
Lewis Meltzer Collection

Finding aid created by Writers Guild Foundation Archive staff using RecordEXPRESS

Writers Guild Foundation Archive

7000 West Third Street

Los Angeles, California 90048

(323) 782-4680

hswett@wgfoundation.org

<https://www.wgfoundation.org/wgf-library-archive/about-the-film-and-tv-archive/>

2018

Descriptive Summary

Title: Lewis Meltzer Collection

Dates: 1938-1967

Collection Number: WGF-MS-055

Creator/Collector: Meltzer, Lewis, 1911-1995

Extent: 1.25 linear feet

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive
Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The Lewis Meltzer Collection, 1938-1967, contains script materials for films, plays, and television programs written by Lewis Meltzer, as well as correspondence related to his career; agency and employment contracts; song lyrics written by Meltzer; stories and other writings; and a small amount of production material related to films written by Meltzer, including *Golden Boy*, *Desert Legion*, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, and *The Beat Generation*.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment only.

Publication Rights

The responsibility to secure copyright and publication permission rests with the researcher.

Preferred Citation

Lewis Meltzer Collection. Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Acquisition Information

Donated by Joshua Meltzer, January 15, 2017

Biography/Administrative History

Lewis Meltzer was a playwright and screenwriter who first came to Hollywood in 1938. Born in New York City on January 28, 1911, Meltzer was the son of Isidor Meltzer, a comedian in the Yiddish theater. Meltzer's brothers Murray (who died in 1938) and Sidney, who adopted the stage name Sid Melton, followed in their father's footsteps and became actors. But Lewis was drawn to the written word. He earned a BA in English Literature at New York University and went on to study playwriting in New York. His play *Yankee Fable* was produced by Cheryl Crawford in 1938 but closed after a short run in Boston. That same year Meltzer and Daniel Taradash, another young writer in his playwriting course, were hired by Rouben Mamoulian to come to Hollywood to work on the screenplay for *Golden Boy*, which was Meltzer's first screen credit. After starting his career at Columbia, Meltzer went on to work at various studios as well as with independent production companies. His filmography includes titles from a wide range of genres, including *The Tuttles of Tahiti*, *Comanche Territory*, *Desert Legion*, *Autumn Leaves*, *High School Confidential*, *The Beat Generation* and the remake of *The Jazz Singer*, starring Danny Thomas. In 1955, Meltzer wrote the first script for *The Man With the Golden Arm*, but only received credit following a Guild arbitration. The case became notable when Walter Newman (who shared credit with Meltzer) unsuccessfully sued to have the Guild's decision overturned. In the 1950s and 1960s, Meltzer also worked in television, writing episodes of *Cheyenne*, *The Rifleman*, and *Naked City*. He also wrote song lyrics for several of his films, and continued to write for the theater, as well as for movies and television, until his retirement. A longtime member of the Writers Guild of America, Lewis Meltzer died in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on February 23, 1995 at the age of 84. He was survived by his second wife, Diane, and four children: Martha, Sarah, Nathaniel, and Joshua.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Lewis Meltzer Collection, 1938-1967, is organized into four series. Series I: Film and Television – Produced consists of script materials for produced films and television series dating from 1939 to 1966. Most of the files contain script excerpts, notes, outlines, treatments, or correspondence. There are only two complete scripts represented: a revised final screenplay for *Desert Legion* (1953) and what appears to be a spec script by Meltzer for the television show *F Troop*. Meltzer was credited on some but not all of the titles represented in the series. Series II: Film and Television – Unproduced and Unidentified contains script materials for various unrealized writing projects undertaken by Meltzer. Most of the materials are undated, and many are incomplete. Included are several ideas for television series, as well as complete screenplays for projects entitled *Robinson Crusoe* 1965 and *Romo the Pony Boy*. Series III: Stage documents Meltzer's work as a playwright, particularly his play *Yankee Fable*, which was produced in 1938. There are ten files of script material for this play, including multiple drafts of each act, handwritten notes, script notes, and sides. Series IV: General contains agency and employment contracts dating from 1946-1966, professional correspondence dating from 1938-1967, memos to and from Jerry Wald 1950-1952, and some miscellaneous materials relating to the Writers Guild of America.

Indexing Terms

Screenwriters

Television writers

Dramatists
