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Stuart Ostrow Papers
1955-2007
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**Lea Jordan
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Summary

Main entry:	Ostrow, Stuart
Title:	Stuart Ostrow papers, 1955-2007
Size:	20.5 linear feet (52 boxes)
Source:	Purchased from Stuart Ostrow, 2007
Abstract:	Stuart Ostrow -- theatre producer, director, author and teacher -- was a driving force behind many successful Broadway productions from the 1960's through the 1990's. The Stuart Ostrow papers contain material from 1955 through 2007 that chiefly document Ostrow's professional life. His general administrative and production files make up the bulk of this collection, and contain correspondence, scripts, scores, photographs, scrapbooks, and other materials pertaining to Ostrow's work in theater.
Access:	Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required. Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the series may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.
Copyright information:	For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.
Preferred citation:	Stuart Ostrow papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.
Special formats	Awards, Photographs, Scrapbooks, Sound recordings, Video recordings.

Biographical note

Stuart Ostrow - producer, director, author and teacher, was a driving force behind many successful Broadway productions from the 1960's through the 1990's. Born in 1932 in New York City to Abe and Anna Ostrow, he graduated from New York University with a degree in music education. After serving in the Air Force from 1952-1955, he married singer Ann Elizabeth Gilbert in 1957, with whom he had three children. While in the Air Force, Ostrow produced and directed many camp shows.

Ostrow began his work in music and theater as Frank Loesser's apprentice in 1955. By 1961 he had become the vice president and general manager of Frank Music Corporation, working on *The Most Happy Fella*, *The Music Man*, *Greenwillow*, and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. By the time he was 28, Ostrow decided that he had enough experience to try producing on his own, and he flew to London to tell Loesser in person that he was leaving the company to produce his first solo venture, *We Take the Town* starring Robert Preston.

While *We Take the Town* never made it to Broadway, Ostrow went on to produce a great variety of successful shows. In 1963 he directed and produced Meredith Willson's *Here's Love*, based on *A Miracle on 34th St.* In the 1960's he also produced *The Apple Tree* (1966) and *1776* (1969), which received not only the New York and London Drama Critics Awards, but the Tony Award for Best Musical. The success of *1776* was followed by *Scratch* in 1971, a show in which Ostrow worked closely with poet Archibald MacLeish. The show was a commercial flop, but was followed by Stephen Schwartz's *Pippin* in 1972, which ran for five years and also had West End and touring productions. In 1978 Ostrow lent his hand to writing and producing a play, *Stages*, which closed on opening night. The same fate befell his 1981 production of *The Mooney Schapiro Songbook*. Ostrow's next major production to reach Broadway was *M. Butterfly* in 1988. Although slow to build an audience, it ultimately ran for nearly two years on Broadway with success leading to a production on the West End and a national tour. *M. Butterfly* won the 1988 Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for Best Play, as well as earning a nomination for the 1989 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Ostrow's next major project, a producing collaboration between Ostrow and Andrew Lloyd Webber, was *La Bête* in 1991, which struggled due to mixed reviews and casting problems.

In 1973, Ostrow established the Stuart Ostrow Foundation's Musical Theatre Lab, a non-profit professional workshop for original musical theatre. The Lab ran in several incarnations through the years - at St. Clements church in New York, at the Kennedy Center and for a time at Radcliffe.

He joined the faculty at the University of Houston as the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Chair in Theater in 1994 and relocated his Lab to Houston. He later became the Distinguished University Professor of Theatre at the University of Houston. In addition to his theatrical achievements, he is the author of *A Producer's Broadway Journey*, *Thank You Very Much (The Little Guide To Auditioning For The Musical Theatre)*, and *Present At The Creation, Leaping In The Dark and Going Against The Grain: 1776, Pippin, M. Butterfly, La Bête & Other Broadway Adventures. The Anatomy of a Broadway Musical*, which traces the journey of a musical production from conception to realization, was published in 2010.

