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Guide to the
Claire Nichtern papers

1959-1987
*T-Mss 1994-026

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, June 2012

Summary

Creator: Nichtern, Claire

Title: Claire Nichtern papers, 1959-1987

Size: 12.72 linear feet (33 boxes)

Source: Donated by Judith Nichtern in 1994.

Abstract: Claire Joseph Nichtern (1920-1994) was an American producer of Broadway and Off-Broadway plays and musicals in the second half of the twentieth century. The Claire Nichtern papers (1962-1987) document Nichtern's professional career. The bulk of the collection consists of production files for Broadway and Off-Broadway plays and musicals produced by Nichtern, who was president of Warner Theatre Productions from 1979-1985. The collection also contains a small amount of office files, scripts, and posters. There is very little personal material in the collection.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying and photography will apply. Advance notice may be required. Inquiries regarding audio in the collection may be directed to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound (rha@nypl.org). Audio material will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Preferred citation: Claire Nichtern papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Material was reboxed and refoldered as necessary. Select photographs and posters were removed from frames.

Creator history

Claire Joseph Nichtern (1920-1994) was an American producer of Broadway and Off-Broadway plays and musicals in the second half of the twentieth century. Nichtern was born in New York City to Fred Joseph and Rebecca Brumer Joseph. The family moved to New Jersey when Nichtern was a child and she returned to New York City shortly after her graduation from Union High School in 1936. Nichtern held various administrative positions before marrying Sol Nichtern, with whom she had two children, David and Judith. In addition to her role as a mother, Nichtern assisted her husband in the management of his pediatrician practice.

In 1954, Nichtern attended New York University where she took an aptitude test that revealed she was ideally suited to work in theater. Buoyed by these results, Nichtern left school to work as a switchboard operator at the Phoenix Theater. She sat in on castings and rehearsals, and was soon promoted to casting director, a position she held until 1958, when she left the Phoenix to assist the general manager at the Playwrights Company. The following year she returned to the Phoenix as production coordinator. In 1961, Nichtern began producing her own plays, under Claire Nichtern Productions. Her first production was the musical *The Banker's Daughter*. Though the production was not a financial success, it was well received and cemented Nichtern's love of theater production. The next year, she produced a double bill of one-act plays from emerging playwright Murray Schisgal, *The Typists* and *The Tiger*, starring Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson. This billing was both a critical and financial success, and began her longstanding professional working relationships with Schisgal, Jackson, and Wallach. Throughout her career, Nichtern would option and produce three more Schisgal plays including *Jimmy Shine* (1968-1969), *Luv* (1964-1967), and *Twice Around the Park* (1982-1983). *Luv*, directed by Mike Nicols, and starring Wallach, Jackson, and Alan Arkin, ran for three years and garnered a 1965 Tony Award nomination for Best Play and Tony Award for Best Producer of a Play.

Throughout the 1970s, Nichtern worked in various capacities for theatrical companies and organizations around New York City. She was a producer in residence and director of admissions at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts from 1970 to 1973, associate director at Circle-in-the-Square in 1973, a production consultant for the ETC Theatre Company in 1974, director of creative affairs at both Warner/Regency and the William Morris Agency from 1978 to 1979, before landing the position of president of Warner Theatre Productions, a position she held until her retirement in 1985. While at Warner Theatre Productions, she produced over thirty plays include *Fifth of July*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, and *Crimes of the Heart*, which won a Pulitzer Prize for playwright Beth Henley.

Nichtern had divorced Sol Nichtern in 1966, and was for a short time was married to Herbert Kallem. In addition to her Tony Award, Nichtern received six other Tony nominations, four Drama Desk nominations, and was a three-time recipient of Antoinette Perry awards for production. Nichtern died in New York City in 1987.

Scope and content note

The Claire Nichtern papers (1959-1987) document the professional career of producer Claire Nichtern. The bulk of the collection consists of production files for plays and musicals produced by Nichtern. The collection also includes a small amount of office files, scripts, and posters. There is very little personal material in the collection.

