

**Guide to the Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production
Materials, circa 1925-1953**

***T-Vim 1978-007**

Billy Rose Theatre Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

Contact Information

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Billy Rose Theatre Division
40 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York, New York 10023-7498

Phone: 212/870-1639

Fax: 212/870-1868

Email: theatrediv@nypl.org

Web address: <http://www.nypl.org/research/lpa/the/the.html>

Processed by: Helice Koffler
Date Completed: October 2007

Processed and encoded through a gift from Robert W. Wilson.

© 2007 The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title:	Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production Materials
Collection ID:	*T-Vim 1978-007
Creator:	Theatre Guild
Extent:	.21 linear feet (1box)
Repository:	Billy Rose Theatre Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: The Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production Materials primarily consist of miscellaneous technical drawings and other items documenting various productions put on by the independent production company. The contents of the individual files on productions, mainly dating from the 1920s and 1930s, vary, but may include ground plans, stage plans, and light and/or property plots.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Preferred Citation

Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production Materials, *T-Vim 1978-007, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in October 2007.

Related Materials

The Theatre Guild Archive is held by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Historical Note

Originally established in 1919, the Theatre Guild began as an independent theatrical production company dedicated to developing new American works, as well as to bringing the best of contemporary British and European drama to New York audiences. From 1919 through 1939, a governing board principally composed of six key members (Theresa Helburn, Lawrence Langner, Philip Moeller, Lee Simonson, Maurice Wertheim, and Helen Westley) guided the operations of the Guild. Among the many highlights of these years were productions of works by American playwrights, including Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Eugene O'Neill and Robert E. Sherwood. During this period, the Guild also presented the world premieres of several plays by George Bernard Shaw, including *Heartbreak House* (1920), and became his American agent. In its earliest days, however, the Guild relied mainly upon works by European writers, commissioning translations or adaptations of plays by such diverse authors as Karel Capek, Henrik Ibsen, and Ferenc Molnár. In 1927, the Guild also began a fruitful association with the innovative director, Rouben Mamoulian, who staged both the original productions of Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's play, *Porgy* (1927), and George Gershwin's folk opera, *Porgy and Bess* (1935). In addition to directing several other dramatic productions for the Guild, Mamoulian would later be responsible for its two biggest successes in musical theater, *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945).

During the 1930s, internal division within the Guild led to the development of competing, splinter groups, such as the Group Theatre and The Playwrights' Company, and, ultimately, the reorganization of the Guild itself. By 1939, the Theatre Guild had become a leaner organization, with Langner and Helburn replacing the board and now functioning as co-directors. In addition to continuing to champion the work of new American dramatists, during the 1940s, the Guild would begin several initiatives to reach a broader audience. Among these efforts were the implementation of a national subscription theater service and the regular broadcast of a radio program, *The Theatre Guild on the Air* (1945), both of which served to enhance the Guild's prestige. These outreach efforts, along with the phenomenal success of *Oklahoma!*, helped to reestablish the Guild's financial stability, but most of the early, innovative fervor had been lost.

In 1953, the *Theatre Guild on the Air* radio program was transformed into a television show, *The United States Steel Hour*. This prize-winning anthology series was broadcast for twelve seasons and the Guild would become active in other areas of television production as well. During the 1960s, the Guild grew increasingly involved with international touring, assembling a national theater company headed by Helen Hayes, which, under the auspices of the State Department, presented the works of American playwrights around the world. In 1968, the Guild became a pioneer in arranging travel tours, developing programs to take its subscribers to attend plays in European countries. By the 1970s, however, the Guild rarely produced any shows for the Broadway theater, although its corporate identity continued to exist in some form. In 1975, it launched the Theatre At Sea cruises, an annual offering, which continues to the present day. The Guild's last official credit on Broadway was as a co-producer of the stage version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical film, *State Fair* (1996).

Scope and Content Note

The Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production Materials primarily consist of miscellaneous technical drawings and other items documenting various productions put on by the Theatre Guild, mainly during the 1920s and 1930s. The contents of the individual files on productions vary, but may include ground plans or stage plans, and light and/or property plots. The collection also contains a few examples of music that was used in productions, including *Chrysalis* (1932) and *Caprice* (1928). Among those plays represented are works by Eugene O'Neill, including *Ah, Wilderness!* (1941 revival) and *Days Without End* (1934), as well as George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* (1925), *Arms and the Man* (1925), and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1927). Among the other productions included are Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story* (1939), Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted* (1924), and William Inge's *Picnic* (1953).

Theatre Guild Technical Drawings and Other Production Materials

Box/Folder	Description
Box 1	
F. 1	<i>Ah, Wilderness!</i> , 1941 (Property plots, rehearsal call sheet, music list, dressing room list, and cast and replacement list.)
F. 2	<i>Androcles and the Lion</i> , circa 1925 (Stage plans.)
F. 3	<i>Arms and the Man</i> , circa 1925 (Ground plans.)
F. 4	<i>Caprice</i> , circa 1928 (Ground plan, light, property plots, and sheet music.)
F. 5	<i>Chrysalis</i> , 1932 (Light plots, ground plans, and music.)
F. 6	<i>Days Without End</i> , 1933-1934 (Ground plans and light plot.)
F. 7	<i>The Doctor's Dilemma</i> , circa 1927 (Stage plans)
F. 8	<i>The Ghost of Yankee Doodle</i> , circa 1927 (Property, light, scene, and sound plots.)
F. 9	<i>Karl and Anna</i> , circa 1929 (Ground plans.)
F. 10	<i>Mary of Scotland</i> , 1933-1934 (Ground plans and light plot.)
F. 11	<i>Mask and the Face</i> , 1933 and undated (Ground plans, light and property plots.)
F. 12	<i>Merchants of Glory</i> , circa 1925 (Stage plans.)
F. 13	<i>Papa is All</i> , circa 1942 (Light plots.)
F. 14	<i>The Philadelphia Story</i> , circa 1939 (Stage plans.)
F. 15	<i>Picnic</i> , circa 1953 (Light plots and stage plans.)
F. 16	<i>Porgy</i> , 1934 and undated (Ground plans, property and light plots.)
F. 17	<i>The Race with the Shadow</i> , undated (Ground plans.)
F. 18	<i>Right You Are</i> , circa 1927 (Ground plan and property plot)
F. 19	<i>School for Husbands</i> , 1933 (Ground plans.)
F. 20	<i>A Sleeping Clergyman</i> , 1934-1935 (Ground plans.)
F. 21	<i>They Knew What They Wanted</i> , circa 1924 (Property and light plots)
F. 22	<i>This Time Tomorrow</i> , 1947 and undated (Stage plans.)
F. 23	<i>Wine of Choice</i> , 1938 (S. N. Behrman's notes.)