

# Resources in the Wisconsin Center for Theatre Research

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THE WISCONSIN Center for Theatre Research (WCTR) is an active research resource for students of the American theatre. It is one of several research programs sponsored by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin. Another of these programs, the Mass Communications History Center (MCHC), was established by the society in 1955, and shortly thereafter it incorporated recent theatre and film materials as part of its collections. The WCTR came into being 5 years later, when the university offered to help the society expand the scope of its theatre and film resources. The Department of Speech assumed the major responsibility for collecting unpublished and published primary materials relating to theatre in its broadest sense. The University Memorial Library enlarged its purchase of published volumes in the theatre field, and the MCHC emphasized more intensively its radio, television, and film collecting interests.

The two centers operate as separate but cooperative administrative units. The WCTR director, Prof. Tino Balio, is a member of the Department of Speech and has the responsibility for searching out and acquiring all theatre materials, coordinating his activities with those of the MCHC. The theatre collections are housed and used in the State Historical Society's Manuscripts Library and are processed and arranged under society staff supervision. Reference queries are usually handled by the society's manuscripts curator.

The WCTR has concentrated upon the American theatre from 1900 to the present. The center has built its holdings in a manner traditional with collectors of historical materials. Its collections focus on the personal and professional records of people eminent in the theatre and on the historical files of theatre organizations. This emphasis has produced a wealth of diverse materials within individual collections, particularly since the modern dramatist frequently moves from one dramatic medium to another. Moss Hart,

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Howard Lindsay, and Russel Crouse are good examples of playwrights who have moved from stage to film to television and from the writing to the directing or producing aspect of theatre.

The collections relate to all areas of theatre, including dramas for the professional and amateur stage, radio, and television; dramatic and documentary films; opera; the musical stage; and vaudeville. Among the kinds of material are holograph manuscripts and typescripts of plays, scenarios, shooting scripts, musical scores, promptbooks, correspondence, diaries, scrapbooks, clippings, records of producing organizations, business and legal files, playbills, posters and other promotional materials, sound recordings, films, photographs, designs, elevations, technical plots, and blueprints and plans of stage architecture and machinery.

Significantly, some individual collections contain important source materials emanating from the diverse nontheatrical interests of the donors. Cumulatively these records contain much information about the role of the performing arts in America's cultural history during the 20th century.

The collections are identified by the names of the individuals and organizations to which they relate (*e.g.*, the Moss Hart collection), for in most cases the name of the collection and the donor are the same. Usually the theatre materials are organized by type such as stage plays and films. Under the type the files are generally arranged alphabetically by individual production with all related materials included, such as scripts, correspondence, notes, and playbills. There are, however, exceptions to this pattern. If an organizational scheme for the collection has been established by the donor himself, his arrangement is often maintained. A summary inventory of each collection is prepared as a research aid.

This discussion is limited to a selection of theatre materials from collections of considerable size or of wide scope and variety. The card catalog and the summary inventories in the Manuscripts Library contain more complete information about the resources available. Several of the mass communications collections (for example, the archives of the National Broadcasting Co.) also contain related materials, particularly in radio and television drama.

A listing of theatre materials processed and cataloged as of January 1965 was published in the society's *Guide to Manuscripts, Supplement II* in 1966. Additional accessions are listed periodically in the quarterly *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. Summary inventories of individual collections may be obtained for the cost of the Xerox copy.

## PRODUCTION RECORDS

The papers, 1907-40, of *Harry and Roy Aitken*, two Wisconsin brothers who pioneered in motion picture production, contain extensive files relating to the formation and financing of several early film studios, including Majestic, Reliance, Keystone, Fine Arts, and New York Motion Pictures and its subsidiaries. The Aitkens also controlled agencies for the distribution of their films throughout the country. The collection (45 boxes, 202 volumes, and 1 roll of negative microfilm) contains scripts and scenarios for approximately 150 films produced by the Aitken brothers, complemented by publicity photographs, reviews, and production and expense reports. Correspondence, primarily for the period 1909-25, pertains to the many facets of the production and distribution of films. Financial and legal records of some of the companies are also included.

