
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY949 East Second Street
Tucson, AZ 85719Library & Archives
(520) 617-1157ahsref@azhs.gov

MS 1322
Playbox Theatre Collection
1945 - 1997**DESCRIPTION**

This small collection consists of a series of newspaper clippings, scripts, slides, posters, playbills, programs, and interviews highlighting both the Playbox Theatre Company and the Tucson Press Club Gridiron show, with the bulk of the collection falling in between the years 1959 and 1982. The newspaper clippings showcase the organizational history of the Playhouse Theatre and the Gridiron Show. They also demonstrate public reception of their productions in the form of reviews, mostly from the Tucson Citizen and the Arizona Daily Star. Particular attention is paid to the Gridiron shows from the early 1960's and the Playbox Theatre productions of "The Cuckoo Watch", "Dracula", "Destry Rides Again," and "The Man in the Dog Suit". Original script drafts for "The Cuckoo Watch" and Gridiron Show skits are included in the collection, complete with changes and handwritten notations. Also included is a production script for "Paint Your Wagon". The slides demonstrate the elaborateness of the Playbox's musical and dramatic productions, with special attention being paid to such productions as "The King and I", "Bus Stop," "Wait Until Dark", "Godspell", "Camelot", and "The Sound of Music". The Playbox playbills chronicle the production history of the company. Since most Playbox productions were based on popular plays and movies of the day, they provide insight into the realm of popular culture. Programs for the Gridiron Show, also known as "The Hellbox", provide not only a history of the show but an enduring view of Tucson culture and the political and social climate of each production year. The advertisements in both these publications are also useful for those interested in the history of local Tucson businesses. Of particular interest in the Gridiron interviews are those of Jess Riggle and Marge Hilts, who worked for both the Gridiron show and the Playbox Theatre. Also included in the interviews are Kay Getzwiller, former Press Club member and Hellbox editor, and Tom Turner, former Press Club president.

3 Boxes, 1.25 linear ft.

ORGANIZATIONAL NOTE

The Playbox was a community theatre that began in 1959. It operated for four years at 504 N. Fremont St., after which it acquired a lease for the opera house at Trail Dust Town, where they continued to operate from 1963 until their close in 1982. The productions mostly consisted of popular musicals and dramas, with one production geared toward children per season.

The Gridiron Show was the Tucson Press Club's annual roast. The productions consisted of a series of comedy sketches lampooning both local and nationally known celebrities and political figures. The show was financed by the Tucson Press Club until 1991, after which time the Gridiron Show became its own non-profit organization and funded its shows independently.

ACQUISITION - Donated by Marge Hilts in 2004.

ACCESS - There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

COPYRIGHT

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Archives Department.

PROCESSING

The collection was processed by Allison Tinkler in August 2007.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box 1

Series 1: Playbox Theatre, 1959 - 1982

- Folder 1: Administrative materials and newspaper clippings
- f. 2 Newspaper clippings (reviews) 1963-1967
- f. 3 Newspaper clippings (reviews) 1967-1982 and misc.
- f. 4-6 Playbox Playbills, 1959-1981 and misc.
- f. 7 Script: "The Cuckoo Watch"
- f. 8 Script: "Paint Your Wagon"

Series 2: The Gridiron Show and misc. publications, 1943 – 1997

- Folder 9: Interviews
- f. 10: Newspaper clippings, pre 1991
- f. 11: Newspaper clippings, post 1991
- f. 12: Scripts
- f. 13: Hellbox dummies, 1956 & 1959
- f. 14: Misc. playbills; University of Arizona and Temple of Music and Art, 1940's
- f. 15: Misc. Reviews

Box 2

Series 3: Hellbox Programs

- Folder 16-27 Hellbox publications (Program for the Gridiron Show) 1959-1996

Series 4: Playbox Slides

- Folder 28-32 Slides relating to Playbox Theatre Productions
- Folder 33 Additional Playbox Theatre slides and photographs

Outside Item

Poster of the Playbox production "The Boyfriend"