Guide to the Burl Ives Papers, 1913-1975

*T-Mss 1965-001

Billy Rose Theatre Collection

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York

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Descriptive Summary

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<td>Collection ID:</td>
<td>*T-Mss 1965-001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Ives, Burl</td>
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<td>Extent:</td>
<td>25 linear feet (49 boxes)</td>
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<td>Billy Rose Theatre Collection. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts</td>
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<td>Abstract:</td>
<td>Burl Ives was a singer, an author and a film, television and theater actor from the late 1930s through the 1980s. This collection contains material from 1913 through 1975, but the majority of the materials are from the 1950s and 1960s. The materials in the collection cover the various aspects of Ives’ professional career.</td>
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Administrative Information

Access

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Preferred Citation


Source

The Burl Ives Papers were donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Collection in 1965 by Burl Ives.
Biographical Note

Burl Ives was born in Hunt City Township, Illinois on June 14, 1909. Growing up in a rural farming family, Ives’ learned American folk songs from his parents and grandparents. He sang from an early age and learned to accompany himself on the guitar and the banjo. In high school, he earned money as a musician and showed talent as a football player as well. He entered Eastern Illinois State College, studying to be a football coach, but continuing to perform over the college radio station and studying voice. And after three years, he left college to pursue his love of folk music, embarking on a cross-country trip to collect traditional folk songs. This phase of Ives’ life inspired his nickname, “The Wayfaring Stranger,” a title he used for his radio show, several albums and his autobiographies.

In 1933 Ives moved to New York, where he attended both Juilliard and New York University, studying acting with Benno Schneider and voice with Ella Toedt. Ives established himself singing at various benefits around the city and acting in upstate New York summer stock productions. He made his Broadway debut in 1938 with a small role in Rodgers and Hart’s hit musical, *The Boys from Syracuse* and had another small role in the short-lived play, *Heavenly Express* (1940). During World War II, he was in the army for 2 years, during which he appeared on Broadway in Irving Berlin’s all-soldier revue, *This is the Army* (1942). In 1944, Ives had a major role in Walter Kerr’s folk music revue, *Sing Out, Sweet Land*, for which he won a Donaldson Award.

Ives’ singing career built steadily throughout the forties, from his network radio debut in June of 1940 to his radio show, *The Wayfaring Stranger* in 1941, as well as regular nightclub appearances. Ives signed a recording contract with Decca, after they put out the cast album of *Sing Out, Sweet Land* (1944) and on December 1, 1945 he made his New York concert debut at Town Hall. Ives had a regular network radio show, *The Burl Ives Show*, from 1946-1948, but also found time to launch another career, making his film debut as a singing cowboy in *Smoky* (1946), which was followed with other small roles in *Green Grass of Wyoming* (1948) and *Station West* (1948). His film breakthrough came in 1949 with the Disney film, *So Dear to My Heart*, which also provided him with a major song hit, “Lavender Blue.”

Each facet of Ives’ career flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. As a New York theater actor, he had several notable roles in the 1950s, replacing James Barton as the star of *Paint Your Wagon* and subsequently starring in the national tour in 1952-1953, and then playing Cap’n Andy in the 1954 revival of *Show Boat* at City Center and culminating in his most famous role as Big Daddy in Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). This performance proved Ives’ ability as a serious actor and it coincided with more prestigious film roles, including re-creating his performance in the film of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), as well as playing supporting roles in *East of Eden* (1955) and *Desire Under the Elms* (1958). Ives won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *The Big Country* (1958). He also worked steadily in television, with appearances on *General Electric Theater* in 1956 and 1959, *Playhouse 90* in 1957, *Zane Grey Theater* in 1960 and *The Bell Telephone Hour* (1963-1965). Ives continued to work in television, starring in his own sitcom, *OK Crackerby!* (1965).
As a recording artist, he produced an impressive catalogue of hits, including “Blue Tail Fly” in 1949, “On Top of Old Smoky” in 1951, “Wild Side of Life” in 1952, and “A Little Bitty Tear” in 1962 and “It’s Just My Funny Way of Laughing” which won Ives a Grammy Award for Best Country and Western Record the same year. The song recording for which Ives is, perhaps, best remembered today, “A Holly Jolly Christmas,” came from the soundtrack of the TV special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, which first aired in 1964.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Ives continued to record music in a wide array of genres, including folk, country/western, religious music, children’s albums and even an album of contemporary pop songs, *The Times They Are A-Changin’* (1968). Ives received Grammy nominations for his children’s recordings, *Chim Chim Cheree and Other Children’s Choices* (1964) and *America Sings* (1974). Ives continued to act in film and television, though his career slowed down in the late 70s and 80s and his final film appearance was in *Two Moon Junction* (1988). His last album, *The Magic Balladeer* was released in 1993.

