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Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Claire Leonard papers

1936-1975, 1992

*T-Mss 1992-008

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013

Summary

Creator: Leonard, Claire, 1903-1992

Title: Claire Leonard papers

Date: 1936-1975, 1992

Size: 22.6 linear feet (56 boxes)

Source: Donated by Norma Klayman in 1992.

Abstract: Claire Leonard (1903-1992) was a New York City literary agent who specialized in representing emerging playwrights. The collection (1936-1975, 1992) holds correspondence, writings, scripts, and promotional material relating to Leonard's representation of playwrights and to her writing of editorial columns and books.

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Processing note: Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2013 Original order was maintained. Materials in deteriorating folders were rehoused and the folder titles maintained.

Creator History

Claire Leonard (1903-1992) was a New York City literary agent who specialized in representing emerging playwrights from the 1920s through the 1960s. Leonard was employed as a stenographer and general secretary by producer and director Cheryl Crawford during the early years of the Group Theatre in the 1930s. She was also affiliated with the original Provincetown Players and The Theatre Guild. Leonard established a literary agency in 1938 that was devoted exclusively to discovering and introducing playwrights to the professional theater. Among the playwrights she represented were Philip Yordan, A.B. Shiffrin, Robert Thom, John Lynn, Sidney Michaels, Philip Van Dyke, and Robert McEnroe. From 1961 to 1965, Leonard wrote a column for Backstage entitled "Launching New Playwrights," in which she discussed the work of new playwrights through reviews and interviews.

In the late 1960s, Leonard began focusing more on her writing projects, including the unpublished *Page to Stage: A Play Agent's Dossier*, and *Playwrights I Have Loved and Lost (or Comes Success)*. These books reflected her longtime experience promoting plays and guiding the playwriting process. In 1971, she published *Launching Your Play: The First Guide for Playwrights from the Practical Approach and Services of a Play Agent*.

Claire Leonard died in Waterford, Connecticut in 1992.

Scope and Content Note

The collection (1936-1975, 1992) holds correspondence, writings, scripts, contract agreements, and promotional material relating to Leonard's representation of playwrights and to her writing of editorial columns and books. The collection also contains a small amount of personal correspondence between Leonard and friends and family.

The bulk of the collection is comprised of Leonard's literary agent files. The files are arranged alphabetically by playwright or subject and hold correspondence, reviews by play-readers, box office statements, royalty agreements, and newspaper clippings. One file containing miscellaneous materials precedes the alphabetical run. Correspondence reflects Leonard's deep involvement with her clients' play-writing through her close inspection of scripts, proposed edits, and discussions of ideas for new plays. Contract agreements for the production of plays, publishing information, and the sending and receiving of scripts are also discussed in detail. Correspondents include playwrights, publishing companies, and theater producers and directors. Examples of subjects in the agent files include actors, contracts, the Playwrights' Arena, press releases, producers, and television. This collection contains several boilerplates created by Leonard. Each plate consists of portions of type or handwritten letters adhered together. These plates are heavily annotated with notes and dates. In general, the correspondence on the plates are from playwrights inquiring about Leonard reviewing their plays, responses to her feedback, or her rejection letters. While some individual agent files may contain boilerplates, folders containing only the boilerplates are also present. "M.P." files, labeled by the creator, are arranged in a separate alphabetical run (by playwright) following the agent files. M.P. files contain correspondence, promotional material, and boilerplates relating to playwrights Leonard represented. Among the several playwrights represented in this collection are Phillip Yordan, A.B. Shiffrin, Robert Thom, Robert E. McEnroe, Sydney Michaels, Philip Van Dyke, and Norman Vane. Productions discussed in the agent files include *Anna Lucasta*, *Angel in the Pawnshop*, *I Like It Here*, and *The Silver Whistle*, among others.

Files that relate to Philip Yordan's work, *Anna Lucasta*, are extensive and document Yordan and Leonard's relationship from the book's initial publication in 1936 through its several materializations on the stage and in film. Regional and international productions are documented through contract agreements between Yordan, Leonard, and various theater and film producers; correspondence; script excerpts; and programs. Correspondence ranges from purely professional logistics regarding agreements and productions, to more lighthearted notes between Yordan and Leonard. Royalties, advertising, and a Yiddish adaptation of the play are documented in detail. Another of Yordan's works, *Any Day Now*, is also represented in this collection.

