



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Edward Mabley papers

1920s-1985

*T-Mss 1986-009

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2013

Summary

Creator: Mabley, Edward, 1906-

Title: Edward Mabley papers

Date: 1920s-1985

Size: 9.82 linear feet (21 boxes, 1 volume)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Edward Howe Mabley, 1986.

Abstract: Edward Mabley (1906-1984) was an American writer for theater, radio, and television, and author of the book *Dramatic Construction: An Outline of Basic Principles*. The Edward Mabley papers (1920s-1985) document his writing career through scripts, scores, book manuscripts, correspondence, clippings, promotional materials, and notes. The papers also hold material related to the Tatterman Marionettes, a company that Mabley co-founded.

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 Access:

Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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

Preferred citation: Edward Mabley papers, *T-Mss 1986-009. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2013 The original order was retained, and original folders and file labels were retained when possible.

Creator History

Edward Mabley (1906-1984) was an American writer for theater, radio, and television. He was author of the book *Dramatic Construction: An Outline of Basic Principles*, and taught playwriting at the New School for Social Research. Mabley was co-founder the Tatterman Marionettes, a theater company that was active from 1923 through the early 1940s. Mabley and his partner, William Duncan, pioneered the use of marionettes in advertising.

Mabley began writing for the stage in the 1930s. He had two plays produced on Broadway: *Temper the Wind* (1946) and *Glad Tidings* (1951), which became his best-known work. Mabley also wrote musicals, and worked frequently with composer Elie Siegmeister; their collaborations included the operas *The Plough* and *the Stars and Night of the Moonspell*.

Mabley's work for radio included educational scripts for *The American School of the Air*. Many of his television scripts were produced for anthology programs such as *Suspense* and *Kraft Theatre*. His script "Borderline of Fear," written with Joanna Roos, was published in *The Best Television Plays, 1950-1951*.

Scope and Content Note

The Edward Mabley papers (1920s-1985) document Mabley's work as a playwright, a writer for radio and television, and an author. The collection holds scripts (produced and unproduced), scores, book manuscripts, correspondence, clippings, promotional materials, background and research materials, notes, and photographs. Material related to the Tatterman Marionettes is present.

Theatrical production files contain scripts, scores (some published), programs, clippings, correspondence, background materials, production notes, and a small number of photographs. Correspondence contains feedback about scripts and information regarding publication and rights. Mabley frequently revised and repurposed his scripts, and the files document multiple productions and hold multiple versions of scripts. Titles include *Bon Voyage*, *Dick Whittington*, *The Feathered Serpent*, *Glad Tidings*, *The Mermaid in Lock No. 7*, *Piggy Bank Rag*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *Red Sky at Morning*, *Temper the Wind* (earlier title: *Drums of Peace*), and *The Twin Musicals* (*The Ascent of George W. Twitchell* and *No More Lovin'*). Short scripts for the Tatterman Marionettes, dating to the 1920s and 1930s, are also here. The file for Mabley's opera, *The Lady of the Lake*, holds clippings and a program from after Mabley's death. Some story scenarios and proposals - including one for a film - are held here. The files include one folder of reports on plays under consideration for production at the Woodstock Playhouse in 1946, when Mabley was the theater's business manager.

The collection holds audio recordings of music, songs, and dialogue for some of the productions. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Writing and lecture files contain books, stories, and articles written by Mabley. They also contain records related to rights, royalties, and new editions, as well as research and background material for his writing and lectures. Lecture notes from Mabley's classes on playwriting are here, as are transcripts of *New Dramatists Craft Discussions with playwrights* (1955-1957). The majority of the files relate to Mabley's nonfiction books, *Dramatic Construction* and *The Motor Balloon "America"*. The files hold

multiple versions of a book Mabley adapted from Glad Tidings. Typescript travel journals from the 1970s and 1980s are also present.

Radio and television files contain scripts and a small number of clippings and letters. Mabley's scripts for The American School of the Air, and the television show The O'Neills (1949-1950), are well-represented. In some cases, the files hold multiple versions of scripts, adapted for different media; the scripts are not annotated.

The collection holds commercial scripts that Mabley wrote for television, short films, and live performances; many of the scripts were intended for the Tatterman Marionettes. Other marionette materials consist of a scrapbook of the Tatterman production of Peer Gynt, including photographs, programs, clippings, and promotional materials; a 1936 article that Mabley wrote about the use of marionettes in advertising; and photographs and pamphlets of window displays and other advertisements. Scripts for Tatterman productions can be found in the theatrical production files.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged in six categories: commercial scripts, radio files, Tatterman Marionettes materials, television files, theatrical productions files, and writing and lecture files. Theatrical productions are arranged alphabetically.

Key Terms

Occupations

Dramatists

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Manuscripts for publication

Scripts (documents)

Subjects

Marionettes

Names

New Dramatists, Inc.

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-6 Commercial Scripts 1939-1950s
- b. 2 f. 1-7 Radio 1941-1950s, 1975
- b. 1 f. 7-12 Radio 1944-1947
- b. 21 f. 6-11 The Tatterman Marionettes 1920s-1930s, 1982
 - b. 22 The Tatterman Marionettes Peer Gynt Scrapbook 1937, 1949
Previously assigned NYPL call number MWEZ + N.C. 27,579
- Television
 - b. 5 f. 1-4 1948-1950s
 - b. 2 f. 8 1949
 - b. 3 f. 1-7 1949-1950s
 - b. 4 f. 1-8 1949-1950s
- Theatrical Productions
 - b. 5 f. 5-8 B 1968-1984
 - b. 6 f. 1-12 B-D 1949-1984
 - b. 7 f. 1-9 D-F 1968-1980s
 - b. 8 f. 1-10 F-G 1950s-1984
 - b. 9 f. 1-11 G-H 1951-1980s
 - b. 10 f. 1-15 H-M 1933, 1958-1985
 - b. 11 f. 1-10 M-P 1957-1984
 - b. 12 f. 1-11 P 1970-1980s
 - b. 13 f. 1-10 P-R 1953-1980
 - b. 14 f. 1-12 R-S 1950-1983
Includes scenarios and miscellaneous short scripts.
 - b. 15 f. 1-11 S-T 1920s-1949, 1983
Includes Tatterman Marionettes scripts.
 - b. 16 f. 1-10 T, Woodstock Playhouse 1938-1947, 1980s
- Writing and Lectures
 - b. 20 f. 1-9 1925, 1945-1984
 - b. 21 f. 1-5 1933-1978
 - b. 16 f. 11-14 1940s, 1960s-1983
 - b. 19 b. 1-10 1952-1978
 - b. 18 f. 1-8 1961-1980s
 - b. 17 f. 1-14 1970-1984