

Sarah Bernhardt:

An Inventory of Her Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923
Title:	Sarah Bernhardt Collection
Inclusive Dates:	ca. 1860-1977
Extent:	8 document boxes, 1 scrapbook box, 2 oversize boxes, 3 oversize files (5.04 linear feet)
Abstract:	The collection contains theatrical production materials, playscripts, translations, and theatrical performance photographs from over thirty of Bernhardt's productions, including <i>l'Aiglon</i> , <i>Camille</i> , and <i>Phedre</i> . Also present are personal photographs, postcards, clippings, a scrapbook, caricatures, advertisements, and artistic sketches of Bernhardt.
RLIN Record #:	TXRC03-A2
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Compiled by staff from Albert Davis, Robert Downing, and Messmore Kendall Collections
Provenance	The Sarah Bernhardt Collection was compiled from materials previously organized within the Theater Biography file and is now a discrete collection. A large portion of the materials are originally from the Albert Davis and Messmore Kendall Collections.
Processed by:	Nicolette Schneider, 2003
Repository:	Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Sarah Bernhardt, "The Divine Sarah," was born Henriette-Rosine Bernard in Paris, France, in 1844. She spent her life gracing the theatrical stages of the world with her interpretations of both classic and modern French drama. Following her education at the drama school of the Paris Conservatoire, Bernhardt made her theatrical debut on stage in an 1862 production of Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*. But it was not until her 1872 performance in Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* that she was recognized and established as a great theatrical actress of her time.

In 1880, Bernhardt began her long series of tours throughout Europe and America. She delighted audiences with her interpretations of characters in productions such as *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Frou Frou*, *Hernani*, *Jeanne D'Arc*, *Phedre*, and *Theodora*, to name just a few. Bernhardt also became one of the few female actors of the time to portray a lead male character. She did so in *Hamlet* and again as the Duc de Reichstadt in Rostand's *l'Aiglon*. She continued to tour America for the rest of her career, even announcing three separate "farewell" tours between the years 1905-1912. Despite all of the time she spent outside her home country, Bernhardt remained a loyal Frenchwoman. In 1914, she was presented the Legion of Honor award for her continued support of her country and its servicemen. After battling a threatening infection in 1915, Bernhardt lost a leg to amputation, but she still continued to pursue her love of acting and traveling. Her final tour through America lasted from the years 1916 to 1918 and then she returned home to France. Bernhardt continued to practice her craft until her death in 1923.

In addition to her traditional stage work, Bernhardt starred in several silent movies, including two of her better-known films, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Camille* in 1911. Aside from acting, Bernhardt was also known to be a gifted artist, sculptor, and writer. She edited and translated many of the plays in which she performed and wrote several novels. Her memoir, *Ma double vie (My Double Life)*, originally published in 1907, is still being reprinted today.

Sources:

Gold, Arthur. *Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

"Sarah Henriette Rosine Bernhardt" in *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Skinner, Cornelia Otis. *Madame Sarah*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966.

Scope and Contents

The Sarah Bernhardt Collection, ca. 1860-1977 (bulk 1880-1920), contains theatrical production photographs, personal photographs, publicity stills, postcards, theater programs and playbills, clippings, and a scrapbook. Also present are several prints, caricatures, advertisements, and artistic sketches of Bernhardt. The collection is arranged in three series: I. Theater Productions, 1872-1920, II. Clippings and Scrapbook, 1879-1977, and III. Other Materials, 1860-1920. Materials in Series I are arranged alphabetically by title of production and then chronologically within each production; materials in Series II and Series III are arranged chronologically where appropriate.

The Theater Production series comprises the bulk of the collection and contains production photographs and theater playbills and programs for over thirty Bernhardt productions. Although the bulk of the production photographs are portrait styled cabinet card photographs, this series contains several photographs of Bernhardt performing on stage. Bernhardt's famous productions of *l'Aiglon*, *Camille*, and *Phedre* are especially well represented. Among the playbills and programs, there are several playscripts, translations, and other versions of plays which are specific to Bernhardt and carry her identification as "the only correct version of my plays translated and printed from my own promptbooks." There are also souvenir programs which contain information on multiple productions.

The Clippings series, while comprehensive during the span of Bernhardt's career with reviews, is very extensive throughout 1923, the year of her death.

