



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Lawrence Langner papers**

1915-1962

\*T-Mss 1999-009

Processed by Francesca Pitaro.

## Summary

**Creator:** Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962

**Title:** Lawrence Langner papers

**Date:** 1915-1962

**Source:** Gift, Armina Marshall Langner?, 1975 Gift, Armina Marshall Langner?, 1975

**Abstract:** The Lawrence Langner Papers include scripts by Langner and others, and speeches, articles and miscellaneous writings by Langner. The collection contains over 30 scripts by Langner, and several adaptations by him. Many of the scripts are annotated, and a few include related material including programs, light plots, and prompt books. Langner's writings and speeches include memorial addresses for Ferenc Molnar and Joan McCracken, seminars on playwriting, and works on the future of the theater, morals in mass media, and some material relating to his interest in inventions and patent law.

**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>

### Conditions Governing Access:

Photocopying prohibited.

**Conditions Governing Use:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

**Preferred citation:** Lawrence Langner Papers, \*T-Mss 1999-009, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Processing note:** Processed by Francesca Pitaro.

## Related Materials:

Additional Lawrence Langner Papers are located at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscripts Library at Yale University.

## Creator History

Lawrence Langner (1890-1962), playwright, author, and producer, was born in Swansea, South Wales, on May 30, 1890. He had a long and varied career in the American theater where he began as one of the founders of the Washington Square Players in 1914. In 1919 he founded the Theatre Guild where he supervised over 200 productions. Langner was also founder and Chairman of the American Shakespeare Festival. With his wife, Armina Marshall he owned and operated the Westport (Connecticut) Country Playhouse. In addition to his plays, Langner wrote several books including an autobiography, *Magic Curtain*. Langner was also involved in patent law and was a founder of the National Inventors Council. This interest is reflected in some of his plays and other writings.

## Custodial History

The Lawrence Langner Papers may have been donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division by Armina Marshall Langner in 1975. One version of the script for *The Pursuit of Happiness* includes a note to that effect, however, no other records regarding the provenance of the collection have been located.

## Scope and Content Note

The Lawrence Langner Papers include scripts by Langner and others, and speeches, articles and miscellaneous writings by Langner. The collection contains over 30 scripts by Langner, and several adaptations by him. Many of the scripts are annotated, and a few include related material including programs, light plots, and prompt books. Langner's writings and speeches include memorial addresses for Ferenc Molnar and Joan McCracken, seminars on playwriting, and works on the future of the theatre, morals in mass media, and some material relating to his interest in inventions and patent law.

**Arrangement:** Series I: Scripts Series II: Articles Series III: Speeches Series IV: Miscellaneous Writings

## Key Terms

### Subjects

Dramatists  
Theater -- United States -- History -- 20th century  
Theatrical producers and directors

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Prompt books  
Scripts

### Names

Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Marshall, Armina  
Theatre Guild  
Westport Country Playhouse (Organization : Westport, Conn.)

## Container List

### Series I: Scripts, 1915-1958 (2 linear feet (5 boxes))

Scripts make up the bulk of the Langner Papers. Most of the scripts are by Langner, alone or with his wife, Armina Marshall. There are also scripts on which Langner collaborated with other playwrights such as Philip Bartholomae and Guy Bolton. Most of the plays are in typescript form, but a few are included in published editions. Many scripts are annotated and some also include light plots, programs or prompt books.

