



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Judith Malina diaries**

1947-1959

\*T-Mss 1990-001

Processed by Rodney Hoffner.

## Summary

**Creator:** Malina, Judith, 1926-2015

**Title:** Judith Malina diaries

**Date:** 1947-1959

**Source:** Gift, Judith Malina

**Abstract:** The diaries of Judith Malina include personal reflections, a history of many aspects of The Living Theatre, and a view of the avant-garde cultural life of New York in the 1940's and 1950's. Malina documents her own struggles as a young woman and artist and also the struggle, together with Julian Beck, to create The Living Theatre. Among their contemporaries and collaborators were James Agee, John Cage, Joseph Campbell, Merce Cunningham, Dorothy Day, Richard Edelman, Paul Goodman, Lou Harrison, Alan Hovhaness, Lester Schwartz and Philip Smith. Malina discusses her work on various productions including: THE AGE OF ANXIETY, DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS, THE IDIOT KING, PHEDRE, AND TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE. Personally, Malina discusses her relationships, her family, her views of the world of the 1950's and her commitment to pacifism. Her involvement as a pacifist, and her imprisonment with Dorothy Day and others, is described in some detail. The final years of the diary (Feb. 1956-June 1959) are incomplete. They relate to the search for and renovation of the 14th Street theater, which opened in 1959. These entries are written by several people who are not identified.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Researchers must use the microfilm copy.

**Conditions Governing Use:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

**Alternative Form Available:** Collection available on microfilm; New York Public Library; call number \*ZC-312

**Preferred citation:** Judith Malina Diaries, \*T-Mss 1990-001, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Processing note:** Processed by Rodney Hoffner. The diaries were microfilmed and the originals were placed in acid-free folders and boxes.

## Creator History

Judith Malina, actress, director, producer and poet, was one of the founding members of the experimental theater group The Living Theatre. Born in Keil, Germany in 1926, Malina came to the United States before World War II. In 1948 she married painter Julian Beck and with the collaboration of Merce Cunningham, James Agee, John Cage and others formed a company that would challenge traditional theater norms. Their "living" theater reflected the hope of creating a non-commercial, community theater that invited audience participation.

The first performances of the Living Theatre were held in the Becks' New York apartment in 1951. Later that same year they moved to the Cherry Lane Theatre and opened their inaugural season with works by Gertrude Stein, Paul Goodman and Kenneth Rexroth. In 1954, the Living Theatre again relocated and was performing in a loft at 100th Street and Broadway.

By 1957, Malina and Beck were searching for a third location, found a vacant department store at 14th Street and Sixth Avenue, and began renovation. The diaries end at this point in the history of the Living Theatre.

## Custodial History

Judith Malina's diaries were donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division in August 1992 by Judith Malina. These diaries formed the basis of Malina's book *The Diaries of Judith Malina: 1947-1957*, published in 1984.

## Scope and Content Note

Judith Malina's diaries are a reflection of both her personal and professional life. It is a story of New York happenings in the artistic, avant-garde circles in the late 1940s and 1950s. The diaries document Malina's efforts with Julian Beck to create the Living Theatre and detail the work they put into early productions. Malina discloses relationships she had with family, friends and fellow artists. Her arrest and imprisonment with Dorothy Day is described in depth.

There are two less personal diaries for the later years (February 1956-June 1959) and their focus is on the Living Theatre. Some entries are incomplete and most are written by both Julian Beck and Judith Malina. A typewritten page explains the reason for ending the journals in 1959--"no time."

**Arrangement:** Series I: Judith Malina Diaries Series II: Living Theatre Diaries

## Key Terms

### Subjects

Actors

Experimental theater -- New York (State) -- New York

Pacifists -- United States -- 20th century  
Peace movements -- United States -- History -- 20th century  
Theatrical producers and directors

**Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Diaries

**Names**

Malina, Judith, 1926-2015  
Agee, James, 1900-1955  
Beck, Julian, 1925-1985  
Cage, John  
Campbell, Joseph, 1904-1987  
Cunningham, Merce  
Day, Dorothy, 1897-1980  
Edelman, Richard  
Goodman, Paul, 1911-1972  
Harrison, Lou, 1917-2003  
Hovhaness, Alan, 1911-2000  
Schwartz, Lester  
Smith, Philip  
Living Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

## Container List

### Series I: Judith Malina Diaries 1947-1957 (2.4 linear feet (6 boxes))

The diaries document Judith Malina's life and career from 1947 to 1957.

#### Chronological

- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina June-December  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina January-March  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina April-July  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina July-December  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina January-May  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina May-October  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina October 1949-February 1950  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina, . February-May  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina May-August  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina August-October  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina October-December  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina January-March  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina March-May  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 1 Diary / Judith Malina May-June  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina June-July  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina August-October  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina December 1951  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina December 1951-March 1952  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina January 1952  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2 Diary / Judith Malina March-May  
\*ZC 312 (1 vol.)

Series I: Judith Malina Diaries (cont.)

- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina May-June  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina June-September  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina September-November  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina December 1952-February 1953  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina February-August  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina March-April  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina May 1953  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina August-September  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina September-October  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina November-December  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina, . January-February  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina February-June  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina June-September  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina September-December  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina December 1954-April 1955  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 2     Diary / Judith Malina April-July  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina August-December  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina January-March  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina January-May  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina April 1956  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina May-September  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina September 1956-March 1957  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     Diary / Judith Malina April-July  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)

Series I: Judith Malina Diaries (cont.)

- r. 3     **Diary / Judith Malina** July-August  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)

**Series II: Living Theatre Diaries** 1956-1959 (.2 linear feet (1 box))

These diaries document Judith Malina's career and the history of the Living Theatre from 1956 to 1959.

Chronological

- r. 3     **Diary / Living Theatre (New York, N.Y.)** February 1956-June 1957  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)
- r. 3     **Diary / Living Theatre (New York, N.Y.)** June 1957-June 1959  
         \*ZC 312 (1 vol.)