Summary

Creator: Busch, Charles

Title: Charles Busch papers

Date: 1967-2015, 1984-2014

Size: 9.07 linear feet (22 boxes)

Source: Purchased from Charles Busch, 2015.

Abstract: Charles Busch (1954- ) is a playwright, screenwriter, novelist, actor, and drag performer best known for his Tony-nominated Broadway production, The Tale of the Allergist's Wife. The Charles Busch papers date from 1967 to 2015 (bulk dates 1984-2014) and consists of correspondence, screenplays, scripts, and writings from Busch's career as a playwright, screenwriter, novelist, and performer.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photography and photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.


Processing note: Compiled by Heather Lember, 2015.

Creator History

Charles Busch (1954- ) is a playwright, screenwriter, novelist, actor, and drag performer. He began his theatrical career at an early age, writing and performing his first play at Camp Lexington for the Performing Arts when he was twelve years old. He attended the High School of Music and Art in New York City, and then Northwestern University, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in drama in 1976. As a college student Busch penned his first full length play, Out-Takes of a "B" Movie (1975), and made his inaugural appearance in a female role with his 1976 one-act play, Sister Act. Busch made his New York


Busch lives in New York City, where, as of 2015, he is writing his memoir and continues to perform in cabaret acts.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Charles Busch papers date from 1967 to 2015 (bulk dates 1984-2014) and consist of materials chronicling Busch’s career as a writer and performer in theatre and film. The collection encompasses the entirety of Busch’s creative output, which also includes unpublished and unreleased works. Items are grouped together by format into the following categories: Correspondence; Theatre; Screenplays; Television Scripts; Cabaret; Writing; and Promotional Materials.

The correspondence dates from 1979 to 2012 and is mostly incoming communications. Included are letters written by individuals with whom Busch collaborated, as well as friends, colleagues, and fans of his work. Some of those who corresponded with Busch include Julie Andrews, Kathie Lee Gifford, Angela Lansbury, Paul Newman, Joan Rivers, and Stephen Sondheim. There are also letters of recommendation written about Busch by Michael Feingold, Daryl Hine, Christopher Isherwood, and Charles Ludlam.
Items from Busch's theatrical career comprise the bulk of the collection, and feature works from solo performances, early student plays, his work with Theatre-in-Limbo, plays in which he was a performer, and scripts he wrote. There is an assortment of early work, the earliest of which is a play entitled *Lovely Lace*, that was written and performed by Busch at age twelve. The collection also holds scripts written by Busch as a student at Northwestern University, as well as his debut New York City performance, *Before Our Mother's Eyes*. Most of the theatre files contain various drafts, rewrites, and revisions of scripts, many of which include notes and annotations. Busch also retained photographs, flyers, reviews, and press clippings, which can be found among the theatre files.

The screenplays encompass script drafts and notes for Busch’s four films that were produced and released: *Psycho Beach Party*, *Personal Assistant*, *Die! Mommie! Die!*, and *A Very Serious Person*. There are also a number of unproduced screenplay drafts including a commissioned film adaptation for *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, and notes for a 1992 Disney Animated feature called *Witches*.

Busch worked on television scripts for six programs, none of which were produced. Among the television scripts is a commissioned HBO adaptation of his novel, *Whores of Lost Atlantis*, and the script for *City of Bachelors*, which Busch wrote for the HBO anthology film, *If These Walls Could Talk II*. Each production includes the unproduced pilot script, and some also contain notes and revisions.

The cabaret materials are comprised of notes, song lyrics, and flyers dating from Busch’s 2012 return to cabaret performing.

Books, journalistic pieces, a creative journal, a grant proposal, and some early short stories comprise Busch’s writings. Most of the book material is for his novel, *Whores of Lost Atlantis*, and contains a treatment, proposal, sample chapters, notes, and reviews. There is also a draft of an unfinished novel called *Jeri*, and a collection of writings for his in-progress and untitled memoir. Also held with Busch’s writings are transcripts of interviews he conducted with Julie Andrews, Carol Burnett, Zoe Caldwell, and Terence Stamp; remembrances he wrote about Joan Rivers; short stories and dramatic sketches he composed while in high school; and a cover story he wrote for *New York Magazine* about the drag scene in 1995.

