Guide to the Benjamin Mordecai Papers

YCAL MSS 790

by Beinecke staff

November 2013

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 790

CREATOR: Mordecai, Benjamin, 1944-2005

TITLE: Benjamin Mordecai papers

DATES: 1975-2005

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 19.96 linear feet (32 boxes) + 2 broadside folders, 1 record album storage, 1 art

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The majority of the collection consists of production programs, photographs, window cards, posters, and other publicity material relating to theatrical productions produced by Benjamin Mordecai at Yale Repertory Theatre and on Broadway. Award certificates, plaques and trophies he received as producer of Angels in America, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, and other productions are included in the papers. In addition, there are legal and financial documents, correspondence, and other material relating to the production Golden Child, and computer disks containing Jitney production records. Audiovisual material includes videotape and compact disc recordings of theatrical productions, Tony Award programs, and Benjamin Mordecai's memorial service, and a long-playing record album of Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mordecai

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 http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mordecai.

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.

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

b. box
	item barcode
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of Sherry L. Mordecai, 2005-2006.

Conditions Governing Access
The materials are open for research.

Boxes 19, 27-28 (sound and video recordings): Use of originals is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Box 35 (computer disks): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Conditions Governing Use
The Benjamin Mordecai 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.

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, at or around the time of acquisition. The collection is comprised of material formerly classed as: Uncat MSS 831 and Uncat MSS 877. Various acquisitions associated with the collection have not been merged and organized as a whole. Each acquisition is described separately in the contents list below, titled according to month and year of acquisition. Descriptive information is drawn in large part 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.

Benjamin Mordecai (1944-2005)
Benjamin Mordecai was born in New York City in 1944. He graduated from Buena Vista University in 1967, and received his Master of Arts degree from Eastern Michigan University in 1968. He was a founder of the Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis and the theater’s producing director for eleven years (1971-1982). During his twenty-three year tenure at Yale University (1982-2005), Mordecai was associate dean and chair of the theater management program at the Yale School of Drama, and managing director of the Yale Repertory Theatre (1982 to 1993). Working closely with Yale School of Drama dean and Yale Repertory Theatre artistic director Lloyd Richards and the playwright August Wilson, Mordecai was the only person to have worked on the original productions of all ten plays in Wilson’s cycle of plays about
the African-American experience in the 20th century. Under his management, five of August Wilson’s plays, as well as plays by Athol Fugard, Lee Blessing, and Eugene O’Neill moved from Yale to Broadway. In 1992, Mordecai founded his own producing and management firm, and was managing partner of Producers Four, a theatrical development and producing company. During his career he was involved in national tours and resident productions in the United States as well as productions in Great Britain, Russia, and Eastern Europe. He was the recipient of numerous awards for productions including three Tony Awards for *Fences*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Angels in America*; Drama Desk Awards for *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*; and the Olivier Award for *Jitney*. He also received the Robert Whitehead Award for outstanding commercial producing; two NAACP Theatre Awards; and a Special Achievement Award from the New England Theatre Conference. The Yale Repertory Theatre received a Tony for outstanding regional theatre in 1991, during Mordecai’s tenure as the theater’s managing director. He died in New Haven in 2005.

**Scope and Contents**

The majority of the collection consists of production programs, photographs, window cards, posters, and other publicity material relating to theatrical productions produced by Benjamin Mordecai. Certificates, plaques and trophies of awards he received as producer of *Angels in America*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Seven Guitars*, and other productions are included in the papers. In addition, there are legal and financial documents, correspondence, and other material relating to *Golden Child*, and computer disks containing various *Jitney* production records. Audiovisual material includes videocassette and compact disc recordings of theatrical productions, Tony Award programs, and Benjamin Mordecai’s memorial service, and a record album of *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*.