The collection contains one sound recording, a demo pressing of the musical version of the play *Luv*. Inquiries regarding the audio material in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatrediv@nypl.org). Audio material may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Arrangement

The Claire Nichtern papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: Office Files, 1959-1985

Series II: Production Files, 1962-1986

Series III: Scripts, 1977-1987

Series IV: Posters, 1980

Key terms

Subjects

Musical theater -- New York (State) -- New York
Theater -- Production and direction

Places

Broadway -- (New York, N.Y.)

Names

Jackson, Anne, 1926-

Nichtern, Claire

Schisgal, Murray, 1926-

Wallach, Eli, 1915-

Special formats

Awards

Photographs

Playbills

Posters

Container list

Series I: Office Files, 1959-1985 (4 boxes)

The office files are arranged alphabetically by folder title and reflect the various theater companies and organizations Nichtern worked for, and the professional organizations she belonged to. The correspondence regards Nichtern's personal and professional lives, which often overlapped. Notable correspondents include the poet and longtime friend Cid Corman, Nichtern's mentor Sir Tyrone Guthrie, and Anne Jackson and Eli Wallach. The publicity file contains clippings regarding Nichtern's career. Photographs consist of both publicity photographs and more casual snapshots of productions, award shows, and other events. Subjects include Vinnette Carroll, Frances Fuller, Moses Gunn, Arthur Miller, Paul Newman, Shauneille Perry, and Murray Schisgal.

- b.1 f.1 The Actors' Fund of America, 1979
- b.1 f.2 American Academy of Dramatic Arts, 1971-1973
- b.1 f.3 American Association of University Women (AAUW), 1975
- b.1 f.4 American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA), 1976, undated
- b.1 f.5-7 Appointment Books, 1967-1980
- b.2 f.1-3 Awards, 1980-1981
- b.2 f.4-5 Correspondence, 1962-1985
- b.3 f.1 ETC Theatre Company, 1974
- b.3 f.2 John Drew Theatre, 1977
- b.3 f.3 Hofstra University, 1975
- b.3 f.4 N'Dour, Youssou, 1986
- b.3 f.5 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, 1966
- b.3 f.6-7 Photographs, 1964-1985, undated
- b.3 f.8 Programs, 1959-1987
- b.3 f.9 Publicity, 1963-1979
- b.3 f.10 Tony Awards, 1965
- b.3 f.11 Warner/Regency Company, 1979
- b.4 f.1 Warner Theatre Productions, 1982-1984
- b.4 f.2 Who's Who in America, 1979-1985
- b.4 f.3 William Morris Agency, 1977-1979

Series II: Production Files, 1962-1986 (27 boxes)

The production files are arranged alphabetically by production and represent plays and musicals that Nichtern independently produced, as well as productions she produced at Warner Theatre Productions. The files primarily contain contracts and financial material. The contracts are detailed and include agreements made with theaters, directors, actors, and playwrights. The financial material consists of operating budgets, correspondence with investors, statements of receipts, final reports, and tax forms. Additional material includes correspondence, photographs, programs, and reviews. The *Crimes of the Heart* files document a two-year national tour and contain correspondence between Nichtern and tour manager, Alexander Holt. The files on *Luv* include photographs of the original cast members Alan Arkin, Anne Jackson, and Eli Wallach, as well as touring cast members Tom Bosley, Herbert Edelman, Barbara Bel Geddes, and Dorothy Loudon.

- b.4 f.4-7 *Absent Friends*, 1977-1985 (By Alan Ayckbourn.)
- b.5 f.1-5 *The American Clock*, 1980-1985 (By Arthur Miller.)

Series II: Production Files, 1962-1986 (cont.)

