



The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

The Acting Company records

1968-2017

*T-Mss 2018-011

Summary

Creator: Acting Company (Theatrical group)

Title: The Acting Company records

Date: 1968-2017

Size: 49.87 linear feet (63 boxes, 144 volumes)

Abstract: The Acting Company is a New York City-based repertory theater company founded by John Houseman and Margot Harley in 1972. The Acting Company records, dating from 1968 to 2017, offer extensive documentation of the Company's history. They contain voluminous stage and technical notes and instructions; programs, promotional literature, administrative files, and clippings; a comprehensive set of stage and promotional photography; and audio and video recordings.

Conditions Governing Access:

Audio and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization. Electronic records are unavailable.

Preferred citation: The Acting Company records, *T-Mss 2018-011. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Creator History

The Acting Company is a New York City-based repertory theater company that tours the United States annually, staging and performing one or two plays in as many as fifty cities, often with runs of only one or two nights. It was founded in 1972 by John Houseman and Margot Harley with Kevin Kline, Patti LuPone and other members of the first graduating class of The Juilliard School's Drama Division.

The Company originated as the Juilliard Repertory Company at the end of the 1960s, then became the City Center Acting Company as an affiliate of City Center, and eventually The Acting Company. (The Company was allied with the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for a few years as well.) Houseman served as producing artistic director through 1986; Harley was producer from the

Company's founding until her retirement at the end of 2015.

The Acting Company has produced 40 Shakespeare plays, as well as classics by Chekhov, Ibsen, Shaw, Sheridan, Marlowe and Moliere. It has also commissioned new adaptations of poetry by Shakespeare, and adaptations of classic American literature by Tennessee Williams, Mark Twain, and others. In addition to performances, the company offers master classes and artist residencies to schools and communities, as well as professional development workshops for actors.

Over 400 actors have launched their careers with The Acting Company, including LuPone, Kline, David Ogden Stiers, David Schramm, Rainn Wilson, Frances Conroy, Jesse L. Martin, Jeffrey Wright, Harriet Harris, and Hamish Linklater.

Scope and Content Note

The Acting Company records, dating from 1968 to 2017, offer extensive documentation of the history of the Company through voluminous stage and technical notes and instructions; programs, promotional literature, administrative files, and clippings; and a comprehensive set of stage and promotional photography.

The largest portion of the collection consists of stage manager and technical production bibles containing detailed notes on staging, lighting, blocking, costumes, and props, as well as touring logs and, in some cases, photographs. They offer a deep look into theatrical production, in some instances for the same play produced in separate seasons, with different casts, directors, and crews.

Promotional and administrative files mainly contain programs for performances in New York and around the United States, as well as benefit programs, flyers, clippings, and brochures. Administrative correspondence and notes regarding the history of the company and production matters appear only for the early years (1968 to 1972), and for the 2003-2004 season.

A large set of photography documents productions from throughout the Company's history through dress-rehearsal or performance photographs used for promotion. Also present are two books of photographs of John Houseman's career, and a book of photos from the American National Theater and Academy's 1983-1984 season.

The collection also holds audio, film, and video recordings. They consist of full performances, performance excerpts, benefit galas, award ceremonies, rehearsals, incidental music, radio/television public service announcements, and interviews with actors.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings (information artifacts)
Letters (correspondence)
Negatives (photographs)
Programs (documents)
Slides (photographs)

Subjects

Repertory theater
Theater -- Production and direction
Theater -- United States
Theatrical companies

Names

Houseman, John, 1902-1988
Acting Company (Theatrical group)

Container List

Series I: Stage Manager and Technical Bibles 1971-2017 (113 volumes, 13 boxes
24.08 linear feet)

This series, which comprises the largest portion of the collection, documents the Acting Company's production and touring process. It holds binders (referred to as "bibles") containing scripts annotated by the stage managers and technical crews, and used to guide the production crew through the performance. The bibles include stage directions and cues; stage designs; scene blockings; lighting plans; and other technical notes. Also present for some productions is information on props or costumes (including photographs); photographs of performances and touring life; tour logs noting the quality of a performance, problems, accidents, or other exceptional circumstances; correspondence between the director and producer, and between the company and local presenters; cast and crew contact lists; and programs and clippings. Some binders also have recordings of sound effects and incidental music, and scores for music performed.

Although there are more binders present from the 1970s, binders from later years are larger and contain more (and more varied) content.

The bibles are titled by production, and arranged in chronological sequence by season. Each binder usually holds one production, though in some cases two or three productions on a single tour are mixed together within single binders.