Eight separate collections deposited with the WCTR comprise a remarkable body of research materials for the study of stage productions for the period 1925-62.

*The Playwrights' Company*, incorporated in 1938 and formally dissolved in 1960, produced 39 plays independently and 29 plays in association with other managements. Except for two seasons, 1944-45 and 1947-48, the company was represented on Broadway by at least one production during the 22 years of its existence. Original members of the corporation were Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, Robert E. Sherwood, and John Wharton. Records of the Playwrights' Company, 1938-60 (146 boxes and 9 volumes), contain a wealth of information on the production and business aspects of a theatrical enterprise. The collection includes production estimates, partnership agreements, staff contracts, theatre booking contracts, union agreements, salary lists, royalty payments, box office statements, and general ledgers. Business correspondence and memoranda relate to the organization, development, and productions of the company and include general agreements and plans, minutes of meetings on casting, selection of plays, and advertising policies. Playscripts are also included, as well as some personal correspondence of the playwright members.

The papers of *Kermit Bloomgarden* (65 boxes, 25 volumes), a leading Broadway producer, contain detailed records of his productions up to 1955. They include financial statements, budgets, tax forms, royalty statements, contracts and agreements, and files concerning promotion and front-of-the-house management. Other production records include floor plans, elevations, working drawings, light plots, costumes, property and furniture plots, scripts, and

complete promptbooks. Among the plays treated are "Another Part of the Forest," "Autumn Garden," and "Death of a Salesman." The collection also contains one box of materials on the American Wing Theatre and the Council for the Living Theatre, on whose boards Bloomgarden has served.

*David Merrick*, one of Broadway's most successful producers, has given the WCTR extensive business records (62 boxes, 4 volumes, and 3 packages) for 12 of his plays, including "Fanny" (1954), "The Matchmaker" (1956), "Look Back in Anger" (1957), "The Entertainer" (1958), and "Romanoff and Juliet" (1958-59). The files, covering the period 1952-61, contain correspondence, scripts, bills, box office statements, contracts, financial reports, and publicity materials.

The *Richard Myers papers*, 1928-62, are primarily concerned with the production aspects of 28 plays with which this prominent Broadway producer has been associated since 1939. The collection (28 boxes, 18 volumes) includes correspondence with financial backers, directors, actors, and actresses; materials on costs, costumes, lights, and scenery; assorted financial records similar in nature to those in the Bloomgarden and Merrick papers; photographs, scrapbooks, and clippings. Materials on "The Moon Is Blue," the most successful production represented in this collection, contain records for the Broadway and Chicago companies and several road companies. One box of correspondence, 1928-31, and financial records, 1941-60, pertain to the Cape Cod Playhouse.

The *Herman Shumlin papers*, 1930-62, also provide important materials concerning the problems of the theatrical producer and the financial aspects of production. This collection (29 boxes and 28 volumes) has papers relating to most of Shumlin's productions, from "The Last Mile" (1930) to "Only in America" (1959). Materials include correspondence, contracts and agreements, financial statements and budgets, and papers on production and publicity. Sixteen boxes of files on "Inherit the Wind" (1955) are the most complete unit. For some plays, such as "Wedding Breakfast," in which Shumlin assumed the dual role of producer-director, there are promptbooks. There is also a large general correspondence including personal letters from George Bernard Shaw, William Saroyan, Bette Davis, and other distinguished people. Shumlin's papers, like Bloomgarden's, contain material on organizations in which he has been active, including the Council of Living Theatre, the League of New York Theatres, and the Committee of Theatrical Producers.

*Dwight Deere Wiman*, best-known for his productions in musical comedy and revue, was a producer of Broadway plays from 1925 until his death in 1951. His papers, 1925–50, contain scripts, programs, photographs, and scrapbooks of press notices for many of his productions. There is also one box of miscellaneous business records and correspondence as well as sheet music and orchestrations used in a few of the shows—"Babes in Arms," "By Jupiter," and "I Married an Angel." In the collection are scripts of four dramas written by Paul Osborn (also a contributor to the WCTR) and produced by Wiman: "Morning's at Seven," "Oliver, Oliver," "On Borrowed Time," and "The Vinegar Tree." The collection totals 11 boxes and 56 volumes.

