



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke records

1970-2001

*T-Mss 2006-012

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

Summary

Creator: Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke

Title: Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke records

Date: 1970-2001

Size: 9 linear feet (33 boxes)

Source: Donated by James Cavanaugh, 2006.

Abstract: The Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke was founded in 1970 by James T. Cavanaugh, a professor emeritus of Theater Arts at Mount Holyoke College. The Summer Theatre offered college students the opportunity to develop their acting and technical skills. The records, 1970-2001, document the history of the theater with scrapbooks, photographs, slides, theater programs, and artifacts.

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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Processing note: Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014 Three scrapbooks were disassembled.

Creator History

James T. Cavanaugh, professor emeritus of theatre arts at Mount Holyoke College, founded the Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke College (formerly the Mount Holyoke College Summer Theatre) in 1970. Cavanaugh established the theatre because students complained that during their summer internship, they often gained little or no practical experience in acting or technical skills.

With \$5000 in contributions and twenty-one students, Cavanaugh established the Mount Holyoke College Summer Theatre. During the premiere summer season, eight plays of comedy and drama were performed. Five or six plays were geared for an adult audience and two plays were for children. The plays featured had previous showings on the Broadway stage. Over the years, the productions of Broadway plays and the ratio of adult to children plays remained consistent.

The Theatre was easily recognizable by its trademark orange and white tent in which the audience sat in the round to watch the actors perform on a thrust stage. Another noticeable feature was the Theatre's logo of the comedy and drama masks set in an orange and yellow sun, which appeared on the cover of all of its programs.

Cavanaugh's guidance as executive producer proved successful for the theatre. The budget grew exponentially with contributions from the college, subscribers, attendance, and support from former students who sometimes returned to perform. This theatre also proved to be a magnet for other colleges and experienced actors. Cavanaugh produced plays at the Summer Theatre until 1992. As an artist, he also performed as an actor in summer theaters throughout the United States.

In 2002, the Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke College moved from South Hadley, Massachusetts. The theatre would eventually become the Pioneer Valley Summer Theatre in Easthampton, Massachusetts.

Scope and Content Note

The Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke records, 1970–2001, document thirty years of theatrical productions at the Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke. The collection holds scrapbooks, photographs, slides, theater programs, and artifacts.

The scrapbooks illustrate the history and development of the theater. Cavanaugh created these scrapbooks at the end of each summer season with letters, photographs, reviews, and artifacts (promotional pins and tickets). The dates are incomplete. There are no scrapbooks for 1975 (Cavanaugh was on sabbatical, so the theater went dark); 1988 to 1989, 1991, and 1996 to 1997.

The photographs, dated 1970 to 1992 (except the year 1975), document all of the stage productions, behind-the-scenes technical work done by the students, and the actors enjoying their leisure time. The files include color slides as well. The images may contain the name of the production, year and the actor's names. The remaining material in the collection consists of theatre programs.

Arrangement: The collection has retained its received order by format: Scrapbooks, Photographs, and Theatre Programs.

Key Terms

Occupations

Actors

Producers (managers)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Artifacts (object genre)
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Theater programs

Subjects

College theater -- United States
Theater -- 20th century

Geographic Names

South Hadley (Mass.)

Names

Cavanaugh, James, 1892-1967

Container List

Scrapbooks

- b. 1 1970
- b. 2 1971
- b. 3 1972
- b. 4 1973
- b. 5 1974
- b. 27 1976
- b. 28 1977
- b. 6 1978
- b. 29 1979
- b. 7 1980
- b. 30 1981
- b. 8 1982
- b. 31 1983
- b. 9 1984
- b. 32 1985
- b. 10 1986, 1987
Two volumes, disbound.
- b. 11 1990
- b. 12 1992
- b. 13 1993
- b. 33 1994
- b. 14 1995
- b. 15 1998
- b. 16 1999

Photographs

- b. 17 f. 1-5 1970-1974
- b. 18 f. 1-7 1976-1979
- b. 19 f. 1-7 1979-1982
- b. 20 f. 1-7 1983-1985
- b. 21 f. 1-6 1985-1987
- b. 22 f. 1-8 1988-1991
- b. 23 f. 1-5 1991-1992

Theatre Programs

- b. 24 f. 1-9 1970-1984
- b. 25 f. 1-9 1985-1993
- b. 26 f. 1-9 1994-2000