#### Alphabetical

- b. 1 f. 1 *The 13th apostle / Lawrence Langner* 1923 (1 folder)  
Typed script of *The 13th Apostle*.
- b. 1 f. 2-5 *Accidents will happen / Lawrence Langner* (4 folders)  
Six typescript versions of *Accidents Will Happen*, ca. 1922-1923, with handwritten annotations. Folder 1-2 also contains a program from a 1922 performance of the play.
- b. 1 f. 6 *Another way out / Lawrence Langner* 1916 (1 volume)  
Published version of the script; Frank Shay: The Washington Square Players, New York, 1916.
- b. 1 f. 7 *Anti-Christ / Lawrence Langner*. (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Typed copy, undated. Note on front page: "This play copyrighted under name of The Broken Image".
- b. 1 f. 8 *Better faces (Play)*. (1 folder)  
Typed script.
- b. 1 f. 9 *The borderline girl / Philip H. Bartholomae* 1924 (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Typed script by Philip Bartholomae and Lawrence Langner.
- b. 1 f. 10 *Champagne, sec (Musical) / Johann Strauss* (1 folder)  
Typed script with annotations; book adapted by Lawrence Langner.
- b. 1 f. 11 *Check mate! (Play)* 1928 (1 folder)  
Typed script. No author noted.
- b. 1 f. 12 *The chimes of Corneville (Musical) / Robert Planquette* (1 folder)  
Prompt book, and program (1934) for *The Chimes of Corneville* at the Westport Country Playhouse.
- b. 1 f. 13 *A Christmas interlude (Play)* (1 folder)  
Typed script; no date or author noted.
- b. 1 f. 14-16 *The Christmas tree / Basil Lawrence* (3 folders)  
Three versions of *The Christmas Tree*, one dated 1917.
- b. 1 f. 17 *Common to the trade or the Saturday Night Soap Company versus the Seventh Night Soap Company / Edward S. Rogers* (1 volume)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Common to the Trade, by Edward S. Rogers and Lawrence Langner, published by the New York Patent Law Association, 1936.
- b. 1 f. 18 *The compromisers / Armina Marshall* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Prompt book, including program copy, for *The Compromisers*, by Armina Marshall and Lawrence Langner, adapted from *The Keyhole* by Kadar. See also a separate script for *The Keyhole*.
- b. 2 f. 1 *Counterpoint / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Story line for a play.

Series I: Scripts,. (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 2 *The country wife / William Wycherley* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Annotated prompt book for *The Country Wife*; acting version by Lawrence Langner.
- b. 2 f. 3-4 *Doctor Knock / Jules Romain*s (2 folders)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962 Marshall, Armina  
Two versions of the script, adapted from the French by Lawrence Langner and Armina Marshall.
- b. 2 f. 5 *The efficient lover / Lawrence Langner* 1920 (1 folder)
- b. 2 f. 6 *The family exit / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)
- b. 2 f. 7 *The famous case of National Kink Safety Pin Co. vs. International Bump Co. et al / Lawrence Langner.* (1 volume)  
Script published by the New York Patent Law Association, 1924.
- b. 2 f. 8 *For husbands only (Play)* (1 folder)  
Typed script, 1932; no author noted.
- b. 2 f. 9 *Fruits of culture / Leo Tolstoy* (1 folder)  
Tolstoy, Leo, graf, 1828-1910--Stage adaptations Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Typed script, arranged for modern production by Lawrence Langner.
- b. 2 f. 10 *Hajji Babba / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Synopsis of the play, first draft, 12/11/1933.
- b. 2 f. 11-13 *Help the strong / Georges Mathet-Dory* (3 folders)  
Two complete scripts, 1958, one annotated, for *Help the Strong*. These may have been adapted by Lawrence Langner. Also includes one folder of loose pages from the script.
- b. 3 f. 1 *Henry-behave / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Typed script, 1922, marked "amateur version".
- b. 3 f. 2-3 *Holding Helen / Lawrence Langner* (2 folders)  
Two typed versions of the script, 1924 and 1926.
- b. 3 f. 4 *The keyhole / Armina Marshall* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Annotated script for *The Keyhole* by Armina Marshall and Lawrence Langner. See also the script for *The Compromisers*, which is a different version.
- b. 3 f. 5 *Lady Godiva / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Annotated script, 1929.
- b. 3 f. 6-7 *Licensed / Lawrence Langner* (2 folders)  
Five typed versions of the script, 1915.
- b. 3 f. 8 *The life of the party / B. T. McAlpin* (1 folder)  
Revised script, 5/31/1950.
- b. 3 f. 9 *Love for love (Play)* (1 folder)  
Typed script, undated. No author noted.
- b. 3 f. 10 *Matinata / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)
- b. 3 f. 11 *Mexican musical comedy / Philip H. Bartholomae* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Typed script for *Mexican Musical Comedy* by Philip Bartholomae and Lawrence Langner.
- b. 3 f. 12 *No more patent lawyers / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Two versions of the script.
- b. 4 f. 1-3 *On the square / Lawrence Langner* (3 folders)  
Script (three acts) for *On the Square*, 1917.
- b. 4 f. 4 *On to fortune / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Marshall, Armina  
Typed script, 1934, for *On To Fortune* by Lawrence Langner and Armina Marshall.

