



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Thomas R. Dash scrapbooks

1925-1971

*T-Mss 2012-030

Compiled by Brynn White, CUNY Queens College 2014, 2013

Summary

Creator: Dash, Thomas R.

Title: Thomas R. Dash scrapbooks

Date: 1925-1971

Size: 4.75 linear feet (10 boxes)

Source: Gift of Naomi Newman, 1984.

Abstract: The Thomas R. Dash scrapbooks (1925-1971) document the work of drama and film critic Thomas R. Dash, offering a weekly, sometimes daily, glimpse into the New York theatre scene. The collection features column and review clippings from the publications *Women's Wear Daily*, *Daily News Record*, *Retailing-Home Furnishings*, *Show Business*, and *Backstage*, and an alphabetical index of reviews.

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Creator History

Critic Thomas R. Dash (1897-1991) wrote about New York theatre for nearly fifty years, chiefly as a reviewer and columnist for *Women's Wear Daily* and *Show Business*. He graduated with a degree in journalism from Columbia University in 1918, and joined Fairchild Publications a year later, filling various editorial positions while contributing drama and film reviews to the Fairfield papers *Daily News Record*, *Retailing-Home Furnishings*, and *Women's Wear Daily*, their popular garment industry trade paper.

Dash accompanied original *Women's Wear Daily* theatre critic Kelcey Allen to performances,

occasionally writing the reviews himself and signing Allen's name. In 1947, he succeeded Allen in his post at Women's Wear Daily. Quotations from Dash's subsequent reviews frequently appeared on marquees and billboards.

Dash joined the New York Drama Critics' Circle in 1948, serving as president from 1960 to 1962. As president of the Drama Desk from 1958 to 1960, he was credited with reigniting the monthly gathering of theatre reporters and editors by programming panels of notable guests and provocative discussion topics. The only person to serve both of these posts, Dash was also regarded as a pioneer in journalistic coverage of off-Broadway theatre.

After 43 years with Fairchild Publications, Dash retired from his Women's Wear Daily position in 1962. In the fall of 1963 he was hired as drama critic and editorial advisor on entertainment news and features at Show Business. His syndicated weekly column on show business events and performances ran until late 1968, when he joined the staff of Backstage.

Scope and Content Note

The Thomas R. Dash scrapbooks (1925-1971) document the work of the drama and film critic, offering a weekly, sometimes daily, glimpse into the New York theatre scene. The collection consists of 47 scrapbooks, assembled chronologically, with clippings of columns, reviews, and articles from the publications Women's Wear Daily, Daily News Record, Retailing-Home Furnishings, Show Business, and Backstage. There is also a card index of hand- and typewritten entries, arranged alphabetically by title of the work or performance.

While the collection spans Dash's career from 1925 to 1971, the bulk of the reviews derive from his tenure as the Women's Wear Daily chief drama critic from 1947 to 1962. The only biographical clippings in the collection are articles from Women's Wear Daily and other industry publications announcing Dash's Fairchild Publications retirement and new position at Show Business. Later columns for Show Business and Backstage additionally address issues and politics within Dash's professional community, reporting frequently on the activities of the Drama Desk, the theatre reporter and editor organization over which he formerly presided.

The alphabetical card index lists the title of work or performance and the Dash review's date of publication; selected cards list publication, production company, and venue information. The index and scrapbooks include Dash's reviews originally published under the byline of Kelcey Allen, but the index also lists materials, such as manuscripts and lectures, not featured in the scrapbooks.

Arrangement: The collection is organized into two groups, scrapbooks and index, and arranged chronologically within each group.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings (information artifacts)
Scrapbooks

Subjects

Theater -- New York (State) -- New York -- Reviews

Occupations

Theater critics

Names

Drama Desk (Association)

Container List

Scrapbooks

- b. 1 f. 1-7 1925-1936 January
- b. 2 f. 1-5 1936 February-1940 October
- b. 3 f. 1-6 1940 October-1948 February
- b. 4 f. 1-8 1948 March-1952 June
- b. 5 f. 1-8 1952 July-1958 May
- b. 6 f. 1-7 1958 June-1962
- b. 7 f. 1-6 1963-1971

Index

- b. 8 1925-1948
- b. 9 1947-1958
- b. 10 1950-1971