

Guide to the Clara Rotter Papers, 1961-1984

***T-Mss 1993-011**

Billy Rose Theatre Division

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

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Clara Rotter Papers
Collection ID:	*T-Mss 1993-011
Creator:	Rotter, Clara
Extent:	1.75 linear feet, 2 boxes
Repository:	Billy Rose Theatre Division The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: This collection consists of correspondence from Brooks Atkinson and Oriana Atkinson to Clara Rotter, and two scrapbooks of Atkinson's *Critic at Large* columns.

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

Clara Rotter Papers, *T-Mss 1993-011, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Clara Rotter Papers were donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division in 1993.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2007.

Biographical Note

Clara Rotter, born ca. 1910, arrived with her family from Europe at age eleven, and started working in the drama department of *The New York Times* in 1945. She developed a close professional relationship with Brooks Atkinson, drama critic of the *Times*, providing indispensable research and administrative assistance. Among her duties was the compilation of an annual list of Broadway and off Broadway productions, published under her byline for nine years. She became such an influential liaison between the drama staff and the theater world, that "Who is Clara Rotter?" was allegedly asked of those aspiring to join the theater press agents union.

Brooks Atkinson, who died in 1984, bequeathed \$2,500 to Miss Rotter, who donated the money to the Brooks Atkinson Memorial Playwright Exchange of New Dramatists.

Miss Rotter lived in Woodside, Queens, and retired from the *Times* in 1980, when she was 70. After a long illness, she died at home on September 13, 1992.

Scope and Content Note

The letters from Brooks Atkinson (1967-1974 and undated) begin after his official retirement in 1965, and there is a devoted appreciation of Rotter's research skills and excellent relations with publishers to acquire materials Atkinson needed. It is apparent from the correspondence of Atkinson and his wife, Oriana, to Rotter that she had prime responsibility for her aged parents, while not enjoying robust health herself. Atkinson and Rotter communicated often, and Atkinson's letters frequently comment on her lively wit and discriminating judgment of current productions.

There are two letters to Clara Rotter from Dr. Rodney E. Sheratsky, a professor of literature in New Jersey, requesting a meeting to discuss her work and personal friendship with Brooks Atkinson. These are accompanied by a letter of permission from Oriana Atkinson for Sheratsky to write the authorized biography of Brooks Atkinson. There is no evidence this book was written. Dr. Sheratsky died in 2005.

Two scrapbooks contain Brooks Atkinson's *Critic at Large* columns from 1960-1965. The breadth of topics includes local history, the environment, politics, and culture.

There is one undated photograph of Brooks Atkinson.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
		Correspondence
		Brooks Atkinson
1	1	1967 Aug - 1970 Nov. Includes one undated photograph.
	2	1972 June-1974 May and undated
	3	Oriana Atkinson, 1973 Oct-Dec Includes two letters from Dr. Rodney E. Sheratsky.
		Scrapbooks - Brooks Atkinson - "Critic at Large" Columns
2	1	1961 Sept. - 1964 Nov.
	2	1964 Dec. - 1965 Apr and 1970 Jan. 24 Includes one "Topics" column.

Related Materials

Clara Rotter's correspondence from Sean O'Casey can be found in the Humanities and Social Sciences Library (Berg Coll MSS O'Casey). Her interview in the documentary about Al Hirschfeld, *The Line King*, is at Performing Arts TOFT (NCOX 1421).