There is a small collection of promotional materials consisting of seven headshots and portraits; theatre programs; and reviews of Busch’s writing and acting.

**Arrangement:** Materials are arranged chronologically.

**Key Terms**

**Occupations**
Actors
Journalists
Playwriting
Screenwriters
Theatrical producers and directors

**Geographic Names**
Broadway (New York, N.Y.)
New York (N.Y.)
Subjects
Camp (Style)
Drag shows
Gay actors -- United States
Off Off-Broadway theater
Off-Broadway theater
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Clippings
Correspondence
Photographs
Programs (documents)
Screenplays
Scripts (documents)
Theatre programs
Container List

b. 1 Correspondence 1979-2010
Theatre
Solo Career Scripts
b. 2 f. 1 That's Show Biz 1978
b. 2 f. 2 Hollywood Confidential 1978
b. 2 f. 3 Alone with a Cast of Thousands 1978-1984
b. 2 f. 4 Solo Anthology 1980
b. 2 f. 5 Solo Anthology Two 1980
b. 2 f. 6-7 After You've Gone 1982
b. 2 f. 8 The Dream 1983
b. 2 f. 9 Phantom Lovers 1983
b. 2 f. 10 Benjamin Harrison High School 1984
b. 2 f. 11-19 Flyers, Photographs, and Clippings 1978-1984
Plays
b. 3 f. 1 Early Plays 1967-1977
Contains Lovely Lace (1967); Call Boys (1977); Masquerade (1970s); Barging Down the Nile or Egypt Me! (1977); Travelogue (1976); and A Woman's Picture (1975).

b. 3 f. 2 Out-Takes of a "B" Movie 1975
b. 3 f. 3 Sister Act 1976
b. 3 f. 4 Old Coozies 1976
b. 3 f. 5 The Fall of the Theatre of Evil or Teeth Marks! 1977
b. 3 f. 6 Myrtle Pope, The Story of a Woman Possessed 1978
b. 3 f. 7 Before Our Mother's Eyes 1982
b. 3 f. 8 Farley and Suzanne 1982
b. 3 f. 9-10 Theodora She-Bitch of Byzantium 1984-1989
b. 3 f. 11 Follies! Vanities! Scandals! Of 1985 1985
b. 3 f. 12-16 Vampire Lesbians of Sodom and Sleeping Beauty or Coma 1984-1990
Times Square Angel
Contains Limbo Lounge script (1984); expanded Off-Broadway script (1985); annual staged reading scripts (1999-2011); flyers; programs; and clippings.

b. 3 f. 17-18 1984-1986
b. 4 f. 1-3 1984-2011
b. 4 f. 4-6 Gidget Goes Psychotic 1984-1986
b. 4 f. 7 Pardon My Inquisition, Or Kiss the Blood off my Castanets 1986
b. 4 f. 8-9 Psycho Beach Party 1987
b. 4 f. 10 Ankles Aweigh 1988
b. 4 f. 11-13 The Lady in Question 1989
b. 5 f. 1-3 Red Scare on Sunset 1991
b. 5 f. 4 The Charles Busch Revue 1993
b. 5 f. 5-11 You Should Be So Lucky 1992-1996
Theatre (cont.)
Plays (cont.)

b. 5 f. 12-14  Swingtime Canteen 1993-1995
b. 6 f. 1-2  Flipping My Wig 1996
b. 6 f. 3-4  The Green Heart 1997
b. 6 f. 5-6  Queen Amarantha 1997
b. 6 f. 7  House of Flowers 1998
b. 6 f. 8-10  Die! Mommy! Die! Or The Fall of the House of Sussman 1999

The Tale of the Allergist's Wife
Contains early drafts and notes; scripts; rewrites; programs; clippings; and reviews.