Series I: Scripts,. (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 5-7 *Once married, twice shy (Play)* (3 folders)  
Three versions of the script, 1952. No author noted.
- b. 4 f. 8 *Patent applied for / Lawrence Langner* (2 volumes and 3 pages)  
Two published versions of the script, 1917 and 1918. Also includes 3 brief reviews.
- b. 4 f. 9 *Pie / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Typed script, 1919.
- b. 4 f. 10-12 *The pursuit of happiness / Lawrence Langner* (3 folders)  
Marshall, Armina  
Annotated script by Lawrence Langner and Armina Marshall. Also, *A la Poursuite du Bonheur*, French translation by Renee Gave. Also includes light plot and a rough floor plan.
- b. 5 f. 1 *The pyramid / Lawrence Langner* (1 volume)  
Script of *The Pyramid* as published in *The Guardian*, February 1925.
- b. 5 f. 2 *The red cloak / Josephine A. Meyer* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Story line for *The Red Cloak*, a pantomime by Josephine A. Meyer and Lawrence Langner.
- b. 5 f. 3 *The respectable virgin / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)
- b. 5 f. 4 *Sailor's delight / Peter Blackmore* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Typed version of the script, "Freely Adapted" by Lawrence Langner.
- b. 5 f. 5 *The Sire de Maletroit's door / Lawrence Langner* (1 volume)  
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 1850-1894--Stage adaptations  
Published script, Samuel French 1931. A play in one act from the story by Robert Louis Stevenson.
- b. 5 f. 6 *Slackers / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Typed script, 1918, and a letter to the Register of Copyrights.
- b. 5 f. 7 *Success (Play)* (1 folder)  
Typed script; no date or author noted.
- b. 5 f. 8 *Tangerine / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Bolton, Guy, 1884-1979  
Typed script for *Tangerine*, "a musical play", by Lawrence Langner, Guy Bolton and Philip Bartholomew.
- b. 5 f. 9 *This marriage revolt / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Typed script of *This Marriage Revolt*. Also includes a memo on various versions of the script.
- b. 5 f. 10 *Too holy for heaven / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Typed script, 1922.
- b. 5 f. 11 *Transmuted / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)
- b. 5 f. 12-14 *Turandot / Carlo Gozzi* (3 folders)  
Three folders including a plot synopsis, and two English versions of the script, one of which is a "literal translation", probably by John Gerard.
- b. 5 f. 15 *Turandot, princess of China / John Gerard* (1 folder)  
Langner, Lawrence, 1890-1962  
Script for *Turandot, Princess of China*, by John Gerard and Lawrence Langner.

Series II: Articles,. ca. 1956-1963 (17 folders)

Langner's writings include articles for *Playbill*, *Variety* and *Theatre Magazine*. The articles are arranged chronologically. The series contains both typescript and published articles, and also a few business letters relating to arrangements for publication.

