



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Arthur William Row papers

1902-1961

*T-Mss 1953-003

Processed by Elisabeth Elkind.

Summary

Creator: Row, Arthur William, 1878-1961

Title: Arthur William Row papers

Date: 1902-1961

Source: Papers: gift, Arthur William Row, 1953

Abstract: The collection consists primarily of correspondence (bulk late 1950s) concerning Row's writings, especially his book on Sarah Bernhardt; and the writings themselves, mostly theatrical reminiscences, in typescript and note form. As well as Bernhardt, Row wrote laudatory personal accounts of the Barrymores, John Gielgud, Richard Mansfield, Paul Muni, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Ellen Terry and Blanche Yurka, among others. The collection also contains some personal biographical material, publicity for Row's book, clippings of play reviews, and some material, mostly publicity, for The Afternoon Theatre under Row's direction.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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Preferred citation: Arthur William Row Papers, *T-Mss 1953-003, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Processing note: Processed by Elisabeth Elkind. In 1998 the papers were reprocessed for inclusion in the Library's online catalog.

Creator History

Born on June 12, 1878 in Montreal, Canada, actor and author Arthur William Row moved with his family to Boston, Massachusetts in 1893. He entered Tufts College as a special student in 1897, started writing dramatic criticism for Boston area newspapers, and began his acting career as an extra with Richard Mansfield in *The Devil's Disciple* before joining the Castle Square Theatre stock company in 1898. The following year, Row appeared in New York in *Becky Sharp* with Mrs. Fiske, Maurice Barrymore and Tyrone Power, Sr. Over the course of a long career, Row also appeared with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, John Barrymore, Ethel Barrymore, Sir Henry Irving, Otis Skinner, Marie Dressler and Jane Cowl, among others.

As well as acting, Row wrote on theatrical and other subjects for various magazines including *Harper's*, *Bellman Magazine* and *Poet Lore*. He was the press representative for Sarah Bernhardt's 1916 American tour and published a serial about her which he later turned into a book, *Sarah The Divine*. In 1919 he was a founder and director of the Afternoon Theatre where he produced Maurice Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Selysette* with Eva Le Gallienne and Clare Eames, Moliere's *The School for Scandal* and Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. The Afternoon Theatre was a cooperative venture that sought to expand opportunities for actors, playwrights and audiences to try new roles by producing seldom seen plays on afternoons without regularly scheduled matinees.

While Row's death date is uncertain, his pen seems to stop in the summer of 1961, shortly after his 83rd birthday.

Custodial History

The Arthur William Row Papers were given to The Billy Rose Theatre Division of The New York Public Library by Row beginning in 1953.

Scope and Content Note

Correspondence (bulk late 1950s) mostly concerns his writings especially his book, *Sarah the Divine*. It documents his efforts to get published as well as his distribution of the book to prominent individuals including heads of state. Writings are typescript manuscripts of magazine articles on theatrical and other subjects, his book on Sarah Bernhardt, and various unpublished pieces. His notes and notebooks are mostly his reminiscences of his life in the theater and the famous actors he knew and with whom he appeared, preparatory jottings for his book on Sarah Bernhardt and his intended memoirs, never finished. There is also a small amount of material, mostly publicity, pertaining to The Afternoon Theater when under his direction, publicity for his book, clippings of play reviews and some personal biographical material.

Arrangement: Series I: Personal Papers Series II: Correspondence Series III: Writings Series IV: Notes Series V: Notebooks Series VI: The Afternoon Theatre Series VII: Printed Material: Publicity and Clippings

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

notes

Subjects

Theater -- United States

Names

Row, Arthur William, 1878-1961

Barrymore, Ethel, 1879-1959

Barrymore, John, 1882-1942

Barrymore, Maurice, 1848-1904

Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923

Gielgud, John, 1904-2000

Mansfield, Richard, 1857-1907

Muni, Paul, 1895-1967

Skinner, Cornelia Otis, 1901-1979

Terry, Ellen, Dame, 1847-1928

Yurka, Blanche

Afternoon Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

Series I: Personal papers 1940-1960 (1 folder)

Contains biographical material including publicity, membership cards, a grant application filled out by Row and an interview conducted with him in 1949 when he was appearing in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

- b. 1 f. 1 **Personal papers / Arthur William Row 1940-1960 (1 folder)**
Personal papers [1940-1960 and n.d.] consist of biographical material, interviews and membership cards of actor and author, Arthur William Row.