In 1945 Ives married one of the writers of his radio show, Helen Erlich. Until their divorce in 1960, Helen Ives was deeply involved in her husband’s career. They had one son together, Alexander. Ives married his second wife, Dorothy Koster Paul in 1971. He retired to Anacortes, Washington and passed away there on April 14, 1995.
Scope and Content Note

This collection contains mainly professional files, pertaining to all aspects of his career. Production files, scrapbooks, photographs, scripts, publicity files and publications are represented in this collection. The majority of the materials in this collection are from the period in which Ives’ carrier peaked, the 1950s and 1960s. Ives’ music career is covered more fully here than his acting career. One of the highlights of this collection is the Photographic History, which contains photos of Ives at various points in his life with extensive identifications. Another highlight of the collection are the histories of many of the songs and albums, and occasionally the plays and films, which provide useful background information and function as a running professional biography throughout the collection. The separated materials from this collection include albums of Ives songs and films of episodes from his television show, OK Crackerby.

Organization

The collection is organized into nine series and three sub-series. They are:

Series I : Production Files, 1935-1975
  - Sub-series 1 – Film/Television, 1948-1975
  - Sub-series 2 – Music, 1940-1968
  - Sub-series 3 – Theater, 1935-1967
Series II : Scrapbooks, 1945-1967
Series III : Photographs, 1916-1967
Series IV : Publicity, 1913-1967
Series V : Publications, 1951-1966
Series VI : Scripts, 1955-1966
Series VII : Scores, 1951-1965
Series VIII : General Professional Files, 1951-1967
Series IX : Oversized Items, 1948-1962
Burl Ives Papers

Series Descriptions

Series I: Production Files, 1935-1975  20 boxes
Sub-series 1 – Film/Television, 1948-1975
Sub-series 2 – Music, 1940-1968
Sub-series 3 – Theater, 1935-1967

This series contains advertisements, album contents, album covers, call sheets, charts, contracts, correspondence, costume sketches, fan mail, financial records, flyers, histories, interviews, invoices, legal documents, liner notes, listings, lyrics, mailings, memos, notes, order forms, press coverage, promotional materials, radio listings revisions, schedules, song lists, staff lists, study cards and telegrams pertaining to Ives’ albums, songs, films, plays and television shows.

Sub-series 1 – Film/Television, 1948-1975  5 boxes
This sub-series consists of production files from Ives’ film and television projects, such as The Big Country, The Brass Bottle (1964), Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Desire Under the Elms, Ensign Pulver (1964), Mediterranean Holiday (1964), OK Crackerby, Our Man in Havana (1959), Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, So Dear to My Heart, Summer Magic (1963) and Wind Across the Everglades (1958).