Audio recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

- b. 1 f. 1 *Scapin The Schemer* 1971
 - v. 1 *The School For Scandal* 1972
 - v. 2 *The Hostage* 1972
 - v. 3 *U.S.A.* 1972
 - v. 4 *The Lower Depths* 1972-1973
 - v. 5
- b. 1 f. 2 *The Diary Of Adam And Eve From The Apple Tree* 1973-1974
 - v. 6 *The Knack* 1973-1974
- b. 1 f. 3 *Measure For Measure* 1973-1974
- b. 1 f. 4 *The Beggar's Opera* 1973-1974
 - v. 7
- v. 8-10 *The Three Sisters* 1973-1975
 - v. 11 *The Orchestra* 1974-1975
- b. 1 f. 5 *Edward II* 1974-1975
 - v. 12
- v. 13-15 *The Time Of Your Life* 1974-1975
 - b. 1 f. 6 *Love's Labour's Lost* 1974-1976
- b. 2 f. 1-4 *Arms And The Man* 1975-1976
 - b. 3 f. 1-3
 - v. 16 *She Stoops To Conquer* 1975-1976
 - v. 17
- b. 3 f. 4-6 *The Taming Of The Shrew* 1975-1976
 - v. 18
 - v. 19 *The Robber Bridegroom* 1975-1976
- b. 4 f. 1-2 *Camino Real* 1976-1977
 - v. 20 *The Kitchen* 1976-1977
- b. 4 f. 3 *The Way Of The World* 1976-1977

Series I: Stage Manager and Technical Bibles (cont.)

- v. 21 *The Duck Variations* 1976-1977
- v. 22 *King Lear* 1977-1978
- b. 4 f. 4 *Chapeau* 1977-1978
- v. 23
- b. 4 f. 5 *Mother Courage And Her Children* 1977-1978
- b. 5 f. 1
- v. 24
- b. 4 f. 6 *The Other Half* 1978-1979
- v. 25
- v. 26
- b. 6 f. 1 *Antigone* 1978-1979
- v. 27
- v. 28 *Romeo And Juliet* 1978-1979
- v. 29
- v. 30 *Broadway* 1978-1979
- v. 31 *Split* 1979-1980
- v. 32 *The White Devil* 1979-1980
- v. 33 *Elizabeth I* 1979-1980
- v. 34 *Il Campiello* 1980-1981
- b. 6 f. 2 *Twelfth Night* 1981-1982
- b. 6 f. 3-4 *Pericles* 1982-1983
- v. 35 *Tartuffe* 1982-1983
- v. 36 *The Cradle Will Rock* 1983-1984
- v. 37
- v. 38 *Pieces Of Eight* 1983-1984
- b. 6 f. 5 *The Skin Of Our Teeth* 1984-1985
- v. 39
- v. 40 *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* 1984-1985
- v. 41 *As You Like It* 1985-1986
- b. 6 f. 6-7 *Orchards: Seven American Playwrights Present Stories By Chekhov* 1985-1986
- b. 7 f. 1 *Ten By Tennessee* 1985-1986
- b. 7 f. 2-3 *The Gilded Age* 1986-1987
- v. 42-44
- b. 7 f. 4 *Much Ado About Nothing* 1986-1987
- b. 7 f. 5 *Kabuki Macbeth* 1987-1988
- v. 45
- v. 46
- b. 7 f. 6 *Love's Labour's Lost* 1988-1989
- v. 47
- b. 8 f. 1 *Boy Meets Girl* 1988-1989
- v. 48
- b. 8 f. 2 *The Phantom Tollbooth* 1988-1989
- v. 49
- v. 50 *Five By Tennessee* 1990-1991
- v. 51 Volume 51 contains photographs.
- b. 8 f. 3 *Two Gentlemen of Verona* 1990-1991
- v. 52
- v. 53-56 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1991-1992
- v. 57 *Blood Knot* 1991-1992

