



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**New Theatre League records**

1935-1942

MssCol 2133

Processed by Laura Bailey, 1988. Machine-readable finding aid created by Chatham Ewing, 1999.

## Summary

**Creator:** New Theatre League

**Title:** New Theatre League records

**Date:** 1935-1942

**Source:** Gift of the Jefferson School Library, 1944

**Abstract:** Papers consist of correspondence, scripts, and administrative materials related to the New Theatre League, a group of theatre professionals working in New York City during the late 1930's and early 1940's.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** New Theatre League Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

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## Creator History

The New Theatre League, organized in 1935 as a left wing federation of little theatres and amateur theatrical groups, produced plays which sought to address the political issues of the late 1930's and early 1940's. Its most successful productions were *Bury The Dead* by Irwin Shaw *The Cradle Will Rock* by Mark Blitzstein. Other artists who worked with the New Theatre League include Leonard Bernstein, Bertolt Brecht, Clifford Odets, Albert Maltz, John Garfield, and Lee Strassberg. The organization also ran a New Theatre School and Theatre Workshop that trained actors, directors, playwrights, and stage managers. Using the Stanislavsky Method, they worked with many who were later to become prominent members of the theatrical community. The New Theatre League published the following periodicals: *New Theatre*, *Theatre and Film*, and *New Theatre News*.

## Scope and Content Note

The fairly sizable forty-four box collection of papers documents the artistic, intellectual, pedagogical, and administrative history of the New Theatre League. The material provides a very focused snapshot

of a particular group of theatre professionals working in New York City during the late 1930's and early 1940's. Some of the highlights of the collection include seventy-seven scripts (including works by Bertolt Brecht and Irwin Shaw); outlines of courses taught at the New Theatre School; publications of the New Theatre League; and photographs from the Moscow Art Theatre, the W.P.A. Federal Theatre Project, and the Bolshoi Ballet. The materials in the collection also include several boxes of correspondence, mostly administrative in nature. See the series descriptions for more detail.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

American drama  
Clothing workers -- Labor unions -- United States  
Dramatists, American  
Labor unions -- Clothing workers -- United States  
Labor unions -- United States -- Political activity  
Peace movements -- United States  
Theater -- Political aspects -- United States  
Theater -- Study and teaching  
Workers' theater -- United States  
Working class -- United States -- Political activity

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Photographic prints

### **Geographic Names**

United States -- Social conditions -- 1933-1945

### **Names**

New Theatre League  
Blitzstein, Marc  
Corcoran, Barbara  
Evans, Alice Hamburger  
Irwin, Ben  
MacLeish, Archibald, 1892-1982  
Odets, Clifford, 1906-1963  
Shaw, Irwin, 1913-1984  
Sinclair, Upton, 1878-1968  
American Federation of Labor  
American Peace Mobilization  
Chestnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, Pa.)  
Chicago Repertory Group (Chicago, Ill.)  
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union  
International Workers Order  
Left Book Club (London, England)

## Container List

### Series I. General Correspondence 1935-1942. (8 linear feet (boxes 1-14))

- b. 1 Ab - Be
- b. 2 Be - Ci
- b. 3 Cl - Coo
- b. 4 Cor - Fie
- b. 5 Fin - Gu
- b. 6 Ha - In
- b. 7 In - Le
- b. 8 Le - Mi
- b. 9 Mi - Ne
- b. 10 Ob - Qu
- b. 11 Ra - Sh
- b. 12 Si - Tw
- b. 13 Uk - We
- b. 14 We - Zi, Unidentified

### Series II. Correspondence with Affiliates 1935-1942. (2 linear feet (boxes 15-18))

Series I and Series II contain both incoming and outgoing correspondence. Both executive secretary Ben Irwin and Alice Evans (of the play department) correspond with theater groups, school officials, colleges, labor unions, and playwrights. Some of the letters relate to routine matters such as the sale of scripts owned by the New Theatre League and permission to perform and publish its plays. Other letters address the development of a progressive or labor theater in America. Correspondents include Barbara Corcoran, Archibald MacLeish, Clifford Odets, and Upton Sinclair.

Letters are arranged alphabetically by correspondent (Series I) or organization (Series II)

- b. 15 American Youth Theatre - Contemporary Theatre of Detroit
- b. 16 Ford Hall Players - New Theatre Group of Montreal
- b. 17 New Theatre of Philadelphia - New Theatre of Trenton
- b. 18 People's Stage of Atlantic City - Winnepeg New Theatre

### Series III. New Theatre School Papers 1938-1941. (2 linear feet (boxes 19-22))

This series includes correspondence, minutes of faculty meetings, course outlines, applications, registrations, and student evaluations.

- b. 19 Correspondence 1938-1942
- b. 20 Minutes of faculty meetings, course outlines
- b. 21 Applications, registrations, scholarships, student evaluations
- b. 22 Student Productions

### Series IV. Theatre Workshop Papers 1938-1941. (2 linear feet (boxes 23, 24, 24A, 24B))

This series includes correspondence primarily on financial and legal affairs of The Theatre Workshop and a disorganized administrative card file.

