Descriptive Summary

Title: Elisabeth Fraser Papers, 1920-1999

Collection ID: *T-Mss 1999-025

Creator: Fraser, Elisabeth.

Extent: 2.44 linear feet (4 boxes, 2 scrapbooks)

Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Abstract: Elisabeth Fraser was a stage, screen and television actress. Her papers consist of correspondence, diaries and journals, scripts and ephemera documenting her career.

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Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice may be required.

Preferred Citation: Elisabeth Fraser Papers, *T-Mss 1999-025, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

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Biographical Note

Elisabeth Fraser, actress of the stage, screen and television, was born Elisabeth Fraser Jonker in Brooklyn, NY in 1920. Miss Fraser attended school in Haiti, France and New York, graduating from Washington Irving High School. As a result of her various travels she learned to speak several languages. She also spent a number of summers in Vermont performing in summer stock companies.

Elisabeth Fraser made her New York debut in 1940 in a production of Robert E. Sherwood's play *There Shall Be No Night*, produced by the Playwright's Company and the Theatre Guild and starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. She played the character of Kaatri Alquist, opposite Montgomery Clift. In the midst of the national tour of the production, Fraser went to Hollywood and completed a successful screen test. She made
her screen debut in 1941 playing the character of Eileen Spence in One Foot in Heaven, which starred Frederic March.


Scope and Content Note

The Elisabeth Fraser Papers consist of correspondence, a diary, journal, clippings, scripts, screenplays, photographs, programs and ephemera relating to her various stage, screen and television roles. The collection is divided into three series: Personal Papers, Productions, and Scrapbooks. The bulk of the collection contains material directly related to a number, but not all, of the various productions she appeared in throughout her career. This material consists primarily of programs, opening night telegrams, sides, photographs and a few contracts. The photographs are all organized in a separate scrapbook. There is one full script, for Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole; two screenplays, one for The Tunnel of Love and one for The Way West; and a teleplay for The Scarlett O'Hara War.
Organization

- Series I: Personal Papers
- Series II: Productions
- Series III: Scrapbooks

Series Descriptions and Container Listing

**Series I: Personal Papers, 1939-1966**
2 boxes

The personal papers consist of correspondence; a diary, which she kept during the national tour of *There Shall Be No Night*; and a journal she wrote during the filming of *The Way West* and ephemera. The journal for *The Way West* encompasses nearly half the collection. There is both a handwritten and a typewritten manuscript copy of the journal, along with background material such as notes and correspondence. The overall correspondence is minimal, but it does include personal letters (including letters from her mother to her grandmother) as well as a few business letters. Some of the letters are photocopies.

b. 1  f. 1  
**Correspondence / Elisabeth Fraser, 1939**
1 folder
Correspondence, consisting of one letter, from Elisabeth Fraser to her father, Mr. Derk Jonker, circa 1939. This is a photocopy of the original letter. The photocopy is incomplete, with missing pages.

b. 1  f. 2  
**Correspondence / Elisabeth Fraser, March 1941**
1 folder
Correspondence from Elisabeth Fraser to her parents and grandmother, written sometime in March, 1941, describing her first experiences in Hollywood.

b. 1  f. 3  
**Correspondence / Mrs. Derk L. Jonker, May 1941-July 1942**
1 folder
Correspondence from Elisabeth Fraser's mother, Mrs. Derk L. Jonker (Jessie), to her grandmother, Mrs. James Coke Fraser (Anne). There are three letters dated May 9, 1941; September 24, 1941 and July 29, 1942, respectively. The July 29, 1942 letter is a photocopy of the original. The letters describe Jessie and Elisabeth's trip across the country and early impressions of Hollywood as well as details on contract negotiations with Warner Brother's Studios.

b. 1  f. 4  
**Correspondence / Leland Hayward, March 27-April 1, 1941**
Correspondence, consisting of two telegrams, dated March 27, 1941 and April 1, 1941 from Leland Hayward to Elisabeth Fraser in regard to Fraser getting a release out of her *There Shall Be No Night* contract and a leave, from Warner Brother's Studios, to tour with the show in the fall.

**Correspondence / Elisabeth Fraser, June 1966**

1 folder
Correspondence from Elisabeth Fraser to Mr. and Mrs. Sal Anzallo and her daughters Meg and Liza McDonald. The letter describes Fraser's trip to Oregon for the shooting of *The Way West*, and is a photocopy of the original.