Files relating to playwright A.B. Shiffrin cover his works *Angel in a Pawnshop* and *I Like It Here*. Correspondence reflects Leonard's involvement with almost every aspect of Shiffrin's writing career. Book publication reprints, changes in scripts for various adaptations, and communicative efforts between other agents, producers, directors, and the media are documented. Royalty earnings, box

office returns, and regional productions are among other topics of correspondence. Royalty statements from Samuel French and Dramatists Play Service document the sale of Shiffrin's works.

This collection holds scripts written by playwrights that Leonard represented. Works by Roscoe Brink, Robert McEnroe, Jack Perry, A.B. Shiffrin, Robert Thom, Charles Anghoff, Phillip Yordan, Helen Hanff, R.C. Lesser, and Meyer Levin are included, among others. Scripts are both dated and undated, annotated and unannotated.

Professional files in this collection hold correspondence, column and novel drafts, notes on plays Leonard reviewed, articles, and programs. Her column, "Launching New Playwrights," is represented through correspondence with editors, fan mail, and drafts and clippings of the columns. Early drafts of her published guide, *Launching Your Play: The First Guide for Playwrights from the Practical Approach and Services of a Play Agent*, are present. Professional files also hold drafts, notes, synopses, and correspondence relating to two of her unpublished works, *Page to Stage: Play Agent's Dossier* and *Playwrights I Have Loved and Lost (or Comes Success)*. The collection also holds two stamps with Leonard's contact information and a hand-held embosser for her representation of Philip Yordan's *Anna Lucasta*.

Leonard's work with the Group Theatre is documented through correspondence and written accounts of the time she spent with some of the members of the group, including Alexander Kirkland, Melvin Levy, Margaret Barker, and Robert Hethmon. Meetings with the group and one summer tour are documented in detail. Summaries of the Group's mission, meeting minutes, correspondence, and notes dating from 1936 to 1938 are here.

This collection holds a limited amount of personal and family-related documents. Primarily composed of correspondence, the files reveal Leonard's close relationship with her niece, Ethel Booth, widow of British aristocrat and television producer Sir Philip Booth.

The collection is predominately in English with some material in Hebrew, German, and Chinese.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged into four categories: Agent Files; Scripts; Professional Associations, Activities, and Writing; and Personal Material. Personal Material is arranged chronologically; all other categories are arranged alphabetically by playwright or subject.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Manuscripts for publication
Scripts

Occupations

Literary agents
Playwrights

Subjects

Playwriting
Theater

Names

McEnroe, Robert E. (Robert Edward), 1916-1998
Morris, Aldyth, 1901-
Shiffrin, A. B. (Abraham B.)
Thom, Robert, 1929-1979
Yordan, Philip
Group Theatre (U.S.)

Container List

Agent Files

- b. 56 f. 3 1945-1969
- b. 1 f. 1 Actors 1954-1959
- b. 1 f. 2 Anderson, Walt 1852-1968
- b. 1 f. 3-11 Anghoff, Charles 1944-1967
- b. 1 f. 12 A-Miscellaneous 1963-1964
- b. 2 f. 1 Bilowit, Ira 1960
- b. 2 f. 2-10 Boilerplates 1942-1968
- b. 3 f. 1-4 Boilerplates 1948-1968
- b. 3 f. 5-9 Brink, Roscoe 1934-1966
- b. 4 f. 1 C-Miscellaneous 1951-1962
- b. 4 f. 2-3 Caulfield, Edward 1946-1969
- b. 4 f. 4 Coast 1949-1956
- b. 4 f. 5 Contests 1956-1960
- b. 4 f. 6-10 Contracts 1938-1962
- b. 4 f. 11 D-Miscellaneous 1958-1966
- b. 4 f. 12 Davidson, Richard 1956-1966
- b. 4 f. 13 Data for Playwrights 1949-1968
- b. 5 f. 1-2 DeBlasio, Edward 1949-1968
- b. 5 f. 3-5 Dwenger, Richard 1938-1955
- b. 5 f. 6-7 Easterlin, Malcolm 1954-1959
- b. 5 f. 8 Elliott, John 1951-1952
- b. 5 f. 9 H-J 1951-1963
- b. 5 f. 10 Johannes, Vivian 1942-1946
- b. 5 f. 11 Herlihy, James Leo 1949-1964
- b. 5 f. 12 K 1943-1966
- b. 5 f. 13 Kennedy, Frank M 1957-1967
- b. 5 f. 14 Kohen, Buz (Alan) 1966-1970
- b. 6 f. 1 Lucas, Joseph 1949-1965
- b. 6 f. 2-8 Lucas, Michael 1941-1962
- b. 6 f. 9-14 Lynn, John 1946-1963
- b. 7 f. 1 Lynn, John 1962-1965
- b. 7 f. 2-15 McEnroe, Robert E 1947-1967
- b. 8 f. 1-10 McEnroe, Robert E 1947-1968
- b. 8 f. 11 Meltzer, Lewis 1938-1943, 1968
- b. 8 f. 12 Michaels, Sidney 1955-1968
- b. 9 f. 1-4 Michaels, Sidney 1952-1956
- b. 9 f. 5 New Dramatists' Committee 1962
- b. 9 f. 6 New Plays Inc 1941-1961

