



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Paul Osborn papers**

1922-1985 [bulk 1950s-1980s]

\*T-Mss 1994-011

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Osborn, Paul, 1901-1988

**Title:** Paul Osborn papers

**Date:** 1922-1985 [bulk 1950s-1980s]

**Size:** 4.2 linear feet (10 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Millicent Osborn, circa 1994.

**Abstract:** Paul Osborn (1901-1988) was an American playwright and screenwriter. In 1930, Osborn achieved early success on Broadway with *The Vinegar Tree*. Other writings include screen adaptations of novels. In 1980, Osborn received a Tony Award for best revival for *Morning's at Seven*. The collection, dating from 1922 to 1985, contains typescripts of plays and screenplays, correspondence, contracts, writings of others, two scrapbooks of newspaper clipping reviews of *The Vinegar Tree*, contracts, programs of Osborn's plays and several photographs.

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**Preferred citation:** Paul Osborn papers.\*T-Mss 1994-011. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

## Creator History

Paul Osborn (1901-1988) was an American playwright and screenwriter. Osborn achieved early success with the Broadway comedy *The Vinegar Tree* in 1930. In 1980, Osborn received a Tony Award for *Morning's at Seven* for best play revival. This play originally opened on Broadway in 1939. Critics noted that Osborn's strongest characters were drawn from his own life growing up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, such as in his play *Morning's at Seven*. Outside of Osborn's original plays, he dramatized novels.

Not all of Osborn's works reached Broadway. For example, *Film of Memory*, later retitled *La Contessa*

was produced for the London stage with Vivien Leigh. Osborn also wrote several unpublished works including *The Darkest Bough*. After a lengthy illness, Osborn died on May 12, 1988, in New York City. He was survived by his wife, Millicent.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The collection, dates from 1922 to 1985 and reflects Paul Osborn's career as a playwright and screenwriter. The collection is primarily typescripts, some annotations of plays and screenplays by Osborn. Prominent works in the collection are *The Vinegar Tree*, *Hot September*, and *Film of Memory*, later titled *La Contessa*. There is also a first draft of *Morning's at Seven*. The files include several lesser-known plays and some unpublished works. *The Darkest Bough* and *The Little Elephant* are examples of two full-length plays that were not produced.

There are several versions of the musical *Hot September* based on William Inge's work *Picnic*. For his background research, Osborn retained a copy of *Picnic*. This version of *Picnic* differs significantly from the published version of Inge's work with the same name.

The remaining material includes some letters to Osborn from friends and colleagues, including S. N. Behrman, Al Hirschfeld, Joshua Logan and Sophie Treadwell; congratulatory telegrams on winning the Tony in 1980; contracts, and two scrapbooks of reviews of *The Vinegar Tree*.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged in three sections: Typescripts (arranged alphabetically), Correspondence and Printed Material.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

American drama -- 20th century

Plays -- American

Theater -- United States -- History -- 20th century

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence

Photographs

Scrapbooks

Typescripts

### **Occupations**

Playwrights

Screenwriters

## Container List

### Typescripts

- b. 1 f. 1 A Bauble for the Baby undated
- b. 1 f. 2-3 Come Out, I Know that You Are There undated
- b. 1 f. 4 La Contessa or The Countess undated
- b. 1 f. 5-8 Darkest Bough 1959-1960
- b. 2 f. 1-4 Film of Memory 1965
- b. 2 f. 5 Flight 202 undated
- b. 2 f. 6 Gabrielle undated
- b. 2 f. 7-9 Hot September 1965
- b. 3 f. 1-6 Hot September 1965
- b. 3 f. 7-9 John Brown's Body 1967
- b. 4 f. 1-9 John Brown's Body 1967
- b. 5 f. 1-12 John Brown's Body 1967
- b. 6 f. 1-3 Judgement Day undated
- b. 6 f. 4-5 Little Elephant 1974
- b. 6 f. 6-7 Maiden Voyage 1969
- b. 6 f. 8 Miss Price undated
- b. 7 f. 1-2 Miss Price undated
- b. 7 f. 3 Morning's at Seven c1939  
First Draft
- b. 7 f. 4-5 New Rules for an Old Game undated
- b. 7 f. 6-8 Olive Oliver undated
- b. 7 f. 9 Perhaps We Are! undated
- b. 7 f. 10 Tomorrow Morning 1984-1985  
Revision
- b. 8 f. 1 Vinegar Tree 1930
- b. 9 f. 1 Vinegar Tree 1930-1932  
Photograph of Mary Bacon.
- b. 9 f. 2-3 Vinegar Tree 1930-1932  
Scrapbooks
- b. 8 f. 2 Untitled Play circa 1975
- b. 8 f. 3 Untitled Play undated  
First Draft
- b. 8 f. 4 Unidentified two pages from a play undated
- b. 8 f. 5 Inge, William. Picnic undated  
Early Version
- b. 8 f. 6 Inge, William. Picnic 1955  
Final Draft
- b. 8 f. 7 Picnic--Guild Agreement 1965
- b. 8 f. 8 Inge, William. Summer Brave 1953
- b. 8 f. 12 Contracts 1950's-1960s  
Assorted

- b. 8 f. 9-11 Correspondence 1938-1984, undated  
Printed Matter and Assorted Materials
- b. 10 f. 1 Spatsommer Morning's at Seven in German 1981  
Morning's at Seven in German.
- b. 10 f. 2-3 Programs. Mornings At Seven 1975-1985
- b. 10 f. 4 Programs. Oliver, Oliver 1985
- b. 10 f. 5-7 Mornings at Seven 1970s-1980s  
Reviews
- b. 10 f. 8 Printed Matter 1922, undated
- b. 10 f. 9 Photograph--Unidentified Woman undated
- b. 10 f. 10 Photograph--Unidentified Man 1924