
Guide to the Donald Montwill Papers, Group I - Records of Valencia Rose, January 1982-1985

Accession number: 93-7

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Donald Montwill Papers, Group I - Records of Valencia Rose,

Date (inclusive): January 1982-1985

Accession number: 93-7

Creator: Valencia Rose

Extent: 1.66 linear feet

Repository: The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

San Francisco, California.

Language: English

Acquisition

The papers (93-7) were acquired by GLHS in 1993 from Donald Montwill.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

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Historical Note

Valencia Rose, located at 766 Valencia Street in San Francisco, opened its doors in January 1982 largely through the efforts of Ron Lanza, an actor, theatre lover, and business entrepreneur. With co-owner and partner Hank Wilson, Ron turned a funeral parlor into one of the city's most prominent cabarets. Lanza and Wilson heavily subsidized the Rose for the first two years of its existence, from 1982 to 1984, bringing various theater productions to the Rose and offering full-course dinners through the culinary talents of chef Ward Smith. In 1983, the life of this cabaret really took off, when Lanza hired Donald Montwill as talent scout and Dennis Powers as publicist. By March of 1984, writing a feature for the San Francisco Chronicle, Randy Shilts announced that the Valencia Rose had become "an epicenter of gay comedy." Many up-and-coming performers began their careers at the Rose, including Whoopi Goldberg, Doug Holsclaw, Lea Delaria, and Marga Gomez and local politician, the then "mother of gay comedy" Tom Ammiano. While much performance came and went at the Valencia Rose, the cabaret also became a community resource. Donald Montwill, who is largely responsible for the stellar performances there, solicited academics, politicians, and artists to give presentations on the history of the gay and lesbian community. The series, entitled "Gay and Lesbian Pioneers," ran successfully during 1984, including presentations on lesbian subculture in Paris in the early twentieth century to lectures on the history of the local leather culture. Montwill also turned the Valencia Rose into a public space for various community organizations, encouraging political rallies and other kinds of organizing to take place there, as well as hosting educational evenings on spirituality or holistic living.

During its brief life, the Valencia Rose became a dynamic cultural and political center of the Valencia Street neighborhood. However, Ron soon set his sights on other goals, notably pursuing an acting career in Los Angeles. In late 1985, the Valencia Rose closed its doors. Donald Montwill and his ill lover, Jim Mannis, moved to Hawaii. After Mannis' death, Montwill returned to San Francisco and soon began planning the opening of a new cabaret with Lanza. This time they scouted a location near Castro and began a strong campaign to obtain a cabaret licence. The result was the opening of Josie's Juice Joint on 16th Street just off Market. He then continued his remarkable career as talent scout and theatrical impresario by becoming artistic director for Josie's, which was, in many ways, the successor to Valencia Rose.

Scope and Content

This collection, consisting of Montwill's records as artistic manager of the Rose, contains a variety of materials on just about any event occurring in its performance space. These ranged from musical reviews, plays, stand-up comedy, political meetings, rallies, slide lectures, films and photography exhibits. Promotional materials compose most of this collection. Other items include business documents, correspondence, and performance reviews from the local press.

The records (1.66 linear feet) are divided into three series; performer files, administrative files, and promotional files. The performer files contain materials for performers or for specific performance events. In these files, you will probably find a collection of fliers or other kinds of advertisements for an event. Unfortunately, though we have a plentiful supply of fliers from these events, they provide very limited information. Often, only names and dates (with no year) can be found on these fliers, accompanied by xeroxed photographs of the performer. Other materials in these files range from publicity photos, press releases, occasional scripts, press reviews, and old copies of programs for the performances. Basically, anything relevant to the specific performer or piece can be found in these files. These files were already largely in existence when the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society received these materials.

The administrative files contain general business documents, monthly calendars, correspondence files, and release forms. Of the two correspondence files, the first contain letters to Ron Lanza or promotional materials which Lanza collected. The second correspondence file contains letters and materials that Donald Montwill probably compiled.

