



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**King Coit School and Children's Theatre papers**

1934-2003

\*T-Mss 2003-051

Processed by Elisabeth Elkind.

## Summary

**Creator:** Palmer, Prudence Taylor

**Title:** King Coit School and Children's Theatre papers

**Date:** 1934-2003

**Source:** Papers: gift, Prudence Taylor Palmer, 09/17/2003

**Abstract:** Correspondence, programs, photographs, reminiscences and published material belonged to Prudence Taylor Palmer, a student at the King-Coit School in the 1930s and 1940s.

**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:**

Photocopying prohibited.

**Conditions Governing Use:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

**Preferred citation:** Prudence Taylor Palmer Papers on the King-Coit School and Children's Theatre, \*T-Mss 2003-051, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

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## Creator History

Edith King (1884-1975) and Dorothy Coit (1889-1976) first collaborated on children's theater productions while they were both employed at the Buckingham School in Massachusetts. The success of these productions led them to open their own school and children's theater in New York City in 1923. The King-Coit School and Children's Theatre offered arts programs for children (5-15 years old) on weekday afternoons and weekends. King taught drawing and painting classes, while Coit was

responsible for acting and dancing. The student body included many children of the rich and famous, and included such notables as Anne Baxter, Madeleine L'Engle, and Lee Remick. The plays were well reviewed and popular, but were performed for short runs in small theaters, and ticket sales did not supply much funding. The school and theater relied heavily on grants and private donations throughout its existence. It finally closed in 1959 when health concerns led to King's retirement.

### **Custodial History**

The Prudence Taylor Palmer Papers on the King-Coit School and Children's Theatre were donated to The Billy Rose Theatre Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts by Prudence Taylor Palmer in September 2003.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Consists of correspondence, programs, photographs, reminiscences and published material that belonged to Prudence Taylor Palmer, a student at the school in the 1930s and 1940s. Includes her reminiscences of her best friend, the ballerina Tanaquil LeClercq, a fellow student at the school and letters to Mayor LaGuardia contesting his denial of permission to perform to children under seven. Also includes correspondence with and memoirs by Lucille Conrad Outhwaite, a dance teacher at the school.

### **Key Terms**

#### **Subjects**

Child actors  
Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

#### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Notes

#### **Names**

Palmer, Prudence Taylor  
Coit, Dorothy, 1889-1976  
King, Edith, 1884-1975  
Le Clerq, Tanaquil  
Outhwaite, Lucille Conrad  
King-Coit School and Children's Theatre

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Reminiscences of Prudence Taylor Palmer, 2003. (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence and notes on Mayor LaGuardia's refusal to let children under seven perform, 1940. (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 3 Letter by Murray Taylor, 1944 May 5. (1 folder)  
Regarding the school's lease of property.
- b. 1 f. 4 Correspondence of Palmer with Lucille Conrad Outhwaite, 1993-1997. (1 folder)
- b. 1 f. 5 Programs of the King-Coit Children's Theatre, 1934-1958. (1 folder)  
Includes commemorative program covering the years 1923-1953.
- b. 1 f. 6 Photographs, 1953 and n.d. (1 folder)  
Consists of production photographs for *Aucassin and Nicolette* and an unidentified production.
- b. 1 f. 7 Printed ephemera, 1976-1979 and n.d. (1 folder)  
Includes obituary of Dorothy Coit.
- b. 1 f. 8 *Publication by Prudence Taylor Palmer and T. J. Palmer, St. Clements: The Chronicle of a Connecticut River Castle, 1992.* (1 folder)  
Includes reminiscences of the King-Coit School, p. 154-157.
- b. 1 f. 9 Publication by Lucille Conrad Outhwaite, *Birds of Flight (The Diary of a Dancer)*, 1993. (1 folder)  
Self-published book, signed "For Prue...".
- b. 1 f. 10 *Publication by Lucille Conrad Outhwaite, Flowers in the Wind, 1994.* (1 folder)  
Self-published memoirs, signed "For Prue...".