Sub-series 2 – Music, 1940-1968  13 boxes
This sub-series consists of production files from Ives’ career as a recording artists, covering albums, such as Animal Folk (1964), Australian Folk Songs (1959), The Best of Burl’s for Boys and Girls (1963), Chim Chim Cheree (1964), Down to the Sea in Ships (1956), Have a Holly Jolly Christmas (1965), It’s Just My Funny Way of Laughing (1962), Pearly Shells (1964), Songs of Ireland (1958), The Versatile Burl Ives (1962) and The Wayfaring Stranger (1949). The sub-series also includes production files on songs recorded by Ives, such as “Blue Tail Fly,” “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” “Call me Mr. In-Between,” “Evil Off My Mind,” “Ghost Riders in the Sky,” “I Know an Old Lady (Who Swallowed a Fly),” “Little Bitty Tear,” “Mr. Froggie Went A-Courtin,” “On Top of Old Smoky,” “Salt Water Guitar” and “Same Old Hurt.”

Sub-series 3 – Theater, 1935-1967  2 boxes
The scripts in this sub-series pertain to theatrical projects, such as Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Dr. Cook’s Garden (1967), Knickerbocker Holiday (1951), The Man Who Came to Dinner (1951) and Sing Out, Sweet Land.

Series II: Scrapbooks, 1945-1967  7 boxes
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series contains scrapbooks, which contain clippings, photographs and mementos documenting Ives’ career as a singer and as an actor in theater film and television.

Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series contains the Burl Ives Photographic History, an extensive collection of photos and other images of Ives, through 1965. There are also various stills and production shots from Ives’ stage and screen performances.
Series IV : Publicity, 1913-1967  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series is comprised mainly of the Burl Ives Publicity files given to NYPL in 1965, documenting the ways the various sides of Ives’ career were publicized. This series also contains many articles published by or about Ives, as well as interviews, press releases and images of Ives used for promotional purposes.

Series V : Publications, 1951-1966  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series contains information and manuscripts of various publications written, edited or introduced by Ives. The publications included in this series are Ives’ children’s book, *Albad the Oaf* (1965), his second autobiography, *The Wayfaring Stranger’s Notebook* (1952) and various songbooks, such as *Burl Ives Songbook* (1953) and *Irish Song Book* (1958).

Series VI : Scripts, 1955-1966  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series contains scripts from film and television projects Ives appeared in, including *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Big Country* and *Summer Magic*.

Series VII : Scores, 1951-1965  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series includes published sheet music from songs recorded by Ives, as well as hand-written lyric and music sheets with notes that Ives made during recording sessions.

Series VIII : General Files, 1951-1967  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series includes various items pertaining more to Ives’ career at large, or to his personality, than to any one particular facet, including his Christmas cards, information of his concerts, tours and radio spots as well as miscellaneous correspondence.

Series IX : Oversized Items, 1948-1962  
Arrangement: Alphabetical.
This series contains various oversized items, such as album advertisements, a magazine in Braille and oversized photos from Ives’ film *The Spiral Road* (1963).
## Series I: Production Files, 1935-1975, Undated

**Sub-Series 1: Film/Television, 1948-1975**

### Absalom, My Son (General Electric Theatre), 1959-1961, Undated
- Call sheets, Undated
- Contract, 1959 Nov. 6
- Correspondence and publicity announcement, 1959
- Distribution statement, 1960-1961
- Premise, 1959 Dec. 6
- Publicity, 1959
- Shooting schedule, 1959 Aug. 27, Undated
- Staff list, Undated

### The Arthur Murray Show, 1959 Oct. 9
- Advertisement
- Contract


### The Big Country, 1957-1959, Undated
- Contracts, 1957-1959
- Promotions, 1958
- Salary vouchers, 1957-1958
- Script additions made on set, Undated

### The Brass Bottle, 1962-1963
- Correspondence
- Contract
- Schedules

### Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, 1958-1962
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- History, 1958
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### The Day of the Outlaw, 1958-1960
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- Legal correspondence

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### Ensign Pulver, 1963-1964
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- Legal documents/contracts, 1963
- Schedules/production notes, 1963
- Script materials with correspondence with Josh Logan, 1963

