

## Finding Aid for the Mitchell Leisen Papers

**Collection Processed by:**  
Samuel A. Henley (May 8, 2019)

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Samuel A. Henley (May 8, 2019)  
Revised, Joel Parham (January 5, 2026)

### OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

**Origination/Creator:** Leisen, Mitchell (1898–1972)  
**Title of Collection:** Mitchell Leisen Papers  
**Date of Collection:** 1898–1972  
**Physical Description:** 12 boxes, 33 Bound scripts  
**Identification:** Special Collection #24  
**Repository:** American Film Institute  
AFI Archives  
2021 N. Western Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA

### RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS

**Access Restrictions:** Collection is open for research.  
**Copyright:** The copyright interests in this collection remain with the creator. For more information, contact the AFI Archives.  
**Acquisition Method:** Donated by Eleanor Broder (Leisen's personal assistant) on behalf of Mitchell Leisen. Collection materials were received from September 28, 1970, up until Leisen's death.

### BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORY NOTE

Mitchell Leisen (born October 6, 1898, Menominee, Michigan; died October 28, 1972, Los Angeles, California) was an American costume designer, art director, and film and television director. He entered the film industry in the 1920s, beginning in the art and costume departments. He directed his first film in 1933 – *CRADLE SONG* – and became known for his keen sense of aesthetics in the glossy Hollywood melodramas and screwball comedies he turned out. His motion pictures — almost all of them made at Paramount — were often dominated by strong female leads such as Barbara Stanwyck, Paulette Goddard, Olivia de Havilland, Claudette Colbert, and Carole Lombard, who rarely were paired with a male actor of equal stature or presence.

His best-known films include the Alberto Casella adaptation *DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY* (1934) and *MURDER AT THE VANITIES* (1934), a musical mystery story with Duke Ellington's Orchestra, as well

as *MIDNIGHT* (1939) and *HOLD BACK THE DAWN* (1941), both scripted by Billy Wilder. *EASY LIVING* (1937) and *REMEMBER THE NIGHT* (1940), both written by Preston Sturges, were also hits for the director. The films *LADY IN THE DARK* (1944), *TO EACH HIS OWN* (1946), and *NO MAN OF HER OWN* (1950) were later successes. The Charles Brackett penned comedy *THE MATING SEASON* (1951) was an updated version of Leisen's earlier screwball comedies of the 1930s and was his last big film success. When his film career ended, Leisen directed many television series and made a few unsuccessful attempts to return to feature films.

In February 1927, Leisen married opera singer and actress Stella Seiger (1898–1967), known professionally as Sandra Gahle; they divorced in April 1942 and had no children. He had a long-term collaboration with dancer Billy Daniel (1912–1967) who was in many of Leisen's films and partnered with him in an off-screen production company called Hollywood Presents, Inc. His personal assistant, Eleanor Broder, was with him from the late 1930s until his death. Leisen died of heart disease in 1972, and his grave is in Chapel of the Pines Crematory in Los Angeles.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The Mitchell Leisen Papers span his film and television career from the early 1930s until the late 1960s. Series 1 through 4 are in the manuscript archives; Series 5 (bound scripts) are kept in the Ahmanson Room of the Louis B. Mayer Library. Scripts, production stills, and research notes reflect Leisen's hands-on approach to directing and attention to detail. The Oversize Series includes items too large to fit into the standard boxes. Arrangement remains consistent from the series throughout the collection. The bound scripts were prepared by Leisen himself for his personal collection and, scripts for films he directed include the shooting script with Leisen's annotations (e.g., notes, ideas, and doodles); all include production stills, and some have other related items included.

The papers are arranged in series by production type in chronological order, followed by oversized items in their own series, and finally the bound scripts:

Series 1: Films

Series 2: Television

Series 3: Miscellaneous files

Series 4: Oversize

Series 5: Bound scripts

The sub-series – research, scripts & treatments, photographs, correspondence, film festivals – are arranged in production order except for personal papers which are in original order as received.

Research includes photographs and drawings; many of the drawings are in fact photographs of drawings. "Historical background" is used as an all-encompassing category to include costumes, sets, dressings, locations, hair, ornaments, etc. as Leisen would review these and sort them together by scene, actor, mood, or other criteria.