- b. 23 Correspondence 1938 - 1941
- b. 24, 24A, 24B Administrative Files

Series V. Scripts of New Theatre League Productions n.d. (2 linear feet (boxes 25, 26, 26A))

This series includes seventy-seven scripts arranged alphabetically by author. Included is Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* and Bertolt Brecht's *Justice*.

b. 25 Allan - Paradise

*Allan, Lewis Death and Destruction*

*Allan, Lewis The Seeds of Liberty*

*American Peace Mobilization Pageant of America*

*Badir, Moishe Troops Are Marching*

*Bengal, Ben Don't Laugh*

*Bengal, Ben With Honor*

*Bentkover, Jacob The Clients*

*Bentkover, Jacob Land and Sea*

*Blankfort, Michael Once is Enough*

*Block, Jane Refuge*

*Brecht, Bertolt Justice*

*Brenner, Sidney Coal*

*Chodorov, Jerome The Miners*

*Cooley, Ronald R. Lostline*

*Corcoran, Barbara Boys Upstairs*

*Corwin, Norman They Fly Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease*

*Davis, Reuben And the Angels Swing*

*Davis, Reuben Family Affair*

*Edmond, Robert Templates*

*Field, Martin Jenny Jobless*

*Field, Martin No One Shall Starve*

*Fischer, Regina Showdown*

*Forest, Kenneth The Pitchman*

*Freeman, Arny I'm Just a Son of the Rich*

*Funaroff, S. A Negro Musical Skit*

*Funaroff, S. Washin' Day*

*Garvey, Robert Pity the Rich*

*Geto, Alfred The Last Fortress*

*Greenwald, M. End of Night*

*Hamann, Fred Steam Heat and Roses*

*Hayes, Allan Steel Town*

*Hayes, Lee Steel Town*

*Keyser, Frank A Place Up High*

*Latner, Dave Nobody Has to Know*

*Levi, Grant The People Against Joe Lawton*

*Lobel, William The Yanks are Not Coming*

Series V. Scripts of New Theatre League Productions (cont.)

Allan - Paradise (cont.)

*Maltz, Albert Merry Go Round*  
*Mann, Edward Book Burning*  
*Mann, Edward A Job is Born*  
*Mann, Edward Hire a Hall*  
*Mann, Edward I Raised My Boy to be a Soldier*  
*Mann, Edward It Can't Happen to Me*  
*Mann, Edward Practice Makes Perfect*  
*Mann, Edward The Soldier Returns*  
*Martin, Peter The Young Go First*  
*Meadow, Herbert Barge Incident*  
*Meadow, Herbert That Side of Jordan*  
*Millholland, Charles B. Gene Debs: Victor!*  
*Molofsky, Sol The Wholesale Mikado*  
*Oliver, Richard Mess of Pottage*  
*O'Neil, Joseph Love in Trouble--Again*  
*Paradise, Jean Flying Fortress*  
*Paradise, Jean Mr. Wittingham Goes to the Devil*

b. 26A Peters - Wright

*Peters, Paul The Police Station*  
*Platt, Raymond Outline for a Workers' Drama*  
*Rella, Ettore Mister Munition and the Scrub Woman*  
*Rolland, Romain The Time Will Come*  
*Ruskin, Benjamin Long, Long Trail*  
*Ruskin, Benjamin Rest Period*  
*Russell, Binee Hollywood Mystery*  
*Shapiro, Jack For People Who Think*  
*Sherman, Nathan Kingfish in Action*  
*Shaw, Irwin Bury the Dead*  
*Shiffrin, A.B. Yesterday's Kids*  
*Shohan, Harry Speech to America*  
*Sinclair, Jo Jesus Was a Dream*  
*Solomon, Albert He Knew How to Die*  
*Stavis, Barrie Alexo Shanko*  
*Unell, Richard Recruiting Scene*  
*Vega, Lope Peasants Down*  
*Volny, Frank The Horse was Crying in the Street*  
*Volny, Frank Joe Starve and His Wolfe*  
*Volny, Frank Kong-quer-ee*  
*Waldron, John Trial and Error*  
*Ward, Lem Medicine*  
*Wexley, John Steel*

Series V. Scripts of New Theatre League Productions (cont.)  
Peters - Wright (cont.)

*Wright, Donald Boys are Marching*

Series VI. New Theatre League Administrative File 1935-1940. (3.5 linear feet  
(boxes 27, 27A, 27B, 27C, 28, 29, 30))

This series includes registrations, minutes, play evaluations, publicity materials, and a card file of authors and their scripts.

b. 27, 27A, 27B, 27C, 28 Authors and Scripts

b. 28 Minutes of the National Executive Committee 1935-1940

b. 28 Minutes of the National Convention 1940

b. 29 Play Evaluation and Publicity

b. 30 Affiliate Productions

Series VII. Financial Papers n.d. (.5 linear feet (box 31))

This series includes financial statements, and material concerning fundraising, contracts, and taxes.

b. 31 Financial Papers

Series VIII. Ephemera n.d. (.5 linear feet (box 31))

This series includes printed matter such as bulletins, periodicals, flyers, tickets, and catalogs of plays.

b. 31 Ephemera

Series IX. Publications of the New Theatre League 1934-1941. (.5 linear feet (box 32))

Series contains runs of *New Theatre* (incomplete), *Theatre and Film*, and *New Theatre News* (incomplete).

Under each title, arranged by date.

b. 32 *New Theatre* June, 1934 - Nov. 1936

b. 32 *Theatre and Film* April, 1937

b. 32 *New Theatre News* Nov. 1939 - April, 1941

Series X. Press Releases 1938-1941. (.5 linear feet (box 33))

Copies of press releases of the New Theatre League.

b. 33 Press Releases

Series XI. Photographs n.d. (.5 linear feet (box 34))

Series includes photographs of the Moscow Art Theatre, WPA Federal Theatre Project, and the Boshoi Ballet. Some photographs unidentified.

b. 34 Photographs

Series XII. Index Cards n.d. (.5 linear feet (boxes 35-38))

Series consists of index cards. The cards are poorly organized and appear to contain administrative information related to the New Theatre League.

b. 35 - 38 Index Cards