



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Alex Szogyi papers

1953-1995

*T-Mss 2010-007

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2015

Summary

Creator: Szogyi, Alex

Title: Alex Szogyi papers

Date: 1953-1995

Size: 2.3 linear feet (4 boxes, 3 volumes)

Source: Gift of Philip Thompson, 2009.

Abstract: Dr. Alexander Szogyi (1929-2007) was an American educator, author, and translator of literature from French and Russian. Many of his play translations were adapted into stage productions between 1960 and 1991. The collection dates from 1953 to 1995 and contains correspondence, theater programs, scrapbooks, scripts, essays, and other writings translated or written by Szogyi.

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Creator History

Dr. Alexander Szogyi (1929-2007) was an American educator, author, and translator of literature from French and Russian. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in French from Yale University where he also studied playwriting under Robert Penn Warren. Szogyi taught for over forty years at CUNY Graduate Center, Wesleyan College, Yale University, and Hunter College, where he was chair of the Romance Language Department for seven years.

Szogyi translated every play by Anton Chekhov, several of which were produced, including *A Country Scandal*, *The Seagull*, *The Wood Demon*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Uncle Vanya*. His adaptations of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, and Molière's *George Dandin* were also produced. Szogyi compiled *Anthologie d'Humour français* in 1970 with Paul A. Mankin, and his fiction

work, *Carnaval*, was published in 1998.

Alex Szogyi was also an astrological consultant and food writer. He contributed articles to *Bon Appétit* and *Gourmet* magazines and his book, *Chocolate: Food of the Gods*, was published in 1997.

Scope and Content Note

The Alex Szogyi papers date from 1953 to 1995 and contain correspondence, theater programs, scrapbooks, scripts, essays, and other writings translated or written by Szogyi.

The bulk of the collection consists of scripts and other writings written or translated by Szogyi. With the exception of *The Dialectic of the Heart*, which consists of English and French versions, all of the scripts and writings are in English. The scripts are arranged alphabetically by title and are largely annotated. There are several translations of plays by Anton Chekhov, such as *The Seagull*, *Platonov* (*A Country Scandal*), *The Wood Demon*, and *Uncle Vanya*. Other titles include *Duetto* by Jeannine Worms, *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorky, and Marivaux's *The Fine Art of Finesse*. Some of the scripts were printed during or prior to their stage production. Writings and essays by Szogyi consist of prefaces to plays, and essays and short stories on a variety of topics. Among the writings translated by Szogyi are "Ideas and Shadows" ("Des Idées et Des Ombres") and Jean Cocteau's "Le Bel Indifferent."

Correspondence is both personal and professional in nature and consists of letters sent to Szogyi from friends and colleagues. Correspondents include Robert Penn Warren, his wife Eleanor, and their daughter Roseanne; and Walter Kerr. Letters from Stella Adler, William Ball, and Helen Harvey acknowledge Szogyi's Chekhov translations. Letters from Center Theatre Group are accompanied by an agreement for the production of Szogyi's translation of *Uncle Vanya*.

Photographs are production stills of unidentified plays, presumably adaptations by Szogyi. Programs and announcements are for productions of plays that Szogyi translated. There is one professional file containing resumes, conference applications, and clippings pertaining to Szogyi's teaching and other professional activities.

Scrapbooks date from 1960 to 1986 and contain programs, clippings, photographs, and letters that document Szogyi's interests and achievements, such as his translation of literature and plays, his professorships at various universities and colleges, and his food writing. The photographs in the scrapbooks are portraits of Szogyi.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by format. Scripts are arranged alphabetically by title.

Key Terms

Occupations

Authors

Educators

Subjects

Literature -- Translations into English

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scrapbooks
Scripts

Names

Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich, 1860-1904

Container List

Scripts

- b. 1 f. 1 *Black Snow* 1988
- b. 1 f. 2-3 *Dialectic of a Heart* 1986
English and French versions.
- b. 1 f. 4 *Duetto* 1983
- b. 1 f. 5-6 *The Fine Art of Finesse* 1990-1991
- b. 2 f. 1 *Ivonov* 1965
- b. 2 f. 2 *Lorenzaccio* 1982
- b. 2 f. 3 *The Lower Depths* 1971
- b. 2 f. 4 *Mozartement Votre* 1991
Working title: *Sincerely Yours, Mozart.*
- b. 2 f. 5 *The Neckties* 1980s
- b. 2 f. 6 *The Orchestra* 1970s
- b. 2 f. 7-8 *Platonov* 1960
A Country Scandal.
- b. 2 f. 9 *The Seagull* 1962
- b. 3 f. 1 *The Seagull* 1962
- b. 3 f. 2-3 *The Two Bolyais* 1961-1962
- b. 3 f. 4 *Uncle Vanya* 1965-1966
- b. 3 f. 5 *The Wood Demon* 1965
- b. 3 f. 6 *Zerline* 1991
- b. 3 f. 7-9 Writings and Essays 1968-1988
- b. 4 f. 1-4 Letters 1957-1997
- b. 4 f. 5 Photographs 1953-1960s
- b. 4 f. 6 Programs and Announcements 1959-1995
- b. 4 f. 7 Professional File 1967-1987

Scrapbooks

- v. 1 1960-1962
- b. 4 f. 8 1966-1984
- v. 2 1973-1986
- v. 3 1981-1982