Scope and content note

The Stuart Ostrow papers, which date from 1955 through 2007, chiefly document Ostrow's professional life. These papers demonstrate the deep commitment Ostrow had to the theater not just as a business, but as an art form. His passion for intellectual theater as well as the development of new works is evident throughout his correspondence. The general administrative and production files make up the bulk of this collection, and contain correspondence, scripts, scores, photographs, scrapbooks, and other materials pertaining to Ostrow's work in theater. There is also material documenting Ostrow's Musical Theatre Lab, correspondence regarding various committees on which Ostrow served, publication files containing drafts and permissions for three of his books, and some family papers.

Arrangement note

The Stuart Ostrow papers are organized in the following series:

- I. General administration files, 1955-2007
- II. Production files, 1956-1999
- III. Musical Theatre Lab, 1975-2005
- IV. Committee files, 1970-2002
- V. Publications, 1998-2005
- VI. Family papers, 1955-2007
- VII. Artifacts, 1958-1993

Series descriptions and container list

I. General administration files, 1955-2007

This series contains files kept by Ostrow in his capacity as a producer. In chronological order, these contain primarily correspondence, as well as notes, business files, projects for consideration, memos, proposals, and other materials related to the day-to-day workings of his production office. There is a heavy focus on procuring capitalization and the search for creative teams and potential artists. Of interest are the pitches playwrights and their agents submitted in an effort to enlist Ostrow as a producer on their projects. Ostrow mingled business with his personal relationships and often a letter pertaining to a contract is followed by an introduction of a lyricist to a composer with whom he might collaborate, or a thank you note for an invitation to an opening night. Honors and awards, including correspondence from the White House in recognition of Ostrow's achievements, can be found at the end of this series.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1-5	1955-1983
	6	Jan-Mar
2	1-4	Mar-Dec
		1986
	5	Jan-Feb
3	1-4	Mar-Dec
		1987
	5	Jan-Apr
4	1-2	May-Dec
		1988
	3-6	Jan-Nov
5	1	Dec
		1989
	2-6	Jan-Nov
6	1	Dec
		1990
	2-6	Jan-Oct
7	2-5	Sep-Dec
		1991
8	1-5	Mar-Oct
9	1	Nov-Dec
	2-6	1992
	7	1993
10	1-2	1994
		1995
	3-5	Jan-Oct
		1996
	6	Jan-Mar
11	1-3	Apr-Dec
		1997
	4-6	Jan-Jun
12	1-2	Aug-Dec
	3-5	1998

Stuart Ostrow papers
Series descriptions and box list

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
		1999
12	6	Jan-Apr
13	1-4	Apr-Nov
14	1	Nov-Dec
	2	2000-2001
		2002
	3-6	Jan-Feb
	4	Mar-Sep
15	1	Oct-Dec
		2003
	2-5	Jan-Oct
16	1	Nov-Dec
	2	2004
	3-4	2005
	5-6	2006
	7	2007
	8	Awards
	9	Presidential correspondence

II. Production files, 1956-1999

The productions series contains files relating to specific productions or in-development projects (properties). They include audition notes, budgets, cast lists, contact sheets, contracts, correspondence, costume sketches, financial materials, photographs (both production and candid), playbills, programs, production notes, public relations materials, research materials, scripts, and scores. Of note in this series are rare production shots of Robert Preston in the flop *We Take the Town* and a series of letters from poet Archibald MacLeish who wrote *Scratch*. Also unique in this series are scripts marked with the stage manager's cues for the final production, drafts of shows in development, and often detailed audition notes - a record of the many complicated steps in the production process.

This series also includes sound and video recordings, such as live audio recordings of shows Ostrow produced including an early reading of *1776*, Anthony Hopkins in the London production of *M. Butterfly*, an audio recording of *American Passion* (1983), and *La Bête* (1991). The series also includes unreleased demo recordings of *1776*, *Doll*, as well as a recording of Stephen Sondheim singing Act I songs from *The Ladies Upstairs*, which later became *Follies*.