- b.5 f.6-7 *The Banker's Daughter*, 1962, undated
By Edward Eliscu. Includes photographs and annotated script.
- b.5 f.8-9 *Beyond Therapy*, 1981-1986
By Christopher Durang. Includes photographs.
- b.6 f.1-7 *Beyond Therapy*, 1981-1986
 - b.6 f.8 *Blue Plate Special*, 1983-1986 (By Tom Edwards.)
- b.7 f.1-4 *Blue Plate Special*, 1983-1986
 - b.7 f.5 *Break a Leg*, 1978 (By Ira Levin.)
- b.7 f.6-8 *Cold Storage*, 1977-1978 (By Ronald Ribman.)
- b.8 f.1-2 *Cold Storage*, 1977-1978
- b.8 f.3-7 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985 (By Beth Henley. Includes photographs.)
- b.9 f.1-5 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.10 f.1-5 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.11 f.1-5 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.12 f.1-5 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.13 f.1-13 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.14 f.1-8 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.15 f.1-5 *Crimes of the Heart*, 1980-1985
- b.15 f.6-8 *A Doll's Life*, 1979, undated
By Betty Comden and Adolph Green. Includes script for *A Doll's House*.
 - b.15 f.9 *The Dresser*, 1980-1983 (By Ronald Harwood.)
- b.16 f.1 *The Dresser*, 1980-1983
- b.16 f.2 *Duet for One*, 1980-1985 (By Tom Kempinski.)
- b.16 f.3 *Einstein and the Polar Bear*, 1981-1985 (By Tom Griffin.)
- b.16 f.4 *Emma*, 1977-1983
- b.16 f.5 *The Fifth of July*, 1980-1985 (By Lanford Wilson.)
- b.16 f.6-7 *Foxfire*, 1982-1983 (By Susan Cooper and Hume Cronyn.)
- b.17 f.1-5 *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, 1979-1985 (By Kurt Vonnegut.)
- b.18 f.1 *Good*, 1982-1985 (By C. P. Taylor.)
- b.18 f.2 *Grown Ups*, 1981-1985 (By Jules Feiffer.)
- b.18 f.3 *The House of Blue Leaves*, 1976 (By John Guare.)
- b.18 f.3 *I Got a Song*, 1974-1979, undated (By E. Y. Harburg.)
 - b.30 *I Got a Song*, 1974-1979, undated
 - b.31 *I Got a Song*, 1974-1979, undated
- b.18 f.5-7 *Jimmy Shine*, 1966-1969
By Murray Schisgal. Includes photographs. One photograph is affixed to glass. Handle with care.
 - b.19 f.1 *Jimmy Shine*, 1966-1969
 - b.31 *Jimmy Shine*, 1966-1969

Series II: Production Files, 1962-1986 (cont.)

- b.19 f.2 *Leda Had a Little Swan*, 1968 (By Bamber Gascoigne.)
- b.19 f.3 *A Little Family Business*, 1982-1983 (By Jay Presson Allen.)
- b.19 f.4-6 *Little Me*, 1981-1983 (By Neil Simon.)
- b.19 f.7 *Luv*, 1962-1986
By Murray Schisgal. Includes photographs.
- b.20 f.1-6 *Luv*, 1962-1986
- b.21 f.1 *Luv*, 1962-1986
- b.21 f.2-6 *March of the Falsettos*, 1981-1986 (By William Finn.)
- b.22 f.1-6 *March of the Falsettos*, 1981-1986
- b.22 f.7-8 *Mass Appeal*, 1980-1984 (By Bill C. Davis.)
- b.23 f.1-2 *Piaf*, 1980-1983 (By Pam Gems.)
- b.23 f.3-5 *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, 1981-1986 (Includes photographs.)
- b.23 f.6 *Rose*, 1981-1984 (By Andrew Davies.)
- b.23 f.7 *The Trial of A. Lincoln*, undated (By James Damico. Includes photographs.)
- b.32 *The Trial of A. Lincoln*, undated
- b.23 f.8 *Triangle Fire*, 1983 (By Leon Stein. Unproduced.)
- b.24 f.1 *Twice Around the Park*, 1982-1984 (By Murray Schisgal.)
- b.24 f.2-3 *The Typists* and *The Tiger*, 1962-1965
By Murray Schisgal. Includes photographs.
- b.32 *The Typists* and *The Tiger*, 1962-1965
- b.24 f.4 *The Wake of Jamey Foster*, 1981-1983 (By Beth Henley.)
- b.24 f.5 *Waltz of the Toreadors*, undated (By Jean Anouilh.)
- b.24 f.6 *Woman of the Year*, 1980-1985 (By Peter Stone.)
- b.25 f.1-2 *Woman of the Year*, 1980-1985

Series III: Scripts, 1977-1987 (5 boxes)

The scripts are arranged alphabetically by title. The majority of the scripts are clean copies. The *Emperor of Atlantic* script includes reader reports from a staff member at Warner Theatre Productions.

