Sarah Bernhardt:
An Inventory of Her Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Bernhardt, Sarah 1844-1923
Title: Sarah Bernhardt Collection
Inclusive Dates: circa 1860-1977 (bulk 1880-1920)
Extent: 8 document boxes, 1 scrapbook box, 3 oversize boxes (osb), 6 oversize folders (osf), 1 oversize portfolio (osp) (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 l'Aiglon, Camille, and Phedre. Also present are personal photographs, postcards, clippings, a scrapbook, caricatures, advertisements, and artistic sketches of Bernhardt.
Call Number: Performing Arts Collection PA-00170
Access: Open for research. Special permission from the Curator of Performing Arts, plus advance notice, is required to access oversize posters. To make an appointment, please email Reference. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
Use Policies: Ransom Center collections may contain material with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in the collections without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the Ransom Center and The University of Texas at Austin assume no responsibility.
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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 Ransom Center's 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 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 *Iphigenie 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:


Scope and Contents

The Sarah Bernhardt Collection, circa 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.

Related Material

Additional material by and about Sarah Bernhardt are located in the Ransom Center's Carlton Lake Collection of French Manuscripts, Carlton Lake Literary File Photography Collection, Carlton Lake Art Collection, John Gassner Papers, Frank Harris papers, Harry Houdini Papers, Harry Houdini Collection, Artine Artinian Collection of French Manuscripts, Artine Artinian Art Collection, Joanna Richardson Papers, B. J. Simmons and Co. Collection, Performing Arts Prints Collection, Ernest William Smith Collection, the Helmut and Alison Gernsheim Papers, the Al Hirchfeld Collection, the Edward Gordon Craig Collection, Literary File Photography Collection, Jed Mace Collection,
and the Ransom Center library.
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.

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, circa 1872-1920

Subseries A. Photographic Images and Prints, circa 1872-1920

*Adrienne Lecouvreur*

2 photos, circa 1880

1 photo, 1 sketch, 1 clipping, circa 1906

*Agamemnon*, 1 photo, undated

*l'Aiglon*

6 photos, 4 clippings, circa 1900

2 photos, 1 clipping, circa 1900

2 photos, circa 1900

RESTRICTED—Alphonse Mucha posters of Bernhardt as the Duc de Reichstadt in L'Aiglon (2 items), 80.25 inches × 30 inches, 1900

*Athalie*, 1 photo circa 1920

*La Beffa*, 1 photo, circa 1910

*Camille (La Dame aux Camélias)*

Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 13.5 inches × 5.25 inches, undated

15 photos, 1 postcard, circa 1880

2 clippings, circa 1890

1 postcard, circa 1906

2 photos, circa 1910

1 print, 1 clipping, circa 1913

*Cleopatra*

7 photos, 2 prints, 1 postcard, 1 clipping, circa 1890

Clarin, Georges, 3 prints, circa 1890
Cyrano de Bergerac

3 photos, 3 clippings, circa 1900

2 photos, circa 1900

La Dame de Challant, 1 photo, circa 1892

l'Etrangere (The Stranger)

2 clippings, circa 1876

6 prints, circa 1876

2 matted photos, circa 1876

Fedora

1 photo, circa 1882

"Description des Toilettes de Mme. Sarah Bernhardt," Fedora, print clipping, 1882

Francesca da Rimini, clipping, circa 1902

François le Champi, Berthaud, H./Helios Studio. Bernhardt as Mariette in François le Champi, 1 photo, circa 1867

Frou Frou, 13 photos, circa 1880

Gismonda

1 photo, 3 clippings, circa 1894

Mucha, Alphonse, 1 mini-poster, circa 1894

Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Gismonda (American tour under the direction of Abbey, Schoeffel, and Grau), (2 items) 39.5 inches × 30 inches, 40.25 inches × 30 inches, undated

RESTRICTED--Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Gismonda, 77.75 inches × 28.5 inches, undated

Hamlet

1 photo, 2 clippings, circa 1900

3 photos, circa 1900
Berger, Rene, 1 print, circa 1900

RESTRICTED--Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Hamlet at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, 82.75 inches × 28.5 inches, 1899

RESTRICTED--Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Hamlet at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, 82.25 inches × 29.75 inches, 1899

_Hernani_

6 photos, circa 1877

2 prints, circa 1887

1 photo, 1 print, 1 clipping, undated

_Izeyl_

3 photos; 7 clippings, circa 1894

1 photo, circa 1894

1 clipping, circa 1894

Color cover of "The Illustrated London News," 1894

_Jeanne d'Arc_

7 photos, circa 1890

1 print, circa 1890

_Leah_

2 photos, 3 prints, 3 clippings, circa 1892

1 photo, circa 1892

_Lorenzaccio, Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Lorenzaccio at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 41.75 inches × 14.75 inches, circa 1896_

_Macbeth_

1 print, circa 1884

1 print, circa 1884
Medea, circa 1898  
RESTRICTED--Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Medee, 85 inches × 34.5 inches, 1898  
Alphonse Mucha sketch of Bernhardt as Medea

Une Nuit de Noel sous la Terreur  
10 photos, 1 photo with autograph, circa 1912  
1 clipping, circa 1913

La Passant, 2 photos, 1 clipping, circa 1868

Phedre  
30 photos, circa 1880  
4 clippings, circa 1880-1906  
2 photos, 1 negative photo, circa 1906  
1 photo, 2 clippings, circa 1916-1918

La Princesse Lointaine  
3 photos, 1 postcard, 2 clippings, circa 1895  
Berthon, Paul, 1 print, circa 1895