Videos include tapes of lectures Ostrow gave at various venues, a recording of the 1995 *Doll* reading, and the press reels for *M. Butterfly*.

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the series may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

		<i>American Passion</i> , 1981-1984
17	1-2	General
43		Photographs
		<i>The Apple Tree</i> , 1965-1967
17	3	Advertising
	4	Early development
	5	Photographs
	6	Programs and playbills
51		Score
46		Scrapbook
17	7	Script
	8	<i>Caper</i> , undated
	9	<i>Conquest of the Air</i> , 1953
		<i>Coyote Goes Salmon Fishing</i> , 1997
18	1	General
	2	Script
		<i>Doll</i> , 1994-1999
	3-5	General
	6	Musical Theatre Lab
19	1	Musical Theatre Lab
	2	Presentation
	3-6	Script drafts
	7	<i>Ending</i> , 1976
		<i>Face Value</i> , 1993

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
20	1	Casting
	2	General
		<i>Here's Love</i> , 1963-1964
	3	Advertising
	4	Correspondence
	5	Financial
	6	Photographs
	7	Programs and playbills
50		Score
42	1	<i>Greenwillow</i> , 1960 (photographs only)
20	8	<i>Inside, Outside</i> , 1985
	9	<i>Is There Anything In Your Past We Ought to Know?</i> , 1991
	10	<i>Jack and Cassie Move to New Jersey</i>
21	1	<i>Jump</i>
	2	<i>Kicks</i> , 1986
		<i>La Bête</i> , 1990-1991
	3	Advertising
	4	Awards
	5	Casting
	6-7	Contracts
22	1	Financial
	2	Photographs
	3	Programs and playbills
	4	Script
	5	<i>Looking West</i> (Actor, Lawyer, Indian Chief), 1999
		<i>M. Butterfly</i> , 1988-1992
23	1-2	General
	3	Awards
	4	Casting
	5	Costumes
	6	Contracts
24	1	Financial
	2-3	Legal
25	1	Photographs
	2	Press
	3	Programs and playbills
		Script
	4	Director's script
	5	Prompt script
	6	Signed memorabilia
26	1-2	Tour
	3	<i>Man's Fate</i>
		<i>The Mooney Schapiro Songbook</i>
27	1	1981
	2	1985
	3	<i>The Most Happy Fella</i> , 1956
	4-5	<i>Musical Comedy</i> , undated
		<i>Pippin</i> , 1971-1977
	6	Advertising
	7	Awards

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
27	8	Correspondence
	9	Financial
	10	Photographs
47		Production script
		Programs and playbills
28	1	Broadway
	2	Tour
44-45		Scrapbook
50		Score
28	3	Sheet music
		<i>Really Rosie</i> , 1975
	4	General
42	5	Photographs
		<i>Scratch</i> , 1970-1971
28	5-6	General
29	1	MacLeish, Archibald
	2-4	Script sketches
		<i>1776</i> , 1968-1972
	5	Awards
	6	Financial
30	1	Photographs
42	6	Photographs (oversized)
30	2	Press
	3	Programs and playbills (Also includes a coloring book)
52		Score
48-49		Scrapbooks
30	4	Script
	5	Sheet music
52		<i>She Loves Me</i> score
31	1-2	<i>Stages</i> , 1978
	3	<i>Sweet Smell of Success</i> , 1993
		<i>Swing</i> , 1980
	4	General
	5	Photographs
	6	<i>1040</i> , 1997 (A musical about taxes)
51		<i>The Unsinkable Molly Brown</i> score
		<i>We Take the Town</i> , 1962
31	7	General
	8	Photographs
32	1	<i>Wrong Mountain</i> , 1997
	2	<i>Young Goodman Brown</i> , 1985

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
		Other Photographs
		Ostrow, Stuart
42	2-3	portraits
	4	candid
43	1	oversized
42	7	Unidentified
	8	Willson, Meredith

III. Musical Theatre Lab, 1975-2005

Founded in 1973, the Musical Theatre Lab is a non-profit workshop for experimental theatre. Originating in New York, the Lab relocated to the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., then the University of Houston when Ostrow became head of the Musical Theatre Department. This series contains correspondence related to the development and day-to-day business of the Lab and playbills and rare photographs from many of the Lab's productions.

