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Varsity Show Records

1894- UA#0106

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Creator

The Varsity Show.

Title and dates

Varsity Show Records, 1894-

Abstract

The Varsity Show Records document the history of Columbia University's Varsity Show, an annual student written and produced musical that lampoons Columbia life. The records contain programs, scores, scripts, photographs, posters and other memorabilia from past productions. Notable Varsity Show alumni include Richard Rodgers (CC '23), Oscar Hammerstein II (CC'16), Lorenz Hart (CC '18), Herman Wouk (CC '34) and I.A.L. Diamond (CC '41).

Size

20.76 linear feet [8 document boxes and 13 flat file boxes]

Call number

UA #0106

Location

Columbia University
Butler Library, 6th Floor
Rare Book and Manuscript Library
535 West 114th Street

New York, NY 10027

Language(s) of material

English.

History of The Varsity Show Records

Initially conceived as a fundraiser for the University's Athletics team, The Varsity Show has grown into Columbia University's oldest performing arts tradition, an annual extravaganza that has launched many students on their paths to careers in the arts and elicited cheers and blushes from those in the Columbia community who find themselves subject of its satire.

The first Varsity Show, *Joan of Arc* by Guy Wetmore Caryl, CC'95, was conceived as a fundraiser for Columbia's fiscally struggling athletics team, with all funds benefiting the Columbia College Athletic Union. The original musical extravaganza was developed by The Columbia College Musical Society and featured many of the staples of early Varsity Shows: an exotic location, a far-fetched plot and humorous contemporary references (the 'All-France Football Team'). As Columbia lacked a suitable theatre for the performance, *Joan of Arc* was performed in The Manhattan Athletic Club Theatre. It proved a financial and artistic success, drawing praise from the press and funds from its audience.

Subsequent varsity shows followed a similar pattern: game Columbia students bewigged themselves as Egyptians, swashbuckled and time-traveled in a variety of gently ludicrous situations which helped earn funds for their athletics team. With modern musical comedy not yet developed, melodramatic operettas dominated the New York stage and these provided ample material for Columbia students to lampoon. As the costumes and settings became increasingly elaborate, the Varsity Show (a moniker first adopted for 1900's *The Governer's Vrouw*) moved further from its role as fiscal cheerleader for the varsity team and justified its existence in its own right. The Columbia University Players was established between 1904 and 1906 so that the Varsity Show could be performed as an annual spectacle whose *raison d'être* was its own pomp rather than generating sports revenue.

Varsity Shows continued in this vein up to the 1950s, quickly becoming an important Columbia institution, though they continued to be performed off-campus, in impressive locations such as The Hotel Astor or the Waldorf-Astoria. These spaces helped to draw in the Broadway theatre crowd who might not have made it uptown and offered an invaluable opportunity for students to strut and sing on a professional stage, with a professional orchestra accompanying them. Though Varsity alums stepped in to help direct and produce, shows continued to be written, performed and composed entirely by students, many of whom used The Varsity Show as a springboard towards professional careers in the arts.

Although the Varsity Show moved beyond its original mandate as a fundraiser for Columbia athletics, many members of the varsity team participated in the show as part of its infamous pony ballet. With women not admitted into Columbia until the 1980s, the Varsity Show featured Columbia students in drag for its female roles. While some of these men made very striking leading "ladies," the pony ballet sought out burly athletes to participate in its parade of dancing girls. This ballet became one of the most beloved features of the early Varsity Show and attempts to introduce Barnard and Teachers College female students in the 1930s were met with protest. It was not until the 1950s that women were allowed a space on the Varsity Show stage and since

then female students have played an active role in performing, producing, authoring and composing subsequent Varsity Shows.