Series I: Stage Manager and Technical Bibles (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 4 *Twelfth Night* 1993-1994
- v. 58
- v. 59 *A Doll's House* 1994-1995
- v. 60
- b. 8 f. 5 *Othello* 1994-1995
- v. 61
- v. 62
- v. 63 *Richard III* 1994-1995
- v. 64 *Henry V* 1995-1996
- v. 65 *Mud, River, Stone* 1996-1997
- b. 8 f. 6 *The Glass Menagerie* 1996-1997
- v. 66
- v. 67 *As You Like It* 1996-1997
- v. 68 *Romeo and Juliet* 1997-1998
- v. 69 *Love's Fire* 1998
- v. 70 *Twelfth Night* 1998-1999
- b. 5 f. 2 *Tartuffe* 1998-1999
- b. 8 f. 7
- v. 71
- b. 9 f. 1 *The Rivals* 1999-2000
- v. 72
- v. 73
- v. 74 *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1999-2000
- v. 75 *The Rivals and Macbeth* 1999-2000
- b. 5 f. 3 *Macbeth* 1999-2000
- v. 76
- v. 77-79 *O Pioneers! and The Comedy of Errors* 2000-2001
- v. 80 *Romeo and Juliet* 2000-2001
- v. 81-83 *Pudd'nhead Wilson and The Taming of the Shrew* 2001-2002
- v. 84 *American Dreams: Lost And Found and As You Like It* 2002-2003
- v. 85
- b. 9 f. 2-4 *Murder By Poe and Richard III* 2003-2004
- b. 9 f. 5 *Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Turn of the Screw, and Love, Shakespeare*
- b. 10 f. 1-4 2004-2005
- b. 10 f. 5 *Two Gentlemen of Verona and The Turn of the Screw* 2004-2005
- v. 86
- v. 87 *Love, Shakespeare* 2004-2005
- v. 88 *The Three Musketeers* 2005-2006
- v. 89 *Macbeth* 2005-2006
- v. 90 *Little Macbeth and The Lottery* 2005-2006
- v. 91 *Jane Eyre* 2006-2007
- v. 92
- v. 93 *Love, Shakespeare* 2007
- v. 94 *The Tempest (One hour version)* 2007-2008
- b. 11 f. 1-5 *The Tempest and Moby Dick* 2007-2008
- v. 95
- b. 12 f. 4 *The Spy and Henry V* 2008-2009
- v. 96 *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter* 2009-2010
- v. 97 *The Comedy Of Errors* 2010-2011

Series I: Stage Manager and Technical Bibles (cont.)

- b. 13 f. 1 *The Comedy Of Errors* 2011-2012
- b. 13 f. 2
- v. 98
- v. 99 *Julius Caesar* 2011-2012
- v. 100-102 *As You Like It* 2012-2013
- v. 103-105 *Of Mice And Men* 2012-2013
- b. 13 f. 3-4 *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* 2013-2014
- v. 106-108
- v. 109 *Hamlet* 2013-2014
- v. 110 *Macbeth and A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court* 2014-2015
- b. 13 f. 5-6 *Desire: A New Play Based On Six Stories By Tennessee Williams* 2015
- v. 111
- v. 112
- v. 113 *Love's Labour's Lost* 2017

Series II: Promotional and Administrative Files 1968-2017 (38 boxes 15.83 linear feet)

This series primarily contains a comprehensive set of programs for the Acting Company's productions and annual benefits. Also present are promotional flyers, subscription brochures, and clippings. The chronological arrangement of this material is preceded in the container list by a separate set of programs only, dating from 1972 to 1991.

In addition to programs, brochures, and flyers, files from 1968 to 1972 and the 2003-2004 season hold administrative correspondence.

The 1968-1972 files, which document the formation and development of the company, its opening season at City Center, and its summer 1972 residency at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), hold administrative correspondence between the Company and the Juilliard School, as well as SPAC; press releases; programs; clippings; and travel and logistical information.

The 2003-2004 season file includes letters between Margot Harley, artistic director, and playwrights, directors, and actors concerning plays, commissions, the functioning of the Company, and university theater programs.

- b. 14 f. 1-3 Programs 1972-1991
- b. 14 f. 4-11 1968-1972
- b. 15 f. 1-12 1972-1975
- b. 16 f. 1-8 1974-1976
- b. 17 f. 1-10 1975-1978
- b. 18 f. 1-12 1977-1980
- b. 19 f. 1-7 1979-1981
- b. 20 f. 1-6 1981-1983
- b. 21 f. 1-6 1982-1984
- b. 22 f. 1-5 1983-1985
- b. 23 f. 1-4 1984-1987
- b. 24 f. 1-4 1986-1988
- b. 25 f. 1-6 1987-1989
- b. 26 f. 1-5 1988-1991
- b. 27 f. 1-5 1990-1992
- b. 28 f. 1-4 1991-1994
- b. 29 f. 1-4 1993-1994

Series II: Promotional and Administrative Files (cont.)

