

LATHAN, BILL, 1937- New Lafayette Theatre collection, 1968-2008

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
Atlanta, GA 30322
404-727-6887
rose.library@emory.edu

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Lathan, Bill, 1937-
Title: New Lafayette Theatre collection, 1968-2008
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1230
Extent: .75 linear ft. (2 boxes) and 16 oversized papers (OP)
Abstract: Material relating to the New Lafayette Theatre collected by Bill Lathan, including organizational records, printed material, and photographs from 1968-2008.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Related Materials in This Repository

Ed Bullins papers

Source

Purchase, 2012.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], New Lafayette Theatre collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Sarah Quigley, 2012.

Collection Description

Historical Note

The New Lafayette Theatre, an African American theater company, was founded in 1966 at the site of the original Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, New York City. The theater's artistic director was Robert Macbeth, and the assistant director was playwright Ed Bullins. Company members included Rosanna Carter, Martha Charles, Estelle Evans, Sonny Jim Gaines, Bill Lathan, Whitman Mayo, and Roscoe Orman, among others. From 1968-1974, the theater produced a number of plays written by Bullins and Gaines, as well as workshops, experimental performances ("rituals"), and *Black Theatre*, a magazine edited by Bullins. The theater closed in 1974.

Bill (William E.) Lathan is an African American doctor, actor and director. Born in Philadelphia in 1937, he acted in several plays produced by the New Lafayette Theatre and directed *Sometimes a Hard Head Makes a Soft Behind* and *What if It Had Turned Up Heads* by Sonny Gaines. Lathan won an Obie award for his direction of the latter. Following the New Lafayette Theatre's closing in 1974, Lathan continued to direct and produce plays, including *The Confessions of Stepin' Fetchit* written by Matt Robinson and starring Roscoe Orman.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of material relating to the New Lafayette Theatre collected by Bill Lathan, including organizational records, printed material, and photographs from 1968-2008. Organizational records contain a small amount of correspondence; writings by Ed Bullins and Robert Macbeth; and a small amount of material documenting various projects. Printed material includes brochures, fliers, posters, programs, and tickets from the New Lafayette Theatre's productions, as well as clippings about the theater. Also included is printed material collected by Lathan from other theaters and events. Photographs primarily consist of group photos of New Lafayette Theatre company members, as well as a folder of head shots of Bill Lathan. The collection also includes a small amount of personal papers documenting Lathan's involvement in the broader theater community.

Arrangement Note

Arranged by record type.

Container List

New Lafayette Theatre records

| Box | Folder | Content |
|-----|--------|--|
| 1 | 1 | Bullins, Ed, biographical sketch, no date |
| 1 | 2 | Bullins, Ed, "Black People's Theater vs. Black Middle-Class Values" [photocopy], 1972 |
| 1 | 3 | Bullins, Ed, poetry [photocopies], no date |
| 1 | 4 | Contact list, no date |
| 1 | 5 | Correspondence, 1970 |
| 1 | 6 | <i>Don't Let it Go to Your Head</i> , projected project budget, 1973 |
| 1 | 7 | Historical précis, no date |
| 1 | 8 | Macbeth, Robert, "Black Theatre: An On the Spot Report," 1970 |
| 1 | 9 | Macbeth, Robert, "An Open Letter to <i>The New York Times</i> ," 1971 |
| 1 | 10 | Macbeth, Robert, unidentified writings, 1971 |
| 1 | 11 | "The New Lafayette Theatre Requests \$1,000,000 from [the] Ford Foundation," grant application narrative, 1971 |
| 1 | 12 | "An Open Statement of Reason from The New Lafayette Theatre Regarding Philanthropy," no date |

Printed material by the New Lafayette Theatre

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|----|----|--|
| 1 | 13 | No date, "Black Films: A Community Cultural Service by The New Lafayette Theatre," brochure |
| 1 | 14 | No date, The Black Theatre Workshop, flier |
| 1 | 15 | No date, letterhead |
| 1 | 16 | No date, "TV and Movies: Harmful to Mental Health of Black People," brochure |
| OP | 1 | 1968, Bullins, Ed, <i>Goin' A Buffalo</i> , poster |
| 1 | 17 | 1968, Bullins, Ed, <i>Goin' A Buffalo</i> , ticket |
| 1 | 18 | 1968, Bullins, Ed, <i>In the Wine Time</i> , programs and tickets [one program is autographed by cast members] |
| OP | 2 | 1968, The New Lafayette Theatre poster |
| 1 | 19 | 1969, Bass, Kingsley B., Jr., <i>We Righteous Bombers</i> , flier |
| 1 | 20 | 1969, <i>Ritual to Bind Together and Strengthen Black People so that They Can Survive the Long Struggle That Is to Come</i> , flier |
| OP | 3 | 1969, <i>Ritual to Bind Together and Strengthen Black People so that They Can Survive the Long Struggle That Is to Come</i> , poster |
| 1 | 21 | 1970, The Black Theatre Workshop, flier |
| 1 | 22 | 1970, Bullins, Ed, <i>A Black Time for Black Folk</i> , flier |
| OP | 4 | 1970, Bullins, Ed, <i>A Black Time for Black Folk</i> , poster |
| 1 | 23 | 1970, Bullins, Ed, <i>The Devil Catchers</i> , flier |