**Correspondence, 1940-1949**

1 folder
Correspondence, primarily of a business nature, to Elisabeth Fraser, covering the years 1940-1949. There are six letters in total.

**Correspondence, 1950-1951**

1 folder
Business correspondence to Elisabeth Fraser, covering the years 1950-1951. There are two letters in total.

**Correspondence, 1960-1969**

1 folder
Business correspondence to Elisabeth Fraser, covering the years 1960-1969. There are two letters in total.

**Correspondence, 1970-1979**

1 folder
Business correspondence to Elisabeth Fraser, covering the years 1970-1979. There is one letter in total.

**Travel diary / Elisabeth Fraser, December 26, 1940-June 9, 1941**

1 folder
Travel diary kept by Fraser during the national tour of *There Shall Be No Night*, covering the period December 26, 1940 to January 7, 1941. There is also a single entry dated January 20, 1940 that falls after the January 7, 1941 entry. The diary picks up again on May 4, 1941 and continues to June 9, 1941. This second part of the diary describes Fraser's first days in Hollywood.

**The way-out West or how I spent my summer location / Elisabeth Fraser**

2 folders
Typewritten manuscript of a journal that Elisabeth Fraser kept
while shooting the motion picture *The Way West* (1967, directed by Andrew V. Mclaglen) in the summer of 1966. The manuscript is undated, but according to a note provided by her daughter, Liza McDonald, it was typed sometime in the 1990's. It has 237 numbered pages plus two unnumbered pages of a prologue and three unnumbered pages of an epilogue. It comprises two folders: Folder 11 covers the Prologue to p. 128; Folder 12 covers p. 129 to the Epilogue.

b. 1 f. 13

**The way-out West or how I spent my summer location / Elisabeth Fraser**

1 folder

Notes and correspondence regarding the journal *The Way-Out West or How I Spent My Summer Location*. The material in this folder consists primarily of correspondence Fraser wrote to a fellow performer in the film, Eve McVeagh and McVeagh's responses. All the material is undated.

b. 1 f. 14

**Ephemera / Elisabeth Fraser**

1 folder

Ephemera on the career of the actress Elisabeth Fraser. Material includes, among other items, a hand-written note from Alfred Lunt, an essay written (both in long-hand and typewritten) by Fraser on her first screen test, with Ronald Reagan, and a program from the 23rd Annual Luncheon held by the Drama League of New York (ca. 1943). The dates of the material range from the 1930s to the 1990s.

b. 1 f. 15

**Audition notes / Elisabeth Fraser**

1 folder

Audition notes, handwritten by Elisabeth Fraser, for the play *Washington Square*, an adaptation of Henry James' novel, by Ruth Goodman and Augustus Goetz. The play was produced in 1947 under the title *The Heiress*, without Fraser in the cast. The notes are undated, but were probably written on or about October, 1946.

b. 2 f. 1-7

**The way-out West or how I spent my summer location / Elisabeth Fraser, 1966**

7 folders

Hand written version of the journal *The Way-Out West or How I Spent My Summer Location* by Elisabeth Fraser. Fraser wrote the journal over the course of the summer in 1966 while shooting the motion picture *The Way West* (1967, directed by Andrew V. Mclaglen) on location in Oregon. The hand written journal comprises seven folders. Folder One covers the period June 13th-June 30th; Folder Two July 1st-July 15th; Folder Three July 16th-
There shall be no night / Robert E. (Robert Emmet) Sherwood, 1940-1941
1 folder
Programs from various productions of There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood. The majority of the programs are from productions staged in the Fall of 1941, but there is one program from a production staged in October of 1940. All the programs are from the road tour of the show.

Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, April 29, 1940
1 folder
Opening night telegrams to Elisabeth Fraser on the New York opening of the play There Shall Be No Night, by Robert E. Sherwood. The play opened on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre on April 29, 1940. This was Fraser's Broadway debut.

There shall be no night / Robert E. (Robert Emmet) Sherwood, November 4, 1940-April 21, 1941
Tour itinerary for the road production of There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood. The itinerary covers the period November 4, 1940 to April 21, 1941. It lists the dates, cities and venues where the show was presented as well as the mileage and name of the railroad that carried the company, with notes and changes written in by Fraser.

