



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Diana Barrymore papers

1865-1959 [bulk 1937-1957]

*T-Mss 1960-002

Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2015

Summary

Creator: Barrymore, Diana, 1921-1960

Title: Diana Barrymore papers

Date: 1865-1959 [bulk 1937-1957]

Size: 7.3 linear feet (4 boxes, 7 volumes)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Diana Barrymore, 1960

Abstract: Diana Barrymore (1921-1960) was an American actress. The Diana Barrymore papers hold correspondence, photographs, scrapbooks, programs, and other material documenting Barrymore's acting career and the publication of her memoir, *Too Much, Too Soon*.

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.

Preferred citation: Diana Barrymore papers, *T-Mss 1960-002. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2015

Related Materials:

Gerold Frank papers, MssCol 1067. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator History

Diana Barrymore (1921-1960) was an American actress. She was the daughter of John Barrymore

and his second wife, poet and actress Blanche Oelrichs. Oelrichs performed and wrote under the pseudonym Michael Strange. Barrymore studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and made her Broadway debut at age 19 in *Romantic Mr. Dickens*. In November 1938, David Selznick had her screen tested for Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, though she didn't get the part. In 1942, she signed a contract with Universal Studios, appearing in several films including *Nightmare* (1942) and *Ladies Courageous* (1944). Alcohol and drug problems ended her film career in 1944. Barrymore married three times and was never able to restart her career, though she worked intermittently in summer stock theatre. In 1950 CBS offered her a live talk show, *The Diana Barrymore Show*, but Barrymore showed up the first night too drunk to work; and the show was canceled before it aired. In 1957 she completed her memoir, *Too Much, Too Soon* with the help of ghostwriter Gerold Frank. She died in New York of a drug and alcohol overdose at the age of 38.

Scope and Content Note

The Diana Barrymore papers hold correspondence, photographs, scrapbooks, programs, and other material documenting Barrymore's acting career and the publication of her memoir, *Too Much, Too Soon*.

Correspondence is both personal and professional and includes letters from her mother Michael Strange, congratulatory telegrams from opening nights, invitations to dinner from friends, and statements from her lawyer in later years concerning her financial situation. Barrymore's letters to close friend Francis Kellogg are here. There is also fan mail, the bulk of which resulted from television appearances she made promoting *Too Much, Too Soon* in 1957.

Photographs include portraits of various family members such as Michael Strange, John Barrymore, and her half-brothers Leonard and Robin Thomas. There are also head shots and promotional shots of Barrymore in various productions, as well as snapshots and childhood portraits. There is a set of photographs from her 1942 wedding to actor Bramwell Fletcher, whom she met while they were both starring in *Rebecca*.

Barrymore's scrapbooks document her outings and parties as a New York debutante in the 1937-1938 season, as well as the first few years of her acting career. The scrapbooks consist of photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, and the occasional sketch by Barrymore. A programs and clippings file holds further promotional material from Barrymore's stage shows and films, as well as copies of advertisements in which she appeared.

Contracts are primarily from her book deal in 1957 and relate to serialization rights and publication. There are also address books and a script for *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* from a 1941 production starring Barrymore at the Ridgeway Theatre in White Plains, New York.

Some files have internal call numbers with which they are associated. These call numbers are indicated in the container list with the letters "MWEZ."

Arrangement: Alphabetical by file title.

Key Terms

Subjects

Debutante balls

Theater -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scrapbooks

Names

Barrymore, John, 1882-1942

Strange, Michael, 1890-1950

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Address Books
- b. 1 f. 2 Contracts 1955-1957
- Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 3-4 General 1937-1959
- b. 1 f. 5 Fan Mail 1957
- b. 1 f. 6 Kellogg, Frances 1940-1943
Barrymore's letters to Kellogg.
- b. 1 f. 7 Strange, Michael
- b. 1 f. 8 Wesburger & Frosch Law Firm 1950-1959
- Photographs
- Barrymore, Diana
- b. 1 f. 9-10 Childhood 1921-1937
- b. 1 f. 11 Headshots 1937-1957
- b. 4 f. 1 Headshots 1937-1950
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,392
- Promotional Shots
- b. 1 f. 12 *Between Us Girls* 1942
- b. 1 f. 13 *Joan of Lorraine*
- b. 1 f. 14 *The Land is Bright*
- b. 1 f. 15 *Light Up the Sky*
- b. 1 f. 16 *Rebecca* 1941
With Bramwell Fletcher.
- b. 1 f. 17 *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- b. 2 f. 1 *Too Much, Too Soon* press 1957
- b. 2 f. 2 WHAM Radio Show
- b. 2 f. 3 Unidentified
- b. 2 f. 4-5 Snapshots 1938-1950
- b. 2 f. 6 Wedding to Bromwell Fletcher 1942
- b. 2 f. 7 Barrymore, John 1910-1930
- b. 4 f. 2 Barrymore, John 1910-1939
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,392
- b. 2 f. 8-9 Extended Family 1865-1910
- b. 2 f. 10 Friends and Colleagues 1930-1955
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,380
- b. 2 f. 11 O'Neil, Eugene and Carlotta
- b. 2 f. 12 Strange, Michael 1910-1935
- b. 4 f. 3 Strange, Michael 1910-1935
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,392
- b. 3 f. 1 Thomas, Robin and Leonard, Jr 1920-1938

Photographs (cont.)

b. 4 f. 4 Thomas, Robin and Leonard, Jr 1920-1938
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,392

b. 3 f. 2 Tweed, Harrison

b. 4 f. 5 Unidentified
MWEZ+ n.c. 18,392

b. 3 f. 3 Programs and Clippings

Scrapbooks

v. 1 1937-1938

Barrymore's society debut season. Also holds a letter and sides from Barrymore's 1938 *Gone With the Wind* screen test.

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,391

v. 2 1938

Photographs from Barrymore's debutante season.

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,395

v. 3 December 1939- May 1940

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,389

v. 4 June - November 1940

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,388

v. 5 December 1940 - March 1941

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,386

v. 6 April - June 1941

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,390

v. 7 1942

MWEZ+ n.c. 18,384

b. 3 f. 4 *Script--Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* 1941