Summary

Creator: Dunning, Phillip, 1890-1968

Title: Philip Dunning papers

Date: 1912-1968

Size: 2.5 linear feet (5 boxes, 2 volumes, 2 oversized folders)


Abstract: Philip Dunning (1890-1968) was a playwright and a theatrical producer and director. The Philip Dunning papers, dating from 1912 to 1968, document Dunning's life and career through production files, scrapbooks, and letters. Half of the collection relates to the play Broadway.

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

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.


Processing note: Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

Creator History

Philip Dunning (1890-1968) was a playwright and a theatrical producer and director. He and George Abbott co-wrote and directed the play Broadway, a hit of the late 1920s that played New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities in the United States, as well as London. They also teamed up as producers for several musicals and plays, including Lilly Turner, which Dunning co-wrote, and Heat Lightning. Dunning produced several plays on his own, some of which he wrote. Among the plays
Dunning wrote or co-wrote were Remember the Day and The Drums Begin.

Scope and Content Note
The Philip Dunning papers, dating from 1912 to 1968, document Dunning's life and career through production files, scrapbooks, and letters.

Production files are composed of annotated scripts, account ledgers, programs, clippings, letters, and photographs. Most of the files document plays written or co-written by Dunning, and also include scripts produced or considered for production by Dunning and various partners, including George Abbott. Some scripts contain notes from Dunning offering details about the play's production, or stating why it was not produced.

Half of the production files relate to the play Broadway. Scripts contain various versions of the play, including drafts, a prompt script, and a revision that was to be used for a 1940 revival. The latter script also includes letters and production notes. Account ledgers, dating from 1925 to 1930, record the financial performance of the New York, Boston, Chicago, and London productions, as well as for regional touring companies in the southern and western United States. One folder of production information holds wardrobe, prop, and electrical requirements.

The production files hold other scripts written or co-written by Dunning, including Lilly Turner, Remember the Day, Anything for a Laugh, Big City Feller, The Dead Level, Face Value, Happy Hour, Home Sweet Home, Knee Deep in Diamonds, and a script with the provisional title of A New Play. Also present are scripts for Ladies’ Money, a play by George Abbott; the plays Twentieth Century and The Drums Begin (both produced by Dunning); and The Last Song, a musical with a book by Dunning and Jack McGowan and music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Also among the scripts is Great Scenes from Great Plays, a collection compiled by Dunning. Two scripts hold photographs. One of them, a publicity photograph for Remember the Day, is a signed portrait of Claudette Colbert. There are two folders of untitled manuscripts.

Two scrapbooks, dating from 1912 to the 1960s, hold photographs of Dunning, his family, friends, and colleagues. The single folder of letters mainly has condolences sent to Dunning's widow, Frances Fox Dunning.

Arrangement: The papers are arranged by format.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Business records
Letters (correspondence)
Photographs
Scripts

Occupations
Directors (performing arts)
Playwrights
Producers (managers)
Subjects
Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Names
Abbott, George, 1887-1995
Container List

b. 4 f. 1 Letters 1935, 1955, 1968
Production Files

b. 1 f. 1-2 A - Bi 1931, 1941
Broadway

b. 1 f. 3-9 Account Ledgers 1925-1930
b. 2 f. 1 Account Ledgers 1927-1928
b. 2 f. 2-6 Scripts 1926, 1940
b. 2 f. 7 Wardrobe, Props, and Electrical Requirements 1926
b. 3 f. 1-9 D - K 1933-1943, undated
b. 4 f. 2-9 L - P 1932-1941, undated
Remember the Day

b. 5 f. 1 Prompt Script 1935
o. 1 Photograph 1941
C12 DWR #31
b. 5 f. 2 A Thousand Times, No 1939
Twentieth Century 1932

b. 5 f. 3 Script
o. 2 Photograph
C12 DWR #31
b. 5 f. 4-5 Unidentified Manuscripts undated
v. 2 Scrapbook 1912-1920s
v. 1 Scrapbook 1916-1960s