### Family Christmas--Article on Columbia Records tie-in, 1950 Dec. 27

### The Faye Emerson Show--Contract, 1950 Oct. 20

### The Lanford-Ameche Show--Correspondence, 1951 Oct. 22

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<td>The Bell Syndicate - Interview, 1952 Oct. 13</td>
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34 1955-1966
35 College radio stations, 1964
36 Thank-You notes, ABC, 1965
37 Family Christmas show-Script and clipping, 1951
38 *Folk Songs: What They Are and Why Sing Them*-Speech given over
   Australian radio, Undated
39 Interview with WINS, 1962 Apr. 9
40 Ives' draft of songs for *Bell Telephone Hour*, 1964 Oct. 6
41 Programming ideas, 1963
42 Show schedules, Undated
43 *The Sound of Burl Ives*-Press coverage, 1963
44 Suggested programming for Ives folk song program, 1951

**Series IX: Oversized Items, 1948-1962, Undated**

47 1 Australian Folk Songs-Display
2 Cheers-Display
3 *Christmas Eve with Burl Ives*
4 *Men*
5 *Songs of the West*
6 *The Braille Musician*-Magazine issue with article and correspondence, 1955-1956
7 Photos-*The Spiral Road*-Production shots, 1962
8 Tribute from Wayne University, 1948 Jan. 30
9 Oversized galleys, 1948, 1952
   *Irish Song Book*, 1958

48 1 Song list
2 *Are You There MO-RI-AR-I-TY*
3 *The Beard of Armagh*
4 *The Bells of Shandon*
5 *Boolavogue*
6 *Boston*
7 *Brennanon the Moor*
8 *Cockles and Mussels*
9 *The Dear Little Shamrock*
10 *The Garden Where the Praties Grow*
11 *The Girl I Left Behind Me*
12 *The Green Bushes*
13 *Has Sorrow Thy Young Days Shaded*
14 *I Know My Love*
15 *I Know Where I'm Goin'*
16 *I Thank You, Ma'am Says Dan*
17 *In Glendalough Lived a Young Saint*
18 *Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye*
19 *Kelley, the Boy from Killmann*
20 *Kilgary Mountain*
21 *The Lark is in the Clear*
22 *Let Erin Remember*
23 *The Low-Back'd Car*
24 *The Maid of Slievenamon*
25 *The Maid of the Sweet Brown Knowe*
26 *The Men of the West*
27 *Molly Brannigan*
28 *Mrs. McGrath*
29 *A Nation Once Again*
30 *Off to Philadelphia*
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Separated Materials List

Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound

Burl Ives *L 92-41
Audio-Visual items separated from the paper materials in this collection are comprised of the following:

Audio Formats

There are 275 phonograph records, 48 audio reels, and 5 8-track cassettes. The majority of the material is commercially released versions of Ives’ output as a vocalist. There are also alternative or original versions of songs which Ives may have used as references to his own versions. Within the phonographic records there are a small amount of acetates and test pressings, but 45s, 33s and 78s make up the majority of items. The audio reels include both final commercial versions, and test demos. There is repetition across formats with several of the titles, where a song may appear in its final version on a record, on an audio reel, and on the 8-track cassette. Fewer songs appear repeated across formats in alternative or working production versions.

Theatre on Film and Tape (TOFT)

There are 20 reels of 16mm film also in this collection.

17 of these are episodes of the ABC television program *OK Crackerby* in which Ives starred. The series ran for only one year (September 16, 1965 through January 6, 1966) with 17 episodes total. The collection has a full representation of all the episodes in the single season. They are black and white, projection prints (most likely kinescopes) with optical soundtrack on a polyester base. They are each approximately 30 minutes long on 1200 foot reels.

In addition there are three separate titles also found in the film collection.

*Time Will Tell.* A 30 minute program on the DuMont Network from 1954 hosted by Ernie Covacs. This reel contains the episode “The Moment of Truth” (undated)
1200 foot reel, black and white, optical soundtrack.

*Auction Aire.* A 30 minute program on ABC from 1949-1950. This episode is from September 30, 1949.
1200 foot reel, black and white, optical soundtrack.

*Leave It To The Girls.* A 30 minute program on NBC. This episode is from June 17, 1951
1200 foot reel, black and white, optical soundtrack.