Two small collections deal with records of other stage productions. One box of papers given by *Morton Da Costa* focuses entirely on the musical comedy "Saratoga" (based on Edna Ferber's novel), which Da Costa coproduced with Robert Fryer in 1959. Included are an outline and various drafts of the play, notes and revisions, and letters to Edna Ferber and to Johnny Mercer, who wrote the lyrics. Six boxes of papers, 1948–56, from *Herman Levin*, Broadway producer of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1949), consist mainly of the business records of this production but include a few papers for Levin's productions of "Bless You All," "Guys and Dolls," and "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn."

#### OUTSTANDING PLAYWRIGHTS AND DIRECTORS

The WCTR has the papers of several individuals who have gained prominence in more than one aspect of theatre. A brief description of some of the major collections will illustrate the variety of information they contain and their value as primary source materials for theatre research and in some cases for research in other areas of history.

The *Moss Hart papers*, 1922–62, provide a remarkably complete chronicle of the playwright's life and writing career and give some insight into his skills as a director of Broadway drama. Two plays written with George Kaufman, "You Can't Take It With You" (1936) and "The Man Who Came to Dinner" (1939), typify the satire and light comedy achieved by this writing team. Hart's fame as a director came with his staging of Lerner and Loewe's musical hit "My Fair Lady" (1956), for which he won the New York Drama Critics' Award as best director of 1955–56. In 1960 he directed the next Lerner and Loewe musical, "Camelot." "Once in a Lifetime" (1930), his first collaboration with Kauf-

man, and "Lady in the Dark" (1941), written with Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, are other examples of his success as a dramatist. He wrote also several motion-picture scripts, including "Gentleman's Agreement" (1947) and "The Eddie Duchin Story" (1954). His collection (14 boxes, including 35 volumes, 21 additional volumes, and 2 packages) contains correspondence, volumes of plays in various forms of creation, screenplays, nondramatic writings and notes, memorabilia, clippings, tapes, and photographs. In many cases the holograph manuscript, the annotated and cut typescript, and the final version exist as a unit. His nondramatic writings include the original manuscript of *Act One*, the autobiography of his early life, including his first theatrical success; a diary of his trip around the world in 1953 that reveals much about the man; and a year's journal kept during 1953-54, which illuminates his attitudes, beliefs, work habits, and opinions on other well-known people. The collection also contains correspondence and scrapbooks concerning the career of his wife, Kitty Carlisle.

Two boxes and 6 volumes of *George Kaufman papers*, 1918-51, contain correspondence and a number of his unpublished play scripts (written with James Mahoney). These materials, when examined along with the Moss Hart papers, throw many highlights on Kaufman's career.

Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse represent another successful Broadway writing and producing collaboration, an association dating back to 1936 and continuing until Crouse's death in 1966. The *Lindsay-Crouse collection*, 1918-61, contains correspondence, notes, drafts, scripts, and revisions of plays, screenplays, and television productions with stage directions; also clippings, reviews, explanatory notes, contracts, and other records of plays produced by the two men. In addition to materials covering their collaboration, some papers relate to Lindsay's work with other playwrights and some to writings by Lindsay alone. The latter group includes verse, essays, and notes on acting and playwriting that Lindsay gathered for a textbook on the theatre. Among the plays written by Lindsay and Crouse in the collection are "Anything Goes" (1934); "Life With Father" (1939), which ran for 7 years on Broadway without a break; "State of the Union" (Pulitzer Prize winner in 1946); "Call Me Madam" (1950); and "The Sound of Music" (1959). Other Lindsay-Crouse productions represented in the collection are "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1940); "The Hasty Heart" (1944); and "The Great Sebastians" (1955), which they also wrote. The collection totals 12 boxes, including 12 volumes.

