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Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Doris Frankel papers

1922-1993 (bulk 1938-1973)

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Compiled by Robyn Hjermstad, August 2013

Summary

Creator: Frankel, Doris, 1909-1994

Title: Doris Frankel papers, 1922-1993 (bulk 1938-1973)

Size: 5.67 linear feet (14 boxes)

Source: Donated by Benjamin Barber, 2003.

Abstract: Doris Frankel (1909-1994) was an Emmy Award-winning American dramatist who wrote for television, radio, and theater production. The Doris Frankel papers (1922-1993) document Frankel's career as a dramatist and contain scripts, synopses outlining show ideas, correspondence, personal papers, and ephemera. Both produced and unproduced work is present in this collection.

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

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

Preferred citation: Doris Frankel papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Loose material was placed into folders, and original arrangement was retained when apparent. Material in oversized manila envelopes or deteriorating folders was refoldered with the original labels.

Creator history

Doris Frankel (1909-1994) was an Emmy Award-winning American dramatist who wrote for television, radio, and theater. Her work appeared on dozens of television and radio shows, and two of her plays, *Don't Throw Glass Houses* (1938) and *Love Me Long* (1949), appeared on Broadway.

Doris Frankel was born and raised in New York City and graduated from Radcliffe College in 1929. By the age of 20 her book of poetry, *The Sun Beats Down*, was published. During that time Frankel was working as the author, producer, and narrator for New York's WPCH radio show "The Poetry Recital," as well as writing and editing scripts for Universal and Warner Brothers.

Frankel's theater career started to take off in 1932 when her play, *Never Sardines*, debuted at the Yale Theater where Frankel was teaching and participating in the Yale School of Drama's '47 Workshop. It was then that she met her husband, Phillip W. Barber, who later became the regional director of the New York Project of the WPA Federal Theater. Both she and her husband were involved with the beginning stages of the Group Theatre, a New York-based theater collective. Frankel's career in theater continued through the 1930s and 1940s. *Hail the Conqueror* (with Ernest Truex) appeared at the Boulevard Theater in Jackson Heights, New York in 1933. *Love in a Black Hat* (with Osgood Perkins) was done in Marblehead, Massachusetts in 1934, and her work *Don't Throw Glass Houses* debuted on Broadway in 1938. *Love Me Long* debuted in 1949 at the Playhouse in Wilmington and eventually made its way to the 48th Street Theater in New York City.

In the 1940s and 1950s, her career shifted focus to television and radio serials. Throughout the course of her career, Frankel wrote over fifty episodes for television and radio programs. For radio, she wrote scripts for *Cavalcade of America*, *Harvest of Stars*, *The Listening Post*, *Sky-Blazers*, *Theater of Today*, and *The Guiding Light* (for both television and radio). Frankel wrote scripts for many television programs, including *Claudia*, *Suspense*, *Star Stage*, *Colgate Hour* (Colgate Theater), *Circle Theater*, *Cameo Theater*, *Westinghouse*, *Windows*, and *Playhouse 90*. She also authored several episodes of *Search for Tomorrow* and *All My Children*.

In addition to theater, television, and radio, Frankel wrote for two World's Fair exhibitions, including the *Electric Power & Light Exhibit* with Alfred Stern for the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair; and the *Century 21 Theme Show* for the Seattle World's Fair with Gilbert Seldes in 1962. Throughout her career, Frankel also wrote several industrial commercials for radio.

Doris Frankel was awarded the Daytime Emmy Award in 1978 for her work on *All My Children*. She died in Manhattan in 1994.

Scope and content note

The Doris Frankel papers document Frankel's career as a writer for radio, television, and theater. The collection contains correspondence and personal papers; production papers; and programs and ephemera dating from 1922 to 1993 (bulk 1938-1973). Both produced and unproduced scripts are present in this collection.