Agent Files (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 7 N-O-P 1945-1958
- b. 9 f. 8 Obey, Andre 1953-1955
- b. 9 f. 9 Pasadena Playhouse 1940-1941
- b. 9 f. 10-11 Patterson, McEnvoy 1949-1968
- b. 9 f. 12 Perry, Charles 1953-1956
- b. 9 f. 13-15 Playwright's Arena 1938-1968
- b. 9 f. 16 Playwright's Guide 1953-1968
- b. 9 f. 17 Press Releases 1947-1961
- b. 9 f. 18 Producers 1955-1965
- b. 9 f. 19 Q-R-S 1952-1967
- b. 10 f. 1-2 Rejection Letters 1942-1968
- b. 10 f. 3 Sanford, Gerald 1957-1960
- b. 10 f. 4 Schenker, J.W 1944-1966
- b. 10 f. 5 Schechter and Clark 1937-1968
- Shiffrin, A.B
- b. 10 f. 6-12 1944-1964
- b. 11 f. 1-20 1946-1970
- b. 12 f. 1-13 1948-1966
- b. 13 f. 1-2 Silver, Warren 1946-1959
- b. 13 f. 3 Smith, Robert 1956
- b. 13 f. 4 Special Authors 1968
- b. 13 f. 5 Summit, Mildred 1942-1968
- b. 13 f. 6 Television 1951-1960
- Thom, Robert
- b. 14 f. 1-10 1948-1964
- b. 13 f. 7-14 1953-1965
- b. 15 f. 1-2 1957-1961
- b. 15 f. 3-9 Tong, Averil 1952-1968
- b. 15 f. 10 T-W Miscellaneous 1954-1967
- b. 15 f. 11 U-V 1938-1968
- b. 15 f. 12-14 Van Dyke, Philip 1939-1968
- b. 16 f. 1-6 Van Dyke, Philip 1939-1968
- b. 16 f. 7-12 Wade, Alyce 1949-1967
- b. 17 f. 1 Wildeberg, John 1950-1961
- Yordan, Philip
- b. 18 f. 1-12 1937-1964
- b. 19 f. 1-22 1939-1969
- b. 17 f. 2-14 1942-1964
- b. 20 f. 1-14 1944-1967
- b. 21 f. 1-19 1944-1968
- b. 22 f. 1-14 1944-1968

Agent Files (cont.)
Yordan, Philip (cont.)

- b. 54 1940s-1960s
 Two printing plates
- b. 23 f. 1 1968
- b. 23 f. 2 X-Z
- M.P. Files
- b. 23 f. 2-11 A-P 1937-1968
- b. 24 f. 1-9 P-Z 1949-1968
- Scripts
- b. 25 f. 1 Anghoff, Charles 1945
 Something to Sing About
- b. 25 f. 2-3 Asermely, Al 1960-1963
 The Parsley Life; An Untitled Play
- b. 25 f. 4 Booth, Philip 1940
 Brief Majesty
- b. 25 f. 5-10 Brink, Roscoe 1937-1950s
 B. Free Franklin; Catskill Dutch; Carry Me Back (with Ben Batsford); *The Price for Her Love;*
 Mister Grant (with Leon Michael)
- b. 56 f. 4 Brink, Roscoe 1950s
 Bride of the Man
- b. 26 f. 1 Davidson, Michael 1938
 Chocolate
- b. 26 f. 2-6 DeBlasio, Edward 1955
 Flowers for 2-B; Charlie, My Boy (with Benny Baker)
- b. 26 f. 7 Dyne, Michael 1953
 Another Cesar
- b. 26 f. 8 Easterlin, Malcolm 1955
 The Early Rose
- b. 26 f. 9-10 Hill, Abram 1946
 Walk Hard
- b. 26 f. 11 Hopkins, Arthur 1947
 At Evening
- b. 27 f. 1 Hopkins, Arthur 1947
 Is This the King?
- b. 27 f. 2-3 Johannes, Vivian 1945-1950
 Prelude to France; The Cup of Trembling
- b. 27 f. 4 Kerner, Ben 1965
 All Women Are One
- b. 27 f. 5 Lash, Isaac 1947
 Anna Lucasta (Hebrew version)
- b. 27 f. 6-7 Lesser, R.C 1961-1962
 A Terror Since September
- b. 27 f. 8 Levin, Meyer 1957
 Compulsion
- b. 28 f. 1-3 Levin, Meyer 1957-1959
 Compulsion
- b. 28 f. 4 Lidor, Alexander 1950
 Springboard to Nowhere