The joint collection of *Walter Kerr*, critic, playwright, director, and lecturer, and his wife, *Jean Kerr*, humorist and playwright, contains papers, 1927–63, on their individual and collaborative writings. The materials (27 boxes including 8 volumes; and 59 additional volumes) include notes and typescripts of their essays, articles, lectures, short stories, lyrics, books, plays, and adaptations for stage and television, as well as financial statements for their published writings and for such productions as “Goldilocks,” “Mary, Mary,” and “Sing Out, Sweet Land.” There are also notes on drama theory and directing, annotated drafts of Walter Kerr’s reviews for the *Herald Tribune*, scrapbooks of clippings and reviews, appointment books, photographs, and memorabilia. Personal and professional correspondence includes letters from many well-known theatre people: George Abbot, Brooks Atkinson, John Van Druten, Mordecai Gorelik, Oscar Hammerstein II, Moss Hart, Helen Hayes, Elia Kazan, Fredric March, William Saroyan, and Tennessee Williams.

The *Frances Goodrich–Albert Hackett papers*, 1927–61, represent another husband-wife collaboration. Their records (13 boxes, 9 volumes, and 3 packages) contain scripts and some related correspondence for many of their screenplays, including several of “The Thin Man” series and “Father of the Bride.” The major part of the collection is composed of files on “The Diary of Ann Frank,” for which they wrote both the stage and the screen versions. These records include letters about the writing, translation, and production of the play and motion picture in the United States and abroad, variant drafts and scripts, financial records, publicity notices, and papers relating to the 1956 Pulitzer Prize and other awards won by this play.

An extensive collection of *Dore Schary papers* (65 boxes, including 12 volumes; 28 other volumes; and 3 packages) provides information on Schary’s career as journalist, playwright, producer, screenwriter, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer executive. Materials for the years 1929 to 1961 include business and personal correspondence, speeches, articles, research materials, scripts, notes, contracts, business reports, and scrapbooks. Most of Schary’s business correspondence concerns the productions of films and plays, such as “Blackboard Jungle,” “Washington Story,” “Sunrise at Campobello,” and “A Majority of One,” and the preparation of his book, *Case History of a Movie*. His professional correspondence contains letters exchanged with Winston Churchill, 1952–58; John F. Kennedy, 1956–61; Eleanor Roosevelt, 1954–61; David O. Selz-



nick, 1950-53; Adlai E. Stevenson, 1952-61; and Harry S Truman, 1952-58. The correspondence also throws light on organizations with which Schary was involved—the Draft Stevenson Committee, the Democratic Party and National Committee, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the American Jewish Committee. His nondramatic writings for organizations, publications, and special programs include speeches, articles, and research materials and cover a wide range of topics, especially Democratic politics and the Communist problem in the motion picture industry. Also included are tape and disc recordings of Schary's plays and speeches and of songs from MGM productions.

The *Gore Vidal papers* (50 boxes, 2 volumes) trace his life and diversified literary career from 1925 to 1965. Included are many of his early poems and a number of original revised manuscripts and typescripts of stage, motion-picture, and television plays; short stories; novels; and essays. Files on "The Best Man" and "Visit to a Small Planet" are among the stage materials; screenplays include "The Left-Handed Gun" and "Suddenly Last Summer"; television scripts, outlines, and treatments include "Barn Burning" and "Smoke," both adaptations of Faulkner stories. There are revised manuscripts of six Vidal novels, two written under the name of Edgar Box, and of a complete but unpublished novel, "Some Desperate Adventure."

Vidal's personal and political correspondence totals more than 6,000 pieces, many from figures prominent in literary, entertainment, and political fields: Paddy Chayefsky; William Faulkner; José Ferrer; William Inge; John F., Jacqueline, and Robert Kennedy; Thomas Mann; Paul Newman; Cyril Ritchard; Eleanor Roosevelt; Adlai E. Stevenson; Harry S Truman; Tennessee Williams; and Joanne Woodward. Some of Vidal's political writings and speeches and materials concerning his own campaign in 1960 are among the papers. The collection contains many photographs, including family pictures.

#### "HOLLYWOOD TEN" MATERIALS

Another group of records constitutes an unusual research unit, significant in the history of theatre arts and in the broader study of American history. In the fall of 1947 there were summoned before the House Committee on Un-American Activities 19 witnesses, all associated in some way with the Hollywood film industry. Of these witnesses, 11 were called to the stand and questioned about



their membership in the Screen Writers' Guild and in the Communist Party. Upon refusing to answer the questions in a manner acceptable to the committee, 10 of the 11 witnesses, known as the Hollywood Ten, were cited for contempt of Congress and subsequently served prison terms.

