Guide to the Arthur Hopkins Papers, 1908-1954

Billy Rose Theatre Division

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

New York, New York

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40 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York, NY 10023-7498
(212) 870-1639
theatrediv@nypl.org
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Processed by: Elisabeth Elkind
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Encoded By: Elisabeth Elkind

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Arthur Hopkins Papers, 1908-1954
Creator: Arthur Hopkins
Call Number: *T-Mss 1992-017
Size: 5.25 lin. ft.; 10 boxes
Billy Rose Theatre Division.
New York, New York
Abstract: Contains promptbooks, scripts and programs for plays produced and/or directed by
Arthur Hopkins, scripts and articles he wrote, a small amount of correspondence and
legal papers, drafts and notes for a biography about him, photographs, and scrapbooks
of clippings.
Languages Represented: English

Administrative Information

Source: Received from the estate of Rosemary Sprague, the granddaughter of Arthur
Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice required
Restrictions on Use: For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.
Preferred Citation: Arthur Hopkins Papers, *T-Mss 1992-017. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New
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Biographical Note

Arthur Hopkins, theatrical producer and director, was born in Cleveland, Ohio on October 4, 1878, the ninth son and tenth and last child of David Hopkins, a mill worker who had immigrated from Wales with his widowed father as a small boy and Mary Jeffreys, a preacher's daughter. Hopkins, like his brothers before him, worked in the mills to put himself through school. His career began in New York in newspapers, then press agentry and booking vaudeville acts. His first production was *Poor Little Rich Girl*, 1913. He produced over seventy plays in the course of his career, directing most of them. He valued artistic over commercial merit and while he had many successes, he had even more failures.


Hopkins had a light touch as a director wanting to preserve the "spontaneity of acting." He labored over the script with the playwright, but then his rehearsals were short. He studied theatrical production in Europe and developed the revolving stage in America. A biographical source credits him with discovering Katharine Hepburn and furthering the success of Robert Edmond Jones. He introduced unusual plays and new ideas to the Broadway theater of the 1910s.
Hopkins was also an author of numerous articles on the theater and other topics, and books including the novel *The Glory Road*, 1935, *To A Lonely Boy*, 1937, and *Reference Point*, 1948, both somewhat autobiographical, and *How’s Your Second Act*. Arthur Hopkins was married to Eva O’Brien, an actress. He died on March 22, 1950 in New York City.

**Scope and Content Note**

Collection consists of promptbooks and scripts for shows produced and/or directed by Arthur Hopkins; his writings, including plays, articles and speeches; a few letters and legal papers; programs; photographs; scrapbooks of clippings; and research materials of his granddaughter Rosemary Sprague who worked on a biography about him. The material documents the career of producer and director Arthur Hopkins.

**Organization**

- Series I. Personal papers
- Series II. Writings of Arthur Hopkins
  - Sub-series 1. Scripts
  - Sub-series 2. Articles, speeches and other writings
- Series III. Promptbooks and scripts
- Series IV. Programs and publicity
- Series V. Research materials for biography on Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague
- Series VI. Personal papers of Rosemary Sprague
- Series VII. Visual materials
- Series VIII. Oversized scrapbooks
Series Descriptions/Container Listing

Series I. Personal Papers, 1908-1950
4 folders

This small series consists of correspondence about Hopkins' articles, legal and financial papers and obituaries and other clippings about him.

b. 1  f. 1  Correspondence of Arthur Hopkins about his articles, 1946-1947
Mostly about his articles in the New York Times.

b. 1  f. 2  Legal and financial papers of Arthur Hopkins, 1919-1934 and n.d.
Includes statement of account pertaining to John Barrymore (1923) and a list of plays for which Hopkins controlled the motion picture rights (1934).

b. 1  f. 3  Legal papers pertain to suit about the play, The Jest, 1950
Arthur Hopkins was the defendant in a copyright case.

b. 1  f. 4  Clippings, notes, and ephemera, 1908-1950 and n.d.
Mostly obituaries for Arthur Hopkins. Also includes a printed souvenir booklet on the history of a Cleveland church with which members of the Hopkins family were involved.

Series II. Writings by Arthur Hopkins, 1913-1949 and n.d.
2 boxes

Two subseries: Scripts, then articles, speeches and other writings.

Consists of plays, articles, speeches and other writings by Arthur Hopkins.

5 folders

Alphabetical by title.

