



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to Frank Schiffman Apollo Theatre Collection

NMAH.AC.0540

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2019

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Frank Schiffman Apollo Theater Collection
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0540
Date:	1931-1985
Extent:	4 Cubic feet (16 boxes)
Creator:	Schiffman, Frank, ?-1972 Schiffman, Jack
Language:	English Collection is in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated to the Archives Center by Jack and Robert Schiffman in January 1996.

Related Materials

John and Devra Levy Collection, dates

Program in African American Culture, dates

Processing Information

Collection processed by Danielle Synder, intern, 2002; Sarah Gediman, intern, 2019; Lauren M. Janik, intern, 2019; Savannah, intern, 2019; supervised by Vanessa Broussard Simmons, archivist, 2019.

Preferred Citation

Frank Schiffman Apollo Theatre Collection, 1935-1973, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research. The scrapbooks in Series 5 are in extremely fragile condition. They cannot be made available for use until they are preserved.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

The Apollo Theater is located in the Harlem section of New York City. A prominent and influential institution, the Apollo Theater hosted numerous performances by popular entertainers who were primarily African-American, including Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Holiday, Smokey Robinson, and the Temptations from the early 1930s to the present. It became best known as the site of "amateur night" programs, which catapulted many of its winners (and losers) to national and international acclaim. To this day, the Apollo Theater remains an important fixture in both the music industry and the African-American community.

The son of Austrian immigrants, Frank Schiffman began his career in the promotion and distribution of motion pictures in New York City. As his career grew, he managed various New York theaters such as the Lafayette and the Harlem Opera House. In 1934, Frank Schiffman became the first manager of the Apollo Theater. Soon thereafter, he became co-owner, and retained the management position until the early 1960s. Schiffman's lack of racial bias as well as his keen business sense helped the Apollo Theater to become a cultural icon within the performance industry. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Schiffman's sons, Jack and Robert assisted him with the management of the Apollo, and later took over management upon Frank Schiffman's retirement. Frank Schiffman died in 1974 at the age of eighty.

Scope and Contents

The Frank Schiffman Apollo Theater Collection documents the business endeavors of Frank Schiffman, and the Apollo Theater's contribution to American culture. The collection includes sound recordings, personal and business correspondence, photographs, business records, and printed material. The collection is arranged in six series as follows:

Series 1: Correspondence, 1938-1985, consists of communications to and from Frank Schiffman, Jack Schiffman, and various business associates and friends. Correspondence is arranged in chronological order and by corespondent..

Series 2: Business Records, 1931-1974, includes financial ledgers; phone books; booking cards containing names, dates, and performance reviews; and accounting documents pertaining to the management of the Apollo Theater.

Series 3: Publicity, undated, includes print media, pamphlets, scrapbooks, and flyers documenting the numerous performances and activities at the Apollo Theater. Several of the newsprint advertisements were reprinted in two books written about the Apollo Theater: Ted Fox's *Showtime at the Apollo Theater*, and Jack Schiffman's *Uptown: The Story of Harlem's Apollo Theater*.

Series 4: Photographs, undated primarily standard publicity stills of vocalists, comedians, musicians, and other artists who performed at the Apollo Theater, such as Lena Horne, Bo Diddley, Pearl Bailey, B.B. King, Jackson Five, Pigmeat Markham, Moms Mabley, Dick Gregory, Richard Pryor, and the Nicholas Brothers. Also includes candid shots of Frank Schiffman with business associates and friends. Similar to the print media, many of the photographs were used as illustrations in Ted Fox's *Showtime at the Apollo Theater*, and Jack Schiffman's *Uptown: The Story of Harlem's Apollo Theater*.

Series 5: Ephemera, undated, includes interview transcripts, various manuscripts, and architectural drawings of the Apollo Theater.

Series 6: Audio Recordings, 1940-1975, contains promotional broadcasts, publicity shorts, and one random music album. All of the audio recordings in the Schiffman Collection originated on 1/4" open reel audio tape and have cassette reference copies.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series.

