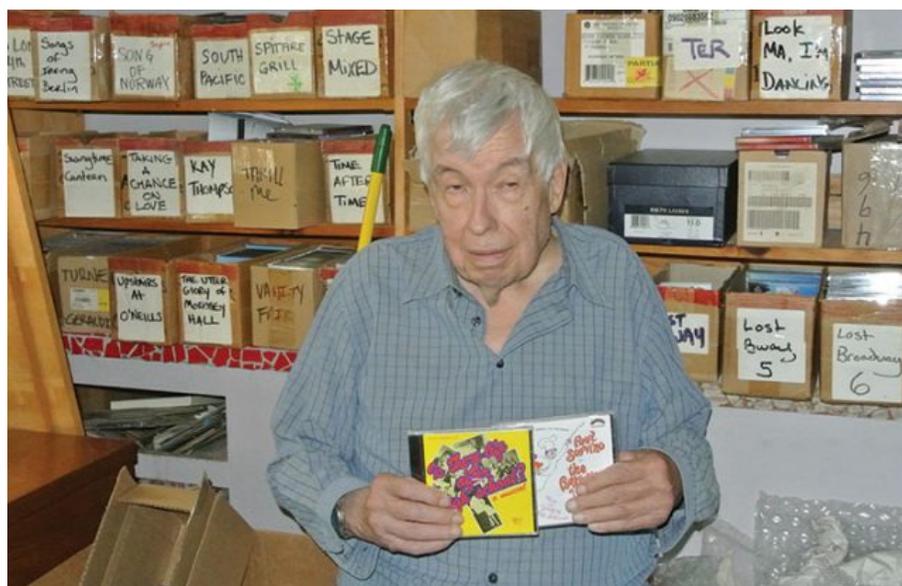


# A lifetime dedicated to the Broadway musical

By [Jeannette Ross](#) on August 15, 2017 in [Lead News](#), [People](#) • 0 Comments



Bruce Yeko holds CDs of two of the musicals for which he produced cast albums — *Is There Life After High School?* and *The Baker's Wife*. Behind him are shelves of more music. — Jeannette Ross photo

### About author



[Jeannette Ross](#)

Bruce Yeko is a big fan of musical theater, and like many before him, he left his midwestern roots for the Great White Way. But he did not leave Milwaukee to come to Broadway as an actor. Yeko was only interested in being in the audience. While it might not seem likely, it was a life-changing event.

As a college student majoring in accounting, Yeko developed an interest in plays.

“In Milwaukee, you might get to see five or six a year, and they might not all be musicals,” he said this week at his home in Wilton. “When Ethel Merman came to Chicago, I went to see her.”

He decided when he graduated he could work in accounting in New York as easily as he could in Milwaukee, so he set his sights east and moved to New York on June 2, 1962. There were seven large accounting firms in New York at the time and he landed a job with Deloitte & Touche on Bank Street. That’s when he got the idea to see every musical on Broadway, whether it played for a week or a year.

Things did not work out quite as he had planned, however, since he was fired

### Share this article

[Tweet this](#)

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Stumble it](#)

[Subscribe by RSS](#)

[Share on Google](#)



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW HAN NETWORK'S PROGRAM SCHEDULE](#)

### Latest Tweets

from his job after seven months, halfway to being a CPA. He had passed two of the four tests toward certification, but figured without a job there was no point to sitting for the other two.

With his mother worried what would become of him, he decided to go all-in with a baseball card business he had started in high school. It had been earning him decent money as a side job so he put all his efforts into the mail-order business.

"I did very well from 1963 to the mid-80s," he said, adding at his peak he had two million cards in his inventory. The downturn came when people started opening baseball card shops and he found it difficult to compete.

While he was in New York he decided to buy every cast album he could find of Broadway shows, a practice he continued after he moved to Wilton in 1967. Yeko visited record stores, Salvation Army stores, and other outlets, eventually finding that he had just about everything and was coming up with duplicates. It was then his wife suggested he start selling them. It was a time when musicals were very popular.

In 1975 he got the idea to produce his own records. It was too expensive for him, as an individual, to produce an actual cast album since he would have had to pay each performer a week's salary, but he could produce a record with other artists singing songs from a show. He decided to produce an EP — extended play — on a record the size of a 45 rpm that actually played at 33½ rpm, allowing for about eight minutes per side.

His first effort was *The Robber Bridegroom* that opened on Broadway in 1975 with a young Patti Lupone and Kevin Kline but eventually closed and went on the road before reopening with Barry Bostwick replacing Kline and Rhonda Coulett replacing Lupone.

Since there was no cast album at the time (there was later) he would have the only recording of songs available and the idea was to sell them at the theater.