Scripts (cont.)

- b. 28 f. 5 **Linvingston, Harold Ellis 1950**
Destination Israel
- b. 28 f. 6-10 **Lynn, John 1958-1961**
A Hero to His Son; Up in the Old Gum Tree; Shivaree; The Other Shape; Affair at the Double Rainbow
- b. 29 f. 1-2 **Lynn, John 1960-1961**
A Hero to His Son; Up in the Old Gum Tree
- b. 29 f. 3-9 **McEnroe, Robert 1945-1968**
The Silver Whistle; Oliver Erwenter; Summer Motley; Mulligan's Snug
- b. 30 f. 1-2 **McEnroe, Robert 1947**
Die Silberflöte (The Silver Whistle); Mulligan's Snug
- b. 30 f. 3-4 **Meltzer, S.L 1960**
They All Came in Tuxedos; Storm Boy
- b. 30 f. 5 **Merrill, James 1954-1955**
The Immortal Husband
- b. 30 f. 6-9 **Michaels, Sidney 1953-1961**
The Plaster Bambino; Passing Fancy (with Mark Sandrich); The Three-Toed Pony; The Sea Wall
- Morris, Aldyth**
- b. 53 f. 1 **1954-1955**
The Fourth Son hard cover script with photographs
- b. 30 f. 10-13 **1954-1956**
The Carefree Tree; The Secret Concubine; Ssu Lang T'an Mu (The Carefree Tree, translated from a Chinese version by Fook-Tan Ching) The Carefree Tree; The Secret Concubine; Ssu Lang T'an Mu (The Carefree Tree, translated from a Chinese version by Fook-Tan Ching)
- b. 31 f. 1-12 **1954-1960**
The Carefree Tree; The Fourth Son; The Secret Concubine; Firepit; Harvest Time; Foresaking All Others; The Carefree Tree (adapted for television) The Carefree Tree; The Fourth Son; The Secret Concubine; Firepit; Harvest Time; Foresaking All Others; The Carefree Tree (adapted for television)
- b. 32 f. 1-8 **1963-1968**
Sword and Samurai; The Damien Letter; Tusitala
- b. 32 f. 9 **Morley, Robert and Langley, Noel 1949**
Edward, My Son
- b. 32 f. 10 **Maurette, Mercelle 1956**
Tatiana
- b. 33 f. 1-2 **Patterson, McEnvoy 1947, 1952**
Souvenirs; Elim
- b. 33 f. 3-7 **Perry, Jack 1960-1973**
Easy Does It; The Indoor Sport; The Marriage Gap; The Main Attraction; The Snow Job (with George Eastman)
- b. 33 f. 8 **Play Bureau-Federal Theatre Project 1936**
- b. 34 f. 1 **Sanford, Gerald 1960**
Take Heart
- b. 34 f. 2 **Shecter, Louis E. and Clark, Norman 1937**
In Garfinckee's Window

Scripts (cont.)