Notes on condition:

Many of the photographs are starting to curl, most severely in Box 8. Please handle with care when removing or replacing folders. Folder 6 in Box 12 (Oversize) contains a typewritten script that is very fragile.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Films

#### Box 1

- f. 1 EASY LIVING (Paramount, 1937), Photos, Production stills, 1937
- f. 2 EASY LIVING (Paramount, 1937), Photos, Publicity stills, 1937
- f. 3 EASY LIVING (Paramount, 1937), Film festivals, UCLA Fall Film Series, Program and note, 1965
- f. 4 ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD (Paramount, 1938), Photos, Production stills, 1938
- f. 5 ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD (Paramount, 1938), Photos, Publicity stills, 1938
- f. 6 I WANTED WINGS (Paramount, 1941), Photos, Publicity Stills, 1940
- f. 7 HOLD BACK THE DAWN (Paramount, 1941), Photos, Publicity stills, 1941
- f. 8 LADY IN THE DARK (Paramount, 1944), Scripts & treatments, Scripts [Stage play script, annotated, 78 p.] 1943
- f. 9–11 FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1943–1944 [3]
- O/S FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1943–1944 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]

f. 12 FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944), Research, Sets, props & set dressing, Notes, 1943–1944

**Box 2**

f. 1 FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944), Research, Historical background, Notes, 1943–1944

f. 2 PRACTICALLY YOURS (Paramount, 1944), Photos, Production stills, 1944

f. 3 PRACTICALLY YOURS (Paramount, 1944), Photos, Publicity stills, 1944

f. 4–7 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1944–1945 [4]

O/S KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1944–1945 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]

**Box 3**

f. 1–4 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1944–1945 [4]

f. 5–6 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Research, Historical background, Notes, 1944–1945 [2]

**Box 4**

f. 1 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Photos, Production stills, 1944–1945

f. 2 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Photos, Preliminary publicity stills, 1944–1945

f. 3–4 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Photos, Publicity stills, 1944–1945 [2]

f. 5 MASQUERADE IN MEXICO (Paramount, 1945), Research, Location, Photos & drawings, 1945

f. 6 MASQUERADE IN MEXICO (Paramount, 1945), Photos, Production stills, 1945

**Box 5**

f. 1–2 MASQUERADE IN MEXICO (Paramount, 1945), Photos, Publicity stills, 1945 [2]

- f. 3 TO EACH HIS OWN (Paramount, 1946), Research, Costumes, Photos & Drawings, 1946
- f. 4 SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING (Paramount, 1947), Research, Locations, Photos & Drawings, 1946–1947
- f. 5 SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING (Paramount, 1947), Photos, Production stills, 1946–1947
- f. 6 SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING (Paramount, 1947), Photos, Publicity stills, 1946–1947
- f. 7 BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1948

**Box 6**

- f. 1–5 BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1948 [5]
- O/S BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1948 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]
- f. 6–7 BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Notes, 1948 [2]

**Box 7**

- f. 1–3 BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Photos, Production stills, 1948 [3]
- f. 4–6 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1949 [3]
- O/S SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1949 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]

**Box 8**

- f. 1 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1949

- f. 2 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT]  
(Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Notes, 1949
- f. 3–9 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT]  
(Paramount, 1949), Photos, Production stills, 1949 [7]
- f. 10–12 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT]  
(Paramount, 1949), Photos, Publicity stills, 1949 [3]

**Box 9**

- f. 1–4 CAPTAIN CAREY, U.S.A. [AFTER MIDNIGHT] (Paramount, 1950), Research,  
Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1948–1949 [4]
- f. 5 CAPTAIN CAREY, U.S.A. [AFTER MIDNIGHT] (Paramount, 1950), Photos, Publicity  
stills, 1948–1949
- f. 6 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951), Research,  
Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1950–1951
- f. 7 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951), Research,  
Historical background, Notes, 1950–1951
- f. 8 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951),  
Correspondence, Production notes, 1950–1951
- O/S DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951),  
Correspondence, Production notes, 1950–1951 [Materials relocated to Series 4:  
Oversize]