The Other Materials series chiefly comprises personal photographs, some family and ceremonial photographs and various portraits, caricatures, advertisements, prints, and artistic sketches. Personalities represented with Bernhardt in the photographs include actress Lillie Langtry, playwright Victorien Sardou, theater mogul Martin Beck, escape artist Harry Houdini, and her manager William Connors. Also in this series is an Alphonse Mucha sketch of Bernhardt as *Medea*, a copy of a letter from *Her Artistic Life*, and several advertisements in which Bernhardt used her notoriety to sell various products.

Elsewhere in the Performing Arts Collection, Bernhardt materials can be found in the Poster Collection (which includes several Alphonse Mucha posters of Bernhardt), the Jed Mace Collection, and the B.J. Simmons & Co. Records. Other materials on Sarah Bernhardt can be found in the Ransom Center's Photography Collection and the Manuscripts Collection. The University of Pennsylvania Rare Book and Manuscript Library also offers a substantial collection of Sarah Bernhardt images in their Philip H. Ward Collection of Theatrical Images.

Arrangement

The finding aid for the Sarah Bernhardt Collection is a conflation of the original inventory created in 2003, and of a small [addition](#) that was catalogued in 2006. Currently the addition is described only by a Folder List which has been appended to the original inventory, continuing the box and folder numbering sequence. The Scope and Contents note does not make reference to the addition, and the RLIN record for the

collection summarizes the original inventory only.

Sarah Bernhardt Collection--Original Inventory [This Page]

[Sarah Bernhardt Collection--Addition](#)

Index Terms

People

Nadar, Paul, 1856-1939.

Sarony, Napoleon, 1821-1896.

Mucha, Alphonse Marie, 1860-1939.

Subjects

Actors--France.

Theater--France.

Document Types

Cabinet photographs.

Cartoons.

Photographs.

Playbills.

Postcards.

Portraits.

Prints.

Scrapbooks.

Theatre programs.

Series I. Theater Productions, ca. 1872-1920

A. Photographic Images, ca. 1872-1920

Adrienne Lecouvreur

2 photos ca. 1880, **Box 1 Folder 1**

ca. 1906, 1 photo, 1 sketch, 1 clipping **Folder 2**

Agamemnon , n.d., 1 photo **Folder 3**

l'Aiglon , ca. 1900

6 photos, 4 clippings **Box 1 Folder 4-5**

2 photos, 1 clipping **Box 8 Folder 1**

2 photos **Box ob 10 Folder 1-2**

Athalie , ca. 1920, 1 photo **Box 1 Folder 6**

La Beffa , ca. 1910, 1 photo **Folder 7**

Camille (La Dame aux Camelias)

ca. 1880, 15 photos, 1 postcard **Box 1 Folder 8-10**

ca. 1890, 2 clippings **Folder 11**

ca. 1906, 1 postcard **Folder 12**

ca. 1910, 2 photos **Folder 13**

ca. 1913, 1 print, 1 clipping **Box 8 Folder 2**

Cleopatra, ca. 1890

7 photos, 2 prints, 1 postcard, 1 clipping **Box 1 Folder 14-17**

Clarín, Georges, 3 prints **Folder 18**

Cyrano de Bergerac, ca. 1900

3 photos, 3 clippings **Box 1 Folder 19-20**

2 photos	Box 8 Folder 3
<i>La Dame de Challant</i> , 1 photo ca. 1892	Box 1 Folder 21
<i>l'Etrangere (The Stranger)</i> , ca. 1876	
2 clippings	Box 1 Folder 22
6 prints	Box 8 Folder 4
2 matted photos	Box ob 10 Folder 3
<i>Fedora</i> , 1 photo ca. 1882	Box 1 Folder 23
<i>Francesca da Rimini</i> , 1 clipping ca. 1902,	Folder 24
<i>Frou Frou</i> , 13 photos ca. 1880,	Folder 25-28
<i>Gismonda</i> , ca. 1894	
1 photo, 3 clippings	Box 1 Folder 29
Mucha, Alphonse,	Box ob 10 Folder 4
<i>Hamlet</i> , ca. 1900	
1 photo, 2 clippings	Box 1 Folder 30
3 photos	Box ob 10 Folder 5
Berger, Rene,	Folder 6
<i>Hernani</i>	
ca. 1877, 6 photos	Box 2 Folder 1-2
ca. 1887 2 prints,	Box 8 Folder 5
n.d.,	Box 2 Folder 3
<i>Izeyl</i> , ca. 1894	
3 photos; 7 clippings	Box 2 Folder 4-5
1 photo	Box 8 Folder 6