- b. 34 f. 3-9 **Shiffrin, A.B 1951-1960**
Angel in the Pawnshop; Märchen in der Pfandleihanstalt (Angel in the Pawnshop adapted by Leo Mittler); Ein Engel in de Lommerd (Angel in the Pawnshop trans. Willy Van Hemert); A Wind is Rising; A Comedy in Two Acts; A Burst of SummerAngel in the Pawnshop; Märchen in der Pfandleihanstalt (Angel in the Pawnshop adapted by Leo Mittler); Ein Engel in de Lommerd (Angel in the Pawnshop trans. Willy Van Hemert); A Wind is Rising; A Comedy in Two Acts; A Burst of SummerAngel in the Pawnshop; Märchen in der Pfandleihanstalt (Angel in the Pawnshop adapted by Leo Mittler); Ein Engel in de Lommerd (Angel in the Pawnshop trans. Willy Van Hemert); A Wind is Rising; A Comedy in Two Acts; A Burst of Summer
- b. 35 f. 1-11 **Shiffrin, A.B 1946-1960**
Guests on This Earth; I Like It Here; A Burst of Summer; Angel in the Pawnshop
Thom, Robert
- b. 36 f. 1-13 **1954-1956**
Don't Let Johnny Die; Sailing to Byzantium; The Minotaur
- b. 37 f. 1-10 **1956-1958**
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose; The Minotaur; Tiger Spring
- b. 38 f. 1-9 **1957-1963**
The Minotaur; Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose; The Sun-Dial; The Wake of Althea; Dangerfield; The Earthly Paradise
- b. 39 f. 1 **Thompson, Robert E 1957**
Laugh a Little Tear
- b. 39 f. 2-4 **Unknown Playwrights 1940-1955**
Script excerpts
- b. 39 f. 5-9 **Usigli, Rodolfo 1946-1967**
The Boy and the Mist; Another Springtime; The Great Gesture; Crown of Shadows
- b. 39 f. 10 **Van Druten, John 1943**
The Voice of the Turtle
- b. 40 f. 1-5 **Van Dyke, Philip 1938-1947**
Life Sentence; A Girl and Her Hounds; The Little Catherine
- b. 40 f. 6-9 **Vane, Norman 1950-1957**
The Fish are Dying in the Sea; O'Malley the Duck; The Moon is a Clock
- b. 41 f. 1-4 **Vane, Norman 1956-1960**
The Duck; O'Malley the Duck; The Fish are Dying in the SeaThe Duck; O'Malley the Duck; The Fish are Dying in the Sea
- b. 41 f. 5 **Vaux, Henry Allen 1950**
Bride of the Moon
- b. 41 f. 6-8 **Yordan, Philip 1938, 1941**
Any Day Now; Anna Lucasta
- b. 42 f. 1-9 **Yordan, Philip 1944-1968**
Anna Lucasta (English and Hebrew versions); Joe Macbeth; Danny Boy
- Professional Associations, Activities, and Writings**
- b. 43 f. 1 **Advertising 1949-1960**
- b. 43 f. 2 **American Negro Theatre 1944**
- b. 43 f. 3 **Book 1965-1969**
- b. 43 f. 4-10 **Correspondence 1937-1975**
- b. 56 f. 5 **Correspondence 1940-1989**
- b. 43 f. 11-12 **Dramatists' Guild 1939-1966**
- b. 43 f. 13 **Dramatists' Play Service 1940-1941**
- b. 43 f. 14-17 **Fellowships, Grants, Foundations 1958-1966**

Professional Associations, Activities, and Writings (cont.)

- b. 44 f. 1-5 Group Theatre 1938-1967
- b. 44 f. 6 Miscellaneous 1952-1969
- b. 56 f. 1-2 Photographs 1940s-1950s
- b. 44 f. 7-10 Programs 1941-1958
- b. 45 f. 1-2 Programs 1951-1974
- b. 45 f. 3 Quotes 1968
- b. 55 Stamps and Embosser 1940s
- b. 45 f. 4-6 Theatre Arts Magazine 1944-1958
- b. 45 f. 7 Writer's Yearbook 1956

Writing

- b. 56 f. 6 1948-1968
- b. 45 f. 8-11 Column 1961-1963
for *Backstage*
- b. 46 f. 1-13 Column 1961-1964
Comes Success
- b. 46 f. 15-17 1940s-1968
- b. 47 f. 1-8 1964-1969
- b. 48 f. 1-4 1966
- b. 48 f. 5 *Double Exposure* 1964-1965
- b. 48 f. 6 *From Page to Stage* 1961
Launching Your Play
- b. 48 f. 7-12 1939-1968
- b. 49 f. 1-7 1949-1970
- b. 50 f. 1-2 1968, 1971
- b. 56 f. 7-8 1969-1970
- b. 50 f. 3 *My Block* 1954
- b. 50 f. 4-8 Notes 1940-1970
- b. 50 f. 9-13 Yaddo 1962
- b. 56 f. 9 Yaddo 1962

Personal Material

- b. 51 f. 1-12 1938-1968, 1992
- b. 52 f. 1-4 1965-1970