

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

THEATER

I. SCOPE

This overview considers theater holdings in the Library both published and unpublished. Theater is defined as performance on stage or on an analog to a stage, and encompasses legitimate theater, music theater, puppetry, vaudeville, minstrelsy, revue, burlesque, circus, chautauqua, and related art forms. This statement addresses all forms of primary and secondary documentation on theatrical (dramatic) literature and production, history, criticism, and theory.

II. SIZE

There are extensive theater holdings in published form, special collections, and in unpublished copyright deposits. Although no overall count of the theater collections has been maintained, a search of the ILS (conducted in September 2008) yielded the following figures from the P (Literature) class: PN 1560 to PN 6120 (48,290 items). Other theater classifications include GV (Circuses, Spectacles, Etc. – 1,663 items); KF (Law of the United States – 16 items); NA, NC and ND (Fine Arts – 1,508 items); NX (Arts in General – 13,874 items); TK (Technology in Theater – 58 items); and Z (Bibliography, Library Science – 218 items). The ML class of libretti contains some 60,000 items.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

General areas of strength in theater include dramatic literature, criticism, analysis and history; biography; and social and cultural history as it relates to theater. While its greatest concentration is in United States material, the Library also has great strength in other areas of the Western world, and in Chinese and Japanese materials.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

The Library's collection of unpublished dramas deposited for copyright since 1870 is in itself a formidable basis for the study of American theatrical, social, cultural, and literary history. The collection includes scripts from American musical comedy, burlesque, the legitimate stage, and vaudeville. In addition, the Library has extremely extensive holdings in published dramatic literature, both United States and foreign, including the Francis Longe Collection of theater works published in English between 1607 and 1812,

which is particularly rich in the works of lesser known seventeenth century figures; and the Raymond Toinet Collection of French literature, which contains a significant number of editions of plays, primarily of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Library's collection of music theater libretti is exceptional, many rare publications from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The libretti include Italian, French, German, Russian, and English publications.

The Library's collection of incunabula includes many dramas, as well as copies of the 1599 Quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the First Folio edition (1623), the Quarto edition (1619) of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and copies of the 1632, 1664, and 1685 folios.

In the area of classic and contemporary non-Western drama, the Asian Division's collection of original Chinese language plays is very sizable. Its collection of Japanese plays is quite comprehensive in its coverage of No, Kabuki, and Kyogen titles. The Library's Federal Theater Project materials are especially important. The FTP was a WPA project, which had important cultural importance as the first instance of U.S. government support for stage performance activities. This very sizable collection includes materials of many different kinds including scripts, music scores, and iconography.

Manuscript collections are particularly rich in papers of women prominent in the American theater, some of whom were also active abroad. Among these women were Laura Keane and Charlotte Cushman (both actress-managers); Minnie Maddern Fiske, Margaret Webster, Jessica Tandy, and Ruth Gordon.

Lyric stage collections afford the researcher perhaps the single most important and powerful resource to be found anywhere for the study of American musical theater. A number of these collections contain quantities of stage production and business material, in addition to a wealth of musical scores. Persons represented in lyric stage collection include George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Sigmund Romberg, Leonard Bernstein, Vernon Duke, Robert Merrill, Vincent Youmans, Arthur Schwartz, and Victor Herbert.

In the Irving Berlin collection are scripts, posters and theater programs, photographs, and considerable business material. The George and Ira Gershwin Collection is the largest public collection of original source materials for the study of the work and life of the Gershwins. It includes, in addition to virtually all of the major Gershwin works in autograph manuscript as well as holograph sketches and scores, scrapbooks, financial records, contracts, correspondence, telegrams and scripts for Gershwin's stage and film productions. The Oscar Hammerstein II collection covers his early musicals, for which he wrote both "book" and lyrics, as well as his later collaboration with Richard Rodgers. The collection also contains scripts, notes, librettos, correspondence, pictorial materials, playbills from a variety of places, and awards. The Library also holds material on Bob Fosse, director-choreographer, the director, Joshua Logan, and producer David Merrick, all with a role in lyric theater.

