



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Charles Gnys papers**

1950s-1970s

\*T-Mss 1999-015

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Gnys, Charles, d. 1986

**Title:** Charles Gnys papers

**Date:** 1950s-1970s

**Size:** 3.2 linear feet (7 boxes, 2 volumes)

**Source:** Donated by Perry Knowlton, 1999.

**Abstract:** Charles Gnys (d. 1986) was a director and manager of the Playwrights Unit. The Charles Gnys papers hold agreements, clippings, letters, notebooks, photographs, playbills, and scripts.

**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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**Processing note:** Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2015

## Creator History

Charles Gnys (d. 1986) was a director and manager of the Playwrights Unit (founded in 1961 by Richard Barr, Edward Albee and Charles Woodward) that offered new playwrights the opportunity to present their work before an audience without the pressure of a commercial production. From this experience, the playwrights would acquire learning skills on how to develop their plays for an audience. Philip Magdalany, a critically acclaimed playwright, received early support and advice from the Playwrights Unit.

During the 1960s through the 1970s, Gnys directed and produced mostly Off-Off Broadway productions. He also directed the rock opera *The Survival of St. Joan* that was created by Smoke Rise (brothers Gary Ruffin, Hank Ruffin and Stan Ruffin). This production ran first as a concert at the Playwrights Unit, briefly followed by the Studio Arena Theatre in Buffalo, and the Anderson Theatre in New York City.

In the late 1970s, Gnys became the president of Curtis Brown Management, an agency that represents actors.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The papers, dated 1950s to 1970s, hold agreements, clippings, letters, notebooks, photographs, playbills, and scripts that document the career of Charles Gnys.

The bulk of the collection is represented by the production *The Survival of St. Joan*. The files hold multiple scripts in completed or draft form; agreements; lyrics, notebooks, playbills, photographs, and slides of the graphics.

Gnys's work as a professional writer was represented by the script *Teddy Bear*, co-written by the playwright Philip Magdalany (d. 1986). The collection holds several letters written by Magdalany while he was abroad in London. The collection also holds several of Gnys's notebooks and drama papers written while as a student at Catholic University.

Other scripts in the collection were previously submitted to Gnys for consideration for future productions.

Address books, business agreements, assorted playbills and Gnys's resumes complete the collection.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Certificates  
Photographs  
Playbills  
Scripts

### **Occupations**

Directors (performing arts)  
Managers

### **Subjects**

Experimental theater  
Experimental theater -- New York (State) -- New York  
Off-Broadway theater

### **Geographic Names**

New York (N.Y.)

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Letters 1972-1974  
*(The) Survival of St. Joan*
- b. 1 f. 2-4 Agreements 1970-1972
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- b. 1 f. 7 Graphics 1970-1972
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- b. 1 f. 11 Notes c. 1970
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1970-1972
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- b. 4 f. 9 Writings. Various by Gnys
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- b. 4 f. 12 *Jacobs, Fred Rue. Well Endowed* 1970  
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- b. 4 f. 13 *Germs*
- b. 4 f. 14 *Who's There?*
- b. 5 f. 1 *Kerbs, Charles. The Friend*
- b. 5 f. 2 *Knee, Allen. Ephrain*  
Litvack, Barry
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- b. 5 f. 4 *Whatever Happens is Gonna Happen...*
- b. 5 f. 5 *Sabath, Bernard. Andy and Sheila* 1978
- b. 5 f. 6 *Smith, Milburn. Bloodsport*
- b. 5 f. 7 *Swan, Jon. Actor's Warm Up*
- b. 5 f. 8 Sydovich, Tom. Untitled Script
- b. 5 f. 9 *Trainer, David. Mr. Curator's Proposal*

Writings. Various by Gnys (cont.)

Wallace, Ian

b. 5 f. 10 *Blackbird*

b. 5 f. 11 *Folio*

Scripts by Other Playwrights

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b. 6 f. 1-3 Address Books

b. 6 f. 4 Melinson, Jeff 1970s  
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b. 6 f. 5 Osborne, Christian 1970s  
Agreements.

Assorted Files