The production papers make up the bulk of this collection and contain scripts and synopses for television, radio and theater productions. Some correspondence is interspersed with the scripts and may or may not relate to surrounding material. The scripts and synopses cover over 30 titles of plays and television and radio shows. Most of the scripts are typewritten but several handwritten synopses and notes with ideas for shows and episodes are present. Several scripts for *Guiding Light* and *Search for Tomorrow* are here, as well as a promotional narrative and script for *The Brighter Day*, documenting its transition from radio to television in the 1950s. Other well represented titles include *The Woman and the Warrior*, *The Girl without an Image*, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, *Career Girl*, *The Day the Lions Turned*, and *The Calliope Tree* from the show *Windows*. Synopses for *The Peaceable Kingdom* are included in addition to the scripts, documenting Frankel's attempts to sell the work to various television stations. Correspondence documenting the sale of *The Peaceable Kingdom* to Arthur Penn at *Playhouse 90* is included. There are also several drafts of a television play about Jefferson Davis titled *Shadow on the Heart*. In addition to scripts and synopses are promotions for the scripts and concepts for commercials and industrials. These are generally short, typewritten write-ups, such as a list of cologne name ideas, or brief descriptions of scenarios.

Several drafts of theater scripts are present in this collection, including *Love Me Long*, *Don't Throw Glass Houses*, and *Love in a Black Hat*. Early versions of *Love Me Long* are included under different working titles. Scripts for her earlier works, *Never Sardines*, *They Took the Fifty Thousand*, and *Adam's Rib* are also present. The final script for *The Threshold and the Threat*, the Century 21 Theme Show exhibit for the 1962 World's fair is also included; as well a preliminary production script for the Electric Power and Light Exhibit at the 1964-1965 World's Fair.

The correspondence in this collection documents Frankel's business and personal relationships. Topics of correspondence include the sending and receiving of scripts, as well as contract agreements between Frankel and production companies for the sale of her work. Many of the correspondents in this collection partnered with Frankel on various projects, and the letters frequently describe occupational updates and show business networking. Primary correspondents in this collection include Alfred Stern, Sam Marx, Bert Berman, Ruby Holbrook, Don Appell, and Bill Ramsey. A manuscript for a patent for Vail Picard tires with correspondence to Frankel's father, Benjamin Frankel regarding the French automobile industry is also included. The personal correspondence dates from the 1940s to the 1950s and pertains to the activities of friends. Correspondence with McCann Erickson regarding submissions for the drama series for "Harvest of Stars" along with Frankel's unpublished outlines is also included.

The personal papers in this collection consist of resumes, biographies, notes and agreements. The agreements are for the submission of writing and ideas, and document payments made to Frankel from various individuals and production companies, including CBS, NBC, MCA Artists, Inc., and World Video Inc. There are several versions and copies of Frankel's resumes, or "credits," demonstrating the evolution of her career. Many of them are annotated and list the titles of programs and episodes that Frankel worked on. There is also a biography on Doris Frankel written for the biographical dictionary "Women in American Theatre," as well as several other write-ups on Frankel and her career. Also included are passenger lists for cruise ships from cruises Frankel went on with her family in the 1920s.

A limited amount of programs and ephemera relating to Frankel's projects and interests are present in this collection, such as playbills, theater journals, and reviews. Photographs documenting Frankel's play, *Love me Long*, and a set design plan and sketches for "The Wall Between" by Neil DeLuca dated June 1957 is included. Material documenting Frankel's personal interests are present, such as travel maps and a file on Mary Shadow from 1949, documenting her election into the Tennessee General Assembly at the age of 23.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by document type, and chronologically within each document type.

Key terms

Subjects

Dramatists -- American
Radio plays -- American
Television plays -- American
Television soap operas
Theater -- United States

Occupations

Dramatists

Names

Appell, Don
Frankel, Doris, 1909-1994

Holbrook, Ruby, 1930-
Marx, Samuel, 1902-1992
Stern, Alfred

Special formats

Correspondence
Outlines (documents)
Radio scripts
Scripts (documents)
Television scripts

Container list

Correspondence and Personal Papers

b.2 f.1-10 1922-1980
b.13 f.6 1929-1951
b.3 f.1-6 1930-1988
b.1 f.1-6 1937-1993
b.4 f.1-4 1963-1982

Production Papers

b.12 f.1-7 1932-1981
b.9 f.1-12 1932-1983
b.8 f.1-9 1938-1970
b.10 f.1-5 1940-1976
b.11 f.1-8 1940-1989
b.4 f.5-9 1942-1993
b.7 f.1-9 1943-1973
b.6 f.1-8 1948-1989
b.5 f.1-10 1950-1980
b.14 f.1-3 1970, 1973
b.13 f.7-8 1970-1975

Programs and Ephemera

b.13 f.1-5 1932-1986
b.12 f.8 1949-1966