Series 1: Correspondence, 1938-1985, undated

Series 2: Business Records, 1931-1974

Series 3: Publicity, undated

Series 4: Photographs, undated

Series 5: Ephemera, undated

Series 6: Audio Recordings, 1940-1975

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African American entertainers -- 20th century
- African American musicians
- Concerts -- New York (State) -- New York
- Entertainers -- 1930-1980
- Music-halls -- 1930-1980
- Theaters -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

- Awards
- Handbills
- Ledgers (account books)
- Photographs -- 20th century
- Publicity photographs
- Scrapbooks -- 20th century

Names:

- Apollo Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
- Schiffman, Robert

Geographic Names:

- Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- 20th century
- New York (N.Y.) -- 20th century

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1938-1985, undated

Box 1, Folder 1	Frank Schiffman, incoming telegrams, 1938-1947, undated Image(s): Telegrams to Frank Schiffman
Box 1, Folder 2	Frank Schiffman and Leonard Reed, telegrams , 1938
Box 1, Folder 3	Frank Schiffman, telegram from Martin Luther King Jr., 1965 Image(s): Telegram to "Mr. Schiffman" (probably Frank)
Box 1, Folder 4	Frank Schiffman, incoming personal and business correspondence , 1938-1965 Image(s): Personal and Business Correspondence to Frank Schiffman
Box 1, Folder 5	Frank Schiffman, outgoing correspondence, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Frank Schiffman and the William Morris Agency relating to Pearle Bailey, outgoing correspondence, 1900, 1910-1915
Box 1, Folder 7	Frank Schiffman and Shaw Artists Company about Harry Belafonte, correspondence
Box 1, Folder 8	Frank Schiffman relating to the F. E. Miller dispute, incoming and outgoing correspondence, 1910-1925, 1930s
Box 1, Folder 9	Frank Schiffman, incoming and outgoing correspondence, 1950
Box 1, Folder 10	Jack Schiffman, incoming correspondence , 1950
Box 1, Folder 11	Jack Schiffman, outgoing correspondence, 1950
Box 1, Folder 12	Jack Schiffman, correspondence , 1950
Box 1, Folder 13	Jack Schiffman, outgoing correspondence to Frank Schiffman, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Harry Schiffman, telegram , 1950
Box 1, Folder 15	Miscellaneous correspondence, 1950

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Series 2: Business and Financial Records, 1934-1973, undated

Box 2, Folder 1	Lafayette Theater, telephone directory, 1960s
Box 2, Folder 2	Record book, 1950
Box 2, Folder 3	Record book, 1950
Box 2, Folder 4	Performer biographies, 1950
Box 3, Folder 1	"Acts from August 1963," Journal (A-I), 1950
Box 3, Folder 2	"Acts from August 1963," Journal (J-P), 1951
Box 3, Folder 3	"Acts from August 1963," Journal (Q-Z), 1952
Box 3, Folder 4	"Acts from January 1968," Journal 1968-1973 (A-I), 1953
Box 3, Folder 5	"Acts from January 1968," Journal 1968-1973 (J-P), 1953
Box 3, Folder 6	"Acts from January 1968," Journal 1968-1973 (Q-Z), 1953
Box 3, Folder 7	Ledger, 1953 Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 8	Ledger Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 9	Ledger Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 1	Ledger Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 2	1934-1935 Apollo Theater accounting
Box 4, Folder 3	Finance Ledger
Box 4, Folder 4	Ledger Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 5	Ledger Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 6	Ledger, 1/7/1966 - 12/8/1967 Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 7	Ledger Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 8	R and B Singers and hits, 1968-69, ledger

[Image\(s\): "R and B Singers and Hits, 1968-69" Ledger](#)

Box 5

Booking cards (A-L)

[Image\(s\): Booking Cards \(A-L\)](#)

Program critique card for a Jazz at the Philharmonic performance of Flip Phillips and 6 musicians, 1949. [black type on an originally white card]
1 Item (5" x 8").

[Image\(s\): Program critique card for a Jazz at the Philharmonic performance of Flip Phillips and 6 musicians, 1949. \[black type on an originally white card\].](#)

Schiffman, Frank, ?-1972, Collector

Critique is dated 6/3/49.

Box No.5.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC0540-0000092.tif (AC Scan No.)

Exhibitions Note

Included in Archives Center Jazz Appreciation Month display, April 1-May 31, 2010, "Jazz at the Philharmonic--Bringing Jazz to the World," curated by Wendy Shay.

Topic: African American musicians
Jazz musicians

Culture: African Americans

[Negative comments about Billie Holiday : index card], September 16, 1955
1 Item (5" x 8").