The first two promotional files are a simple collection of all postings of performances. Additional promotional files are sorted into "Music Events;" "Photo, Slide, or Film Presentations;" and "Political, Spiritual, Holistic or Other Events." Again these are mostly brief announcements of events. One of the more interesting files in this collection is the History Project file. Here there are promotional materials, and a little correspondence, from "The History Project Series" which the cabaret hosted for about a year. In the next files, a variety of materials more or less related to Valencia Rose can be found. A file labeled "Information about Possible Performances," contains materials that either Ron Lanza, Donald Montwill, or others had collected, pertaining to any performance considered as a possibility for Valencia Rose. The following file "Materials for Planned Performances" consists largely of publicity photos, with reviews and other promotional materials also occasionally included. The file "Articles about Valencia Rose" follows. This consists of reviews and other discussions of the cabaret found in the local press. The next file of this series is a collection of monthly calendars dating from December, 1981 to July 1985; this file includes miscellaneous press releases located in the back of the folder. Finally, the last file of this series contains performance placards, or signs used to announce the event in the cabaret.

Title: Hank Wilson Papers

Identifier/Call Number: #96-2

Performer Files

Box 1

Ackamoor, Idris & Rhodessa Jones
Ammiano, Tom
Anderson, Jane
Anderson, Lenny
Ashton, Kerry
Avery, Gwen
Avotcja
Aylesworth, Gary
Baum (Terry) and Tufo
Blackberri
Bly, Marj
Bond, Pat
Busch, Charles
Casselberry-DuPre
Clinton, Kate
Comedy Fiesta: Richard Montoya, Margo Gomez, Monica Palacios, and Jose Anonio Burciaga
Corine, Tee
Crossover
DeLaria & Strobel
Doba, Wayne/Ernesto Sanchez
Dombrowski, Patti
Dornacker, Jane
Dubie, Francesa
Dyketones
Dysart, LeRoy
Egomanics
A Fine Romance (performance opening night for Valencia Rose)
Fink, Sue
Fjell, Judy
Flower, Robin
Folk, Bill
Fran & Charlie
Gannon, Kris
Goldberg, Whoopi
Gorman-Jacobs, Judy
Grossman, Steve
Habib, Martine
Halston, Julie
Hayes, Steve
Healey, Susan
Hedzolek, Soundz
Helen, Sandra de
Hershey, Christopher
The Hesitations
Hissy Fits: Doug Holsclaw, Ellen Brook Davis, Mario Mondelli, Marga Gomez
Hit and Run Theatre
Hot Flashes
I Wish I Had Never Met You and I Was Meeting You Now Script
Jasmine
Justin, James
Kasten, Kate
Kelly, Ned
Ladies Against Women
The Last of the Nuns Script, Joe Besecker
Lavner, Lynn

Lesbian Chorus
Leigh, Carol/Scarlot Harlot
Leishman, Gina
Lifeline
Lippman, Dave
Malvina
McCalla, Deidre
McDonald, Reginald and Diane Schlactus
McGeeHee, Peter
Mellotones
Morgan, Geof
Motherlode
Mothertongue
Murphy, Charles
Murphy & Sieber
Out of the Way Players
Over Our Heads
Pat Wynne Band
Patterson, John
Pecora, Donna
Peterson, Art
Pilshaw, Elliot
Primavera
Quinlan Sisters
Rainbow Ensemble
Reno, Karen
Righteous Mothers
Rogers, Robin
Romanovsky & Phillips
Rose, Betsy
Ross, Jae
Schein, David & Whoopi Goldberg, Reverence for the Dead
Schiffer, Harriet
Sheppard, Frank J.
Sjogren, Craig
Sloan, Judy
Small, Judy
Spider Woman Theater
Street Angels
Street Theater
Sweet Surrender
Sylvern, Elka
Tannen, Holly
Ten Percent Revue
Towe, Ronald
Tumbleweed
Tyler, Robin
Vaudeville Nouveau
Vincent, Rick
Vocal Minority
Vogl/Shaubaum
We Three
What's Burning with Judy Roderick
Williams, Danny
Wilson (or Weinberg), Tom
Word is Out (film)
Xposed: A Male Musical

Administrative Files

Box 1

Business Documents
Correspondence Files (2 folders)
Release Forms

Promotional Files

Box 1	Performance Fliers
Box 2	Performance Fliers
	Music Events
	Photo, Slide or Film Presentations
	Political, Holistic, or other events
	History Project
	Information about possible performances
	Materials for planned performances: publicity photos, info, etc.
	Articles about Valencia Rose
	Monthly Calendars
	Performance Placards
Folder Legal Size	Calendar of Events
Folder	Fliers