Revelation / Robert E. (Robert Emmet) Sherwood

Side for the play There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood, under the working title Revelation. It is undated, but was probably written sometime in early 1940, and is for the character Katri Alquist, the part played by Elisabeth Fraser. It also contains notes and corrections, all hand written, presumably by Fraser.

Elisabeth Fraser and Montgomery Clift radio interview, ca. 1941

Script for a radio interview of Elisabeth Fraser and Montgomery Clift. The interview was conducted in Memphis, ca. 1941, during the national tour of the play There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood, which featured Fraser and Clift as the ingenues.

There shall be no night / Robert E. (Robert Emmet) Sherwood, March 28, 1940

Contract for Elisabeth Fraser's term of employment for the run of the play There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood. The term covers the last few months of the 1939-1940 season, including the months of June, July and August, and the 1940-1941 season.

The Luntanne tattler (Newsletter), May 18, 1940; September 14, 1940

Official weekly newsletter of the Lunt-Fontanne company (under the direction of Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne) that was appearing in the play There Shall Be No Night by Robert E. Sherwood in the 1939-1940 and 1940-1941 seasons. There are two editions: May 18, 1940 and September 14, 1940. The May 18 issue features an interview of Fraser.

One foot in heaven (Motion picture), ca. October 3, 1941

Press releases for the motion picture One Foot in Heaven (1941), directed by Irving Rapper. There are two press releases, one is dated October 3, 1941 and the other is undated. Some of the pages
are photocopies.

b. 3  f. 9  
*The pirate* / S. N. (Samuel Nathaniel) Behrman, 1942
1 folder
Souvenir program for *The Pirate* by S. N. Behrman, with music by Herbert Kingsley, and produced by The Theatre Guild and The Playwright's Company.

b. 3  f. 10  
*The Russian people* / Clifford Odets, 1942
1 folder
Side for the play *The Russian People* by Konstantin Simonov; American acting version by Clifford Odets. The side is for the role of Valya, played by Elisabeth Fraser. It has notes and corrections written in, presumably by Elisabeth Fraser. Some of the pages, including the cover, are photocopies. The show opened in New York on December 29, 1942 and closed on January 31, 1943.

b. 3  f. 11  
Correspondence / Pvt. Robert B Sharron, January 28, 1943
1 folder
Correspondence from Pvt. Robert B. Sharron to the Theatre Guild and to Burns Mantle commenting on the negative critical response to the play *The Russian People* by Konstantin Simonov (American acting version by Clifford Odets) and the subsequent closing of the play.

b. 3  f. 12  
*The Russian people* / Clifford Odets, 1942
1 folder
Program for the play *The Russian People* by Konstantin Simonov (American acting version by Clifford Odets), at the Guild Theatre (NY) for December 1942.

b. 3  f. 13  
*The Russian people* / Clifford Odets, 1942
1 folder
Flyer for the play *The Russian People* by Konstantin Simonov; American acting version by Clifford Odets.

b. 3  f. 14-15  
*The family* / Victor Wolfson, 1943
2 folders
Programs for the play *The Family* by Victor Wolfson at the Windsor Theatre (NY), for the week of March 30, 1943, and at the Wilbur Theatre (Boston) probably for the week of March 23, 1943. Folder 14 contains the Windsor Theatre program and Folder 15 contains the Wilbur Theatre program.

b. 3  f. 16-17  
*The family* / Victor Wolfson
2 folders
Script excerpts and a side for the play *The Family* by Victor Wolfson. The script excerpts are from Act Three, Scenes One and Two. The Scene One excerpts are missing pages 11-14 and the Scene Two excerpts are incomplete, but both are clean copies. The side is for the role of Lida, played by Elisabeth Fraser, and has notes and corrections written in by hand. Folder 16 contains the excerpts and Folder 17 contains the side. Both are undated.

b. 3 f. 18

**Elisabeth Fraser radio interview, November 9, 1943**

1 folder

Script for a radio interview of Elisabeth Fraser conducted by Evelyn Howe for the program *Five o’Clock Follies* on WEEI-Boston. The script consists of questions to ask Fraser, all of which are concerned with the show *Winged Victory* by Moss Hart.

b. 3 f. 19-20

**Winged victory / Moss Hart, 1943**

2 folders

Programs for the play *Winged Victory* by Moss Hart. One is a souvenir program the other is a regular program for the week of November 20, 1943 at the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre (NY). Folder 19 contains the Souvenir Program and folder 20 contains the regular program.