b. 30 f. 1-5	1994-1995
b. 31 f. 1-5	1994-1996
b. 32 f. 1-6	1995-1997
b. 33 f. 1-6	1996-1998
b. 34 f. 1-5	1997-1999
b. 35 f. 1-6	1999-2001
b. 36 f. 1-5	2000-2002
b. 37 f. 1-7	2001-2002
b. 38 f. 1-5	2001-2003
b. 39 f. 1-6	2002-2004
b. 40 f. 1-6	2003-2005
b. 41 f. 1-6	2004-2006
b. 42 f. 1-6	2005-2007
b. 43 f. 1-5	2006-2007
b. 44 f. 1-5	2007-2008
b. 45 f. 1-5	2007-2009
b. 46 f. 1-5	2008-2010
b. 47 f. 1-4	2009-2011
b. 48 f. 1-6	2010-2012
b. 49 f. 1-7	2012-2013
b. 50 f. 1-6	2013-2015
b. 51 f. 1-3	2014-2017

Series III: Photographs 1972-2003 (31 volumes, 13 boxes 10.37 linear feet)

The photographs primarily document Acting Company productions, benefit galas, and staff. The bulk of the series consists of binders, arranged by season, containing complete sets of images of productions in dress rehearsals or performances for publicity purposes. The binders contain mostly slides, though prints and negatives are present as well for some productions. Actors from throughout the Company's history are featured in multiple productions.

The binders were numbered consecutively by season, though as time went on, seasons had to be housed in more than one, hence "Book 5, Part I", "Book 5, Part II", etc. A few binders received no numbers, but have been arranged with the other books based on their time range. Each binder in the container list has a note detailing the productions it documents. A few binders are devoted to photographs of the annual Acting Company benefits, or to pictures of staff.

Three binders have excerpts of productions from multiple seasons. They contain images duplicated from the other binders, but may represent those photographs favored for publicity purposes. These binders appear at the end of the chronological list as "mixed productions."

Also present is a book of photographs of American National Theater and Academy (ANTA) productions in 1983 and 1984, and two books of slides of John Houseman, compiled for a tribute event in 1986. These contain images of Houseman from around 1904 to the 1970s, and consist of photos of plays; film and television stills; film posters; and informal images of Houseman with producers and actors. The slides are individually numbered; Volume 143 has a list of slide numbers and their contents.

Productions

v. 114 Book 1 1972-1973

The Hostage, The School For Scandal, Ring Round The Moon, Interview, U.S.A., and Women Beware Women.

Series III: Photographs (cont.)
Productions (cont.)

- v. 115 **Book 2 1973-1974**
Next Time I'll Sing To You, The Knack, The Three Sisters, The Beggar's Opera, Scapin The Schemer, Measure For Measure, and The Diary Of Adam And Eve From The Apple Tree.
- v. 116 **Book 3 1974-1975**
Play, Love's Labour's Lost, The Orchestra, Edward II, and The Time Of Your Life.
- v. 117 **Book 4 1975-1976**
She Stoops To Conquer, Arms And The Man, The Taming Of The Shrew, and The Robber Bridegroom.
- v. 118 **Book 5, Part I 1976-1977**
The Kitchen, The Duck Variations, and Rosemary.
- b. 51 f. 4-6 **Book 5, Part II 1976-1977**
b. 52 f. 1 *Camino Real and The Way Of The World.*
- v. 119 **Book 6, Part I 1977-1978**
Mother Courage And Her Children and Camino Real (second year).
- b. 52 f. 2-5 **Book 6, Part II 1977-1978**
b. 53 f. 1 *King Lear and Chapeau.*
- b. 53 f. 2-4 **Book 7, Part I 1978-1979**
Broadway, The Other Half, and A Voice Of My Own.
- v. 120 **Book 7, Part II 1978-1979**
Antigone and, Romeo And Juliet.
- b. 54 f. 1-4 **Book 8, Part I 1979-1980**
The White Devil.
- b. 54 f. 5 **Book 8, Part II 1979-1980**
b. 55 f. 1-3 *Elizabeth I, Broadway (second year), Split, and Domino Courts.*
- b. 55 f. 4-6 **Book 9 1980-1981**
b. 56 f. 1-2 *Waiting for Godot, Il Campiello: A Venetian Comedy, and A Midsummer Night's Dream.*
- v. 121 **Book 10 1981-1982**
The Country Wife, Twelfth Night, Il Campiello: A Venetian Comedy (second year), and Waiting for Godot (second year).
- b. 56 f. 3-4 **Book 11 1982-1983**
b. 57 f. 1 *Tartuffe, Play And Other Plays, Pericles, and Twelfth Night (second year).*
- v. 122 **Unnumbered 1982-1984**
Contains a mix of production and Acting Company staff photographs.
- b. 57 f. 2-5 **Book 12 1982-1984**
Pieces Of Eight, The Merry Wives Of Windsor, The Cradle Will Rock, Pericles (second year), and A Chamber Musical (non-repertory).
- v. 123 **Book 13, Part I 1984-1985**
Issue: I Don't Even Know You!, Vaudevillian, Between The Acts, and As You Like It.
- v. 124 **Book 13, Part II 1984-1985**
A New Way To Pay Old Debts and, The Skin Of Our Teeth.
- v. 125 **Book 13 Part III 1985 Summer**
The Cradle Will Rock at the Old Vic.
- v. 126 **Book 14 1985-1986**
As You Like It and Orchards.
- b. 58 f. 1-4 **Book 15, Part I 1986-1987**
Benefits, touring photos, *The Gilded Age*, and *Much Ado About Nothing.*
- v. 127 **Book 15, Part II 1986-1987**
Much Ado About Nothing and On the Verge.

