Guide to the Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other Papers

JWJ MSS 95

by Beinecke staff

October 2012

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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:** JWJ MSS 95

**CREATOR:** Becker, Richard S.

**TITLE:** Richard S. Becker collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and other papers

**DATES:** 1961–2005

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.67 linear feet (8 boxes) + 1 art storage

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Collection contains memorabilia relating to Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander assembled by music publisher Richard S. Becker and some of Becker’s personal papers. The memorabilia, such as framed albums and printed ephemera, relates to Alex Bradford’s and Arthur Alexander’s better known works, including Bradford’s theatrical work, “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope,” and covers of Alexander’s songs by The Rolling Stones (“You Better Move On”) and The Beatles (“Anna”). Becker’s personal papers include awards and a small number of photographs and letters from political figures.

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

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.becker.

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:

- box

Administrative Information

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Conditions Governing Access
The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
The Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other 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.

Preferred Citation
Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other Papers. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information
This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Former call numbers: Uncat MSS 749, Uncat MSS 774, Uncat MSS 775, and Uncat MSS 816.

Alex Bradford (1927-1978)
Alex Bradford, born in 1927 in Bessemer, Alabama, was a clergyman, gospel singer, stage actor, composer, and lyricist. A minister and choir director of the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey, Bradford believed in bringing black gospel music to the theater. He collaborated on several gospel plays with Vinnette Carroll, including “Your Arms Too Short To Box With God” (1976), which was nominated for several Tony awards. Bradford also won Obie and Drama Desk awards in 1972 for his performance in the musical “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope.” In addition, the actor headed a number of gospel singing groups that toured widely, such as the Bradford Specials and the Professor Alex Bradford Singers. His musical compositions include “Too Close to Heaven.” Bradford died February 15, 1978, in New York City.


Arthur Alexander (1940-1993)
Arthur Alexander, born in 1940 in Sheffield, Alabama, was a singer and songwriter. In 1953 Alexander led a teenage gospel group, The Heartstrings, before singing rock-and-roll on regional television in Alabama in the late 1950s. His first recorded song, "Sally Sue Brown," was later covered by Bob Dylan; the title track from his first album, "You Better Move On" (1962), was covered by the Rolling Stones; and the single "Anna" was covered by the Beatles. Alexander toured extensively in the 1960s before quitting the music business in the mid 1970s. He returned to music in the early 1990s, but then died of a heart attack on June 9, 1993.

Scope and Contents

The collection contains memorabilia relating to Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander assembled by music publisher Richard S. Becker and some of Becker’s personal papers. The memorabilia, consisting chiefly of albums and printed ephemera, relates to Alex Bradford’s and Arthur Alexander’s better known works, including Bradford’s theatrical work, “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope,” and covers of Alexander’s songs by The Rolling Stones (“You Better Move On”) and Beatles (“Anna”). Becker’s personal papers include awards and a small number of photographs and letters from political figures.

Arrangement

Organized into four groupings by date of acquisition: January 2005 Acquisition, March 2005 Acquisition, April 2005 Acquisition, and October 2005 Acquisition.
Collection Contents

January 2005 Acquisition

1.38 linear feet (7 boxes)

This grouping contains memorabilia, such as albums and printed ephemera, relating to some of Alex Bradford’s and Arthur Alexander’s better known works, including Bradford’s theatrical work, “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope,” and covers of Alexander’s songs by The Rolling Stones (“You Better Move On”) and The Beatles (“Anna”).

Former call number: Uncat MSS 749.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>Certificate, National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>Obie award</td>
<td>1971–1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>Printed material relating to “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope”</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 (Art)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “Anna,” The Beatles, framed</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “Souvenir of Their Visit to America, The Beatles,” framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Scrapbook</td>
<td>1978, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “Please please me, The Beatles,” framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Photograph of Marion Williams and Alex Bradford, framed</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “December’s Children,” The Rolling Stones, framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “The Early Beatles,” framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “You Better Move On,” The Rolling Stones, framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Printed ephemera relating to “Your Arms Too Short To Box With God,” framed</td>
<td>1976, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7 (Oversize)</td>
<td>Memorabilia, “Anna,” The Beatles, framed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
March 2005 Acquisition

2 folders

This grouping contains two typed, signed letters to Becker, one each from Alabama governor George C. Wallace and New Jersey senator Harrison A. Williams, two photographs of governor Wallace, and a coin from the 21 Club in New York City.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 774.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. 8</th>
<th>Coin from “The 21 Club”</th>
<th>undated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td>Letters and photographs</td>
<td>1973–1974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
April 2005 Acquisition

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

This grouping contains additional memorabilia relating to music as well as personal papers comprised of awards and correspondence.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 775

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“BMI Pop Hits 1940-1966”</td>
<td>[circa 1967]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Frances W. Preston, BMI</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music for guitar, “Your Arms Too Short”</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed material relating to “Your Arms Too Short To Box With God”</td>
<td>1980–2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Winfield Dunn</td>
<td>1973 June 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clipping about Becker</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from The Juilliard School</td>
<td>2002 February 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation from The Juilliard School</td>
<td>2001–2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate, State of Arkansas</td>
<td>1973 May 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Special Citation of Achievement” presented by BMI</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate of honorary citizenship, State of Tennessee</td>
<td>1973 April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment, Colonel Aide de Camp, State of Tennessee</td>
<td>1973 April 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clipping identifying 1977-78 Broadway productions, <em>Variety</em></td>
<td>1978 May 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp, State of Alabama</td>
<td>1973 May 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation of Achievement presented by Broadcast Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Warner Bros. Records, Inc.</td>
<td>1968 November 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorabilia, “Moody River”</td>
<td>1961, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**October 2005 Acquisition**

This grouping contains photographs of Governor George C. Wallace and printed ephemera.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 816.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. 8</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playbill, Gershwin Theatre</td>
<td>1983 June 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace and [Richard S. Becker?]</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stored in: Oversize, Box 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace, signed</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stored in: Oversize, Box 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Oversize**  
*0.08 linear feet (1 box)*

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Clipping about Becker  
  undated

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  “Special Citation of Achievement” presented by BMI  
  undated

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Certificate of honorary citizenship, State of Tennessee  
  1973 April 12

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Appointment, Colonel Aide de Camp, State of Tennessee  
  1973 April 23

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Clipping identifying 1977-78 Broadway productions, *Variety*  
  1978 May 31

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Appointment, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp, State of Alabama  
  1973 May 4

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Citation of Achievement presented by Broadcast Music, Inc.  
  1961

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Letter from Warner Bros. Records, Inc.  
  1968 November 20

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Memorabilia, “Moody River”  
  1961, undated

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace and [Richard S. Becker?]  
  undated

- b. 9 (Oversize)  
  Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace, signed  
  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.

Subjects
African American singers
Gospel music
Popular music -- United States

Genres / Formats
Audiovisual materials
Photographic prints

Names
Alexander, Arthur
Becker, Richard S.
Bradford, Alex

Corporate Bodies
Beatles
Rolling Stones