Mostly clean typescripts of plays by Arthur Hopkins.

b. 1  f. 5  The Fatted Calf: an optimistic comedy by Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Clean typescript.

b. 1  f. 6  Holding a Husband: a triangular comedy by Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Clean carbon typescript.
Sub-series 2. Articles, speeches and other writings 1913-1949 and n.d.
34 folders

Titled articles followed by untitled.

Includes articles for newspapers, magazines, and book chapters, eulogies, luncheon speeches, and miscellaneous writings on both theatrical and non-theatrical topics.

b. 1 f. 10
*About Revivals* by Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Two copies: one typed and one handwritten.

b. 1 f. 11
*Actor for Governor*, 1940
Synopsis of a "picture story."

b. 1 f. 12
*Banners in the Heart*, n.d.
On Alcoholics Anonymous. Two copies: one typed and one handwritten.

b. 1 f. 13
*Grandpa* by Arthur Hopkins, 1937 Jan. 4
Typescript.

b. 1 f. 14
*Hamlet and Olivier* by Arthur Hopkins, 1948
Three copies: two typed and one handwritten

b. 1 f. 15
*A Job for a 1913 Shakespeare* by Arthur Hopkins, 1913 Sept.
Published in *The Green Book Magazine*.

b. 1 f. 16
*Other Gods* by Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Typescript.

b. 1 f. 17
*The Stage Director* by Arthur Hopkins, 1947-1948
Two copies: one typed and one handwritten. Also accompanying correspondence.

b. 1 f. 18
*The Theatre Tomorrow*, 1949
Drafts of article, both typed and handwritten with accompanying correspondence. From a paper read by Arthur Hopkins on the Theatre Exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum by Aline Bernstein.

b. 1 f. 19
*A Voice in the Night*, n.d.
Clean typescript.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>f. 20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|      | *What Has the Actor to Give?*, 1935 Mar. 30  
Mostly clean carbon typescript for a conference on acting. |
| b. 1 | f. 21  |
Two versions: one typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 1 | f. 22  |
|      | *When the Soul Speaks*, n.d.  
On listening to a recording of Edwin Booth's voice. |
| b. 1 | f. 23  |
|      | *Which Ramparts?*, 1940 Dec. 11  
Typescript with accompanying letter. |
| b. 1 | f. 24  |
|      | *While Broadway Slept*, n.d.  
Typescript. |
| b. 1 | f. 25  |
|      | *Why Not Try Democracy?*, 1936  
Typescript. |
| b. 1 | f. 26  |
|      | *You Can't Make a Papa Out of Me*, 1938  
Poem by Hopkins with accompanying letters. |
| b. 2 | f. 1   |
|      | *On John Barrymore*, 1942 Oct. 15  
Two versions: one typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 2   |
|      | *At Martin Beck's funeral*, 1940 Nov. 18  
Two versions: one typed with revisions and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 3   |
|      | *Eulogy for Sam Harris*, 1941 July 6  
Three versions: two typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 4   |
Voice teacher to John Barrymore. Two versions: one typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 5   |
|      | *On H. T. Parker*, 1934 Nov. 4  
Three versions: two typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 6   |
|      | *Broadcast tribute to President Roosevelt*, 1945 Apr. 14 |
| b. 2 | f. 7   |
|      | *Article on Western Reserve Academy*, 1933  
With letter to Hopkins attached. |
| b. 2 | f. 8   |
|      | *Speech by Hopkins at dinner for Katharine Cornell*, 1941 Apr. 27  
Three versions: two typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 9   |
|      | *Talk by Hopkins at League of NY Theatres Convention*, 1938 Sept. |
| b. 2 | f. 10  |
|      | *Speech at luncheon to honor Laurette Taylor*, 1939 May 8  
Two versions: one typed and one handwritten. |
| b. 2 | f. 11  |
|      | *Talks at luncheons and dinners by Hopkins*, 1942-1948 and n.d.  
With a few accompanying letters. |
| b. 2 | f. 12  |
|      | *Articles for The Call Board of the Catholic Actors Guild*, 1939-1948 and n.d. |
Also talk by Hopkins for a Guild dinner.

b. 2  f. 13

Correspondence and article for *Our Theatre Today*, 1932-1935
Hopkins wrote a chapter for the book edited by Herschel L. Bricker.

b. 2  f. 14

Articles on the theater by Hopkins, 1929-1939

b. 2  f. 15

Articles on the theater by Hopkins, 1940-1949

b. 2  f. 16

Articles on the theater by Hopkins, n.d.

b. 2  f. 17

Writings by Hopkins on non-theatrical subjects, 1941-1949 and n.d.
Topics include politics and religion.

b. 2  f. 18

*The Broadway Revolution* by Samuel Spewack, n.d.
Spewack's article with cover letter recounts his interview with Hopkins.