The mid-century heralded further changes for the Varsity Show. World War II necessitated a reduction in scale and 1944's *On the Double* performed in Columbia campus' Brander Matthews Theater. The move became permanent, with subsequent Varsity Shows performed uptown at Columbia instead of in the midst of the Broadway theatre district. Though the shows continued to be extravagant, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the enterprise as the twentieth century continued and despite successes such as 1954's bicentennial *The Sky's The Limit*, which featured contributions from Varsity alumni Herman Wouk and I.A.L. Diamond, and 1960s' *A Little Bit Different* by Terrence McNally, the Varsity Show struggled to find adequate funding for its spectacular stagings and ceased productions for over a decade after 1967's *Feathertop*. Though there were intermittent attempts at resurrecting the Varsity Show, such as 1978's *The Great Columbia Riot of '78* it wasn't until 1982's *Columbia Graffiti*, a musical revue staged by enterprising sophomores, that the Varsity Show re-emerged as the biggest annual event in Columbia's performing arts calendar. Productions from the 1980s on focused their attentions on satirizing Columbia's administration and lampooning the personal anxieties and bureaucratic battles that Columbia students face. Many aspects of student life, from relationships with Professors to concern over Columbia's expansion into Manhattanville, have been turned into a song and dance number and 1994's Varsity Show even recruited several celebrities (including former Vice Presidential Nominee Geraldine Ferraro and former New York City Mayor David Dinkins) to cameo as God in *Angels at Columbia*.

The Varsity Show boasts many successful alumni. Oscar Hammerstein II (CC'16) and Richard Rodgers (CC'23), who would later collaborate on many celebrated musicals as lyricist and composer (including *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*), were involved in separate Varsity productions. Hammerstein donned blackface to portray 'Washington Snow' in 1916's *The Peace Pirates* while Rodgers provided music for 1923's *Half Moon Inn* and collaborated with Lorenz Hart (CC'18) for 1920's *Fly with Me*. This partnership proved prolific outside Columbia's gates and Hart went on to write lyrics for *Pal Joey* and *The Boys from Syracuse*. I.A.L. Diamond (CC '41), who won an Oscar for co-writing 1960s *The Apartment* with Billy Wilder, flexed his writing muscles on the Varsity Show before he moved to Hollywood. Diamond is the only writer who was responsible for four consecutive Varsity Shows, devoting much of his time at Columbia to creating pithy scripts during World War II, including penning parts for Hitler and Mussolini in 1938's *You've Got Something There*. Other notable Varsity alumni include Herman Wouk (CC'34) who wrote *The Caine Mutiny*, Ed Kleban (CC '60) who wrote the lyrics for *A Chorus Line* and Terrence McNally (CC'60) who wrote *Love!Valour!Compassion!*

Description

The Varsity Show Records document productions of Columbia University's annual Varsity Show. Materials for each production include original programs, scripts, scores, press clippings, photographs and correspondence or promotional materials relating to the show. The collection includes scripts by the Oscar winning writer I.A.L. Diamond, who wrote the book for four Varsity shows.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in three series.

Varsity Show Records

Series I: Productions, 1894-	PAGES 6-12
Series II: Photographs, 1894-	PAGE 12
Series III: Posters, 1909-1955	PAGE 13

Series I: Productions, 1894-

Series I contains all non-photographic materials relating to individual productions of The Varsity Show, including original scripts and scores, programs, promotional materials and press clippings. Productions are arranged chronologically in ascending order from 1894 to the present. Some productions have extensive supplementary materials, including scripts, scores and musical parts for the orchestra. The Varsity Show was not performed every year and had a hiatus from 1967 to 1982.

This series also includes a small amount of miscellaneous supplementary materials, which document other Columbia musicals related to the Varsity Show including *Clare de Lune*, a 1923 musical comedy by Barnard's Edythe Sheehan and *The Soldier's Wedding*, a 1907 musical by Varsity writer Walter E. Kelley.

Series II: Photographs, 1894-

Series II is composed of photographs from Varsity Shows from 1894 onwards. Most photographs are production photographs, but some backstage and rehearsal photographs are also included. Productions are arranged chronologically in ascending order from 1894 to the present. Where possible, photographs have been organized by individual productions; some of I.A.L. Diamond's photographs, which span the late 1930s and early 1940s have been retained in their original folder to avoid potential misidentification.

Series III: Posters, 1909-1955.

Series III consists of publicity posters from Varsity Shows from 1909 onwards. Posters are generally 11' by 17' in size and in good condition. Most posters are printed, however, some from the 1950s are handmade on card, with the image and title etched with paint and glitter: 1954's *The Sky's the Limit* features an excitable Alma Mater dancing alongside her owl. Posters are stored as part of the University Archive's Image Database, so the box numbers for this series refer to these flat file boxes.

ACCESS AND USE

Access

This collection has no restrictions.

This collection is located on-site.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

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Other Finding Aids

Herman Wouk Papers (MS#1393)

See Columbiana Books for published materials relating to this collection.

ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL

Provenance and Acquisition

This collection was gathered by library staff over the years and supplemented by some donations from Varsity alumni, including writer I.A.L. Diamond's Varsity scripts and a gift of cabinet cards from Ms. Marian Ferry Williams, whose grandfather George M.D. Kelly was a Varsity alumnus.

Accrual of Records

Additions are expected annually.

PROCESSING AND OTHER INFORMATION

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Darragh Martin, GSAS '2011. Finding aid written by Darragh Martin in October 2008.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*

Encoding

Machine readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002.

Finding aid written in English.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); The Varsity Show Records; Box and Folder; University Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

Subject Headings

These papers have been indexed in the Columbia University Library online catalog using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

College Musicals--Columbia University
College Musicals--Columbia University--Scores
Diamond, I.A.L.
Hammerstein, Oscar, 1895-1960.
Hart, Lorenz, 1895-1943
Musicals--Scores
Rodgers, Richard, 1902-1979
Wouk, Herman, 1915-

Series I: Productions, 1894-2008

Box 1

- F.1 General, 1925-2003
- F.2 *Joan of Arc*, 1894
- The Buccaneer*
- F.3 General, 1896

Box 7

- F.1 Score-Fragments, 1896
- F.2 Script-Partial, 1896
- F.3 Vocal Selections, 1896

Box 1

- Cleopatra*
- F.4 General, 1897

Box 2

- F.1 Bass Part, 1897
- F.2 Bassoon Part, 1897
- F.3 Cello Part, 1897
- F.4 Clarinet Part, 1897
- F.5 Cornet Part, 1897
- F.6 Flute Part, 1897
- F.7 Horns Part, 1897
- F.8 Oboe Part, 1897
- F.9 Overture, 1897
- F.10 Score, 1897

Box 3

- F.1-2 Act One Score, 1897 (2 folders)
- F.3 Act One Number Four Score, 1897
- F.4 Second Violin Part, 1897
- F.5 Trombone Part, 1897
- F.6 Tympani Drums Part, 1897
- F.7 Viola Part, 1897
- F.8 Violin Part, 1897

Box 1

- F.5 *Cleopatra*, 1899
- F.6 *The Governor's Vrouw*, 1900
- F.7 *The Princess Proud*, 1901
- The Vanity Fair*
- F.8 General, 1902

Box 3

- F.11 Bass Part, 1902
- F.12 Bassoon Part, 1902

Box 4

- F.1 Cornet Part, 1902
- F.2 First Violin Part, 1902

Varsity Show Records

F.3 Oboe Part, 1902
F.4-5 Score, 1902 (2 folders)
F.6 Second Violin, 1902
F.7 Timpani and Drum Part, 1902
F.8 Trombone Part, 1902
F.9 Viola Part, 1902

Box 1

F.9 *The Mischief Maker*, 1903
F.10 *The Isle of Illusia*, 1904
F.11 *The Khan of Kathan*, 1905
F.12 *The Conspirators*
General, 1906

Box 15

F.9 "He Just Wants You" Score, circa 1906
F.10-12 Score, circa 1906 (3 folders)
F.13 "The Typhoon" Score, circa 1906