While the play was on tour he searched for an actor with Broadway experience to sing Bostwick's part. Through a friend he landed Jerry Orbach. Virginia Vestoff, who had appeared in *1776*, sang the female role. The composer arranged for the theater orchestra to play and all was recorded late one night after a show.

Yeko had the records pressed and delivered to the Biltmore Theater. Three days later the producers sent the records back saying Bostwick had objected. He wound up selling some of them through Korvette's stores but he did not make back the \$10,000 he invested.

Undaunted, he pressed on. A deal to do *Annie*, which opened at the Goodspeed Opera House in Haddam, fell through. He did not have success until he called upon Stephen Schwartz, who lives in Ridgefield, to discuss his musical *The Baker's Wife*, which was touring around the United States. Schwartz thought his idea of recording the music was a good one but said why not do a cast album?

Yeko ran with the idea and produced a full cast album with Patti Lupone and Paul Sorvino in 1976. It was an "underground success" he said. "We had a listening party, it got a little buzz." It was no *Godspell*, but it was a start.

Over the years, Yeko produced 124 cast albums, and has seen every new musical for 48 years.

His best-known cast album was *Sugar Babies*, the paean to vaudeville that ran from 1979 to 1982. Oddly, Yeko said, although the musical ran on Broadway for three years and starred Hollywood veterans Ann Miller and Mickey Rooney, no cast album had been made.

Yeko waited until the show was on tour, since "when the show is running [on Broadway] you can't not pay the weekly salary" of everyone in the show. Rooney was making \$20,000 a week, well above Yeko's budget.

While Miller was happy to make the album, Rooney was a different story, employing a number of tactics to avoid performing. For example, he signed a

## Tweets by @WiltonBulletin



The Wilton Bulletin  
@WiltonBulletin

Blumenthal, animal advocates support gray wolves and endangered species - [bit.ly/2vG2nO0](http://bit.ly/2vG2nO0)



40s

The Wilton Bulletin Retweeted



HAN Network  
@HANNetworkCT

Connecticut Sports Talk, August 15 -  
[live.han.network/?p=546697](http://live.han.network/?p=546697)



[Embed](#)

[View on Twitter](#)

contract agreeing to terms but added he would work “any Monday in 1980 I’m not golfing.” Rooney was an avid golfer but things eventually worked out.

Yeko’s favorite show is Grand Hotel, which he was “in” for one performance.

“I had a friend who played piano in the show,” he explained. “He asked me, ‘how would you like to sit with the orchestra?’”

Happily accepting, he was told to wear a black suit, which he did, but it wasn’t black enough so he was given a different jacket and took his place among the musicians.

“At the end I got up and bowed,” he said with a laugh.

All told, Yeko estimates he been to 10,000 plays and musicals and he would like to share his love of Broadway with others. To that end, he has formed a Meetup group called Broadway Lovers of Georgetown that would gather at either the YMCA or Wilton Library and talk about Broadway and listen to recordings.

As for that recording business, he said, “it was all about preserving the music.”

Tags: [Bruce Yeko](#)

Previous Post  
[Sources of safe solar view glasses](#)

Next Post  
[New addition brings peaceful message](#)



By participating in the comments section of this site you are agreeing to our [Privacy Policy and User Agreement](#)

### Ellen Shocks LGBT Community & Confirms She Is Moving On

Many knew what Ellen’s plan was, but no one expected it to leak like this...

[Learn More](#)

Sponsored by **Celebritique**

Report ad

0 Comments WiltonBulletin

Login

Recommend Share

Sort by Oldest



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH



OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

### Ellen Shocks LGBT Community & Confirms She Is Moving On

Many knew what Ellen's plan was, but no one expected it to leak like this....

[Learn More](#)

Sponsored by **Celebriqtue**

[Report ad](#)



#### HAN Network News Sites

**Live.HAN.Network** | Bridgeport News | Darien Times  
Easton Courier | Fairfield Sun | Greenwich Post  
Lewisboro Ledger | Milford Mirror | Monroe Courier  
New Canaan Advertiser | Redding Pilot | Ridgefield Press  
Shelton Herald | Stratford Star | Trumbull Times  
Weston Forum | Wilton Bulletin

E-Edition  
Subscriptions  
The Home Monthly  
Advertise  
Classifieds  
Article Reprints  
Print Archives  
Sitemap

Follow us on Twitter  
Like us on Facebook  
Wilton Answerbook  
Open House Gallery  
Contact The Bulletin  
Submissions  
User Agreement &  
Privacy Policy

© HAN Network. All rights reserved. The Wilton Bulletin, 16 Bailey Avenue, Ridgefield, CT 06877