Series II: Correspondence 1902-1962 (18 folders)

Correspondence, both personal and professional, is mostly incoming letters from Row's later years arranged alphabetically. Much is about his writings, especially his book, *Sarah the Divine*, including correspondence with publishers and many letters of thanks for copies received. Correspondents include Eva Le Gallienne, Nance O'Neil, Hesketh Pearson and Blanche Yurka. Letters by Row include clippings of some of his letters to the editor on various topics.

Alphabetical

- b. 1 f. 2 **Correspondence "A-E" 1923-1959 (1 folder)**
Correspondence, A-E consists of incoming letters to Row, many thanking him for copies of his biography of Sarah Bernhardt.
- b. 1 f. 3 **Correspondence / Actors' Equity Association 1939-1957 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 4 **Correspondence / Actors' Fund of America 1954-1958 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 5 **Correspondence / Comet Press Books 1953-1959 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 6 **Correspondence "F-L" 1941-1961 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row include some from London publishers who declined to publish his biography of Sarah Bernhardt.
- b. 1 f. 7 **Correspondence / George Freedley 1956-1961 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 8 **Correspondence / Uta Hagen (1 folder)**
Thank you card [n.d.] to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 9 **Correspondence / Eva Le Gallienne (1 folder)**
Letter [n.d.] to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 10 **Correspondence "M-R" 1902-1961 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 11 **Correspondence / Nance O'Neil 1958-1959 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 12 **Correspondence / Hesketh Pearson 1956-1957 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 13 **Correspondence / Tony Randall 1958 (1 folder)**
Letter to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 14 **Correspondence / Jason Robards 1959 (1 folder)**
Letter to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 15 **Correspondence "S-W" 1902-1959 (1 folder)**
Letters to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 16 **Correspondence / Bertram Sommer 1957-1959**
Letters to Arthur William Row, many pertaining to the estate of Mary Fanton Roberts.

Series II: Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 17 **Correspondence / Blanche Yurka 1955-1959 (1 folder)**
Letters [1955-1959 and n.d.] to Arthur William Row.
- b. 1 f. 18 **Unidentified correspondence 1935-1959 (11 folder)**
Letters from unidentified correspondents, mostly family and friends.
- b. 1 f. 19 **Correspondence / Arthur William Row 1929-1961 (1 folder)**
Letters [1929-1961 and n.d.] by Row include photocopies of clippings of some of his letters to the editor published in newspapers.

Series III: Writings 1908-1957 (Alphabetical)

Typescripts of his articles primarily on theatrical subjects, some of which were published in magazines are divided into theater and non-theater and then arranged alphabetically by subject name or title. Includes a manuscript with handwritten revisions for his book, *Sarah the Divine*; other writings about Sarah Bernhardt; brief essays of Row's reminiscences of other actors including the Barrymores, Richard Mansfield, Ellen Terry, and Blanche Yurka; essays on prominent people not connected to the theater such as Mary Baker Eddy and Randolph S. Churchill; and various versions of his "Home As the Root of All Evil". There are also a few mysterious typescripts that came with Row's papers: two long letters addressed to Dear A-- and purportedly written by an Englishwoman who describes the bombing of London during World War II. They appear to have been transcribed by Row for newspaper publication. Also two typescript articles by an anonymous woman newspaper reporter in America, also probably transcribed by Row.