Among more than 10,000 posters in the Library's Prints and Photographs collections are 5,000 19th century lithographs, chromolithographs, and woodcuts pertaining to circus, rodeo, minstrelsy, specialty acts, burlesque, magic, vaudeville, opera, operetta, and theater.

Theater photographs include original daguerreotypes from the middle of the 19th century of Jenny Lind and Junius Brutus Booth and original Matthew Brady glass plate negatives. There are also portraits of theater personalities by noted theatrical photographers; photographs in the Minnie Maddern Fiske photographic collection; and photographs by Alfred Cheney Johnston of numerous Ziegfeld showgirls and prominent New York musical comedy personalities. Documentation on theater buildings includes drawings, historical prints, and various types of photographs, spanning the period from 1798 to the present, including materials from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER).

The Library's collection of stage design materials is growing. The Federal Theatre Project archives includes the largest single grouping of stage design in the custody of the Library. In addition to these are holdings of various quantities of design of Oliver Smith, Tony Walton, Robert Edmond Jones, Peggy Clark, Lester Horton, and Bronislava Nijinska.

The audio-visual collections comprise one of the Library's largest holdings. It includes recordings of dramatic stage and musical theater and radio theater, film adaptations of many plays, American and foreign, tape archives which include many play productions.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Library of Congress makes available a variety of Web projects and subscription databases related to theater. Accessible both internally and externally are presentations in the Library's *American Memory* site; among these subjects are Zora Neale Hurston (Custodial Division-Manuscript); selected Federal Theatre Project materials Custodial Division-Music); and the Variety Stage (Custodial Divisions: several). The Library's *Performing Arts Encyclopedia* includes brief overviews of selected collections, Web presentations, database, and resource description relevant to the theater. Representing multiple divisions, these includes: Roger L. Stevens Presents – Exhibit – Web presentation; The Wizard of Oz: On Stage and Film – Exhibit – Web presentation; The Zora Neale Hurston Plays at the Library of Congress – Web presentation; Shakespeare on Film and Television – resource description; Show music on record – database; and information on collections of materials relating to Bob Hope, Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine, P. G. Wodehouse Collection, Peggy Clark, David Merrick, Harriet Hctor, Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon, Frederick Loewe, and Cole Porter.

Online finding aids for collections with a relation to theater include: Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy Papers, Charlotte Cushman Papers, Sam Jaffe Papers, Garson Kanin Papers, Lucy Kroll Papers, Joshua Logan Papers, Clare Boothe Luce Papers, MacDowell

Colony, Archibald MacLeish Papers, and Arnold Moss Papers (all in the Manuscript Division); Federal Theatre Project archives (limited searching capability), Vernon Duke Collection, Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon Collection, Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Collection, Jerome Kern Collection, National Negro Opera Collection, and Cole Porter Collection (all in the Music Division); and King Lear Archive: preparatory materials for an illustrated edition of King Lear (in Rare Book and Special Collections Division).

Among the subscription Sources of theater reference value, available at public works stations within the Library only are *Dramatic Personae Archive*; *International Index to the Performing Arts*; *Internet Resources for Music, Theater, and Dance*; *MLA International Bibliography*; *Performing Arts in America, 1875 -1923*; *Play Index*; *Contemporary Authors*; *CESAR*; *Credo Reference: Music & Theatre*; *Internet Broadway Database*; *Iter Gateway to the Renaissance and Middle Ages*; *Oxford Reference Online: Humanities and Social Sciences*; *SIBMAS International Directory of Performing Arts Collections and Institutions*; *Asian American Drama*; *Cambridge History of English and American Literature*; *E-Journals in Music, Dance, Drama & Film*; *English Prose Drama Database*; *JSTOR Arts and Sciences*; *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*; and *Digital Dissertations*.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

The Library does not collect materials on amateur theatrical production. This excludes community theater as a collection point.