al Jolson and a photograph of June Knight autographed to Higgins (*Jubilee*, 1935).

Series II. Thomas R. Higgins Papers, 1946-1971

8 folders

The series consists of letters to Tom Higgins from Evelyn Russell while she was working in Special Services in Germany (1946-1948). Later correspondence (1960-1971) touches on her career and that of her husband Joe Layton.

Photographs include Special Services publicity photos of Russell (1946-1947), a candid photo of Russell, Tom Higgins and Bette Larson in Germany (1946), headshots of Russell (1960s), photo of Joe Layton, photo of Noel Coward (Russell appeared in *Sail Away*), and a few snapshots of the Layton family and cat.

- b. 1 f. 7-9 Correspondence / Evelyn Russell, 1946
3 folders
Letters written to Thomas R. Higgins from actress Evelyn Russell while she was appearing in soldier shows for Special Services in Germany from 1946-1948.

b. 1 f. 10-
14

Correspondence / Evelyn Russell, 1960

5 folders

Letters (1960-1971) to Thomas R. Higgins from actress Evelyn Russell. Includes information about the career of her husband director/choreographer Joe Layton.

b. 1 f. 15

Photographs / Evelyn Russell, 1946

1 folder

Photographs of actress Evelyn Russell include autographed photographs to Thomas R. Higgins (1947), photograph of Russell, Higgins and Bette Larson in Germany (1946), headshots of Russell (1960's), and snapshots of the Layton family and their cat. Also included are photographs of Russell's husband Joe Layton and Noel Coward.

Series III. Robert Higgins Papers, 1955-1956

1 folder

Three photographs of Robert Higgins as he appeared in *Auntie Mame* with Rosalind Russell and in *Tea and Sympathy* with Maria Riva.

b. 1 f. 16

Photographs / Robert Higgins, 1955

1 folder

Photographs of actor Robert Higgins in the national company of *Tea and Sympathy* (1955) with Maria Riva and in the Broadway production of *Auntie Mame* (1956) with Rosalind Russell.

Series IV. Oversized Materials, 1923-1932

1 folder

Oversized photographs of casts and crews Thomas H. Higgins worked with include *The Cocoanuts* (1927), *Artists and Models* (1925), and *Make It Snappy* (1923) and *Of Thee I Sing* (ca. 1931-1932).

Rose Bldg: Drawer 7

Artists and models (Revue), 1925

1 folder

Oversized photograph of cast and crew for the musical revue *Artists and Models* (Denver 1925).

Rose Bldg: Drawer 7

The cocoanuts (Musical) / Irving Berlin, 1927

1 folder

Oversized photograph of cast and crew of the musical *The Cocoanuts* (Denver, 1927).

Rose Bldg: Drawer 7

Make it snappy (Revue) / Jean Schwartz, 1923

1 folder

Oversized photograph of cast and crew of the revue *Make It Snappy* (Atlantic City 1923)

Rose Bldg: Drawer 7

Of thee I sing (Musical) / George Gershwin

1 folder

Oversized production photograph from the musical *Of Thee I Sing* (ca. 1931, 1932).
