

Paul Newman's Brief Career at Yale

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Paul Newman (left) as Hippolytus, Son of Theseus, in a November 1951 production of *Phaedra* in the Experimental Theatre at Yale.

Paul Newman matriculated at Yale University in the Fall of 1951, pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in the Department of Drama, School of Fine Arts, as the [Yale School of Drama](#) [2] was then known. He stayed for only the 1951-1952 academic year, withdrawing after the first year of a three-year program that he would have completed in 1954.

The University Archives collections in Manuscripts and Archives contain vast documentation about the School of Drama in its various forms through the years, including production photographs, playbills, and programs documenting much of the 20th century work of YSD students and faculty. Sadly, there is little in the way of visual or printed records documenting Paul Newman's year at Yale. There is evidence in the records of two productions in which he acted.

- In *Phaedra*, "a play in verse freely adapted from the French of Jean Racine, writted and produced by Robert Collington Ackart — a Drama 140 production," Newman played Hippolytus, Son of Theseus. The play ran from 12-16 November 1951 at The Experimental Theatre. We have a program and three photographs from this production in two different collections, the [Yale School of Drama Records \(RU 728\)](#) [3] and the [Yale School of Drama Photographs and Posters \(RU 397\)](#) [4].
- In *Beethoven*, written by Dorothy B. Bland and directed by Frank McMullan, Newman played Karl van Beethoven as a man. This was one of the school's major stage production for the year, presented in the University Theater, and ran from 20-23 February 1952. Newman's credit in the playbill reads: "Paul Newman (Karl) is making his first appearance on the Yale stage. He is a first year student of play production from Shaker Heights, Ohio, and another veteran, with summer stock experience." We have a program and over a dozen photographs in RU 397 from this production, though only one of the photographs clearly depicts Newman.

We don't know why Paul Newman left Yale without completing his M.F.A. in Drama here. Perhaps he got a better offer? It is clear, though, that his career as an actor wasn't hampered in any way by not completing the course of study he undertook at Yale in the 1951-1952 school year!

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[1] <http://mssa.commons.yale.edu/files/2013/08/Newman.jpg>

[2] <http://drama.yale.edu/>

[3] <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ru.0728>

[4] <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ru.0397>

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