1 clipping	Box ob 10 Folder 7
<i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> , ca. 1890	
7 photos	Box 2 Folder 6-7
1 print	FlatFile 1
<i>Leah</i> , ca. 1892	
2 photos, 3 prints, 3 clippings	Box 2 Folder 8
1 photo	Box 8 Folder 7
<i>Macbeth</i> , ca. 1884	
1 print	Box 2 Folder 9
1 print	Box 8 Folder 8
<i>Une Nuit de Noel sous la Terreur</i>	
ca. 1912 10 photos, 1 photo with autograph,	Box 2 Folder 10-12
ca. 1913, 1 clipping	Box ob 10 Folder 8
<i>La Passant</i> , ca. 1868 2 photos, 1 clipping,	Box 2 Folder 13
<i>Phedre</i>	
ca. 1880, 30 photos	Box 2 Folder 14-18
ca. 1880-1906, 4 clippings	Folder 19
ca. 1906,	Box 8 Folder 9
ca. 1916-1918,	Box 2 Folder 20
<i>La Princesse Lointaine</i> , ca. 1895	
3 photos, 1 postcard, 2 clippings	Box 2 Folder 21
Berthon, Paul,	FlatFile 2

Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923

Ruy Blas , ca. 1872, **Box 2 Folder 22-23**

Theodora , ca. 1884

10 photos, 2 clippings **Box 3 Folder 1-2**

1 photo **Box 8 Folder 10**

Theroigne de Mericourt , ca. 1902, **Box 3 Folder 3**

La Tosca , ca. 1887, **Folder 4-5**

Varennnes , ca. 1904, **Folder 6**

Multiple productions, **Folder 7**

Farewell American Tour, 1905-1906, **FlatFile 3**

Miscellaneous, **Box 3 Folder 8**

B. Playbills and Programs, ca. 1880-1918

Adrienne Lecouvreur , 1880-1896 **Box 3, 8 Folder 9-10, 11**

l'Aiglon , 1900-1901, 1910, n.d. **Box 3 Folder 11-15**

Angelo , 1905 **Folder 16**

Camille

1880-1887 **Box 8 Folder 12**

1881-1910 **Box 3 Folder 17-19**

Cleopatra

1891, n.d. **Box 3 Folder 20-21**

1892 **Box 8 Folder 13**

Cyrano de Bergerac , 1900 **Box ob 10 Folder 9**

La Faux Modele , n.d. **Box 3 Folder 22**

Fedora

1887, 1891 **Box 8 Folder 14**

1887, 1892	Box 3 Folder 23
n.d.	Folder 24
<i>Frou Frou</i>	
1880-1881	Box 8 Folder 15
1881	Box 3 Folder 25
<i>Gismonda</i> , n.d.	Folder 26
<i>Hamlet</i> , 1899-1900	Folder 27
<i>Hecube</i> , 1916-1917	Folder 28-9
<i>Hernani</i>	
1880	Box 8 Folder 16
1887	Box 4 Folder 1
<i>Izeyl</i> , 1896, n.d.	Folder 2
<i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> , n.d.	Folder 3
<i>Leah</i> , 1892	Folder 4
<i>Madame X</i> , 1910	Folder 5
<i>Phedre</i> , 1913	Folder 6
<i>La Princesse Georges</i> , 1881	Box 8 Folder 17
<i>Du Theatre au Champ d'Honneur</i> , 1916	Box 4 Folder 7
<i>Theodora</i> , 1887	Box 4, 8 Folder 8, 18
<i>La Tosca</i>	
1892, 1896	Box 8 Folder 19
1905, n.d.	Box 4 Folder 9-10
n.d.	Box ob 10 Folder 10
Multiple productions	

Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923

1880	Box 8 Folder 20
1881-1906	Box 4 Folder 11
1910-1911	Folder 12
1912-1913	Folder 13
1916	Box 8 Folder 20
1916-1917	Box 4 Folder 14
n.d.	Folder 15
Miscellaneous	Box ob 10 Folder 11

Series II. Clippings & Scrapbook, ca. 1879-1977, n.d.