- b.25 f.3 *Alterations*, 1981 (By Leigh Curran.)
- b.25 f.4 *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*, undated (Screenplay)
Adapted by Maurice Kamhi and Marlene Ascherman.
- b.25 f.5 *Bargains*, 1987 (By Jack Heifner.)
- b.25 f.6 *Behind the Heart*, 1987 (By Sande Zeig.)
- b.25 f.7 *C. C. Pyle and the Bunion Derby*, undated (By Michael Cristofer.)
- b.25 f.8 *Chekhov in Yalta*, 1978 (By John Driver and Jeffrey Haddow.)
- b.26 f.1 *Clytemnestra*, 1986 (By Stuart McCarrell.)
- b.26 f.2 *Crisis in the Diner*, undated
By Tom Edwards. Sequel to *Blue Plate Special*.

Series III: Scripts, 1977-1987 (cont.)

- b.26 f.3 *Crystal Clear*, 1982 (By Phil Young.)
- b.26 f.4 *Della's Diner*, undated
By Tom Edwards. Sequel to *Blue Plate Special*.
- b.26 f.5 *A Destiny with Half Moon Street*, 1987 (By Paul Zindel.)
- b.26 f.6 *Ducks and Lovers*, undated (Screenplay)
By Murray Schisgal and John Hunter.
- b.26 f.7 *The Emperor of Atlantis*, 1979 (By Viktor Ullmann.)
- b.27 f.1 *Flemming*, undated (By Sam Bobrick.)
- b.27 f.2 *Fog*, 1983 (By Conrad Bromberg.)
- b.27 f.3 *Freud*, undated (By Lynn Roth.)
- b.27 f.4 *Hunting Cockroaches*, 1985 (By Janusz Glowacki.)
- b.27 f.5 *The Lunch Girls*, 1977 (By Leigh Curran.)
- b.27 f.6 *Me and Bessie*, 1981 (By Will Holt and Linda Hopkins.)
- b.27 f.7 *Missing Pieces*, 1987
By Molly Fowler and Karen de Balbian Verster.
- b.27 f.8 *Oatmeal and Kisses*, undated (By Murray Schisgal.)
- b.27 f.9 *Old Wine in a New Bottle*, 1981 (By Murray Schisgal.)
- b.27 f.10 *The Party*, undated
By Arnold Weinstein. Includes original scores by Laurence Rosenthal.
- b.28 f.1-2 *The Party*, undated
- b.28 f.3 *Poppy*, 1982 (By Peter Nichols.)
- b.28 f.4 *Principals Only*, undated (By Reginald Rose.)
- b.28 f.5 *Removing All Doubt*, 1985 (By Aaron Sorkin.)
- b.28 f.6 *The Sponsor*, undated (By Ira Lewis.)
- b.29 f.1 *Stages of Fear*, 1986 (By Nicholas Nappi.)
- b.29 f.2 *Wedlocked or A Husband's Notes About Her*, undated (By Eve Merriam.)
- b.29 f.3-4 *World War II*, undated (By David Rintels.)

Series IV: Posters, 1980 (1 box)

The posters are arranged alphabetically by title. Though the posters are primarily of productions Nichtern produced, there are also posters from plays and musicals developed by other producers.

- b.32 *Absent Friends*, undated
- All's Well That Ends Well*, undated
- The American Clock*, 1980
- The Banker's Daughter*, undated
- Cold Storage*, undated
- Crimes of the Heart*, undated
- Fifth of July*, undated (Signed by Christopher Reeve.)

Series IV: Posters, 1980 (cont.)

The House of Blue Leaves, undated
God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, undated
Good, undated
Grown Ups, undated
I Got a Song, undated
Jimmy Shine, undated
Leda Had a Little Swan, undated
Luv, undated
March of the Falsettos, undated
Marcel Marceau, undated
My One and Only, undated
Piaf, undated
Pump Boys and Dinettes, undated
Rose, undated
Sunday in the Park with George, undated
The Typists and *The Tiger*, undated
Twice Around the Park, undated (Signed by Anne Jackson and Eli Wallach.)
The Wake of Jamey Foster, undated
Woman of the Year, undated