Chronological by date

Series II: Articles,. (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 1 **Variety articles / Lawrence Langner** (1 folder)  
Green, Abel, 1900-1973  
Five articles, 1956-1962, (photocopies) written by Lawrence Langner for *Variety*. Also includes correspondence with Abel Green, editor and the typescript of one article.
- b. 6 f. 2 ***Saturday review article / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
"Rough draft" of untitled article for the *Saturday Review*, ca. 1958. Also includes two letters about the article.
- b. 6 f. 3 **Articles/correspondence / Lawrence Langner.** (1 folder)  
Gassner, John, 1903-1967  
Green, Elinor  
Correspondence, 1958-1959, regarding articles by Langner. Includes correspondence with John Gassner of Yale University and Elinor Green of *Playbill*.
- b. 6 f. 4 ***Exit drab realism--American legit marks return to a colorful theatre / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Typescript and published version of article which appeared in *Variety*, 1/7/1959.
- b. 6 f. 5 **A rally for the road / Lawrence Langner** (1 folder)  
Lipsett, Charles H  
Typescript and published version of the article which appeared in *Theatre Magazine* of February, 1959. Also includes a letter from Charles H. Lipsett.
- b. 6 f. 6 ***The producer / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Typed and annotated article for a book by John Gassner.
- b. 6 f. 7 ***A happy new year / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Typescript of article published in *Theatre Magazine* in 1959.
- b. 6 f. 8 ***Foreign atmosphere for foreign plays / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Typescript of article and published version from *Playbill*, 11/7/1961.
- b. 6 f. 9 ***Hail, paradiso del union! / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Typescript of article and published version from *Variety*, 1/10/1962.
- b. 6 f. 10 ***Theatre Guild's offerings / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Published version from *Playbill*, 7/30/1962.
- b. 6 f. 11 **In memory of Joan McCracken / Lawrence Langner** (1 folder)  
McCracken, Joan  
Two typed versions of the article, 1962.
- b. 6 f. 12 ***A new crusade under the star, the crescent and the cross! / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Proposal for the restoration of Jerusalem, 1962.
- b. 6 f. 13 ***The future of the American theatre or what's right with the theatre / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Two photocopies of the article, one marked "Texas", ca. 1962. A version of this article was also delivered as a speech at the New England Theatre Conference in 1962.
- b. 6 f. 14 ***What's right and wrong with the crazy American theatre--1962-1963 / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Photocopy of article, undated.
- b. 6 f. 15 ***These modern women / Lawrence Langner*** (1 folder)  
Preface to *These Modern Women*, typescript with annotations.
- b. 6 f. 16 **Miscellaneous articles / Lawrence Langner** (1 folder)  
Four typed articles: *Sunrise at Campobello and the Theatre Guild*; *Third Best Sport*; *The Theatre Guild and Musical Plays*; and one untitled. All are undated.
- b. 6 f. 17 **Biographical sketches / Lawrence Langner** (1 folder)  
Biographical sketches of Lawrence Langner including one by Bennett Cerf.

**Series III: Speeches, . 1931-1962 (15 folders)**

Speeches include typescript copies of various addresses made by Langner. The earliest among them are two Commencement programs for the American Academy for Dramatic Arts for 1931 and 1949. Other speeches include Langner's memorial address at the funeral of Ferenc Molnar in 1952, and transcripts of a series of seminars on playwriting given at the Westport Country Playhouse in 1957.