19 folders

- b. 1 f. 20 **Autobiographical writings / Arthur William Row 1957 (1 folder)**
Typescripts [1957 and n.d.] by Row.
- b. 1 f. 21 **Barrymore legend / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Barrymore, Maurice, 1848-1904Barrymore, Ethel, 1879-1959Barrymore, John, 1882-1942
Typescripts [n.d.] with some variation in title.
- b. 1 f. 22 **Sarah the divine / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923
Typescript [n.d.] with handwritten revisions for Row's book, *Sarah the Divine*.
- b. 1 f. 23 **Articles on Sarah Bernhardt / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923
Typescript articles [n.d.].
- b. 1 f. 24 **Article on John Gielgud and Cornelia Otis Skinner / Arthur William Row 1947 (1 folder)**
Gielgud, John, 1904-2000Skinner, Cornelia Otis, 1901-1979
Typescript of interviews by Row.
- b. 1 f. 25 **Articles on Richard Mansfield / Arthur William Row 1908-1914 (1 folder)**
Mansfield, Richard, 1857-1907
Typescripts of magazine articles by Row.
- b. 1 f. 26 **Article on Paul Muni / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Muni, Paul, 1895-1967
Typescript [n.d.] of Row's reminiscences of Muni.
- b. 1 f. 27 **Article on Ellen Terry / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Terry, Ellen, Dame, 1847-1928
Typescript [n.d.] of Row's reminiscences of the actress Ellen Terry.
- b. 1 f. 28 **Article on Blanche Yurka / Arthur William Row 1927-1928 (1 folder)**
Yurka, Blanche
Typescript of an interview with Blanche Yurka by Row that was published in *Drama*, 1927-1928.
- b. 1 f. 29 **Magazine articles / Arthur William Row 1915-1918 (1 folder)**
Typescript articles by Row on theatrical subjects for *The Bellman* magazine.

Series III: Writings (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 30 **Magazine articles / Arthur William Row 1918-1929 (1 folder)**
Gest, Morris, b. 1881
Typescript articles by Row on theatrical subjects for Poet Lore magazine. Includes article on Morris Gest.
- b. 1 f. 31 **Magazine articles / Arthur William Row 1913-1944 (1 folder)**
Typescript articles by Row on theatrical subjects.
- b. 2 f. 1 **Article on Randolph S. Churchill / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Churchill, Randolph S. (Randolph Spencer), 1911-1968
Typescript article [n.d.] of an interview with Randolph S. Churchill by Row.
- b. 2 f. 2 **Article on Mary Baker Eddy / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Eddy, Mary Baker, 1821-1910
Typescript article [n.d.] with handwritten revisions on Row's reminiscences of Mary Baker Eddy.
- b. 2 f. 3 ***Home as the root of all evil / Arthur William Row (1 folder)***
Typescripts [n.d.] with handwritten revisions of Row's essay, also one copy in pamphlet form.
- b. 2 f. 4 **Miscellaneous articles / Arthur William Row 1924 (1 folder)**
Miscellaneous typescript articles [1924 and n.d.] by Row, some published in magazines.
- b. 2 f. 5 **Letters from an Englishwoman (1 folder)**
Typed letters from an "Englishwoman" describing life in London during the bombing of World War II were probably transcribed by Row for newspaper publication and were possibly written by him.
- b. 2 f. 6 **Experiences of a country newspaper reporter (1 folder)**
Two typescripts [n.d.] were written by an anonymous woman reporter and given to the Library by Row. Or did he write them?
- b. 2 f. 7 **An interview with Eleonora Duse / Gertrude Norman April 1906 (1 folder)**
Duse, Eleonora, 1858-1924
Typescript of an article by a friend of Row's published in Theatre Magazine, vol. 6, April 1906.

Series IV: Notes (3 folders)

Handwritten notes are on Sarah Bernhardt, Row's memoirs, and miscellaneous subjects.

- b. 2 f. 8 **Notes / Arthur William Row. (1 folder)**
Bernhardt, Sarah, 1844-1923
Handwritten notes [n.d.] by Row on Sarah Bernhardt.
- b. 2 f. 9 **Notes / Arthur William Row. (1 folder)**
Handwritten notes [n.d.] by Row for his memoirs.
- b. 2 f. 10 **Notes / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Miscellaneous handwritten notes [n.d.] by Row.