**Box 10**

- f. 1 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951), Scripts &  
treatments, Script, Smith, Dodie & Lesser Samuels [Final white, 132 p.] 1950,  
November 3
- f. 2 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951), Photos,  
Publicity stills, 1950–1951
- f. 3 THE MATING SEASON (Paramount, 1951) Photos, Publicity stills, 1950–1951

- f. 4 YOUNG MAN WITH IDEAS (MGM, 1952) Photos, Publicity stills, 1952
- f. 5 TONIGHT WE SING (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1953), Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Kurnitz, Harry & George Oppenheimer [Revised shooting final, 129 p.] 1952, April 12
- f. 6 TONIGHT WE SING (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1953), Photos, Publicity stills, 1953

## Series 2: Television

### Box 11

- f. 1 INVISIBLE MAN (Unreleased) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Leisen, Mitchell [First draft, handwritten, 57 p.] 1958
- O/S INVISIBLE MAN (Unreleased) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Leisen, Mitchell [First draft, typewritten, 110 p.] 1958 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]
- f. 2 OPEN WINDOWS [WOMAN IN THE CASE] (CBS, 1960) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Miller, J.P. [First draft, annotated, shooting notes, 3 copies, 34 p.] 1959
- O/S OPEN WINDOWS [WOMAN IN THE CASE] (CBS, 1960) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Miller, J.P. [Shooting notes] 1960 [Materials relocated to Series 4: Oversize]
- f. 3 ALEXANDER THE GREAT (Selmur Productions, 1963) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Pirosh, Robert & William Yates [Final draft, Pilot, annotated, 66 p.] 1963, October 14

## Series 3: Miscellaneous Files

- f. 4 Personal, Correspondence, 1951
- f. 5 Personal, Photos, 1930s–1960s
- f. 6 Scripts & Treatments, Scripts, *The Gay Felons* [Play, One-line continuity, 13 p. & script, 83 p.] 1956

## Series 4: Oversize

### Box 12

#### From Series 1: Films

- f. 1 FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1943–1944
- f. 2 KITTY (Paramount, 1945), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1944–1945
- f. 3 BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1948–1949
- f. 4 SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT] (Paramount, 1949), Research, Historical background, Photos & drawings, 1949
- f. 5 DARLING, HOW COULD YOU! [RENDEZVOUS] (Paramount, 1951), Correspondence, Production notes, 1950–1951

#### From Series 2: Television

- f. 6 INVISIBLE MAN (Unreleased) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Leisen, Mitchell [First draft, typewritten, 110 p.] 1958
- f. 7 OPEN WINDOWS [WOMAN IN THE CASE] (CBS, 1960) Scripts & treatments, Scripts, Miller, J.P. [Shooting notes] 1960

## Series 5: Bound Scripts

Located in locked cases in the library

- Vol. 1. TONIGHT IS OURS [THE QUEEN WAS IN THE PARLOR] (Paramount, 1933) [Final script] Mayer, Edwin Justus. Production stills.
- Vol. 2. THE EAGLE AND THE HAWK (Paramount, 1933) [Shooting script, annotated] Miller, Seton I. & Bogart Rogers. Production stills.

- Vol. 3. CRADLE SONG (Paramount, 1933) [Shooting script, annotated] Connelly, Marc & Frank Partos. Production stills.
- Vol. 4. DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY (Paramount, 1934) [Shooting script, annotated] Anderson, Maxwell & Gladys Lehman. Production stills.
- Vol. 5. MURDER AT THE VANITIES (Paramount, 1934) [Shooting script, annotated] Wilson, Carey & Joseph Gollomb. Production stills, cast list, costume list.
- Vol. 6. BEHOLD MY WIFE [RED WOMAN] (Paramount, 1934) [Shooting script, annotated] Jones, Grover. Production stills.
- Vol. 7. HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE (Paramount, 1935) [Shooting script, annotated] Krasna, Norman; Vincent Lawrence & Herbert Fields. Production stills.
- Vol. 8. 13 HOURS BY AIR (Paramount, 1936) [Shooting script, annotated] Rogers, Bogart. Production stills.
- Vol. 9. BIG BROADCAST OF 1937 (Paramount, 1936) [Shooting script, annotated] DeLeon, Walter & Francis Martin. Production stills.
- Vol. 10. SWING HIGH, SWING LOW (Paramount, 1937) [Shooting script, annotated] Van Upp, Virginia & Oscar Hammerstein II. Production stills.
- Vol. 11. EASY LIVING (Paramount, 1937) [Shooting script, annotated] Sturges, Preston. Production stills.
- Vol. 12. BIG BROADCAST OF 1938 (Paramount, 1938 [Shooting script, annotated] DeLeon, Walter; Francis Martin & Ken Englund. Production stills.
- Vol. 13. ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD (Paramount, 1938) [Shooting script, annotated] Lindsay, Howard; Russel Crouse & Ken Englund. Production stills.
- Vol. 14. MIDNIGHT (Paramount, 1939) [Shooting script, annotated] Brackett, Charles & Billy Wilder. Production stills.

