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# Guide to the Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein papers

YCAL MSS 1117



Eve C. Neiger

December 2019

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 1117

**CREATOR:** Russler, Goldie, 1904-1997 , author

**TITLE:** Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein papers

**DATES:** 1900-1992

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 10.92 linear feet (18 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** In English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian.

**SUMMARY:** The Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein Papers consist of personal and professional records of American Yiddish theater actress Goldie Russler (1904-1997) and her husband Abraham Burstein (1900-1992) from circa 1900-1992.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.russlerburstein>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.russlerburstein>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.        box  
        item barcode

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased jointly with the Judaica Collection from Lorne Bair Rare Books on the Sinclair Lewis Fund and the Rosalyn and Joseph Newman Collection Fund, 2016.

August 2023 acquisition: Gift of Stefan Weisman, 2023.

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## Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Box 12 (audio tapes): Use of originals is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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## Conditions Governing Use

The Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

The Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit. This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization. Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing. This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description. These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual. Yiddish and Hebrew names, titles, and quotations in their original languages have been transliterated in accordance with Library of Congress guidelines. Some nitrate negatives were found among the photographs. Negatives matching extant prints were discarded in 2019 in compliance with Yale University policy. Negatives lacking matching prints in 2019 and 2023 were digitized and then discarded following digitization.

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## Goldie Russler (1904-1997)

Goldie Russler was a Jewish actress active in American Yiddish theater in New York in the 1920s and 1930s, and in the Artef (Arbeter Teater Farband), an American Yiddish theater company. Goldie was born on August 1, 1904 to Hetya and Menachem Aaron Russler in Klishkovtsy, Bessarabia, Russian Empire (Klishkivtsi, Ukraine) and had five siblings, Yona (Weisman), Ephraim, Shoshana, and Benjamin, some of whom later moved to Israel. Goldie immigrated to the United States in 1920, arriving in New York on the Nieuw Amsterdam on September 7, 1920 under the name Golda Rosler. She performed in amateur theater productions throughout the 1920s. Goldie performed in her first Artef production, *Aristocrats*, in 1929 and went on to appear in fourteen Artef productions from 1929-1938 including *Rekrutn* (1934), *Yegor Buliche* (1933-1934), and *Dostigayev* (1934-1935). She was a member of Artef's 1938-1939 traveling troupe and directed productions at Camp Kinderland in Hopewell Junction, New Jersey. Goldie became a naturalized United States citizen on December 19, 1938. She married Abraham Burstein on June 14, 1946 and changed her name to Goldie Burstein. She lived in New York City until her death on December 5, 1997.

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## Abraham Burstein (1900-1992)

Abraham (Abram) Burstein was born on June 12, 1900 in Bessarabia, Russian Empire (Ukraine) to Rabbi Shmuel Burstein and Miriam Shaindel Cahane, and had five siblings Sheiva, Rabbi Meyer Cohen Burstein, Pinchas, Sarah, and Hanna. His mother and sister Hanna were murdered at Babi Yar in September 1941. Abraham immigrated to the United States on June 2, 1921. He founded the Manhattan Slipper Company in 1928 which he ran until the late-1950s. Abraham married Yiddish theater actress Goldie Russler on June 14, 1946. He later worked as an economist. Abraham lived in New York City until his death on April 30, 1992.

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## Artef (Arbeiter Teater Farband) (circa 1929-1940)

The Arbeter Teater Farband (Workers Theater Association), known by the acronym, Artef, was an American Yiddish theater group organized circa 1929 by the Young Workers' League. The Artef was influenced by communist groups and often performed works that reflected an American Jewish proletarian ideology. The Artef performed plays in both Yiddish and English gaining a wider audience in the late 1930s. At its founding Kalman Marmor was president, Y. Adler, G. Sander and David Abrams were secretaries and Jacob Mestel was the director. The Artef was dissolved in 1940.

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## Content Description

The Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein Papers consist of personal and professional records of American Yiddish theater actress Goldie Russler (1904-1997) and her husband Abraham Burstein (1900-1992) from circa 1900-1992. The papers include personal correspondence between the couple, correspondence to and from family members in the United States, Israel, and Russia, as well as some professional correspondence from Russler's association with the Artef (The Arbeter Teater Farband) and from Burstein's business enterprises. Russler's papers include scripts, manuscript music parts and song texts, photographs, clippings and other records related to her career as a Yiddish theater actress with Artef. Clippings are primarily in Yiddish and includes articles about Russler, Artef, and Yiddish theater from *Morgen Freiheit* and other Yiddish language periodicals. Burstein's papers include business and financial records, correspondence, records of membership in philanthropic organizations, records related to wills and burial plots, and material related to family. Also included are Russler and Burstein family photographs and correspondence, primarily in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian. Records related to family history, before and after World War II, are included among the correspondence.

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## Arrangement

The Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein Papers is arranged into five groupings: I. Goldie Russler, 1925-1988; II. Abraham Burstein, 1930-1991; III. Russler and Burstein family papers, 1930-1992; IV. Photographs, 1900-1980; V. August 2023 acquisition, 1920-1992.