**Series III. Promptbooks and scripts, 1918-1946 and n.d.**

3 boxes

Separated into promptbooks (annotated with cues, etc.) followed by scripts (mostly clean), each alphabetical by title.

Promptbooks and scripts are for plays produced and sometimes directed by Arthur Hopkins. All are typescript, most undated: the promptbooks are heavily annotated while the scripts are mostly clean.

b. 2  f. 19

Promptbook, *Blow Ye Winds* by Valentine Davies, 1936
Carbon typescript with handwritten cues and revisions.

b. 3  f. 1

Promptbook, *The Commodore Marries* by Kate Parsons, n.d.
Carbon typescript includes property and electric plots and sketch for backdrop.

b. 3  f. 2

Promptbook, *The Devil's Garden* by Edith Ellis, n.d.
Clean typescript with staging directions underlined in red.

b. 3  f. 3

Promptbook, *Encore* by Victor Wittgenstein and Sheridan Gibney, 1931
Typescript with handwritten staging directions, "as played by Miss Barrymore."

b. 3  f. 4

Promptbook, *Feathers in a Gale* by Pauline Jamerson and Reginald Lawrence, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten notes and cues.

b. 3  f. 5

Promptbook, *Hear That Trumpet* by Orin Jannings, 1946
Typescript with handwritten notes and cues, property plot and program.

b. 3  f. 6

Typescript with staging directions in red and cast list from program.
b. 3 f. 7  Promptbook, *The Jest* from the Italian of Sam Benelli, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten notes and staging directions.

b. 3 f. 8  Promptbook, *The Lady Next Door*, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten notes and staging directions in red.

b. 3 f. 9  Promptbook, *Machinal* [by Sophie Treadwell], n.d.
Called "Original Prompt Copy." Typescript with some staging directions in red,
also handwritten revisions and cues and property plot.

b. 4 f. 1  Promptbook, *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell, n.d.
Typescript with staging directions in red and some handwritten cues.

b. 4 f. 2  Promptbook, *The Magnificent Yankee* by Emmet Lavery, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten staging directions and sheet music in German.

b. 4 f. 3  Promptbook, *Paths of Glory* by Sidney Howard, 1935
Typescript with staging directions and cast list in red.

b. 4 f. 4  Promptbook, *The Petrified Forest* by Robert E. Sherwood, 1934
Typescript with handwritten revisions and staging directions and a program.

b. 4 f. 5  Promptbook, *Rendezvous* by Barton MacLane, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten revisions and staging directions.

b. 4 f. 6  Promptbook, *The Rescuing Angel* by Clare Kummer, n.d.
Typescript with staging directions in red.

b. 4 f. 7  Promptbook, *Roadside* by Lynn Riggs, n.d.
Carbon typescript with handwritten notes and cues, property and electric plots
and ground plans.

b. 4 f. 8  Promptbook, *Star Spangled* by Richard Ardrey, n.d.
Typescript with handwritten cues and revisions, property plot and ground plans.

b. 4 f. 9  Promptbook, *This Is New York* by R. E. Sherwood, 1930
Carbon typescript with revisions and cues, handwritten and pasted in.

b. 4 f. 10 Promptbook, *A Very Good Young Man* by Martin Brown, n.d.
Carbon typescript with handwritten notes and cues.

b. 4 f. 11 Promptbook, *When Half Gods Go* by Sidney Howard, 1929
Typescript with handwritten notes and cues, set designs and electric and
property plots.

b. 5 f. 1  Script, *the Cat-Bird* by Rupert Hughes, 1919
Clean typescript.

b. 5 f. 2  Script, *The Channel Road* by Alexander Woollcott and George S. Kaufman,
n.d.
Clean carbon typescript, "produced by Arthur Hopkins."

b. 5 f. 3  Script, *The Channel Road* by Alexander Woollcott and George S. Kaufman,
n.d.
Clean carbon typescript, slightly different from above.