Chronological by date

- b. 6 f. 18-19 **American Academy of Dramatic Arts (New York, N.Y.) (2 folders)**  
Graduation programs for 1931 and 1949, including graduation addresses by Lawrence Langner. Folder for 1949 also includes 3 letters re: arrangements and thanks.
- b. 6 f. 20 **Memorial address at the funeral of Ferenc Molnar / Lawrence Langner (1 folder)**  
Molna\_r, Ferenc, 1878-1952  
Lawrence Langner's memorial address at the funeral of Ferenc Molnar, 1952. Also includes a telegram to Langner from Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, and a telegram from Gilbert Miller to Lili Darvas. Both are about the death of Molnar.
- b. 6 f. 21-23 ***Morals in mass entertainment media / Lawrence Langner* (3 folders)**  
Address by Langner at the Conference on Moral Standards sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, September 13-15, 1953. Includes two typed drafts and a "final version", all with annotations.
- b. 6 f. 24 ***Art and mass media: television / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)**  
Two typescript copies (with annotations) of Langner's speech at Swarthmore College, 4/14/1957.
- b. 6 f. 25 **Lectures / Lawrence Langner. (1 folder)**  
Westport Country Playhouse (Conn.)  
Transcript of a lecture given at the Westport Country Playhouse, June 29, 1957.
- b. 6 f. 26 **Seminars on playwriting / Lawrence Langner (1 folder)**  
Westport Country Playhouse (Conn.)  
Transcript of "Playwriting #3", given by Langner at the Westport Country Playhouse, 7/6/1957.
- b. 6 f. 27 **Seminars on playwriting / Lawrence Langner (1 folder)**  
Miner, Worthington, 1900-1982 Westport Country Playhouse (Conn.)  
Transcript of "Playwriting #4", given by Langner and Worthington Miner at the Westport Country Playhouse, 7/13/1957. Two copies, one marked "television" with relevant passages underlined.
- b. 7 f. 1 **Seminars on playwriting / Lawrence Langner (1 folder)**  
Helburn, Theresa, 1887-1959 Westport Country Playhouse (Conn.)  
Transcript of "Playwriting #5", given by Theresa Helburn at the Westport Country Playhouse, 7/20/1957.
- b. 7 f. 2 **Seminars on playwriting / Lawrence Langner (1 folder)**  
Westport Country Playhouse (Conn.)  
Transcript of "Last in a Series", given by Langner at the Westport Country Playhouse, 7/27/1957.
- b. 7 f. 3 ***Love those critics: a producer looks at dramatic criticism / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)**  
Several versions of a speech given at the National Theatre Conference in 1960. Also includes an article on the conference which appeared in the *New York Times*.
- b. 7 f. 4-5 ***What's right with the theatre / Lawrence Langner* (2 folders)**  
Two typed drafts and a final copy of the speech delivered at the New England Theatre Conference, 10/13/1962. Also includes a program for the conference.

**Series IV: Miscellaneous Writings, . ca. 1926-1969 (6 folders)**

This series includes a letter and memos written by Langner, which relate to the Theatre Guild. The letter dated 1926, is over 20 small handwritten pages to the Board and managers of the Theatre Guild. Two memos address the Theatre Guild's response to O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* being banned in Boston in 1929.



Series IV: Miscellaneous Writings,. (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 6 *The war of inventions / Lawrence Langner* (1 notebook)  
Notebook with handwritten text by Langner.
- b. 7 f. 7 *Letter to John Anderson / Lawrence Langner.* (1 folder)  
Letter and draft, 1/23/1930, written in response to an article by Anderson in the American.
- b. 7 f. 8 *Memorandum of project of theatre arts building in connection with R.K.O. Radio City plans / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Memo written by Langner, ca.1931. Also includes his letter to S. Rothafel of RKO, and Rothafel's reply.
- b. 7 f. 9 *Statement of the Theatre Guild re: Strange Interlude / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
O'Neill, Eugene, 1888-1953  
Two memos regarding the Theatre Guild's response to *Strange Interlude* having been banned in Boston, 1929.
- b. 7 f. 10 *Letter to the board and managers of the Theatre Guild / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Theatre Guild  
Handwritten letter, 9/27/1926, from Langner, marked "not sent".
- b. 7 f. 11 *Letter to Jo Mielziner / Lawrence Langner* (1 folder)  
Letter from Mielziner representing ANTA, inviting Langner to a conference, and Langner's reply, 11/13/1961.