Box 1

F.13 *The Ides of March*, 1907
F.14 *Mr. King*, 1908
F.15 *In Newport*, 1909

Box 5

The King of Hilaria
F.1 General, 1910
F.2 Script, 1910
F.3 Costume Plot, 1910

Box 6

F.1 Bass Part, 1910

Box 21

F.1 Bassoon Part, 1910

Box 6

F.2 Cello Part, 1910

Box 21

F.2 Clarinet Part, 1910
F.3 Cornet Part, 1910

Box 6

F.3 First Violin Part, 1910
F.4 Flute Part, 1910

Box 21

F.4 Horns Part, 1910
F.5 Oboe Part, 1910

Box 6

F.5 Piano Part, 1910

Varsity Show Records

- F.6 Second Violin Part, 1910
- Box 21**
F.6 Timpani Drums Part, 1910
- Box 6**
F.7 Trombone Part, 1910
F.8 Viola Part, 1910
- Box 5**
F.4 *Made in India*
General, 1911
- Box 7**
F.4 Score, 1911
- Box 5**
F.5 *The Mysterious Miss Apache*, 1912
F.6 *The Brigands*, 1913
F.7 *The Merry Lunatics*
General, 1914
- Box 7**
F.5 Bass Clarinet Part, 1914
F.6 Bassoon Part, 1914
- Box 14**
F.1 Clarinet Part, 1914
F.2 Contra Bassoon Part, 1914
F.3 First Violin Part, 1914
F.4 Horns Part, 1914
- Box 7**
F.7 Oboe Part, 1914
F.8 Overture, 1914
F.9 Piano Part, 1914
- Box 14**
F.5-6 Score, 1914 (2 folders)
- Box 15**
F.1 Second Bassoon Part, 1914
F.2 Second Oboe Part, 1914
- Box 8**
F.1 Trombone Part, 1914
F.2 Trumpet Part, 1914
- Box 15**
F.3 Tuba Part, 1914
F.4-5 Tympani Part, 1914 (2 folders)
- Box 5**
F.8 *On Your Way*, 1915

Varsity Show Records

- F.9 *The Peace Pirates*, 1916
 Home, James
- F.10 *General*, 1917
F.11 *Script-with Notes*, 1917
- Box 21**
F.6 Assorted Musical Parts, 1917
- Box 8**
F.3 Cello Part, 1917
F.4 Drums Part, 1917
F.5 Flute Part, 1917
F.6 Score-Incomplete, 1917
- Box 5**
 Ten for Five
F.12 *General*, 1918
- Box 8**
F.7 Bass Part, 1918
F.8 Cello Part, 1918
- Box 9**
F.1 Clarinet Part, 1918
F.2 Drums Part, 1918
F.3 First Violin Part, 1918
F.4 Flute Part, 1918
F.5-7 Score--Incomplete, 1918 (3 folders)
F.8 Trombone Part, 1918
F.9 Trumpet Part, 1918
F.10 Tympani and Drums Part, 1918
F.11 Viola Part, 1918
F.12 Violin Part, 1918
- Box 10**
F.1 *Take a Chance*, 1919
 Fly with Me,
F.2 *General*, 1920
- Box 21**
F.7 Score, 1920
- Box 10**
F.3 *You'll Never Know*, 1921
 Steppe Around
F.4 *General*, 1922
- Box 9**
F.13-14 Actors' Parts, 1922 (2 folders)
F.15 Score, 1922
- Box 10**
F.5 *Half Moon Inn*, 1923

F.6 *Old King's*, 1924
F.7 *Half Moon Inn*, 1925
F.8 *His Majesty, The Queen*, 1926
F.9 *Betty Behave*, 1927
F.10 *Zuleika*, 1928

Box 11

F.1 *Oh Hector*, 1929
F.2 *Heigo Pharaoh*, 1930
F.3 *Great Shakes*, 1931
F.4 *How Revolting*, 1932
F.5 *Home James*, 1933
F.6 *Laugh it Off!*, 1934
F.7 *Flair Flair the Idol of Paree*, 1935
F.8 *Off your Marx*, 1936
Some of the People
F.9 General, 1937

Box 12

F.1-2 Alto Saxophone Part, 1937 (2 folders)
F.3 Bass Part, 1937
F.4 Cello Part, 1937
F.5 Drums Part, 1937
F.6 First Violin Part, 1937
F.7 Flute Part, 1937
F.8-9 Tenor Saxophone Part, 1937 (2 folders)
F.10-12 Trumpet Part, 1937 (3 folders)
F.13 Violin Cello Part, 1937
F.14 Violin Part, 1937

Box 11

You've got Something There
F.10 General, 1938

Box 13

F.1-2 Alto Saxophone Part, 1938 (2 folders)
F.3 Bass Part, 1938
F.4 Cello Part, 1938
F.5 Drums Part, 1938
F.6 First Trumpet Part, 1938
F.7 First Violin Part, 1938
F.8 Tenor Saxophone Part, 1938
F.9 Second Trumpet Part, 1938
F.10 Third Trumpet Part, 1938
F.11 Trombone Part, 1938
F.12 Violin Part, 1938

Box 11

F.11 *Fair Enough*, 1939
Life Begins in '40
F.12 General, 1940

Box 15

F.6 Score, 1940

Box 16

- F.1 *Hit the Road*, 1941
- F.2 *Saints Alive*, 1942
- F.3 *Second the Double*, 1945
- F.4 *Step Right Up*
- F.5 General, 1946