- Vol. 15. REMEMBER THE NIGHT (Paramount, 1940) [Shooting script, annotated] Sturges, Preston. Production stills.
- Vol. 16. ARISE MY LOVE (Paramount, 1940) [Shooting script, annotated] Brackett, Charles & Billy Wilder. Production stills.
- Vol. 17. I WANTED WINGS (Paramount, 1941) [Shooting script, annotated] Maibaum, Richard; Beirne Lay Jr. & Sig Herzig. Production stills.
- Vol. 18. HOLD BACK THE DAWN (Paramount, 1941) [Shooting script, annotated] Brackett, Charles, & Billy Wilder. Production stills.
- Vol. 19. THE LADY IS WILLING (Columbia Pictures, 1942) [Shooting script, annotated] Grant, James Edward & Albert McCleery. Production stills.
- Vol. 20. TAKE A LETTER, DARLING (Paramount, 1942) [Shooting script, annotated] Binyon, 1942. Production stills.
- Vol. 21. LADY IN THE DARK (Paramount, 1944) [Shooting script, annotated] Goodrich, Frances & Albert Hackett. Production stills.
- Vol. 22. FRENCHMAN'S CREEK (Paramount, 1944) [Shooting script, annotated] Jennings, Talbot. Production stills.
- Vol. 23. PRACTICALLY YOURS (Paramount, 1944) [Shooting script, annotated] Krasna, Norman. Production stills.
- Vol. 24. KITTY (Paramount, 1945) [Shooting script, annotated] Tunberg, Karl & Darrell Ware. Production stills.
- Vol. 25. MASQUERADE IN MEXICO (Paramount, 1945) [Shooting script, annotated] Mayer, Edwin Justus & Franz Schultz. Production stills.

- Vol. 26. TO EACH HIS OWN (Paramount, 1946) [Shooting script, annotated]  
Brackett, Charles & Jacques Théry. Production stills.
- Vol. 27. SUDDENLY IT'S SPRING (Paramount, 1947) [Shooting script, annotated] Binyon,  
Claude & P.J. Wolfson. Production stills.
- Vol. 28. GOLDEN EARRINGS (Paramount, 1947) [Shooting script, annotated]  
Polonsky, Abraham; Frank Butler & Helen Deutsch. Production stills.
- Vol. 29. DREAM GIRL (Paramount, 1948) [Shooting script, annotated] Sheekman, Arthur.  
Production stills.
- Vol. 30. BRIDE OF VENGEANCE [A MASK FOR LUCRETIA] (Paramount, 1949) [Shooting  
script, annotated] Hogan, Michael & Cyril Hume. Production stills.
- Vol. 31. SONG OF SURRENDER [ABIGAIL, DEAR HEART / SIN OF ABBY HUNT]  
(Paramount, 1949) [Shooting script, annotated] Maibaum, Richard. Production stills.
- Vol. 32. CAPTAIN CAREY, U.S.A. [AFTER MIDNIGHT] (Paramount, 1949) [Shooting script,  
annotated] Thoeren, Robert. Production stills.
- Vol. 33. NO MAN OF HER OWN [THE LIE / I MARRIED A DEAD MAN] (Paramount, 1950)  
[Shooting script, annotated] Benson, Sally & Catherine Turney. Production stills.