



## The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

### **J.J. Robbins papers**

1893-1953 [bulk 1911-1953]

MssCol 2585

Processed by Julie Miller.

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Robbins, John Jacob, 1895-1950

**Title:** J.J. Robbins papers

**Date:** 1893-1953 [bulk 1911-1953]

**Source:** Gift of Mrs. Cesare Stea (Florence Robbins, sister), 1958; 1962; 1968

**Abstract:** Collection consists of correspondence, writings of Robbins and others, personal and legal papers, photographs, sketches, and printed matter. Correspondence, 1911-1953, concerns literary, theatrical and translating work as well as personal matters. Robbins's writings, 1910s-1940s, make up the bulk of the collection and include manuscripts and typescripts of his articles, plays, poems, stories, and parts of novels, and his translations of writings of other authors in Yiddish and Russian. Also, family papers and documents, photographs, sketches, and programs and printed materials from theaters with which Robbins was affiliated.

**Preferred citation:** John Jacob Robbins Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

**Language of the Material:** Some items in Yiddish, Russian and French English

**Processing note:** Processed by Julie Miller; machine readable finding aid created by APEX data services and revised by Chatham Ewing.

### **Creator History**

J.J., or Jack, Robbins was an author, editor, poet, stage director, teacher of theater, and translator (chiefly from Russian and Yiddish) in New York. He was affiliated with the Actors' Ensemble Theater, American Theater Ensemble, Impromptu Theater, Leonardo da Vinci Art School (theater department), New Theater School, the Professional School of the Theater at the 92nd Street YMHA, and other theaters and theater schools. He edited literary and theatrical journals including *East and West*, *Impromptu*, *J.R.'s Magazine*, and others. From approximately 1917-1918 Robbins served as head of the translation department of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a New York Yiddish language newspaper. His published translations include: *A Sheaf From Lermontov* (1923), *Azure Cities: Stories of New*

*Russia*(1929), and Constantin Stanislavsky's *My Life in Art*(1952). During the 1920s, apparently during trips to Russia, Robbins was an assistant to Constantin Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theater, USSR. From 1921-1936 he was assistant to Nikita Balieff at Balieff's *La Chauve-Souris*.

Robbins was involved with the Ferrer Colony, Stelton, New Jersey, from 1918-1920s, serving as the principal of the Colony's Modern School, editor of its magazine *Modern Education*, and founder and director of the theatrical group the Stelton Players. His family appears to have had a house at the "Jewish Colony" at Chatham, New Jersey.

## Scope and Content Note

Correspondence, 1911-1953, some undated, consists primarily of letters and postcards received by Robbins, in English, with some in Russian and a few in French. A few drafts of Robbins' letters are included. Letters post-dating his death are addressed to his widow, Constance. Correspondence concerns literary, theatrical, and translating work, and personal matters. Some Ferrer Colony matters are also discussed. Letters are from literary and theatrical colleagues; magazine editors; book publishers; authors' representatives; friends; and family members. Frequent or prominent correspondents include: Leonard D. Abbott, Scholom Asch(authorizing Robbins to sell five of his one-act plays, 1915), William Rose Benet, Richard Boleslavsky, H.W.L. Dana, Ossip Dymow, Frances M. Gill, B.W. Huebsch, Alexander Koiransky, Maxim Lieber, David Liebovitz, Edwin Markham, Ralph R. ("Wad") Perry, Constantin Stanislavsky, Lewis Untermeyer, Abraham Yarmolinsky, Stark Young, Marya Zaturenska, others.

Also included are programs and other printed material from theaters with which Robbins was affiliated; theater mailing lists; statements and legal documents relating to various theater projects; stage design sketches. Personal material includes: portrait photographs of Robbins and of Bertha Robbins, his mother; a portrait sketch of Robbins; minutes of an investigation, 1927, probably at the Jewish Colony, Chatham, N.J.; letters and documents, in Yiddish, of Robbins' father, Shmolvitch Rabinovitch; and a document, 1893, in Russian, certifying that Daba Shliomovna Rabinovitch of Minsk Province is Jewish. The document is signed by a rabbi, and was part of an application for higher education.