b. 5  f. 4  
**Script, The Claw** by Henri Bernstein, n.d.  
Typescript with a few handwritten notes.

b. 5  f. 5  
**Script, Deep River** with book by Lawrence Stallings and music by Frank Harling, n.d.  
Clean carbon typescript.

b. 5  f. 6  
**Script, The Gentile Wife** by Rita Wellman, 1918  

b. 5  f. 7  
**Script, The Idle Inn** by Peretz Hirschbein, n.d.  
Clean carbon typescript.

b. 5  f. 8  
**Script, The Laughing Lady** by Alfred Suto, n.d.  
Clean typescript called "Dialogue of the First Act...in which Ethel Barrymore is appearing at the Longacre Theatre."

b. 5  f. 9  
**Script, A Night's Lodging** by Maxim Gorky, n.d.  
Clean typescript.

b. 5  f. 10  
**Script, Paris Bound** by Philip Barry, 1927  
Clean typescript.

b. 5  f. 11  
**Script, The Passing Present** by Gretchen Damrosch, n.d.  
Clean carbon typescript.

b. 5  f. 12  
**Script, Plumes in the Dust** by Sophie Treadwell, n.d.  
Clean carbon typescript.

b. 5  f. 13  
**Script, Salvation** by Sidney Howard and Charles MacArthur, 1927  
Clean carbon typescript.

b. 5  f. 14  
**Script, Voltaire** by Leila Taylor and Gertrude Purcell, n.d.  
Clean typescript.
Series IV. Programs and publicity, 1925-1946
8 folders

Programs are alphabetical by theater, then chronological

Consists of theater programs for Hopkins productions, the bulk at the Plymouth Theatre. Also a few publicity brochures and a photocopied scrapbook of clippings on Ethel Barrymore in *The Joyous Season*.

b. 6 f. 1  Theater programs for Hopkins productions at the Broadhurst Theatre, 1932-1935

b. 6 f. 2  Theater programs for Hopkins productions at the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre, 1936-1937

b. 6 f. 3  Theater programs for Hopkins productions at the Plymouth Theatre, 1925-1930

b. 6 f. 4  Theater programs for Hopkins productions at the Plymouth Theatre, 1930-1933

b. 6 f. 5  Theater programs for Hopkins productions at the Plymouth Theatre, 1933-1938

b. 6 f. 6  Theater programs from various theaters for plays presented or directed by Hopkins, 1925-1943

b. 6 f. 7  Publicity brochures for Hopkins productions, n.d.

b. 6 f. 8  Scrapbook of clippings, photocopied, on Ethel Barrymore in *The Joyous Season*, 1945-1946

The play was produced by Arthur Hopkins at the Selwyn Theatre in Chicago.
20 folders

Correspondence, followed by drafts of the biography, working notebooks kept by Rosemary Sprague, and then loose notes.

Consists of working files of Rosemary Sprague, a published novelist, for her biography of her grandfather, Arthur Hopkins. Includes drafts, notes and notebooks of the biography in various stages. As part of her research, Sprague corresponded with many people who had known and worked with Hopkins. Of interest are the letters she received from Maxwell Anderson, Brooks Atkinson, Lynn Fontanne, Clark Gable, and Edward G. Robinson, among others.

b. 6 f. 9  Letter by Maxwell Anderson to Rosemary Sprague, 1952

b. 6 f. 10  Correspondence between Brooks Atkinson and Rosemary Sprague, 1950-1951

b. 6 f. 11  Letter by Lynn Fontanne to Rosemary Sprague, 1951 Jan. 18

b. 6 f. 12  Letter by Clark Gable to Rosemary Sprague, 1954 Oct. 19
Reminiscing on his Broadway debut in *Machinal* under the direction of Arthur Hopkins.

b. 6 f. 13  Correspondence between W. Frank Harling and Rosemary Sprague, 1951

b. 6 f. 14  Correspondence with and about Robert Edmond Jones, 1951

b. 6 f. 15  Correspondence between Edward G. Robinson and Rosemary Sprague, 1951

b. 6 f. 16  Research correspondence of Rosemary Sprague for her biography of Arthur Hopkins, 1950-1952

b. 6 f. 17  Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript on his early years.

b. 6 f. 18  Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript on yellow paper, continuation of story.