b. 3 f. 21

**Winged victory / Moss Hart**

1 folder

Side for the role of Helen in the play *Winged Victory* by Moss Hart. It contains notes and corrections written in by hand and is undated.

b. 3 f. 22

**The Army Air Corps / Robert Crawford, 1942**

1 folder

Lyric sheet for the song *The Army Air Corps*, the official song of the United States Army Air Corps. The song is also known as The U. S. Air Force ("Off we go...”). The song was used in the show *Winged Victory* by Moss Hart.

b. 3 f. 23

**The "Winged victory" gremlin (Newsletter), December 18, 1943-January 8, 1944**

1 folder

Copies of the newsletter *The "Winged Victory" Gremlin*. This newsletter was put out by the Army Air Forces Show for the production of the play *Winged Victory* by Moss Hart. The Elisabeth Fraser Papers contain three issues of the newsletter: December 18, 1943 (vol. 1, no. 1); December 25, 1943 (vol. 1, no. 2), which is a photocopy; January 8, 1944 (vol. 1, no. 4).

b. 4 f. 1

**Little women / Marian DeForest, 1944**
Program for a production of *Little Women*, adapted by Marion De Forest at the Strand Theatre (Stamford, CT) for the week of July 18, 1944.

**Guest in the house / Hagar Wilde, 1944**

Program for a production of the play *Guest in the House* by Hagar Wilde and Dale Eunson at the Strand Theatre (Stamford, CT) for the week of August 7, 1944.

**Angel Street / Patrick Hamilton, 1947**

Programs for the play *Angel Street* by Patrick Hamilton, as presented by Shepard Traube and The Actors’ Company. One program is dated November 27, 1947, at the Civic Auditorium in San Jose, California; the other is dated December 1, 1947 for the Biltmore Theatre in Los Angeles.

**Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, January 9, 1957**

Opening night telegrams for the stage version of the play *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries at the Shubert Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut.

**Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, January 28, 1957**

Opening night telegrams for the stage version of the play *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries, in Philadelphia.

**Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, February 13, 1957**

Opening night telegrams for the stage version of the play *The Tunnel of Love* at the Royale Theatre, New York City. Some of the telegrams are dated February 14, 1957, and a few are photocopies. Some of the senders include Alan Lerner, Dorothy and Herbert Fields, Jack Carter and Adelle and Vincent Sardi, Jr.

**The tunnel of love / Joseph A. Fields, January 9-February 13, 1957**

Programs for the play *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries, based on DeVries novel. There are three programs in this folder. One is dated January 9-12, 1957 at the Shubert Theatre in New Haven, CT. The second is undated but is probably from late January, 1957, for the Walnut Theatre in Philadelphia.
The third is the Opening Night program, dated February 13, 1957, for the Royale Theatre in New York.

b. 4  f. 8  *The tunnel of love / Joseph A. Fields, 1957*
1 folder
Souvenir program for the play *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries. Half of one of the pages has been torn out, leaving half of a page.

b. 4  f. 9  *The tunnel of love / Joseph A. Fields, November 30, 1956*
1 folder
Contract between Elisabeth Fraser and the Theatre Guild for the role of Alice Pepper in the play *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields and Peter DeVries, dated November 30, 1956.

b. 4  f. 10  *The tunnel of love (Screenplay) / Joseph A. Fields, October 1, 1957-January 27, 1958*
1 folder
Screenplay for the motion picture *The Tunnel of Love* by Joseph Fields, based on the novel by Peter DeVries. This is a clean copy with inserted changes dated January 27, 1958.

b. 4  f. 11  *Ask any girl (Motion picture), May 28, 1959*
1 folder
Program for a showing of the motion picture *Ask Any Girl* by George Wells, including a live show, at Radio City Music Hall during the week of May 28, 1959.

b. 4  f. 12  *The best man / Gore Vidal, 1960*
1 folder
Program for a production of the play *The Best Man* by Gore Vidal at the Huntington Hartford Theatre in Hollywood, California, circa August, 1960.

b. 4  f. 13  *The best man / Gore Vidal, 1960*
1 folder
Flyer advertising a production of the play *The Best Man*, by Gore Vidal, at the Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara, California, August 5th and 6th, 1960.