Robbins' writings, both original writings and English translations, make up the bulk of the collection. They include manuscripts and typescripts of Robbins' articles, plays, poems, stories, and parts of novels, in English, ca. 1910s-1940s. Articles are on literary, theatrical, and musical topics, and include Robbins' impressions of Chaim Soudeikine and Constantin Stanislavsky. Plays, *A Breath of Life*, and *Children Never Forget*, were written in collaboration with Stanley Lewis and Z. Libin, respectively. Robbins' English translations of stories, plays, poetry, essays, and other writings are chiefly from Yiddish and Russian. Authors translated include: Scholom Asch, Chaim Nachman Bialik, Alexander Blok, Boris Baykoff, Mikhail Bulgakov, Ossip Dymow, Ilya Ehrenberg, Viacheslav Ivanov, Vsevolod Ivanov, Jehoash (pseud.), I.A. Krylov, Simeon Frug, I.L. Peretz, Mikhail Prishvin, V.I. Shishkov, M. Volkov, Maximilian Voleshin, and Panteleimon Romanov. Of note are manuscript and typescript versions of Robbins' translation of the complete poems of the Yiddish poet Abraham Liessin in three volumes (the third is incomplete).

Unidentified writings in Yiddish and Russian; typescript excerpts, in Russian, of *My Life in Art*; and unsigned writings and writings by other authors (Sandro Corona, Alexander Koiransky, others) are included.

**Arrangement:** Six series: I. Correspondence, 1911-1953; II. Personal and Theatrical Papers, 1893-ca.

1940s; III. Writings, ca. 1910s-1940s; IV. Translations; V. Writings in Yiddish and Russian; VI. Writings by Other or Unidentified Authors

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

American literature -- 20th century  
American poetry -- 20th century  
Russian literature -- 20th century -- Translations  
Theater  
Yiddish literature -- Translations

### **Occupations**

Authors  
Poets  
Translators

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Photographic prints  
Sketches

### **Names**

Robbins, John Jacob, 1895-1950  
Abbott, Leonard Dalton, 1878-1953  
Asch, Sholem, 1880-1957  
Baykoff, Boris  
Bene\_t, William Rose, 1886-1950  
Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, 1873-1934  
Blok, A. (Aleksandr), 1852-1910  
Boleslavsky, Richard, 1889-1937  
Bulgakov, Mikhail, 1891-1940  
Dana, Henry W. L.  
Dymow, Ossip, 1878-1959  
E\_renburg, Il\_i\_a\_, 1891-1967  
Frug, S. G. (Semen Grigor\_evich), 1860-1916  
Gill, Frances McLaughlin  
Huebsch, B. W. (Benjamin W.), 1876-1964  
Ivanov, V. I. (Vi\_a\_cheslav Ivanovich), 1866-1949  
Ivanov, Vsevolod Vi\_a\_cheslavovich, 1895-1963  
Koiransky, Alexander  
Krylov, Ivan Andreevich, 1768-1844  
Lieber, Maxim, 1897-  
Liebovitz, David, 1892-1968  
Liessin, Abraham, 1872-1938  
Markham, Edwin, 1852-1940  
Peretz, Isaac Leib, 1851 or 1852-1915  
Perry, Ralph R.  
Prishvin, Mikhail Mikhail\_ovich, 1873-1954  
Romanov, Pantelei\_mon, 1884-1938  
Shishkov, V. I\_A\_. (Vi\_a\_cheslav I\_A\_kovlevich), 1873-1945  
Stanislavsky, Konstantin, 1863-1938  
Untermeyer, Louis, 1885-1977  
Voleshin, Maximilian  
Volkov, M.

Yarmolinsky, Avrahm, 1890-1975  
Young, Stark, 1881-1963  
Zaturenska, Marya, 1902-1982  
Ferrer Colony (Stelton, N.J.)

## Container List

- b. 1 I. Correspondence 1911-1953
- b. 2 II. Personal and theatrical papers 1893-ca. 1940s
- III. Writings ca.1910s-1940s
  - b. 2 a. Articles
  - b. 2-4 b. Plays
  - b. 4-5 c. Poetry
  - b. 5-6 d. Stories and novels
  - b. 5-6 e. Translations
  - b. 7 A-L; A. Liessin, Vol. I
  - b. 8 A. Liessin, Vol. I cont'd.; Vol. II
  - b. 9 A. Liessin, Vol. II cont'd.; Vol. III (incomplete)
  - b. 10 P-V; translations of poetry.
  - b. 11 f. Writings in Yiddish and Russian
  - b. 12 g. Writings by other or unidentified authors