



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Chester Erskine papers**

1870-1991 [bulk 1930-1987]

\*T-Mss 1994-025

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Erskine, Chester, 1905-1986

**Title:** Chester Erskine papers

**Date:** 1870-1991 [bulk 1930-1987]

**Size:** 2.3 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by the estate of Sally Erskine, 1994.

**Abstract:** Chester Erskine (1905-1986) was a director, writer, and producer for theater, film, and television. He was active from the late 1920s through the 1980s. In his early career, he wrote under the pseudonym Paul Leslie. The Chester Erskine papers (1870-1991, bulk 1930-1987) consist largely of scripts, outlines, and film treatments written by Erskine. Not all scripts were produced; some are annotated. Programs, clippings, contracts, and other materials are present for some productions. Productions represented in the collection include *Double Murder*, *Satyr* (a script for the original 1930 play and a later screenplay), *The Seven Who Resisted*, and *The Spencer Tracy Legacy: A Tribute* by Katharine Hepburn. A photocopy of an annotated script for *Harlem* (1929) is present. The collection also contains biographical material and articles about Erskine; his notes and poetry; letters to Erskine; and photographs of him and show business colleagues, including two small photographs of Spencer Tracy. One cabinet card, depicting Edwin Booth and dating to about 1870, is also present. Letters date from 1952 to 1991 and discuss Erskine's scripts as well as personal subjects. Correspondents include Robert Whitehead, Garson Kanin, Robert Parrish and his wife Kathie, Arlene Francis, Irwin Shaw, and Vivien Leigh. Some letters are addressed to Erskine's wife, Sally Erskine.

**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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**Preferred citation:** Chester Erskine papers, \*T-Mss 1994-025. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Dramatists

Screenwriters

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Scripts (documents)

Treatments (documents)

## Container List

### Biographical Information, Writings, Photographs, and Letters 1870s, 1930-1991

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical Information 1970s
- b. 1 f. 2 Clippings
- Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 3 Evans, Maurice 1965, 1977
- b. 1 f. 4 Kanin, Garson and Ruth Gordon 1949-1963
- b. 1 f. 5 Francis, Arlene 1960-1975
- b. 1 f. 6 Kerr, Deborah and Peter Viertel 1959-1970
- b. 1 f. 7 Leigh, Vivien 1955-1965
- b. 1 f. 8 Marshall, Armina 1977
- b. 1 f. 9 Matthau, Walter 1965-1970
- b. 1 f. 10 *Mulatto, by Langston Hughes* 1984
- b. 1 f. 11 Parrish, Robert and Kathie Parrish 1961-1969
- b. 1 f. 12 Shaw, Irwin and Marion Edwards 1960-1981
- b. 1 f. 13 Tracy, Spencer circa 1950-1986  
Includes photographs, notes and magazine.
- b. 1 f. 14 Whitehead, Robert and Zoe Caldwell 1965-1969
- b. 1 f. 15 General Correspondence 1955-1991  
Prominent individuals include Richard Chamberlain, Hume Cronyn, George Cukor, Jose Ferrer, John "Jack" Merivale, and Ginger Rogers.
- b. 1 f. 16 Obituaries 1986
- b. 1 f. 17 Poetry and Other Writings circa 1950s – circa 1970s
- b. 1 f. 18 Photographs circa 1870, 1930s-1960s
- b. 1 f. 19-20 Profiles and Articles 1930, 1941-1942
- b. 1 f. 21 University of Southern California 1968-1972  
Includes photographs, clippings, programs, and class outlines.

### Productions

Alphabetical by production title.

- b. 2 f. 1 *The African Treasure* circa 1970s
- b. 2 f. 2 *Casanova's Homecoming* circa 1950s
- b. 2 f. 3 *City Episode*
- b. 2 f. 4 *Close-Up*
- b. 2 f. 5-6 *The Culper Ring* 1971
- b. 2 f. 7 *Daisy Bates* 1972
- b. 2 f. 8 *Double Murder* 1970s
- b. 3 f. 1 *Double Murder* 1970s
- b. 3 f. 2-3 *Gemini* 1970s
- b. 3 f. 4 *Harlem – Work Copy of 1929 Play* circa 1970s

Productions (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 5-7 *The King's Favorite* circa 1970s  
Includes floor plans and cast plot.
  
- b. 3 f. 8 *My Wife, the Celebrity* 1949
- b. 3 f. 9 *Project for Peace* circa 1961
- b. 3 f. 10-11 *Satyr* 1937  
Annotated by Erskine. Includes copies of original reviews made in the 1970s.
  
- b. 4 f. 1-4 *Satyr* circa 1970s
- b. 4 f. 5-8 *The Seven Who Resisted* 1982-1984  
Includes Production Analysis and Budget.
  
- b. 5 f. 1 *The Seven Who Resisted* 1982
- b. 5 f. 2 *The Soldiers* circa 1970s
- b. 5 f. 3-5 *The Spencer Tracy Legacy: A Tribute* 1986-1987  
Includes Emmy Awards Certificate.
  
- b. 5 f. 6 *Stepdaughters of War* 1930
- b. 5 f. 7 *Story of Chico* circa 1970s
- b. 5 f. 8 *The Studio – Master Script 1977 August 25* 1977 August 25
- b. 5 f. 9 *Trial for Treason* circa 1970s
- b. 6 f. 1 *Virgil* circa 1970s (Photocopy.)
- b. 6 f. 2 Untitled Screenplay circa 1970s
- b. 6 f. 3 Television Projects – Proposals and Outlines 1960s-1970s