[Image\(s\)](#)

Apollo Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Index card with typed negative comments about Billie Holiday's performance.
Author unidentified.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

00054001.tif (AC Scan No.)

Featured in Archives Center's Women in Jazz Exhibit.

Names: Holiday, Billie, 1915-1959

Topic: Jazz
Women in jazz
Women in music

Place: New York (N.Y.) -- 1950-1960

Genre/ Card files

Form: Cards

Typescripts

Culture: African Americans

Box 6

Booking cards (Mc-Z)

[Image\(s\): Booking Cards \(Mc-Z\)](#)

A program critique card for Oscar Peterson, 1962 and 1963. [black type on originally white card]

1 Item (5" x 8")

[Image\(s\): A program critique card for Oscar Peterson, 1962 and 1963. \[black type on originally white card\].](#)

Schiffman, Frank, ?-1972, Collector

Critiques are dated 8/24/62 and 9/6/63.

Box No.6.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC0540-0000091.tif (AC Scan No.)

Exhibitions Note

Included in Archives Center Jazz Appreciation Month display, April 1-May 31, 2010, "Jazz at the Philharmonic--Bringing Jazz to the World," curated by Wendy Shay.

Topic: African American musicians
Jazz musicians

Culture: African Americans

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Series 3: Publicity, 1940-1968, undated

Box 7, Folder 1

Print media newspaper clippings, flyers, etc. (reference)

[Image\(s\): Print Media / newspaper clippings, flyers, etc. \(reference\)](#)

The / Nancy / Wilson / Cannonball / Adderley / ... / Flip / Wilson / Show
[newspaper advertisement proof], 1968
1 Item (8" x 6").

[Image\(s\): The / Nancy / Wilson / Cannonball / Adderley / ... / Flip / Wilson / Show \[newspaper advertisement proof\].](#)

Apollo Theatre (New York, N.Y.), Advertiser

Newspaper advertisement proof for Apollo Theatre acts performing the week of April 12, 1968, Nancy Wilson, Cannonball Adderley, Duke Pearson Orchestra, Flip Wilson, and the Impacts.

In Box 7, Folder 1.

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC0540-0000044.tif (AC Scan No.)

Archives Center's Women in Jazz

Names:	Adderley, Cannonball Wilson, Flip Wilson, Nancy, 1937-
Topic:	African American musicians Jazz Singers Women in jazz Women in music Women musicians
Place:	Harlem (New York, N.Y.)
Genre/ Form:	Advertisements -- 1950-2000. Newspapers
Culture:	African Americans

Box 7, Folder 2

Print media, reference

[Image\(s\): Print Media / continued \(reference\)](#)

Box 7, Folder 3

Print media, reference

[Image\(s\): Print Media / continued \(reference\)](#)

Pearl Bailey, newspaper advertisement, 1965

1 Item (9" x 4".)

[Image\(s\): Pearl Bailey \[newspaper advertisement\].](#)

Apollo Theatre (New York, N.Y.), Advertiser

Newspaper ad for Apollo Theatre acts performing the week of October 22; Pearl Bailey and her Revue, Bunny Briggs, Martin Bros.

In Box 7, Folder 3.

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC0540-0000049.tif (AC Scan No.)

Archives Center's Women in Jazz

Names:	Bailey, Pearl
Topic:	African American musicians Jazz Singers Women in jazz Women in music Women musicians
Place:	Harlem (New York, N.Y.)
Genre/	Advertisements -- 1960-1970
Form:	Clippings -- 1950-2000 Newspapers
Culture:	African Americans

Box 7, Folder 4

Playbills and pamphlets

[Image\(s\): Playbills and Pamphlets](#)

Harlem's High Spot / Apollo [newsprint], [unknown]

1 Item (8.5" x 11".)

[Image\(s\): Harlem's High Spot / Apollo \[newsprint\].](#)

"All Girl / Revue / with the / International / Sweethearts / of Rhythm / Added Attraction / The Cats / and the / Fiddle", around September 5th [no year]. "Ella Fitzgerald / and her / Band, featuring / Teddy / McRae / Miller / Bros. / & Lois", around September 12th (no year). Author unidentified.

In Box 7, Folder 4.

Unrestricted research access on site by appointment.

Ink on newsprint.

Local Numbers

AC0540-0000064.tif (AC Scan No.)

