



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

M. David Samples papers

1948-2005

*T-Mss 1973-008

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014

Summary

Creator: Samples, M. David

Title: M. David Samples papers

Date: 1948-2005

Size: 1.7 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Donated by M. David Samples, 1996 to 2006.

Abstract: M. David Samples also known as David Samples (circa 1924-) was a director, playwright and actor for Off-Broadway, regional theaters and abroad. Samples' career spanned over forty years, with over a hundred productions including William Inge's *Summer Brave*, Catherine Muschamp's *The Beheading* and Gore Vidal's *On the March to the Sea*. The collection, 1948 to 2005, holds scripts, correspondence, a daybook, photographs, printed matter and one audio recording.

Conditions Governing Access:

Inquires regarding audio/visual materials in the collection may be directed to the Billy Rose Theatre Division (theatre@nypl.org). Audio/visual materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Preferred citation: M. David Samples papers, *T-Mss 1973-008. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2014 The Wayne F. Maxwell papers were separated from the collection. The collection was housed in acid free folders and boxes.

Creator History

M. David Samples, also known as David Samples (circa 1924-) was a director, playwright and actor for

Off-Broadway, regional theaters, and abroad. Samples' career spanned over forty years with over a hundred productions. His directing accomplishments include William Inge's *Summer Brave*, Catherine Muschamp's *The Beheading*, and Gore Vidal's *March to the Sea*.

After receiving a bachelor of arts from Lake Forest College, he completed a masters of arts from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1948. To partially fulfill the masters' requirements, Samples submitted a play entitled *Let Tomorrow Come*. His inspiration came from a junior high school teacher who, in 1937, introduced him to the epic poem *Evangeline, A Tale of Arcadie* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Upon graduation, he taught speech and drama at local schools-- Joliet Illinois Township High School, Joliet Junior College and also Lake Forest College from the late 1940s to the 1950s. His writings reflect his theatrical background as represented in the article "College Pro Theatre" that gave sharp criticism about college theatre on university campuses (*Improving College and University Teaching*, Winter 1971).

In 1956, Samples moved to New York City where he began appearing in many Off-Broadway productions. He transitioned from an educator to an active part in the performing arts. Feature performances include *From a Dark Land* at the New Dramatists' Studio, *Picture in the Hallway* at the Greenwich Mews Theatre, *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* at the Carnegie Hall Playhouse, and *Insufficient Evidence* at the Double Image Theatre. Other credits include productions in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Virginia.

Samples achieved early success directing the production *Kataki*, in 1959. Performed at the St. Mark's Playhouse, this two man play set during World War II received rave reviews. Starring Wayne F. Maxwell (1939-2000), and Dale Ishimoto (1923-2004), the play tells the dramatic story of an American soldier who parachutes to a deserted island inhabited by a lone Japanese soldier. Enemies or "kataki" the distrust slowly dissolves as the men began to trust one another. Upon the arrival of a rescue American patrol, the Japanese soldier shocked into reality commits hari-kari.

Maxwell had a long-time relationship with Samples from the late 1950's until his death in 2000. Both frequently collaborated on productions such as *The Beheading* (1972). Maxwell often performed in these productions and became an identifiable and versatile theatrical actor.

He also befriended Catherine (Thomas) Muschamp (1917-) a British playwright, librettist and actor. Muschamp based in England and France sought Samples professional advice and support for her works. she often sent her scripts to him.

Recognition for his work includes a Ford Foundation Fellowship in Directing, and membership in the Director's Unit of the Actors Studio. M. David Samples currently resides in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The collection, dating from 1948 to 2005, reflects the performing arts career of M. David Samples, as a director, playwright and actor in Off-Broadway, local, and regional theaters. The files hold scripts, printed matter, correspondence, and a daybook.

Samples and Muschamp's scripts are the bulk of the collection. Samples' scripts include *Consider the Heavens* (1952); *Let Tomorrow Come* (master thesis, 1948); *Mrs. President: A Play about Mary Todd Lincoln* (1970); *Marquette and Joliet* (1952-1958, copy); and *The Winter Harvest*, a drama in one act

(published version, 1969).

Muschamp scripts include *The Beheading* (1973), *Black Ice* (2003), *Mother of the Pride* (1998) and *To Walk with Kings* (2004). The correspondence contains background information about some of the productions.

Programs from plays document additional information about Samples work as an actor or director that include *Saint Joan* at the Playmakers Theater in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; *The Man Who Came to Dinner* at the Showcase Theatre in Evanston, Illinois, *The Carolina Playmakers* at the University of North Carolina, *Voice in the Wind* at the Suncoast Theatre in Ruskin, Florida, and *The Heiress* at the Belfry Players in Wisconsin Bay, Wisconsin.

Programs after he transitioned to New York City are few from the 1950s to the present. Representative programs include a reading with fellow cast mates of the play *From a Dark Land* at the New Dramatists Studio; *My Heart's in the Highlands* at the Equity Library Theatre, Inc.; summer stock theater at the Hyde Park Playhouse; and *Insufficient Evidence* at the Double Image Theatre. In the latter production, Wayne Maxwell directed and Samples had a feature role.

Correspondence, dated from the 1970s to 2005, mostly revolves around the friendship and professional work of Muschamp and Samples. For thirty years, Muschamp wrote frequently to Samples from Europe. While most of the letters were written to Samples, some included his partner Wayne F. Maxwell. The remaining material is a daybook, dated 1955, contract and several photos.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by format.

Key Terms

Occupations

Actors
Directors (performing arts)
Playwrights

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Daybooks
Photographs
Scripts
Theater programs

Subjects

Theater -- 20th century
Theater -- New York (State)

Names

Maxwell, Wayne F., 1939-2000
Muschamp, Catherine

Container List

Scripts

Muschamp, Catherine

- b. 1 f. 1-3 *The Beheading* 1973
- b. 1 f. 4 *Black Ice* 2003
- b. 1 f. 5 *Deadfall* 1993
- b. 1 f. 6 *Fire of God* 1997
- b. 1 f. 7 *Matt* 1995
- b. 2 f. 1 *Mother of the Pride* 1998
- b. 2 f. 2 *The Orlando Syndrome* 1995
- b. 2 f. 3 *A Quartet of Kings* 2004
- b. 2 f. 4 *To Walk With Kings* 2004

Samples, M. David

- b. 2 f. 5-8 *Consider the Heavens* 1952
- b. 3 f. 1 *The Devoted* 1954
- b. 3 f. 2 *Down From the Mountain* circa 1950s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 3 *Evangeline* circa 1950s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 4 *The Fir Tree Fantasy* circa 1950s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 5 *Let Tomorrow Come* 1948
- b. 3 f. 6 *Marquette Joliet* 1962-1968
- b. 3 f. 7 *Out of Order* 1961
- b. 3 f. 8 *Mrs. President. A Play About Mary Todd Lincoln* 1970
- b. 3 f. 9 *There Dies an Adonis* circa 1950s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 10 *The Winter Harvest* 1969
- b. 3 f. 11 *A Word in Edgewise* circa 1950s-1970s

Printed Matter

- b. 3 f. 12-13 Articles 1949-1971
- b. 3 f. 14-15 Programs 1947-2004

Correspondence

- b. 4 f. 1 General 1970s, 1990s
- b. 4 f. 2-7 Muschamp, Catherine 1972-2005
- b. 4 f. 8 Daybook 1955

Assorted Materials

- b. 4 f. 9 Contract 1971
- b. 4 f. 10 Photographs 1950s-1980s