Series V: Notebooks 1923-1961 (9 folders)

Notebooks, mostly spiral and composition books, are primarily from Row's later years and contain his notes of reminiscences and drafts of letters. The last two, dated 1960-1961, are titled Mummer's Memories.

Chronological

- b. 2 f. 11 **Notes / Arthur William Row 1923 (1 folder)**
Cowl, Jane, 1884-1950
Notebook cover with handwritten notes by Row and a letter to him from Jane Cowl pasted in, but all pages are missing.
- b. 2 f. 12 **Notebook / Arthur William Row 1946 (1 folder)**
Wilde, Oscar, 1854-1900
Small marbled composition book contains drafts by Row of letters, notes and a book review of a biography of Oscar Wilde. Some pages are loose.

Series V: Notebooks (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 13 **Spiral notebook / Arthur William Row, . 1953-1959 (1 folder)**
Spiral notebook with brown cover contains notes and drafts of letters by Row.
- b. 2 f. 14 **Spiral notebook / Arthur William Row 1957-1960 (1 folder)**
Spiral notebook with brown cover contains notes by Row of his reminiscences on life in the theater.
- b. 2 f. 15 **Spiral notebook / Arthur William Row 1959 (1 folder)**
Spiral notebook with green covers contains drafts of letters, notes on Sarah Bernhardt and autobiographical notes on Row's life.
- b. 2 f. 16 **Spiral notebook / Arthur William Row 1959 (1 folder)**
Spiral notebook with yellow cover contains notes by Row including autobiographical material and drafts of letters.
- b. 2 f. 17 ***Adventures of a journeyman player, 1899-1957 / Arthur William Row 1959-1960 (1 folder)***
Marble composition book is called "*Adventures of a journeyman player, 1899-1957*" and contains notes re "Mummer's Memories" and some drafts of letters by Row.
- b. 2 f. 18 ***Mummer's memories / Arthur William Row, . 1960-1961 (1 folder)***
Marble composition book called "*Mummer's Memories*" contains notes by Row for his memoirs.
- b. 2 f. 19 **Notes / Arthur William Row (1 folder)**
Writing tablet [n.d.] contains notes by Row on his career.

Series VI: The Afternoon Theatre 1922-1932 (1 folder)

A small amount of material, mostly publicity and financial papers, for The Afternoon Theatre which Row founded and directed. The Theatre produced plays seldom seen, on afternoons without regularly scheduled matinees, to give actors a chance to try different roles than those they normally performed.

- b. 2 f. 20 **Records / Afternoon Theatre 1922-1932 (1 folder)**
Contains mostly publicity for The Afternoon Theatre when Arthur William Row was a director there. Also includes a small amount of financial material.

Series VII: Printed material: Publicity & Clippings 1938-1958 (4 folders)

Consists of printed publicity for Row's book, *Sarah the Divine*, clippings of reviews of Orson Welles' production of *Julius Caesar* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, two plays in which Row appeared, and other clippings collected by Row.

Chronological

- b. 2 f. 21 ***Sarah the Divine papers / Arthur William Row (1 folder)***
Consists of publicity for Row's book, *Sarah The Divine*.
- b. 2 f. 22 **Julius Caesar clippings 1938 (1 folder)**
Welles, Orson, 1915-1985 Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616
Clippings on the play *Julius Caesar* directed by Orson Welles in which Arthur William Row appeared.
- b. 2 f. 23 **Streetcar named Desire clippings / Arthur William Row, . 1948 (1 folder)**
A Streetcar Named Desire Hagen, Uta, 1919-2004 Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983
Clippings on the play *Streetcar Named Desire* with Uta Hagen in which Row appeared.
- b. 2 f. 24 **Clippings / Arthur William Row 1948-1958 (1 folder)**
Miscellaneous clippings collected by Row.