b. 4  f. 14  *Blood, sweat and Stanley Poole / James Goldman, 1961*
1 folder
Programs for the play *Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole* by James and William Goldman. There are two programs in this folder. The first program is for a performance at the New Locust Theatre in Philadelphia, with no date listed. The second program is for the Broadway premiere at the Morosco Theatre, on October 5, 1961.
b. 4 f. 15 Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, October 5, 1961
1 folder

b. 4 f. 16 Blood, sweat and Stanley Poole / James Goldman, May 1960-August 1961
1 folder
Script for the play Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole by James and William Goldman, dated May, 1960 with revisions dated August 12, 1961. Notes, revisions and cross-outs are written in by hand as well as through inserts.

b. 4 f. 17 Blood, sweat and Stanley Poole / James Goldman, May 12, 1961
1 folder
Contract and correspondence to Elisabeth Fraser from Victor Samrock for the role of Seargent Denzil in the play Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole by James and William Goldman. The contract is dated May 12, 1961.

b. 4 f. 18 Two for the seesaw (Motion picture), 1962
1 folder
Program notes for the motion picture Two For The Seesaw written by Isobel Lennart.

b. 4 f. 19 Opening night telegrams / Elisabeth Fraser, March 28, 1962
1 folder
Opening night telegrams to Elisabeth Fraser on the opening of the play Great Day in the Morning by Alice Cannon at the Henry Miller Theatre (NYC) on March 28, 1962.

b. 4 f. 20 The way West / Ben Maddow, 1965
1 folder
Screenplay of the motion picture The Way West by Ben Maddow, based on the novel by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Elisabeth Fraser was a featured performer in this film which was released in 1967. This is a clean copy of the script with revisions and changes inserted. The date on the cover says June 29, 1965.

b. 4 f. 21 The way West / Ben Maddow, 1966
1 folder
Photocopies of snapshots taken on location during the filming of the motion picture The Way West (1967, directed by Andrew V. McLaglen) in the summer of 1966. The pictures feature Elisabeth Fraser along with other performers of the film including Kirk Douglas and Robert Mitchum, among others.
b. 4 f. 22

*The way West* / Ben Maddow, 1966
1 folder
Call sheets from the shooting of the motion picture *The Way West* (1967, directed by Andrew V. Mclaglen) which was filmed in the summer of 1966. There are seven in total, with various dates, and some are photocopies.

b. 4 f. 23

*The way West* (Motion picture), 1966
1 folder
Clippings on the motion picture *The Way West* (directed by Andrew V. Mclaglen). Most of the clippings are from an issue of the Central Oregon Vacationer (Vol. 3, No. 2, Late Summer Edition, 1966) and include features on the location shooting of the film. All the material is photocopied.

b. 4 f. 24

*Moviola. The Scarlett O’Hara war* (Television script) / William Hanley, 1979
1 folder
Television script for the teleplay *Moviola-The Scarlett O’Hara War* by William Hanley, based on the book by Garson Kanin, directed for television by John Erman. This is a clean copy labelled "Revised second draft" with changes inserted.

b. 4 f. 25

Clippings / Elisabeth Fraser, 1940-1949
1 folder
Clippings on the career of the actress Elisabeth Fraser.

b. 4 f. 26

Clippings / Elisabeth Fraser, 1950-1959
1 folder
Clippings on the career of the actress Elisabeth Fraser.

**Series III: Scrapbooks, 1920-1999**
2 scrapbooks

Chronological

The scrapbooks in the collection consist primarily of clippings and photographs. One scrapbook is a collection of photographs organized and arranged by her daughter, Liza McDonald. The photographs are arranged by type with occasional captions provided by Miss McDonald. They include publicity shots, production stills and family snapshots. There is also an index and separate sheets of biographical notes, written at different points during her career. The scrapbook of clippings also includes reviews, some photographs (mostly photocopies) and ephemera, with occasional comments pasted in after the fact by Miss Fraser.
b. 5  Scrapbook / Elisabeth Fraser, 1920-1980
1 scrapbook
Scrapbook of clippings, including reviews, ephemera, correspondence and some photographs chronicling the career of the actress Elisabeth Fraser.

b. 6  Photographs / Elisabeth Fraser, 1941-1999
1 scrapbook
Scrapbook of photographs chronicling the career of the actress Elisabeth Fraser. The scrapbook was organized by Fraser's daughter, Liza McDonald and is divided into sections covering different aspects of her career, along with personal photographs. It also includes a brief biography written during different stages of her career and an index.