1879-1899	Box 5 Folder 1
1900-1913	Folder 2
1900-1915	Box 8 Folder 21
1914-1922	Box 5 Folder 3
1923	
March	Box 5, 8 Folder 4, 22
April	Box 5 Folder 5
May-June	Folder 6
July-September	Folder 7
1923-1924	Box ob 11 Folder 1
1924-1929	Box 5 Folder 8
1930-1977	Folder 9
1937	Box ob 11 Folder 2
1942, n.d.	Box 8 Folder 23
n.d.	Box 5 Folder 10
scrapbook, ca. 1900-1906	Box 9

Series III. Other Materials, ca. 1860-1920, n.d.

A. Personal Photographs, ca. 1860-1920

ca. 1860,	Box 6 Folder 1
ca. 1870,	Folder 2
ca. 1876, 3 photos, 2 prints	Folder 3
ca. 1880, 33 photos	Folder 4-10
ca. 1887, Bernhardt with Lillie Langtry, 3 photos, 1 clipping	Folder 11
ca. 1890, 13 photos, 1 clipping	Folder 12-13
ca. 1890, 1 photo	Box 8 Folder 24
ca. 1896, Bernhardt with Suzanne Seylor, 1 photo	Box 6 Folder 14
ca. 1900	
15 items (6 images, 9 duplicates)	Box 6 Folder 15
10 items (3 images, 7 duplicates)	Folder 16
40 items (1 image, 39 duplicates)	Folder 17
24 items (2 images, 22 duplicates)	Box 7 Folder 1
ca. 1903, Bernhardt with Victorien Sardou, 1 clipping	Box 8 Folder 25
ca. 1904, 1 photo	Folder 26
ca. 1906, Bernhardt in front of tent, 1 photo, 1 negative photo; 1 photo	Box 7, ob 11 Folder 2, 3
ca. 1910, Bernhardt with Harry Houdini,	Box 7 Folder 3

ca. 1910-1920, 6 photos, 1 postcard, 3 clippings	Folder 4-5
ca. 1911, Bernhardt with manager, William Connors, 1 photo	Box 8 Folder 27
ca. 1913, Bernhardt with Martin Beck, 2 photos	Folder 28
ca. 1916, Bernhardt with company, 1 clipping	Box 7 Folder 6
ca. 1918, Bernhardt with family, 2 photos	Folder 7
n.d., Bernhardt on tour train, 1 photo	Box ob 11 Folder 4
B. Family and Other, n.d.	
Bernard, Royal, 2 photos	Box 7 Folder 8
Bernhardt, Jeanne, 6 photos, 1 clipping	Folder 9
Damala, Jacques, 1 photo	Folder 10
Other people, 2 clippings	Folder 11
Bernhardt tent, 2 photos	Folder 12
Belle Ile en Mer, 4 postcards	Folder 13
C. Ceremonies, ca. 1913-1914	
ca. 1913, Wreath presentation, 12 photos	Box 8 Folder 29-31
ca. 1913, Award in New York, 3 photos	Folder 32
ca. 1914, Legion of Honor presentation, 1 clipping	Box 7 Folder 14
D. Miscellaneous, ca. 1903, n.d.	

Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923

Advertisements, 2 clippings; 3 clippings	Box 7, ob 11 Folder 15, 5
Autograph, ca. 1903	Box 7 Folder 16
Bautier, Marguerite, sketch and mat	Box ob 11 Folder 6-7
Berger, Rene, print (Bernhardt as Tosca?)	Folder 8
Caricatures, 4 prints, 1 clipping	Box 7 Folder 17
<i>Her Artistic Life</i> 6 page copy of letter	Folder 18
Mucha, Alphonse	
Sketch of Bernhardt as Medea	Box 8 Folder 33
3 clippings of posters	Box 7 Folder 19
Portraits	
5 prints, 4 clippings	Box 7 Folder 20
9 prints, 1 clipping	Box 8 Folder 34
3 prints	Box ob 11 Folder 9-10
Sculptures, 4 photos	Box 7 Folder 21
Miscellaneous	
2 items	Box 7 Folder 22
1 print, 3 clippings	Box 8 Folder 35