Ruy Blas, 8 photos, 1 clipping, circa 1872

RESTRICTED--La samaritaine, Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Photine in La samaritaine at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, 69.5 inches × 23.5 inches, circa 1897

Theodora  
10 photos, 2 clippings, circa 1884  
1 photo, circa 1884

RESTRICTED--Georges Clairin poster of Bernhardt as Theodora, 81 inches × 30.25 inches, undated

RESTRICTED--Manuel Orazi poster of Bernhardt as Theodora, 47.5 inches × 33 inches, undated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Container</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Orazi print of Bernhardt as Theodora at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, 16 inches x 11.5 inches, undated</td>
<td>osb 12.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Theroigne de Mericourt</em>, 3 photos, circa 1902</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>La Tosca</em></td>
<td>3.4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 photos, 2 prints, 2 clippings, circa 1887</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alphonse Mucha poster of Bernhardt as Tosca at the Théâtre Sarah Berhardt, 41.5 inches × 15 inches, 1899</td>
<td>osf 5</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Varennes</em>, 1 clipping, circa 1904</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple productions, 1 photo, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farewell American Tour, 1 print, 1905-1906</td>
<td>osf 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous, 1 postcard, 1 clipping, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subseries B. Playbills and Programs, circa 1880-1918</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Adrienne Lecouvreur</em>, 1880-1896</td>
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<td><em>l'Aiglon</em>, 1900-1901, 1910, undated</td>
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<td><em>Angelo</em>, 1905</td>
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<td><em>Cleopatra</em></td>
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<td>1891, undated</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>8.13</td>
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<td><em>Cyrano de Bergerac</em>, 1900</td>
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<td><em>La Faux Modele</em>, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fedora</em></td>
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<td>1887, 1891</td>
<td>8.14</td>
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1887, 1892

Undated

Frou Frou

1880-1881

1881

Gismonda, undated

Hamlet, 1899-1900

Hecube, 1916-1917

Hernani

1880

1887

Izeyl, 1896, undated

Jeanne d'Arc, undated

Leah, 1892

Madame X, 1910

Phedre, 1918

La Princesse Georges, 1881

Du Theatre au Champ d'Honour, 1916

Theodora, 1887

La Tosca

1892, 1896

1905, undated

Undated

Multiple productions
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Undated</td>
<td>4.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>osb 10.11</td>
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Series II. Clippings & Scrapbook, circa 1879-1977, undated

1879-1899  Container 5.1
1900-1913  Container 5.2
1900-1915  Container 8.21
1914-1922  Container 5.3
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1924-1929  Container 5.8
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1937  Container osb 11.2
1942, undated  Container 8.23
Undated  Container 5.10
3 clippings of posters by Alphonse Mucha, undated  Container 7.19
Scrapbook, circa 1900-1906  Container 9
Series III. Other Materials, circa 1860-1920, undated

Subseries A. Personal Photographs, circa 1860-1920

1 photo, circa 1860, Container 6.1
7 photos, circa 1870, Container 6.2
3 photos, 2 prints, circa 1876, Container 6.3
33 photos, circa 1880, Container 6.4-10
Bernhardt with Lillie Langtry, 3 photos, 1 clipping, circa 1887, Container 6.11
13 photos, 1 clipping, circa 1890, Container 6.12-13
1 photo, circa 1890, Container 8.24
Bernhardt with Suzanne Seylor, 1 photo, circa 1896, Container 6.14
15 items (6 images, 9 duplicates), circa 1900, Container 6.15
10 items (3 images, 7 duplicates), circa 1900, Container 6.16
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Bernhardt with Victorien Sardou, 1 clipping, circa 1903, Container 8.25
1 photo, circa 1904, Container 8.26
Bernhardt in front of tent, 1 photo, 1 negative photo, 1 photo, circa 1906, Container 7.2, osb 11.3
Bernhardt with Harry Houdini, 15 items (3 images, 12 duplicates), circa 1910, Container 7.3
6 photos, 1 postcard, 3 clippings, circa 1910-1920, Container 7.4-5
Bernhardt with manager, William Connors, 1 photo, circa 1911, Container 8.27
Bernhardt with Martin Beck, 2 photos, circa 1913, Container 8.28
Bernhardt with company, 1 clipping, circa 1916

Bernhardt with family, 2 photos, circa 1918,

Bernhardt on tour train, 1 photo, undated

Subseries B. Family and Other, undated

Bernard, Royal, 2 photos, undated

Bernhardt, Jeanne, 6 photos, 1 clipping, undated

Damala, Jacques, 1 photo, undated

Other people, 2 clippings, undated

Bernhardt tent, 2 photos, undated

Belle Ile en Mer, 4 postcards, undated

Subseries C. Ceremonies, circa 1913-1914

Wreath presentation, 12 photos, circa 1913

Award in New York, 3 photos, circa 1913

Legion of Honor presentation, 1 clipping, circa 1914,

Subseries D. Miscellaneous, circa 1903, undated

Advertisements, 5 clippings, undated

Autographs, 2 items, undated

Bautier, Marguerite, sketch and mat, undated

Berger, Rene, print (Bernhardt as Tosca?), undated

"Can the American Woman Design Her Own Clothes?," article by Bernhardt, 1913

Caricatures, 4 prints, 1 clipping, undated
Handwritten note, 1903

*Her Artistic Life*, 6 page copy of letter, undated

10 letters, 1879-1920 and undated,

Portraits

- 5 prints, 4 clippings, undated
- 9 prints, 1 clipping, undated
- 3 prints, undated

Sculptures, 4 photos, undated

Miscellaneous

- 2 items, undated
- 1 print, 3 clippings, undated