



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Irwin Stahl theater files

1893-1988 [bulk 1950s-1960s]

*T-Mss 1990-017

Compiled by Joyce Joseph, 2015

Summary

Creator: Stahl, Irwin

Title: Irwin Stahl theater files

Date: 1893-1988 [bulk 1950s-1960s]

Size: 10.71 linear feet (16 boxes, 6 volumes, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Donated by Irwin Stahl, 1989.

Abstract: Irwin Stahl was a theatrical director, playwright, actor, and educator. The Irwin Stahl theater files date from 1893 to 1988 and contain scripts, sheet music, programs, clippings, sketches, notes, photographs, and scrapbooks.

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 Joyce Joseph, 2015

Creator History

Irwin Stahl was a theatrical director, playwright, actor, and educator. He received three degrees in theater, fine arts, and education from Syracuse University.

Stahl directed many stock and off-Broadway musicals such as *West Side Story* (1960) and *Plain and Fancy* (1962), and dramas such as *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1951).

He wrote original plays and musicals, such as *Out of Focus*, *The Crisis*, *An Ancient Statue*, and *The Red Rose and the Briar*, which he later directed at Syracuse Civic Theatre. His short plays were directed and produced by Gian Carlo Menotti for the Spoleto Festival; and other plays were showcased at the Actors Studio and Talent '61.

Stahl taught courses at the American Theatre Wing, American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and the Actors Studio. During his tenure at the Actors Studio he observed and wrote extensively about the techniques of actor and director Lee Strasberg.

Scope and Content Note

The Irwin Stahl theater files date from 1893 to 1988 (bulk dates 1950s-1960s) and contain scripts, sheet music, programs, clippings, sketches, notes, photographs, and scrapbooks.

The bulk of the collection consists of scripts for various plays, the majority of which were not written by Stahl. Some of the scripts are excerpted from *Theater Arts* and other magazines. The scripts are sometimes annotated and served as prompt books for theatrical productions, such as the scripts for *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1951), *Plain and Fancy* (1962), and *West Side Story* (1960).

Stahl's original manuscripts, plays, musicals, and adaptations include *The Ecclesiastusae*, *Out of Focus*, *The Crisis*, *An Ancient Statue* and *The Red Rose and the Briar*. The latter play has various drafts of the script, sheet music, notes, correspondence, and clippings regarding the production. Stahl also wrote the lyrics for *Whatever the Season* and *Marry Your Own Kind*, both of which are represented in the collection through sheet music.

The collection holds five volumes of Stahl's notes from 1962 through 1970, taken during Lee Strasberg's technique sessions at the Actors Studio. There are correspondence and chapter drafts that demonstrate the desire to turn those notes into a "Journals from Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio" publication. Other Actors Studio materials include teaching notes for Stahl's classes, Director's Unit correspondence, and newsletters with scene schedules.

The programs, clippings of reviews, photographs, and scrapbooks document numerous theatrical productions throughout Stahl's career. The programs convey the various roles that Stahl played in theater, such as an actor in *Androcles and the Lion* (1946), stage manager for *George Washington Slept Here* (1948), director for *Plain and Fancy* (1962), and choreographer for *Bye Bye Birdie* (1968). The sketches and production notes demonstrate his versatility such as the set designs for *Thunder Rock* (1950s), and the costume designs for *Twelfth Night* (1950s). The copies of biographies and resumes record his milestones. The correspondence pertains to the development of plays, and administration matters such as payment arrangements.

Additionally, Stahl collected a scrapbook of programs that recounts an array of theatrical productions dating back to 1893.

Arrangement: The collection is organized alphabetically by subject or file type.

Key Terms

Occupations

Acting teachers
Dramatists
Male actors
Playwrights
Theatrical producers and directors

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings (information artifacts)
notes
Photographs
Preparatory drawings
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks
Scripts
Sheet music

Subjects

Musical theater
Performing arts
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Theater -- Production and direction
Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Names

Strasberg, Lee
Actors Studio (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

Actors Studio

- b. 1 f. 1-5 1960s
- b. 1 f. 8-11 1960s

Journals from Lee Strasberg

- b. 1 f. 6-7 1960s
 - v. 1 1962-1963
 - v. 2 1963-1966
 - v. 3 1965-1967
 - v. 4 1967-1968
 - v. 5 1968-1970
- b. 2 f. 1 Biographies and Resumes 1950s-1970s
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Correspondence 1940s-1969
- b. 2 f. 4-8 Photographs 1950s-1970s
- b. 16 f. 1-2 Photographs 1950s-1970s
 - b. 3 Programs 1945-1980s
- b. 4 f. 1-4 Reviews 1947-1972
- b. 4 f. 5 Scrapbook 1960s-1970s
 - v. 6 Scrapbook 1893-1922
Theater record.

Scripts

Written by Irwin Stahl

- b. 4 f. 6 *An Ancient Statue* 1950s
- b. 4 f. 7 *The Atom Man* 1968
- b. 4 f. 8 *The Crisis* 1950s
- b. 4 f. 9 *The Ecclesiastusae* 1949
Adaptation.
- b. 4 f. 10-11 *Electra* 1950s
Adaptation.
- b. 4 f. 12 *Five Thousand Francs* 1950s
- b. 4 f. 13 *A Mime for a Sunday* 1940
- b. 4 f. 14 *A One Act Play* 1940s
- b. 5 f. 1 *Out of Focus* 1960s
- b. 5 f. 2-3 *The Red Rose and the Briar* 1950-1951
Sheet music in box 16 and oversize folder 1.
- b. 5 f. 4 *Short Plays* 1960
For Spoleto Festival.
- b. 5 f. 5 *Summer and Smoke Scene* 1950s

Written by others

Arranged alphabetically by title or author.

- b. 5 f. 6-14 A
- b. 6 f. 1-18 A-B

Scripts (cont.)

Written by others (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 1-18 B-D
- b. 8 f. 1-22 D-G
- b. 9 f. 1-23 G-L
- b. 10 f. 1-20 L-O
- b. 11 f. 1-24 O-R
- b. 12 f. 1-26 R-T
- b. 13 f. 1-14 T
- b. 14 f. 1-14 U-W
- b. 15 f. 1-3 W-Y

Sheet Music

- b. 16 f. 3-14 1920s-1951
- b. 15 f. 4-6 1950s-1970s
 - o. 1 1951-1961
 - Contains sheet music for *Whatever the Season* and *Marry Your Own Kind*.
- b. 15 f. 7-13 Sketches and Production Notes 1946-1960