This series also includes video recordings, including musical theater collaborations and lab classes from 1995 and 1999.

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the series may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

		General administration
32	3	1975-1976
	4	1977-1979
	5	2002
33	1	2005
		Photographs
	2	<i>Amerika</i>
	3-4	<i>Good Sports</i>
	5	<i>Hot Grog</i>
	6-7	<i>Lab Revues</i>
	8	<i>Neverland</i>
	9	<i>Three Mean Fairy Tales</i>
	10-11	<i>Up On the Mountain</i>
	12	Programs and playbills

IV. Committee files, 1970-2002

This series contains correspondence relating to various committees on which Ostrow served over the years, including the Pulitzer Prize committee, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, and others. Includes offers for membership, invitations to sit on boards, and programs and flyers.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
34	1	American Repertory Theatre
	2	Harvard University
	3	National Council on the Arts
	4	National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts
	5	National Endowment for the Arts - Opera-Musical Theatre, 1983
	6	Pulitzer jury, 2000
	7	University of Houston

V. Publications, 1998-2005

The publications series includes drafts, correspondence, and permissions relating to three of Ostrow's books: *A Producer's Broadway Journey* (1999), *Thank You Very Much* (2002) and *Present at the Creation, Leaping in the Dark and Going Against the Grain* (2005).

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
35	1-4	<i>Present at the Creation</i> , folders 1-4 of 9
36	1-5	<i>Present at the Creation</i> , folders 5-9 of 9
37	1-3	<i>A Producer's Broadway Journey</i> , folders 1-3 of 8
38	1-5	<i>A Producer's Broadway Journey</i> , folders 4-8 of 8
39	1-6	<i>Thank You Very Much</i>

VI. Family papers, 1955-2007

The family papers include letters and cards from Ostrow's three children, fan mail to his wife Ann Ostrow Gilbert from her years as a performer, as well as Christmas, anniversary and birthday greetings from friends and family, and well wishes from Stuart and Ann's wedding in 1957.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
40	1-2	Children
	3	Gilbert, Ann (fan mail)
	4	Greetings and general correspondence, undated, folder 1 of 2
41	1	Greetings and general correspondence, undated, folder 2 of 2
	2-4	Wedding, 1957

VII. Artifacts, 1958-1993

The Apple Tree

Liquor flask from Mike Nichols
Brass apple from Jerry Bock
Glass Apple from Gerald Schoenfeld
Small silver apple (opening night gift to cast)

Chicago

Small bowler hat and homemade "best assistant choreographer" award from Bob Fosse
Opening night paperweight

Face Value

Silver pen (gift from David Hwang)
Bell (gift from Roy Brodesmith)
Cuff links (silver) (gift from David Hwang)
Cuff links (blue) (gift from Jeff Ash)
Statue of man (gift from Ann Ostrow)

Here's Love

Brass keychain from Meredith Willson

La Bête

Writing pen
Glass ashtrays (3)

M. Butterfly

Tony Award (Best Play)
Framed Chinese proverb (gift from John Dexter)
Silver bill clip
Silver frame
Jar with butterflies (gift from David Hwang)
Plastic enclosed butterfly
Lace butterfly
Card butterfly
Glass opening night paperweight (Broadway)
Colored opening night paperweight (London)
Chinese mask
Good luck hat made of dollars

Mooney Schapiro Songbook

Pocket watch

Pippin

Hand painted platter
Etched drinking glass
Silver goblets (3)
Commedia Matinee Club Award

Scratch

Silver pitchfork

1776

Tony Award (Best Musical)
Liberty Bell penny bank
Home made sculptures
Various pins/tokens/keys
Silver shot glass/mug

Swing

Silver whistle
Swing sculpture

We Take the Town

Black ceramic bull