Archives Center's Women in Jazz

Names: Apollo Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
Fitzgerald, Ella
International Sweethearts of Rhythm

Topic: African American musicians
Jazz
Women in music
Women musicians

Place: Harlem (New York, N.Y.)

Genre/
Form: Clippings

Culture: African Americans

Box 7, Folder 5

Advertisement templates

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Series 4: Photographs, 1940-1970, undated

Box 8, Folder 1	Vocalists (A-L) Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 2	Vocalists (A-L) James Brown Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 3	Vocalists (A-L) Ella Fitzgerald Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 4	Vocalists (A-L) Gladys Knight Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 5	Vocalists (A-L) Gloria Lynne
Box 8, Folder 6	Vocalists (M-Z)
Box 8, Folder 7	Vocalists (M-Z) Smokey Robinson Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 8	Vocalists (M-Z) The Temptations
Box 8, Folder 9	Vocalists (M-Z) Leslie Uggams Image(s)
Box 8, Folder 10	Vocalists (M-Z) Stevie Wonder
Box 8, Folder 11	Gospel singers
Box 8, Folder 12	Gospel Singers
Box 9, Folder 1	Comedians and theatrical performers, miscellaneous Image(s): Comedians and Theatrical Performers - miscellaneous
Box 9, Folder 2	Comedians and theatrical performers, (Crackshot) Hackly
Box 9, Folder 3	Comedians and theatrical performers, Jackie Mabley Image(s): Comedians and Theatrical Performers - Jackie Mabley
Box 9, Folder 4	Comedians and theatrical performers, Pigmeat Markham Image(s): Comedians and Theatrical Performers - Pigmeat Markham
Box 9, Folder 5	Dancers Image(s)
Box 9, Folder 6	Instrumentalists Image(s)
Box 9, Folder 7	Instrumentalists, Count Basie
Box 9, Folder 8	Miscellaneous

Box 9, Folder 9

Frank Schiffman
[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 5: Ephemera

Box 10, Folder 1	Transcript, interview with Robert Schiffman, 1975 - 1975
Box 10, Folder 2	Manuscript, Chapter XI: Memorabilia "The Way We Were"
Box 10, Folder 3	Manuscript, Harlem Heyday: A Pictorial Reminiscence of Harlem's Showplace, by Jack Schiffman
Box 10, Folder 4	Miscellaneous notes
Box 11, Folder 1	Newspaper article, Sunday News, 1965 November 14
Box 11, Folder 2	Photographs, 1900-1960, undated
Box 11, Folder 3	Two tribute books to Frank Schiffman
Box 11, Folder 4	Architectural prints of the Apollo Theater
Box 12	Scrapbooks 1940, 1941, 1942, and undated miscellaneous scrapbook pages Restricted.
Box 13	Scrapbooks 1940-1949, 1955-1956, and 1958 Restricted.
Box 14	Scrapbooks 1947-1949, and 1949-1950 Restricted.
Box 15	Scrapbooks 1950-1961, 1959-1961, and house staff photograph, 1950 Restricted.

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Series 6: Audio

Box 16, Item AC0540-
OT0001

The Apollo
1 sound tape reel

The Apollo: A NBC promotional broadcast for the Apollo Theater. The program discusses the uniqueness and importance of the Apollo Theater to the African-American community and American pop-culture. [25 min]

Digital reference copy in Smithsonian Institution Digital Asset Management System (DAMS).

Box 16, Item AC0540-
OT0002

The Apollo, National Broadcasting Company (NBC) broadcast
1 sound tape reel

A publicity short about the Apollo Theater. [4 min, 40 sec] **Digital reference copy in the Smithsonian Institution Digital Asset Management System (DAMS).**

Box 16, Item AC0540-
OT0003-1

Black Dialogue, part one
1 sound tape reel

Radio Program: Discussion between radio host, Bob Law and Apollo manager, Robert Schiffman on the history, audience, and performers of the Apollo Theater. [38 min] **Digital reference copy in Smithsonian Institution Digital Asset Management System (DAMS).**

Box 16, Item AC0540-
OT0003-2

Black Dialogue, part two
1 sound tape reel

Radio Program continued: Bob Law and Robert Schiffman talk over the future of the Apollo Theater. [13 min, 20 sec] **Digital reference copy in Smithsonian Institution Digital Asset Management System (DAMS).**

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