Series III: Photographs (cont.)
Productions (cont.)

- b. 59 f. 1-3 **Book 16** 1987-1988
National tour, *Five By Tenn*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Kabuki Macbeth*, and *The Witch of Edmonton*.
- v. 128 **Book 17** 1988-1989
National tour, *Boy Meets Girl*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*.
- v. 129 **Book 18** 1989-1990
Romeo And Juliet. Also contains photos of the Moscow Studio Theatre.
- v. 130 **Book 19** 1990-1991
Romeo And Juliet, *Two Gentlemen Of Verona*, and *Five By Tenn* (in the Soviet Union).
- v. 131 **Book 20** 1991-1992
A Midsummer Night's Dream and *Blood Knot*.
- b. 59 f. 4 **Unnumbered** 1992-1993
The 1993 benefit, photos of the board and staff, the Arena Stage House production of *A Doll's House*, and *The African Company Presents "Richard III"*.
- b. 59 f. 5 **Book 21, Part I** 1993-1994
- b. 60 f. 1-4 *A Doll's House* and *Twelfth Night*.
- v. 132 **Book 21, Part II** 1993-1994
The African Company Presents "Richard III".
- v. 133 **Book 22, Part I** 1994-1995
Othello.
- v. 134 **Book 22, Part II** 1994-1995
Juilliard tour. *She Stoops To Conquer*, *A Doll's House*, and *The African Company Presents "Richard III"*.
- v. 135 **Unnumbered** 1995 October 30
A benefit for the Acting Company at Copacabana, New York City.
- b. 60 f. 5 **Book 23** 1995-1996
- b. 61 f. 1-3 Margot Harley, a benefit, *The School for Scandal* (co-produced with Great Lakes and the National Actors Theater), *Arms And The Man* (co-produced with George Street Playhouse), and *Henry V*.
- v. 136 **Book 24** 1996-1997
The Glass Menagerie, *Mud River Stone*, and *As You Like It*.
- v. 137 **Book 25** 1997-1998
Romeo And Juliet and *Love's Fire*.
- v. 138 **Book 26** 1998-1999
Tartuffe, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*.
- b. 61 f. 4 **Book 27** 1999-2000
- b. 62 f. 1-4 *The Rivals*, *Macbeth*, and *The Merry Wives Of Windsor*.
- v. 139 **Unnumbered** 2002-2003
As You Like It, *American Dreams*, and promotional material for the 2003-2004 season.
- Mixed Productions**
These books contain images from multiple productions selected for publicity purposes. All are duplicated from the complete sets of photographs in the previous books.
- v. 140 **1972-1999**
- b. 63 f. 1-2 **1972-2000**
- v. 141 **1973-1998**
- v. 142 **American National Theater and Academy** 1983-1984
El Grande De Coca Cola, *History of American Film*, and *The Tavern*.
- v. 143 **John Houseman Tribute Slides** 1986
- v. 144

Series IV: Audio and Video Recordings 1972-2015

Notable audio/video contents include the film *Stages: Houseman Directs Lear* (1981); performances of *A Doll's House* (1994), *The Cradle Will Rock* (1983), *The Comedy Of Errors* (2000), and *The Tempest* (2008); a workshop for *Romeo and Juliet*; and interviews with Kevin Kline and Margot Harley.

Audio and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.