



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Nadia Gray papers**

1930s-1977

\*T-Mss 1995-007

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Gray, Nadja, 1923-1994

**Title:** Nadia Gray papers

**Date:** 1930s-1977

**Size:** 5.66 linear feet (9 boxes, 14 volumes)

**Source:** Donated by Herbert Silverman, 1995.

**Abstract:** Nadia Gray (1923-1994) was a twentieth century Romanian actress who worked in European theatre and film from the late 1940s to the late 1960s, when she moved to New York and performed as a cabaret singer. She is most remembered for performing a striptease in Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. The Nadia Gray papers contain scrapbooks, photographs, scripts, sheet music, programs, correspondence and clippings.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: <https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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**Processing note:** Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2014

## Creator History

Nadia Gray was born Nadia Kujnir-Herescu on November 23, 1923 in Bucharest, Romania. She began her acting career on the stage in post-World War II Bucharest, often appearing under her married name, Nadia Cantacuzino. With her first husband, the Romanian aviator Constantin Cantacuzino, she

fled the communist regime in Romania to settle in Western Europe. She got her big break when Noël Coward cast her opposite him in the 1948 Paris production of *Present Laughter* (*Joyeux Chagrins*). Gray made her film debut in *L'Inconnue d'un Soir* (1949) an Austrian-French coproduction. In the 1950s and 1960s she appeared in various films, mostly Italian, French, German or English productions, performing with actors such as Errol Flynn, Rod Cameron, Peter Sellers, Robert Ryan, Marcello Mastroianni, Gina Lollobrigida, Fernandel, Viktor de Kowa, Vittorio De Sica, and O.W. Fischer. Her best-known role was in Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960). From 1959 to 1967 she also made several guest appearances in various television productions. In 1967 she married New York attorney Herbert Silverman, and moved to New York. She retired from film in 1976 to concentrate on a career as a cabaret singer. She died of a stroke on June 13, 1994 in Manhattan.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Nadia Gray papers document her stage, film, and cabaret careers and to a lesser extent, her personal life.

Scrapbooks and albums of Gray's early stage career contain photographs and clippings from theatrical productions in which she appeared in Bucharest and in Paris. A highlight of materials from Gray's stage career is a copy of the script for *Joyeux Chagrins*, the French version of Noël Coward's *Present Laughter*, inscribed to Gray by Coward.

Film career files consist of photographs, clippings, and programs. Production stills and photograph albums document productions including *The Captain's Table* (1958), *Court Martial* (1965), *The Crooked Road* (1967), *Crossed Swords* (1954), *La Dolce Vita* (1959), *Hengst Maestro Austria* (1956), *L'Inconnu d'un Soir* (1949), *Maniac* (1962), *Moglie per una Notte* (1951), *Musik im Blut* (1955), *The Oldest Profession* (1966), *Parola di Ladro* (1957), *Puccini* (1953), *Rosen der Liebe* (1949), *Wenn Beide Schuldig Werden* (1962), *Winnetou and Old Firehand* (1966), *Valley of the Eagles* (1951), and *Zwei Whisky und ein Sofa* (1963). Production scrapbooks date between 1949 and 1963 and contain clippings and reviews. There are also clippings from German, English, French, Italian, and Austrian newspapers dating from 1963 to 1976. Film career files include programs from *L'Inconnue d'un Soir* (1949) and *Night Without Stars* (1951).

There is sheet music from songs Gray performed or considered performing in her New York cabaret act, many of which are in Russian, German, and Polish; as well as photographs of her performances. There are also photographs, notes, contracts, and publicity materials from Gray's cabaret career in Europe and New York.

Personal photographs consist of portraits and headshots of Gray and colleagues. These are generally in black and white, and several are signed. Personal photographs show Gray with friends and associates such as Fernandel, Federico Fellini, Peter Sellers, and Robert Ryan. A 1958 photograph album documents Gray's visit to HMS *Victory* in Portsmouth, England. Other photograph albums depict Gray as a child and members of her family. There is also one folder of correspondence, which includes a 1977 letter to Gray from Fellini.

**Arrangement:** The Nadia Gray papers are arranged into the following categories: Stage Files, Film Files, Cabaret Files, and Personal Photographs.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Actresses  
Singers

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Correspondence  
Photographs  
Programs (documents)  
Scrapbooks  
Scripts

### **Subjects**

Motion pictures -- Austria -- History -- 20th century  
Motion pictures -- England -- History -- 20th century  
Motion pictures -- France -- 20th century  
Motion pictures -- Germany -- History -- 20th century  
Motion pictures -- Italy -- History -- 20th century  
Motion pictures -- United States -- History -- 20th century  
Nightclubs -- New York (State) -- New York  
Theater -- France -- History -- 20th century  
Theater -- Romania -- History -- 20th century