b. 6 f. 11-14  1997-1999
b. 7 f. 1-6  2001-2013
b. 7 f. 7-12  Shanghai Moon 1999-2008
b. 8 f. 1-3  Ronni Adams 2002-2007
b. 8 f. 4-9  Taboo 2002-2003
Contains original London version; early drafts; notes; and opening night script.

b. 9 f. 1  Nina 2005
b. 9 f. 2-9  Our Leading Lady 2003-2007
b. 10 f. 1-3  Die! Mommie! Die! 2006-2007
The Third Story 2006-2007
Contains early drafts titled Queen of Vice and Mob Play; notes; and rehearsal scripts.

b. 10 f. 4-8  2006-2007
b. 11 f. 1-2  2008-2009
b. 11 f. 3-9  The Divine Sister 2009-2012
b. 12 f. 1-9  Olive and the Bitter Herbs 2010-2011
Contains early drafts entitled Mirror Within the Mirror; edits and additions; and post production changes.

b. 13 f. 1-4  Judith and Bethulia 2012
b. 13 f. 5  Stars of David 2011-2012

Bunnicula: A Rabbit Tale of Musical Mystery
Contains notes; drafts of scripts; music and dialogue edits; and additional scenes.

b. 13 f. 6-12  2011
b. 14 f. 1-9  2011-2012
b. 15 f. 1-2  2012

The Tribute Artist
Contains early drafts entitled You Never Know Said the Widow; edited scripts; notes; and final production script.

b. 15 f. 3-6  2013
b. 16 f. 1-4  2013-2014

Screenplays
Produced
b. 16 f. 5-8  Pyscho Beach Party 1999-2000
Screenplays (cont.)
Produced (cont.)

b. 17 f. 1-2  
*Personal Assistant* 2002

b. 17 f. 3-6  
*Die! Mommie! Die!* 1999-2003

*A Very Serious Person*  
Contains a first draft entitled *Male Nurse Movie*; an early draft called *Swim Type Drive*; subsequent drafts and rewrites; additional scenes; and a nearly finalized shooting script.

b. 17 f. 7-11  
2004

b. 18 f. 1-5  
2004-2005

Unproduced

b. 18 f. 6  
*Blind Item* 1981

b. 18 f. 7  
*Witches* 1992

*Trippin the Prom Queen*  
This screenplay was written for a Lifetime TV movie and was based on the nonfiction book also titled *Trippin the Prom Queen*.

b. 18 f. 6-10  
2008-2009

b. 19 f. 1-2  
2009

b. 19 f. 3-5  
*The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife* 2005-2013

Contains a 2005 version commissioned by producer Robert Colt and a 2013 adaptation based on notes from director Susan Seidelman.

b. 19 f. 6  
*Red Scare Sunset* 2013

b. 20 f. 1-3  
*The Divine Sister* 2010-2014

Television Scripts

b. 20 f. 4  
*Lillian* 1987

b. 20 f. 5  
*Two in a Million* 1991

b. 20 f. 6  
*City of Bachelors* 1998

b. 20 f. 7-9  
*Broadway Series* 2001  
Thirteen part mini-series commissioned by HBO.

b. 20 f. 10-12  
*The Young Girls of Ravenscroft* 2004

b. 20 f. 13-15  
*Whores of Lost Atlantis* 2009

b. 20 f. 16-17  
*Cabaret* 2012-2015

Writing

b. 21 f. 1  
High School Short Stories 1968-1972  
Contains 13 short stories; 1 play; and dramatic sketches and notes.

b. 21 f. 2  
Theatre-in-Limbo Grant Proposal 1984

b. 21 f. 3-11  
Journalism 1989-2015

b. 21 f. 12-14  
Notes 1990-2015  
Contains notes for *Ruby Slippers of Oz*; Theatre-in-Limbo’s trip to Japan; *Vampire Lesbians, The Musical*; Marie Antoinette play; *Unisex*; and a creative journal (1997-2015).

Books

b. 21 f. 15-18  
*Whores of Lost Atlantis* 1993

b. 22 f. 1  
*Jeri* 1994-2011

b. 22 f. 2-7  
Memoir 2003-2014
b. 22 f. 8-17  Promotional Materials 1980-2011