Deposited with the WCTR are the papers of five members of the Hollywood Ten—Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Albert Maltz, Samuel B. Ornitz, and Dalton Trumbo. Included also are the records of their lawyers, Robert W. Kenny and Robert S. Morris, 1940–57; the files of the Hollywood Democratic Committee, 1943–58; and the papers of Howard Koch, 1938–64, whose scheduled appearance before the committee to answer questions about his film “Mission to Moscow” was eventually canceled.

These collections—correspondence, statements, transcripts of the hearings, voluminous and detailed briefs, petitions and other legal papers, financial reports, clippings, speeches, printed essays, articles, pamphlets, sound recordings, and a film on the Hollywood Ten—document in detail and depth this experience and its impact on the careers and lives of the men involved.

The individual papers include additional materials about their personal and professional lives. The *Dalton Trumbo collection*, 1905–62, is the most extensive file (87 boxes, 16 volumes, 1 package); it contains correspondence, notes, manuscripts of articles, short stories, novels, and stage plays; and numerous scripts for his screenplays, many of them written under a “black market” system. His films include “Kitty Foyle,” “Our Vines Have Tender Grapes,” “Exodus,” and “The Brave Ones” (which he wrote under the name Robert Rich and which won an Oscar as the best original screenplay of 1955). Especially detailed are the files for the film “Spartacus,” which Trumbo also wrote under an assumed name.

The joint collection (26 boxes, 11 volumes, 7 packages) of *Herbert Biberman* and his wife, *Gale Sondergaard*, covers many facets of his experience as a director and writer for stage and screen and her career as an actress. Materials, 1908–64, include an extensive correspondence, scripts, scrapbooks, speeches, and other writings. The play “Roar China” and the film “The Master Race” are among Herbert Biberman’s better known productions. Gale Sondergaard won an Oscar as best supporting actress of 1936 for her screen debut as Faith in “Anthony Adverse.” She was also nominated for an Oscar for her role as Lady Thiang in “Anna and the King of Siam.”

The *Samuel Ornitz papers*, 1919–57, contain manuscripts of his novels *Haunch*, *Paunch*, and *Jowl* (1923) and *Bride of the Sabbath* (1951) as well as scripts, notes, and character files for several of his screenplays. There are also letters, notes, clippings, and testimony on a 1931 coal strike in Harlan County, Ky., which Ornitz investigated with Theodore Dreiser.

Similar records are found in the papers of *Alvah Bessie* (8 boxes), *Albert Maltz* (4 boxes, 1 microfilm roll), and *Howard Koch* (3 boxes). The radio script of "War of the Worlds," written by Howard Koch, is also a part of his collection.

The above are only some of the highlights of the collection. There are materials also from the following donors:

*Playwrights, producers, and directors:* S. N. Behrman, Alvin Boretz, Vera Caspary, Paddy Chayefsky, David Davidson, Edna Ferber, John Frankenheimer, Ketti Frings, Ruth Goodman Goetz, David Harmon, Arthur Kober, N. Richard Nash, Kenyon Nicholson, Paul Osborn, John Patrick, Alan Schneider, Rod Serling, Joseph Stein, David Susskind, and David Victor.

*Composers and lyricists:* Marc Blitzstein, J. Fred Coots, and Arthur Schwartz.

*Actors:* Fredric March and Groucho Marx.

*Technical Designers:* Dorothy Jeakins, costumes; Jean Rosenthal; and Wolfgang Roth, stage design.

Growth of the WCTR has been most encouraging. The collections have already been used as sources for several doctoral dissertations and research studies. Regular additions to the present holdings and commitments from new donors assure the center's continued expansion. The prospect of a collection rich in scope and depth is very promising, particularly since the interrelationship of stage, film, radio, and television makes it increasingly evident that the cooperative development of the WCTR and MCHC provides an excellent opportunity to obtain a comprehensive collection in these closely allied fields.

## SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS

### *Sustaining Members*

Archival institutions wishing to become sustaining members of the Society may request further information of the Secretary, Philip P. Mason, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. 48202.