Box 15

- F.7 Lullaby Music, circa 1946
- F.8 Madeline Waltz Music, circa 1946

Box 16

- F.6 *Dead to Rights*, 1947
- F.7 *Streets of New York*, 1948
- F.8 *Mr. Oscar*, 1949
- F.9 *Wait for It*, 1950
- F.10 *Streets of New York*, 1952
- F.11 *Shape of Things*, 1953
- F.12 *Sky's the Limit*, 1954
- F.13 *When in Rome*, 1955
- F.14 *Elsinore*, 1963
- F.15 *The Bawd's Opera*, 1966
- F.16 *The Feathertop*, 1967
- F.17 *The Great Columbia Riots of '78*, 1978
- F.18-19 *Fly with Me*, 1980 (2 folders)
- F.20 *Columbia Graffiti*, 1982
- F.21 *College on Broadway*, 1982
- F.22 *Fear of Scaffolding*, 1983
- F.23 *The New U*, 1984
- F.24 *Lost in Place*, 1985

Box 17

- F.1 *Sans Souci be Happy*, 1989
- F.2 *Behind the Lion Curtain*, 1990
- F.3 *The Silence of the Lions*, 1991
- F.4 *The Lion Game*, 1993
- F.5 *Columbia History of the World*, 1994
- F.6 *Step Inside*, 1995
- F.7 *Enlargement and Enhancement*, 1997
- F.8 *Love is Indefinite*, 1998
- F.9 *Dial D for Deadline*, 2003
- F.10 *Off Broadway*, 2004
- F.11 *The Sound of the Muses*, 2005
- F.12 *Misery Loves Columbia*, 2006
- F.13 Unidentified Script Fragment, undated

Box 18

- Unidentified Scores
- F.1 French Song, undated
- F.2 Wooden Shoe Dance, undated
- F.3-8 Unidentified Scores, undated (6 folders)

Box 21

F.8 Unidentified Score--by Hugo Frey, circa 1916

Box 20

F.22 Miscellaneous Supplementary Materials, 1907-1923

Series II: Photographs, 1894-

Box 19

F.1 *Joan of Arc*, 1894
F.2 *The Buccaneers*, 1896
F.3 *Cleopatra*, 1897

Box 18

F.9 *Cleopatra--Oversize Photographs*, 1897
F.10 *Cleopatra--Oversize Photographs*, 1899

Box 19

F.4 *Cleopatra*, 1899
F.5 *Vanity Fair*, 1902
F.6 *The Mischief Maker*, 1903
F.7 *The Isle of Illusia*, 1904
F.8 *The Khan of Kathan*, 1905
F.9 *The Conspirators*, 1906
F.10 *The Ides of March*, 1907
F.11 *Mr King*, 1908
F.12 *In Newport*, 1909
F.13 *Made in India*, 1911
F.14 *The Brigands*, 1913
F.15 *The Merry Lunatic*, 1914
F.16 *You'll Never Know*, 1921
F.17 *Steppe Around*, 1922
F.18 *His Majesty, the Queen*, 1926

Box 20

F.1 *Oh Hector*, 1929
F.2 *Heigho Pharaoh*, 1930
F.3 *Great Shakes!*, 1931
F.4 *How Revolting*, 1932
F.5 *Home James*, 1933
F.6 *Flair-Flair, the Idol of Paree*, 1935
F.7 I.A.L. Diamond Photographs--Miscellaneous Productions--circa 1939-1941
F.9 *Fair Enough*, 1939
F.10 *Life Begins in '40*, 1940
F.11 *Saints Alive*, 1942
F.12 *Step Right Up*, 1946
F.13 *Streets of New York*, 1948
F.14 *Babe in the Woods*, 1951
F.15 *Streets of New York*, 1952
F.16 *The Shape of Things*, 1953
F.17 *Sky's the Limit*, 1954
F.18 *When in Rome*, 1955
F.19 *Come Fly with Me*, 1980
F.20 *College on Broadway*, 1982
F.21 General, undated

Series III: Posters, 1909-1955

Flat Box 4

F.1 *In Newport--Can Can Girl Illustration, 1909*

Flat Box 13

F.3 *You'll Never Know, 1921*
Steppe Around, 1922
Half Moon Inn, 1923
Her Majesty the Queen, 1926

Flat Box 14

F.3 *You've Got Something There, 1938*

Flat Box 12

F.5 *Fair Enough--Drag Advertisement, 1939*

Flat Box 14

F.3 *Hit the Road, 1941*
Saints Alive, 1942
On the Double, 1944
F.2 *The Shape of Things, 1953*
The Sky's the Limit, 1954
When in Rome, 1955