b. 6 f. 19  Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript (Prologue-p. 42.)
b. 6    f. 20  Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript (IV-54, various numbering)

b. 7    f. 1   Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript (F-p. 133, various numbering)

b. 7    f. 2   Biography of Arthur Hopkins, n.d.
Carbon typescript (J-p. 41, some pages unnumbered)

b. 7    f. 3   Notebook for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
Handwritten draft in spiral notebook.

b. 7    f. 4   Notebook for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
Draft and notes in spiral notebook.

b. 7    f. 5   Notebook for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
Draft and notes, both handwritten and typed. Was in three-ring binder.

b. 7    f. 6-7  Notebook for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
Two spiral notebooks of notes.

b. 7    f. 8   Notebook for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
A few notes in a bound marble notebook.

b. 7    f. 9   Notes for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
From folder. Both typed and handwritten. Includes "Tentative Outline for Remainder" and transcription of letter [1890] by Hopkins' mother Mary to her daughter-in-law.

b. 7    f. 10-11 Research notes for biography of Arthur Hopkins by Rosemary Sprague, n.d.
Loose notes.

Series VI. Personal papers of Rosemary Sprague, 1939-1951
5 folders

Mostly personal letters to Rosemary Sprague or her mother
Eleanor. Also telegrams and a few programs reflecting
Rosemary's involvement in the theater in Ogunquit, Maine in the
summer of 1939.

b. 7    f. 12  Letters to Rosemary Sprague, 1938-1951
Mostly personal; if professional, not on Hopkins biography.

b. 7    f. 13  Telegrams to Rosemary Sprague on her theater appearances in Ogunquit, Maine, 1939

b. 7    f. 14  Theater programs from Ogunquit, Maine, 1939

b. 7    f. 15  Clippings about Rosemary Sprague, 1939 and n.d.

b. 7    f. 16  Letters to Eleanor Sprague, mother of Rosemary, 1939
Personal letters, many concern her daughter during her debutante year.

**Series VII. Visual materials, 1926-1946 and n.d.**

1 box

Mostly photographs. Includes a photo of Hopkins with John Barrymore and another with Lillian Gish. Also family photographs and a scrapbook of photos of his production of *The Magnificent Yankee*.

| b. 8 f. 2 | Printed publicity on Hopkin's production of *Burlesque*, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 3 | Photographs of Arthur Hopkins, 1926 and n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 4 | Photograph of John Barrymore and Arthur Hopkins, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 5 | Photograph of Arthur Hopkins, Lillian Gish, Roland Young and William C. De Mille, 1933 At the Astoria Studio where Hopkins was producing *The Great Adventure*. |
| b. 8 f. 6 | Photograph of Arthur Hopkins and an unidentified woman, possibly his wife, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 7 | Family photographs, n.d. Probably Arthur Hopkins with family members including his mother Mary. |
| b. 8 f. 8 | Photographs, probably the Hopkins brothers with and without their parents, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 9 | Photographs, possibly Ann and John Jeffreys, Hopkins maternal grandparents, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 10 | Photographs of Rosemary Sprague, n.d. One portrait as a young woman, one family group where she is probably the youngest child. |
| b. 8 f. 11 | Photographs of Eve MacDonald in *Shadowed*, n.d. |
| b. 8 f. 12 | Photographs of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, n.d. Used by Hopkins as research material for *The Magnificent Yankee*. |
| b. 8 f. 13 | Scrapbook of photographs from *The Magnificent Yankee*, 1946 Play by Emmet Lavery, produced by Hopkins, stared Louis Calhern as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. Both Dorothy Gish and Sylvia Field played Mrs. Holmes. (Was formerly MWEZ 12, 504). |
Series VIII. Oversized scrapbooks, 1926-1948
2 boxes

Three scrapbooks of clippings in poor condition. Also includes a published version of Hopkins’ *Letters to a Lonely Boy*, found inside one of the scrapbooks.

b. 9 f. 1  Scrapbook of clippings on the career of Arthur Hopkins, 1926-1948
Also contains a few programs. (Was formerly MWEZ 12,503).

b. 10 f. 1  *Letters to a Lonely Boy* by Arthur Hopkins, 1937
Was published in *The Ladies Home Journal*. Was loose inside the scrapbook in Box 10, Folder 3.

b. 10 f. 2  Scrapbook of clippings on *The Magnificent Yankee*, 1946-1947
Was formerly MWEZ 12,505.

b. 10 f. 3  Scrapbook of clippings and publicity on *The Magnificent Yankee*, 1946-1947
Was formerly MWEZ 12,506.