

Inventory of the Nana Bryant Papers, 1917-1955

*T-Mss 1997-027

Billy Rose Theatre Division



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

The Billy Rose Theatre Division. New York Public Library.
40 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York, NY 10023-7498
(212) 870-1639

theatrediv@nypl.org

<http://nypl.org/research/lpa/the/the.html>

Processed by: Susan McArthur

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Encoded by: Mary Ellen Rogan; addenda by Elisabeth Elkind

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Nana Bryant Papers, 1917-1955.

Collection ID: *T-Mss 1997-027

Creator: Nana Bryant .

Extent: 1.42 lin. ft. (2 boxes)

Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
Billy Rose Theatre Division.

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited.

Preferred Citation: Nana Bryant Papers, *T-Mss 1997-027, Billy Rose Theatre Division,
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Biographical Note

Nana Bryant was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1888. She began her acting career at the age of sixteen when she joined a repertory company that later toured in the West. Bryant was the leading lady in stock companies in San Francisco, Oakland, Salt Lake City, Washington, D.C., and Portland, Maine and appeared in *Topsy and Eva* with the Duncan Sisters. In 1924 she debuted on Broadway in *The Firebrand* and for the next several years appeared in musicals and comedies in New York.

A contract with Columbia Pictures Corporation took her to Hollywood in 1935 and began a motion picture career that lasted twenty years. She played roles in over ninety films including *Mad about Music*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Calling Dr. Gillespie*, *The Song of Bernadette*, *Brewster's Millions*, *The Virginian*, *Harvey*, *Bright Victory*, and *The Private War of Major Benson*.

Her television appearances included roles on *Robert Montgomery Presents*, *Studio One*, *Life with Father*, *Make Room for Daddy*, *The First Hundred Years* and *Our Miss Brooks*.

Scope and Content Note

The focus of the collection is the early part of Bryant's career when she was a stock company leading lady. A scrapbook of clippings about performances in California, Washington, D.C. and Maine, a few fan letters and snapshots document this time. Her Broadway career is represented by opening night telegrams and a published script for *The Firebrand* in 1924 and a program from the 1945 production of *Marriage is for Single People* autographed by cast members. The papers also include publicity photos of Bryant from her early days until late in her career, but motion picture stills and unautographed programs were separated from the collection and added to the appropriate Theatre Collection files (see separation sheet). The collection merely touches on a career that spanned over fifty years.

Organization

Series I: Personal Papers

Series II: Ephemera

Series Description and Container Listing

Series I: Personal Papers, 1917-1955.

5 folders

By form of materials

The series includes correspondence which consists of telegrams marking the Broadway opening of *The Firebrand* and fan mail; Bryant's speech to the Portland Business and Professional Woman's League, given when she was part of the Jefferson Theatre Company; 1930-1937 income statements; and biographical materials which include magazine articles, clippings, obituaries, and a tribute by David Hanna.

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|------|------|---|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence "A-Z", 1917-1952.
1 folder of correspondence.
Correspondence to Nana Bryant includes fan mail, opening night telegrams for <i>The Firebrand</i> , and telegram for opening of <i>Song of Norway</i> [1917-1931, 1947, 1952]. |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Speech / Nana Bryant.
1 folder.
Speech given by Nana Bryant to the Portland Business and Professional Womans League. |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | Income statement / Nana Bryant, 1931-1937.
1 folder. |

List of Nana Bryant's earnings from 1931-1937.

- b. 1 f. 4 Biographical materials / Nana Bryant, 1924-1955.
1 folder.
Clippings about Nana Bryant including her obituary.
- b. 1 f. 5 Eulogy / David Hanna, 1955.
1 folder.
Tribute to Nana Bryant in two versions.

Series II: Ephemera, 1920-1931.

1 box and 4 folders

By form of materials

Ephemera includes publicity photographs of Bryant and snapshots of Bryant and fellow actors in costume for productions of *Rollo's Wild Oat*, *Tiger Rose*, and what appears to be *Road to Rome*; Bryant's annotated copy of the operetta *Die Dubarry*; a published script of *The Firebrand* signed by the cast; an autographed program from the 1945 Broadway production of *Marriage is for Single People*; and a scrapbook of clippings about Bryant's career (1920-1931). The scrapbook also includes clippings about actress Emelie Melville.

- b. 1 f. 6 Photographs / Nana Bryant.
1 folder.
Publicity photographs of Nana Bryant span her career. Also snapshots of Bryant in costume for *Rollo's Wild Oat* (1922), *Tiger Rose* (1921), and *Road to Rome* (?) (1931) with fellow cast members.
- b. 1 f. 7 *The Dubarry (Operetta)* / Carl Millocker.
1 folder.
Nana Bryant's annotated copy of the score for *The Dubarry*.
- b. 1 f. 8 *The firebrand* / Mayer, Edwin Justus, 1924.
1 folder.
Bound published script autographed by members of the cast.
- b. 1 f. 9 *Marriage is for single people* / Stanley Richards, 1945.
1 folder.
Program autographed by members of the cast.
- b. 2 Scrapbook / Nana Bryant, 1920-1931.
1 box.
Scrapbook of clippings about the career of actress Nana Bryant.
Includes clippings about actress Emelie Melville.

Separated Materials

Photographs from motion pictures (B Files)

- *Always in Trouble* - 2
- *Counsel for Crime* - 2
- *Espionage Agent* - 5
- *Her Husband's Affairs* - 1
- *The King Steps Out* - 2
- *Lincoln in the White House* - 3
- *A Little Bit of Heaven* - 1
- *Mad About Music* - 4
- *Man-Proof* - 1
- *Nice Girl* - 1
- *Peck's Bad Boy with the Circus* - 2
- *The Private War of Major Benson* - 1
- *Sinners in Paradise* - 3
- *State Department - File 649* - 1

Programs

- *Everywoman* - 1919
- *Once in a Lifetime* - 1931
- *Road to Rome* - 1931
- *Roberta* - 1946
- *Scarlet Pages* - 1931
- *Song of Norway* - 1947 (playbill and souvenir program)

Oversized Photographs

- Nana Bryant portrait - C file