## Collection Contents

### Goldie Russler, 1925-1988

b.1	Personal papers (4 folders)	circa 1925-1988
	Yiddish theater	circa 1927-1972
b.1	Artef (Arbeter Teater Farband)	1927-1942
	Scripts	circa 1929-1939
b.1	<i>Baym telefon (By the Telephone)</i> and <i>A Jewish Tribunal</i> by David Bergelson (2 folders)	circa 1929-1939
b.1	<i>Die Kaprizne Kalemoyd (The Capricious Bride)</i> adapted from Abraham Goldfaden by Y. Dobrushin	circa 1929-1939
b.1	<i>The World to Come</i> by Moishe Nadir	circa 1929-1939
b.1	<i>The NRA</i> by Zumimaud	circa 1929-1939
b.1	Various Yiddish scripts (4 folders)	circa 1929-1939
b.1, 13	Manuscript sheet music and song lyrics (11 folders)	circa 1929-1939
b.2	Theater programs from Israel and the United States (3 folders)	circa 1929-1972
b.2, 14, 15 (Oversize)	Clippings related to Goldie Russler, Artef, and Yiddish theater (20 folders)	circa 1929-1939
b.2	Costume drawings	circa 1930s
b.2	Production photographs (4 folders)	circa 1930s
b.2	Ten Years Artef (New York: Posy-Shoulson Press, 1937)	1937
b.3	Correspondence related to Yiddish theater	circa 1938-1951
b.3	Material related to YKUF (Yiddish Kultur Farband)	1948
b.3	Material related to Camp Kinderland (2 folders)	circa 1930s
b.3	Correspondence (4 folders)	circa 1932-1959

**Abraham Burstein, 1930-1991**

b. 3	Goldie Russler correspondence to Abraham Burstein (2 folders)	1938-1939
b. 4	Russian letters to Abraham Burstein (4 folders)	circa 1934-1991
b. 4	Abraham Burstein to Aviva Weisman	circa 1953-1974
b. 4	Various correspondence	circa 1939-1984
b. 4	Empty envelopes (2 folders)	circa 1930-1964
b. 5	Personal papers (4 folders)	circa 1935-1991
b. 5	Papers relating to the education of Zvi Leibovitz	1949-1950
b. 5	Correspondence and records related to the Manhattan Slipper Company	1929-1958
b. 5-6	Correspondence and records related to the estate of Fannie Penn (5 folders)	1969-1970

**Russler and Burstein family papers, 1930-1992**

b. 6	Joint correspondence (3 folders)	circa 1950-1989
b. 6	Burstein family correspondence from Russia, Israel, and the United States	1977-1992
b. 7	Russler family correspondence from Israel (6 folders)	circa 1935-1991
b. 7-8	Aviva Weisman correspondence (8 folders)	circa 1949-1968
b. 9	Ezra Weisman correspondence	circa 1950-1963
b. 9	Various family papers and correspondence	1934-1991
b. 9	Documents related to Benjamin Russler	1930-1938
b. 9	Burstein family history	circa 1981
b. 9	Clippings and other ephemera related to family	circa 1939-1986
b. 9	The Philistine: A periodical of protest	1910 October
b. 9	Postage stamps (3 folders) Includes dried Two-tailed Swallowtail butterfly.	circa 1930-1990
b. 9	Haggadah and sabbath prayer book	1978-1992
b. 12, ■■■■ 39002141023623	Unidentified audio cassette tape 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> Box 12: Restricted fragile material (audio cassette tape). Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated



**Photographs, 1900-1980**

b. 10	Cartes de visite	circa 1900-1910
b. 10	Photographic postcards with portraits	circa 1915-1950
b. 10	<a href="#">Photographs of Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein</a> (2 folders)	circa 1920-1980
b. 10	Photographic holiday greeting cards	circa 1950s-1960s
b. 10	Trip to Israel	circa 1950s
b. 10	Color photographs of Dr. Burstein's retirement luncheon	1975 March 20
b. 10	Color photographs (2 folders)	circa 1960-1990
b. 10	Modern copy photographs	circa 1985-1998
b. 10-11, 13	Unidentified photographs (13 folders)	circa 1900-1970
b. 11	Photographs and negatives from envelopes (2 folders)	circa 1930s-1970s
b. 11	Black and white cellulose acetate negatives	circa 1958
b. 11	Black and white cellulose acetate negatives; Black and white nitrate negatives (2 folders)	circa 1950s-1960s

**August 2023 acquisition, 1920-1992***1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)*

This accession contains playscripts, programs, and correspondence, primarily between Goldie Russler and Abraham Burstein.

Gift of Stefan Weisman, 2023.

Four nitrate negatives were found and are being digitized. The files will be available for public access. The negatives will be discarded following digitization in compliance with Yale University policy.

Maintains order found at time of acquisition.

b. 16	Yiddish plays	undated
	Correspondence Arranged in rough chronological order.	1920-1992
b. 16	1920s-1930s 8 Folders	1920s-1930s
b. 17	1930s 5 Folders	1930s
b. 17	1940s 3 Folders	1940s
b. 17	1950s-1970s 2 Folders	1950s-1970s
b. 17	1980s-1992	1980s-1992
b. 18	Programs, appointment cards, and other papers	1930-1939, undated
b. 18	Service award for Abraham Burstein	1951
b. 18	Passports	1935-1971
b. 18	Slide	1967
b. 18	<a href="#">Four photographic negatives</a> Digitized images of four nitrate negatives were created and are available for public access. The negatives were discarded following digitization in compliance with Yale University policy.	undated

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Preferred Titles**

*Morgn-frayhayt*

### **Subjects**

Jewish newspapers -- New York (State) -- New York  
Songs, Russian  
Songs, Yiddish  
Songs with piano  
Theater, Yiddish -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Genres / Formats**

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Paintings (visual works)  
Photographic prints  
Postage stamps  
Scripts (documents)

### **Occupations**

Actors -- United States -- 20th Century

### **Corporate Bodies**

Artef  
Camp "Kinderland" (Hopewell Junction, N.Y.)

### **Contributors**

Russler, Goldie, 1904-1997, author  
Burstein, Abraham C.