**Arrangement**

# Collection Contents

## 1. October 2005 Acquisition

11.17 linear feet (16 boxes) + 2 broadside folders, 1 record album storage

Production programs, awards, window cards, posters, and a record album documenting theatrical productions produced or attended by Benjamin Mordecai.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 831

Arranged by type of material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consists of Playbill binders containing production programs from shows in New York and various other U.S. cities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. 1</th>
<th>1975 July - 1981 October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>1981 October - 1983 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>1983 October - 1984 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>1984 October - 1986 March</td>
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<td>b. 2</td>
<td>1986 April - 1987 April</td>
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<td>b. 2</td>
<td>1987 June - 1988 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>1988 February - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>1988 November - 1989 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3</td>
<td>1989 May - 1990 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3</td>
<td>1990 March - December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3</td>
<td>1991 February - December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3</td>
<td>1992 February - November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4</td>
<td>1993 April - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4</td>
<td>1993 November - 1994 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4</td>
<td>1994 February - 1995 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4</td>
<td>1995 November - 1996 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5</td>
<td>1996 October - 1997 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5</td>
<td>1997 April - July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5</td>
<td>1997 October - 1998 January</td>
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<td>b. 5</td>
<td>1998 October - December</td>
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<td>b. 6</td>
<td>1998 February - September</td>
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### Production Programs (continued)

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<th>Container</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999 January- March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999 April - July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999 August - November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999 November - 2000 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000 March - April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000 May - November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000 November - 2001 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001 June - November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001 December - 2002 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001 April - June</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002 April - June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 9</td>
<td>Unsorted</td>
<td>16 folders 1988-2004</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Award Files

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Playbill</em> program for 12th Annual Abbott Award</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Playbill</em> programs for Tony Awards 6 folders</td>
<td>1980-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>W.I.T. membership plaque</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>Buena Vista College plaque presented to Benjamin Mordecai</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>Drama Desk Award nomination to Benjamin Mordecai for outstanding play producer for <em>Angels in America</em></td>
<td>1992-1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>Tony nomination for best play producer for <em>The Piano Lesson</em></td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>Indianapolis City Council Resolution honoring Benjamin Mordecai</td>
<td>1982 July 19</td>
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</table>

### Miscellaneous Production Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>“Fences, A Play in Two Acts,” by August Wilson, typescript copy</td>
<td>December 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>Program from Benjamin Mordecai’s memorial service</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Three Sisters</em> photographs of performance at Brooklyn Academy of Music</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Moon Over Miami</em> by John Guare, typescript copy “Williamstown version”</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>King Hedley</em>, printouts of photographs of cast and crew</td>
<td>2001 June 28, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Seven Guitars</em> promotional photographs</td>
<td>1996 March 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td><em>Jitney</em>, photograph of set</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Angels in America</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Blood Knot</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>BKLYN, the Musical</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>End Papers</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Fences</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Flower Drum Song</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Gate of Heaven, with signatures</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Gem of the Ocean</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Golden Child</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Harlem Nutcracker</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 11 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Jitney, signed with note by August Wilson</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Joe Turner’s Come and Gone</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Kentucky Cycle</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>King Hedley II, signed with note from August Wilson</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Love! Valor! Compassion!</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>&quot;The O’Neill Plays&quot;</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 12 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Piano Lesson</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Radio Golf</td>
<td>2004-2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Redwood Curtain</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Road to Mecca</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Seven Guitars</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>The Silver River</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Sixteen Wounded</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Thunder Knocking on the Door</td>
<td>undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, signed by Anna Deavere Smith</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Two Trains Running</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 13 (Oversize)</td>
<td>A Walk in the Woods</td>
<td>1988</td>
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</table>
### Award Certificates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Angels in America</em>, Drama Critics Circle</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Golden Child</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>The Kentucky Cycle</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>King Hedley II</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td>New York Drama Critics Circle Special Citation: Anna Deavere Smith</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>The Piano Lesson</em>, New York Drama Critics Circle Award</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Seven Guitars</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Two Trains Running</em>, Tony Award nomination</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Two Trains Running</em>, New York Drama Critics Circle Award</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Jitney</em>, New York Drama Critics Circle Award</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 14</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td>Sagamore of the Wabish Award</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 15</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td>Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Theatre Awards, Best Play/Producer for <em>Two Trains Running</em>, framed</td>
<td>1992 December 14</td>
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### Miscellaneous Papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 16</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td><em>Flower Drum Song</em>, photographs, window cards, publicity material</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 16</td>
<td>Oversize</td>
<td>Small poster of <em>New Yorker</em> magazine cover</td>
<td>1994 March 7</td>
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### Posters

