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.


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 - Winnipeg 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*
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

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, Benee 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))

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
Bolshoi 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