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Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

John Van Druten papers

ca. 1920-1957

MssCol 3134

Summary

Creator: Van Druten, John, 1901-1957

Title: John Van Druten papers

Date: ca. 1920-1957

Source: Gift of John Van Druten, 1945; and Carter Lodge, 1963; purchase, 1990. Additional material donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Collection. See Separated Materials Note.

Abstract: Collection of correspondence, book reviews, typescripts of plays and books written by Van Druten, and clippings. Correspondence, 1938-1957, consist of letters concerning his writings and personal letters between Van Druten and his friend, dramatist and novelist Dodie Smith. Book reviews, ca. 1920-1925, written by Van Druten for an English publication published in Switzerland. Typescripts of his plays and books, many of which contain changes and corrections in his hand. Clippings of articles collected by Van Druten from magazines and newspapers, 1924-1951.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: John Van Druten Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Laura Bailey; machine readable finding aid created by APEX data services and revised by Chatham Ewing.

Related Materials:

Other Van Druten papers at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Creator History

John Van Druten (1901-1957) was an Anglo-American playwright, theatrical director, screenwriter and novelist. Born in London of a Dutch father and an English mother Van Druten graduated from the University College School in that city. Formerly a solicitor and lecturer on English law and legal history

at the University College of Wales, he first came into prominence with *Young Woodley*, 1928, which was banned by the censor, and produced by the Stage Society as a protest. When the ban was removed, it was seen in London and had a long run. It was also very successful in New York. Van Druten's later plays, which are mainly comedies, include *There's Always Juliet*, 1931, *The Distaff Side*, 1933, *Old Acquaintance*, 1940, *The Damask Cheek*, (with Lloyd Morris) 1942, *The Voice of the Turtle*, 1943, *Make Way For Lucid*, 1948 and *Bell, Book and Candle*, 1950. Among novels written by him are: *A Woman On Her Way*, 1931, *And Then You Wish*, 1936, *Playwright At Work*, 1953, and *The Vicarious Years*, 1956. In 1951 Van Druten directed Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King And I* and was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Van Druten are arranged in the four series: Correspondence, Book Reviews, Clippings, and Typescripts. The Correspondence is sub-divided in two sections: letters concerning writings by Van Druten and Van Druten - Smith letters. The material regarding writings includes correspondence about *The Way To the Present*, 1938, with publisher Michael Joseph and people mentioned. Also included is correspondence with Lloyd Morris, 1942, regarding the development of the play *The Damask Cheek*. The Van Druten - Smith letters are between Van Druten and his friend, dramatist and novelist Dodie Smith (1896 -). The correspondence, 1941 - 1957, is both incoming and outgoing and in chronological order. The writing is very intimate in tone. They discuss their daily lives and creative work, debate the theory and practice of dramatic writing, and share frank, and often intensely critical views of their friends and acquaintances in the theater and motion picture world. The Book Reviews, ca. 1920-1925, were written by Van Druten for the *English Herald Abroad* published in Montreux, Switzerland. Among authors reviewed are: Aldous Huxley, W. Somerset Maugham, Virginia Woolf and H.G. Wells. Clippings, 1924-1951, are articles saved by Van Druten from *Punch* magazine and several newspapers. The Typescripts are of plays and books written by Van Druten, many of which contain changes and corrections in Van Druten's hand.

Arrangement: Four series: I. Correspondence; II. Book Reviews; III. Clippings; IV. Typescripts

Key Terms

Subjects

American literature -- 20th century
Playwriting
Theater -- Great Britain
Theater -- United States

Occupations

Authors
Dramatists
Novelists

Names

Van Druten, John, 1901-1957
Joseph, Michael
Morris, Lloyd
Smith, Dodie, 1896-1990

Container List

Series I. Correspondence

A. Concerning Writings

- b. 1 *The Way To The Present* 1938
- b. 1 *The Damask Cheek* 1942

B. Van Druten - Smith

- b. 1 1941 - 1944
- b. 2 1945 - 1955
- b. 3 1956 - 1957
- b. 3 Series II. Book Reviews ca. 1920 - 1925
- b. 3 Series III. Clippings 1924-1951

Series IV. Typescripts

- b. 3 *The Widening Circle*
- v. 1 *Bell, Book And Candle*
- v. 2 *Druid Circle*
- v. 3 *Gavin*
- v. 4 *Home Ground*
- v. 5 *I Remember Mama*
- v. 6 *Leave Her To Heaven*
- v. 7-8 *Professor White (two copies)*
- v. 9 *Solitaire*
- v. 10 *The Damask Cheek; I Remember Mama; The Voice Of The Turtle*
- v. 11 *Hello U.S.C.*
- v. 12 *The Mermaid Singing*