<table>
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<th>Number</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 17</td>
<td>Broadside</td>
<td><em>Fences</em> posters</td>
<td>1985, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 17</td>
<td>Broadside</td>
<td><em>Jitney</em> posters</td>
<td>1999, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 18</td>
<td>Broadside</td>
<td><em>Into the Woods</em> poster from production at the Pushkin Theatre, Moscow</td>
<td>1989</td>
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### Audiovisual Material

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 19</td>
<td>Record Album Storage</td>
<td><em>Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom</em> record album</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Use of originals is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.
2. May 2006 Acquisition

8.79 linear feet (16 boxes) + 1 art

Legal and financial records and promotional materials relating to *Golden Child*; *Jitney* scripts, prompt book, production notes, promotional material, photographs, and computer files; and photographs, audiocassettes, videocassettes, compact disks, awards and other material documenting theatrical productions produced by Benjamin Mordecai including plays by August Wilson and Anna Deveare Smith.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 877

Arranged by type of material.

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### Golden Child Material

| b. 20 | Contracts - music | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Contract - author | 1997 |
| b. 20 | Limited Partnership | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Final accountant’s statements | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Contracts | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Company Business certificate | 1997 |
| b. 20 | Contracts: SCR/NYSF | 1997 |
| b. 20 | Jonathan Yap | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Limited partnership - Jujamcyn Theaters | 1997-1998 |
| b. 20 | Limited partnership - distribution | |
| b. 20 | Joint Venture - Kennedy Center loan agreement | 1998 |
| b. 20 | East West Players loan agreement | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Limited partnership - Jon Platt | 1998 |
| b. 20 | David Henry Hwang - loan agreement | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Joint venture agreement between Benjamin Mordecai Productions and Intergalactic Entertainment LLC | 1997 |
| b. 20 | Joint Venture - Talia Shire loan agreement | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Correspondence with investors | 1997-1998 |
| b. 20 | Limited partnership - Dori Berinstein | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Checkbook and receipt | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Joint venture loan agreement reference memos | 1998 |
| b. 20 | Limited Partnership - John Kao | 1997 |
| b. 20 | Far East Bank | 2000-2003 |
Golden Child Material (continued)

<table>
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<td>b.20</td>
<td>John Kao loan agreement</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>b.20</td>
<td><em>Golden Child</em>, the movie</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
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<td>b.20</td>
<td>Office - personal</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.20</td>
<td>Production programs</td>
<td>1996-1998</td>
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Jitney Material

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#### Awards

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<td>New England Theatre Conference special award for advancement in theatre</td>
<td>1998 November 7</td>
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<td>Redwood Curtain opening night program cover [mounted]</td>
<td>1993 March 30</td>
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## Audiovisual Material

Use of originals is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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Oversize > Awards (continued)

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<td>Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Theatre Awards, Best Play/Producer for <em>The Piano Lesson</em>, framed</td>
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**Computer media**

Eleven computer disks relating to *Jitney*
Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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Benjamin Mordecai’s memorial service on DVD
Reference copies of electronic files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

REMEMBERING BEN A Tribute to the Life and Work of Benjamin Mordecai December 10, 1944 - May 8, 2005
Call Number: 2006-ycal-31-0012
1 DVD-R
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Objects

King Hedley machete, mounted
Includes plate with the following inscription: “This is the machete of the ‘Conquering Lion of Judea,’ Stool Pigeon, King Hedley II: Act II, Scene 1.”
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.

Subjects
Theater -- Production and direction -- United States
Theatrical producers and directors -- United States

Genres / Formats
Audiovisual materials
Born digital
Theater programs
Theatrical posters

Occupations
Theatrical producers and directors -- United States -- 20th Century

Names
Mordecai, Benjamin, 1944-2005

Corporate Bodies
Yale Repertory Theatre
Yale School of Drama

Contributors
Mordecai, Benjamin, 1944-2005
Hwang, David Henry, 1957- ( Golden child)
Kushner, Tony ( Angels in America)
Wilson, August ( Jitney)
Wilson, August ( August Wilson’s The piano lesson)
Wilson, August ( Seven guitars)