



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Gladys Vaughan papers**

1931-1988 [bulk 1961-1972]

\*T-Mss 2014-143

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Summary

**Creator:** Vaughan, Gladys

**Title:** Gladys Vaughan papers

**Date:** 1931-1988 [bulk 1961-1972]

**Size:** 2 linear feet (5 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

**Source:** Gift of Dorothy Senerchia.

**Abstract:** Gladys Vaughan (1924-1988) was an American theater director and the first woman to direct a play for the New York Shakespeare Festival. The collection dates from 1931 to 1988 and contains production files, professional files, programs, clippings, scores, and a small amount of biographical materials.

**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:

Inquiries regarding audio material in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division ([theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org)). Audio material will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

## Creator History

Gladys Vaughan (1924-1988) was an American theater director and the first woman to direct a play for the New York Shakespeare Festival. She graduated from Kansas State Teachers College in 1944 and earned an M.A. in drama from Stanford University in 1948. From 1955 to 1960, Vaughan assisted directors Joseph Papp, Gerald Freeman, and Stuart Vaughan at the New York Shakespeare Festival. She made her directorial debut with *Richard II* in 1961 at the Wollman Memorial Skating Rink in Central Park. She co-directed *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* with Joseph Papp the following year.

Vaughan's other works include *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Coriolanus*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Woyzeck*. Her production of *Othello* with James Earl Jones was staged in repertory with Eric Bentley and Martin Esslin's adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Baal* at the Martinique Theatre in 1965. In addition to directing, Vaughan taught Shakespearean acting at the Circle-in-the-Square Theatre School and Workshop and the New York Shakespeare Festival.

## Scope and Content Note

The Gladys Vaughan papers date from 1931 to 1988 and contain production files, professional files, programs, clippings, scores, and a small amount of biographical materials.

Production files are arranged alphabetically by title and document Vaughan's theatrical direction between 1961 and 1972. The degree to which each production is represented varies. Files may contain scripts, prompt books, notes, prop and costume plots, set designs, sound recordings, programs, and reviews. Titles include *Baal*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Richard II*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Woyzeck*. Files for *Liola*, *Drums in the Night*, *Henry V*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* do not contain scripts. Sound recordings of music by composer David Amram are present in the production files for *Henry V* and *Richard II*. *Woyzeck*, *Othello*, and *Baal* are the best-represented plays in the collection. Researchers should also consult clippings and programs files for further documentation of Vaughan's productions

Professional files contain correspondence, photographs, and other materials relating to Vaughan's work in and outside of theatrical direction, such as teaching Shakespearean acting at the Circle in the Square Theatre School and Workshop, and her attendance at conferences and events. Correspondence is professional in nature and consists of incoming letters from colleagues, such as Joseph Papp, Jo McDonald, Gordon Davidson, and Toby Cole. The letters discuss project proposals, professional associations, and plays directed by Vaughan. Letters from Eric Bentley, Martin Esslin, Fred Jordan, and Paul A. Bernstein review Vaughan's 1965 production of *Baal*. Congratulatory letters and telegrams sent to Vaughan during the 1964-1965 production of *Othello* at the Martinique Theatre are also present. Programs and clippings document Vaughan's work from the 1940s to the 1970s, with particular focus on her New York Shakespeare Festival productions. Plays documented through the clippings and programs that are not represented elsewhere in the collection include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Thunder in the Index*, and *Blood Knot*.

Biographical materials consist of resumes, certificates, and school essays and notes completed by Vaughan. Scores, most likely printed in the 1930s and 1940s, are lightly annotated. They primarily consist of popular musical arrangements for vocals and piano, with some violin.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged by format with Production Files further arranged alphabetically by title.

## **Key Terms**

### **Titles**

Baal  
Othello  
Woyzeck

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Promptbooks  
Scripts  
Sound recordings  
Theater programs

### **Subjects**

Theater -- United States

### **Occupations**

Women theatrical producers and directors

### **Names**

Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 -- Dramatic production  
New York Shakespeare Festival Productions

## Container List

### Production Files

- b. 1 f. 1-3 *Baal* 1965, 1967  
origsr.221175 *Baal* 1965  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.
- b. 1 f. 4-5 *Coriolanus* 1965
- b. 1 f. 6 *Drums in the Night* 1967  
*Henry V*
- b. 1 f. 7 1965  
origsr.221182 1965  
Sound recording of Acts I and II.  
Available by appointment only.
- origsr.221179 1965  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.
- b. 1 f. 8 *Liola* 1969  
origsr.221187 *Liola* 1969  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.
- b. 1 f. 9-12 *Macbeth* 1962-1966
- o. 1 *Macbeth* 1966  
Set design.
- b. 2 f. 1 *A Moon for the Misbegotten* 1968
- o. 1 *A Moon for the Misbegotten* 1968  
Set design.
- b. 2 f. 2 *Much Ado About Nothing* 1972
- b. 2 f. 3-6 *Othello* 1964-1965  
origsr.221188 *Othello* 1965  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.
- origsr.221189 *Richard II* 1961  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.
- b. 2 f. 7-9 *Richard II* 1961-1968
- b. 3 f. 1 *Uncle Vanya* 1970-1971  
*Woyzeck*
- b. 3 f. 3-5 1968-1969
- o. 1 1969  
Set design.
- origsr.221191 1970s  
Sound recording  
Available by appointment only.

- Production Files (cont.)
  - Woyzeck (cont.)
    - origsr.221193 1970s
      - Sound recording
      - Available by appointment only.
  - b. 3 f. 6-7 *The Winter's Tale* 1963
    - o. 1 *The Winter's Tale* 1963
      - Set design.
  - b. 3 f. 8 Biographical File 1931-1971
- Professional Files
  - b. 4 f. 1-3 1946-1987
    - o. 1 1965
      - Preliminary stage plans of The Public Theater and The Little Theatre.
  - b. 4 f. 4-6 Programs and Clippings 1944-1988
  - b. 5 f. 1-6 Scores 1930s-1940s