



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Theatre Guild records

1949-1952

*T-Mss-2004-024

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013

Summary

Creator: Theatre Guild, 1919-

Title: Theatre Guild records

Date: 1949-1952

Size: .42 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donated by the Museum of the City of New York, 2004.

Abstract: The Theatre Guild, established in 1919 by Theresa Helburn, Lawrence Langner, Philip Moeller, and Helen Westley, is an American theatrical association. Since its inception, the Theatre Guild has produced over 200 original theatrical productions, many of which have become Broadway classics. The Theater Guild records (1949-1952) document the Theatre Guild's administrative activities during the planning and execution of the production of *Carousel* at the Stoll Theatre in London in 1950, and *Oklahoma!* for the 1951 Berlin Arts Festival.

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 Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatrediv@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: Theatre Guild records, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013 Original order has been maintained.

Creator History

The Theatre Guild, established in 1919 by Theresa Helburn, Lawrence Langner, Philip Moeller, and Helen Westley, is an American theatrical association. The Theatre Guild's original mission to produce original, noncommercial theatrical productions, evolved out of the Washington Square Players, an

earlier theatrical society that produced plays from 1914 to 1918. Unlike other theater companies at that time, the Theatre Guild's board of directors were involved in the planning, managing, and producing of the plays. Since its inception, The Theatre Guild has produced over 200 original theatrical productions, and is responsible for some of the most renowned productions on Broadway, including works by George Bernard Shaw, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill.

In addition to producing original theatrical productions, the Theatre Guild created several programs in an effort to reach broader audiences. The Theatre Guild on the Air, a broadcast radio program which produced and aired live productions of plays, first aired in 1945. In 1953, the show evolved into a television series known as The United States Steel Hour, and ran until 1963. The 1960s marked a period of significant expansion for the Guild when they created a national company headed by Helen Hayes to tour their productions internationally. Since 1975, the Theatre Guild has hosted over 30 cruises with their Theatre at Sea program. The Theatre Guild's last Broadway production was State Fair in 1996.

Custodial History

This collection was part of a larger gift from the Museum of the City of New York to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in 2004.

Scope and Content Note

The Theater Guild records date from 1949 to 1952 and document the Theatre Guild's administrative activities during the planning and executing the production of *Carousel* at the Stoll Theatre in London in 1950, and *Oklahoma!* for the 1951 Berlin Arts Festival. This collection contains correspondence, invoices, licensing agreements, memorandums, and publicity files relating to these two productions.

The *Carousel* files relate to the production of *Carousel* at the Stoll Theatre in London, and include drafts of contracts, correspondence with Prince Littler of the Stoll Theatre, and interoffice correspondence dating from 1949 to 1950. Drafts of a licensing agreement between Rodgers & Hammerstein and the Stoll Theatre in London are present, as well as several abstracts of contracts relating to royalties distributed to the director, choreographer, and set designer for *Carousel*. The correspondence pertains to Designing Artists' contracts between Theatre Guild and Jo Mielziner, as well as the distribution of royalties, passport and travel logistics of cast and crew, and interoffice memorandums relating to the planning of the show.

The *Oklahoma!* files document the production of *Oklahoma!* for the Berlin Cultural Arts Festival in 1951. Included are files on budgets, travel and transportation, publicity, insurance, newsreel and radio coverage, and payroll, among others. Most of the files contain correspondence in addition to invoices, receipts, budgets, meeting minutes, and travel documents. The correspondence is comprehensive and documents many aspects regarding the planning and execution of the production in Germany, such as the establishment of conditions surrounding the televising of the production in Germany, press coverage, letters of congratulation, and interoffice correspondence relating to sending customs and passport information to the cast and crew. Primary correspondents are the directors for the Theatre Guild, Lawrence Lagner and Theresa Helburn, and secretary Warren Caro.

Also present is a limited amount of correspondence relating to the showing of *Oklahoma!* for the Hershey Theatre in Pennsylvania. The correspondence between Theatre Guild staff and the Hershey Theatre's manager, Harry C. Chubb, documents the Theatre Guild's pleasure with the success of the

production.

Arrangement: Material is arranged alphabetically by production.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Contracts
Correspondence
Invoices
notes

Subjects

Theater -- Production and direction
Theater -- United States
Traveling theater

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-4 Carousel 1949-1950
- b. 1 f. 5-23 Oklahoma! 1951-1952