## Container List

### Stage Files

#### Bucharest

- v. 1 *Lâng\_ Draga Mea* circa 1947  
Romanian version of Marcel Archard's *Auprés de Ma Blonde*.
- v. 2 *Prim\_vara a Venit / Vocea Turturelei* circa 1947  
Romanian version of John Van Druten's *The Voice of the Turtle*.
- v. 3 *Prim\_vara a Venit / Vocea Turturelei* circa 1947

#### Paris

- b. 7 f. 1 *Bonne Nuit, Patricia!* Undated  
*Joyeau Chagrins* 1948  
French version of Noël Coward's *Present Laughter*.
- b. 7 f. 2 Script
- b. 15 f. 1 Scrapbook  
*Le Petit Cafe* 1949
- v. 4 Scrapbook
- v. 5 Scrapbook

### Film Files

- v. 16 *Le Avventure di Giacomo Casanova* 1955
- b. 7 f. 3 *Candide* 1960  
*The Captain's Table* 1958
- v. 19 Scrapbook
- b. 7 f. 4 Photographs
- b. 7 f. 5 *Il Cardinale Lamberti* 1954
- b. 7 f. 6 *La Città Canora* 1954
- b. 7 f. 7 *Court Martial* 1965
- b. 7 f. 8 *The Crooked Road* 1965
- b. 7 f. 9 *La Dolce Vita* 1959
- b. 5 v. 1 *Hengst Maestoso Austria* 1956
- b. 7 f. 10 *I Like Money / Mr. Topaze* 1961-1962  
*L'Inconnu d'un Soir* 1949
- v. 6 Scrapbook
- b. 8 f. 4 Photograph Album and Program
- b. 7 f. 11 *La Jeu de la Vérité*  
*Il Maestro di Don Giovanni / Crossed Swords* 1952-1954
- v. 18 Scrapbook
- b. 7 f. 12 Photographs  
*Maniac* 1962-1963
- v. 17 Scrapbook
- b. 7 f. 13 Photographs

Film Files (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 14 *Moglie per una Notte* 1951
    - Monseigneur* 1949
    - v. 5 Scrapbook
    - v. 6 Scrapbook
  - b. 7 f. 15 *Musik im Blut* 1955
  - b. 7 f. 16 *The Naked Runner -- Script* 1966
    - Night Without Stars* 1951
    - v. 6 Scrapbook
    - v. 19 Scrapbook
  - b. 8 f. 1 Photographs and Program
  - b. 8 f. 2 *Le Plus Vieux Métier du Monde* 1966
  - b. 8 f. 3 *Puccini* 1953
  - b. 8 f. 4 *Rosen der Liebe* 1949
    - The Spider and the Fly* 1949
    - v. 17 Scrapbook
    - v. 19 Scrapbook
  - b. 8 f. 5 Photographs
    - Valley of the Eagles* 1951
    - v. 6 Scrapbook
    - v. 17 Scrapbook
  - b. 8 f. 6 Photographs
  - b. 8 f. 7 *Wenn Beiede Schuldig Werden* 1962
  - b. 8 f. 8 *Winnetou und Sein Freund* 1966
  - b. 8 f. 9 *Zwei Whisky und ein Sofa* 1963
  - b. 8 f. 10 Unidentified Production Stills 1950s-1960s
- Various Films
- b. 8 f. 11-13 Clippings 1949-1963
  - b. 9 f. 1-4 Clippings 1963-1966
  - b. 14 f. 3 Menu from Grand Prix Internationaux du Cinéma 1958
    - v. 13 Scrapbook 1952-1960
      - Scrapbook includes clippings from *The Captain's Table*, *Le Carrousel Fantastique*, *Le Dolce Vita*, *Les Femmes S'en Balacent*, *Moglie per una Notte*, *Puccini*, *Top Secret*, and *La Vierge du Rhine*.
    - v. 20 Scrapbook 1952-1960
- Cabaret Files 1950s-1970s
- b. 9 f. 5 Photographs, Notes, and Contracts
  - b. 9 f. 6-8 Press Files
  - b. 10 f. 1-2 Sheet Music
  - b. 11 f. 1-2 Sheet Music
  - b. 12 f. 1-2 Sheet Music
  - b. 14 f. 1 Sheet Music
  - v. 21 Sheet Music

Cabaret Files (cont.)

- v. 22 Sheet Music
- Personal Materials 1930s-1977
- b. 23 f. 1 Correspondence 1963-1977
- b. 23 f. 2 Personal Photographs 1940s-1970s
- b. 23 f. 3 Photograph Album 1958
- b. 14 f. 2 Portraits and Headshots 1940s-1970s
- b. 9 f. 9-13 Portraits and Headshots 1940s-1970s
- v. 20 Scrapbook -- Family Photographs 1930s-1940s