- OP 5 1970, Bullins, Ed, *The Devil Catchers*, posters
 1 24 1970, Bullins, Ed, *Duplex*, flier
 OP 6 1970, Bullins, Ed, *Duplex*, poster
 1 25 1970, Bullins, Ed, *To Raise the Dead and Foretell the Future*, brochure, flier,
 program and ticket
 OP 7 1970, Bullins, Ed, *To Raise the Dead and Foretell the Future*, poster
 1 26 Circa 1971, *Black Theatre* brochure
 1 27 Circa 1971, The New Lafayette Theatre brochure
 1 28 1971, Bullins, Ed, *The Fabulous Miss Marie* [directed by Bill Lathan], cast and
 crew list, Playbill, script, and ticket
 OP 8 1971, Bullins, Ed, *The Fabulous Miss Marie* [directed by Bill Lathan], poster
 1 29 1972, Bullins, Ed, *The Psychic Pretenders: A Pageant of the Black Passion*, flier,
 program and ticket
 1 30 1972, Gaines, Sonny, *Sometimes a Hard Head Makes a Soft Behind* [directed by
 Bill Lathan], invitation and program
 OP 9 1972, Gaines, Sonny, *Sometimes a Hard Head Makes a Soft Behind* [directed by
 Bill Lathan], poster
 OP 10 1972, Gaines, Sonny, *Sometimes a Hard Head Makes a Soft Behind*, sheet music
 1 31 1972, Gaines, Sonny, *What if it Had Turned Up Heads* [directed by Bill Lathan],
 fliers and lyrics [autographed by Gaines]
 OP 11 1972, Gaines, Sonny, *What if it Had Turned Up Heads* [directed by Bill Lathan],
 poster
 1 32 1972, press releases
 OP 12 1974, Wesley, Richard, *The Sirens* [directed by Bill Lathan], poster

Printed material about the New Lafayette Theatre

- 1 33 Clippings, no date
 1 34 Clippings, 1968-1970
 1 35 Clippings, 1971
 1 36 Clippings, 1972
 1 37 Clippings, 1973
 1 38 Clippings, 1974
 1 39 Clippings, 1975
 1 40 *Theatre Today*, Fall 1968

Other printed material

- 1 41 "Black Magicians Present Three One Act Plays," flier, no date
 1 42 Bullins, Ed, *The Fabulous Miss Marie* [directed by Bill Lathan], New Federal
 Theatre (New York, New York), fliers and script [annotated photocopy], 2001
 1 43 Bullins, Ed, *House Party*, The American Place Theatre (New York, New York),
 flier, 1973

- 1 44 Bullins, Ed, *In New England Winter* and N.R. Davidson, Jr., *El Hajj Malik*, Theatre Company of Boston and The New African Company (Boston, Massachusetts), program, no date
- 1 45 Chandra Productions, Inc., (New York, New York), brochure, no date
- 1 46 Clippings, 1971-1993
- 1 47 "Committee for Unified Newark Presents an Evening of Soul and African Culture (Newark, New Jersey)," flier, no date
- 1 48 Howell, William Lee, memorial card and program, 1975
- 1 49 Miss Marie Company, press release, no date
- 1 50 National Black Arts Festival theatre program, 1996
- 1 51 *Riot* [directed by Stan Lathan], Theatre Workshop Boston, Inc. (Boston, Massachusetts), ticket, no date
- 1 52 Robinson, Matt, *The Confessions of Stepin Fetchit* [directed by Bill Lathan], fliers, invitations and programs, 2006-2008
- 1 53 Scott, Seret, *Second Line* [directed by Bill Lathan], Nyack Center (Nyack, New York), invitations and program, 2000

Photographs

- 1 54 Green, Loretta, Veronica Redd and Debbie Morgan, *The Sirens* [Photographer: Bill Lathan], 1974
- 1 55 Lathan, Bill
- 2 1 Mayo, Whitman, *What if it Had Turned Up Heads* [Photographer: Bill Lathan], 1973
- OP 13 New Lafayette Theatre company members, no date
- 2 2 New Lafayette Theatre female company members [Photographer: Bill Lathan], no date
- 2 3 New Lafayette Theatre male company members [Photographer: Bill Lathan], no date
- OP 14 New Lafayette Theatre male company members [Photographer: Bill Lathan], no date
- OP 15 New Lafayette Theatre male company members, no date
- 2 4 New Lafayette Theatre under construction, 1968
- 2 5 *Sometimes a Hard Head Makes a Soft Behind* cast photo [Photographer: Bill Lathan], 1972

Bill Lathan papers

- 2 6 Correspondence, circa 1975-1984
- OP 16 Drawing, "Dr. Lathan," no date
- 2 7 New Federal Theatre (New York, New York), Board of Directors, 1989-1990
- 2 8 Resume, no date
- 2 9 Script, unidentified, no date

2 10 *Second Line* sound cues, 2000
