

Inventory of the Vincent J. Donehue Correspondence and Ephemera, 1930-1973

*T-Mss 1999-007

Billy Rose Theatre Division



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

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Vincent J. Donehue Correspondence and Ephemera, 1930-1973

Collection ID: *T-Mss 1999-007

Creator: Vincent J. Donehue .

Extent: .41 linear feet (1 box

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: Vincent J. Donehue Correspondence and Ephemera, *T-Mss 1999-007,
Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the
Performing Arts.

Biographical Note

Director Vincent J. Donehue was born on September 22, 1915 in Whitehall, New York to Julian B. Donehue and Helen E. Vincent. His father was director of redevelopment in Albany, New York. Vincent Donehue was educated at Christian Brothers Academy and the State University of New York and studied for the stage with Tamara Daykarhanova and with Fanny Bradshaw at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon, England. He made his radio debut in 1937 and in the years prior to World War II was heard on over 1500 radio shows. He also acted on Broadway during this time. He appeared as Cinna, the poet in Orson Welles' production of *Julius Caesar*; in Katharine Cornell's *Herod and Marianne*; Guthrie McClintic's *Christmas Eve*; the Theatre Guild's *Jeremiah*, by Stefan Zweig; John Golden's *The Old Foolishness* by Paul Vincent Carroll; and *My Fair Ladies* with Betty Furness and Celeste Holm.

Donehue enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1941 and served through 1945 attaining the rank of Major. While overseas he co-authored, produced and directed a play San Francisco that toured France and Germany. After the war he and playwright Horton Foote established Productions, Inc., an acting school and professional theater repertory company in Washington D.C., sharing the responsibilities of producer, director and

manager together. This repertory company staged productions ranging from J. M. Synge's *Deidre of the Spirits* to William Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands*.

In 1950 Donehue signed as a director for NBC-TV's *Chevrolet Theatre* with Fred Coe, who had been his summer stock roommate back in 1935. Subsequently Donehue was producer-director for the *Gabby Hayes Americana* dramas, an alternate director for *Robert Montgomery Presents* (1952), director of *Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse* (1952-1956), and *Producer's Showcase* (1957-1958). He staged many teleplays during TV's "golden age" including Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, Robert E. Sherwood's *Reunion in Vienna*, Clare Booth Luce's *The Women*, Paddy Chayefsky's *The Big Deal*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Rudolf Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* with Katharine Cornell, and the Mary Martin production of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1960), one of the first television productions filmed on magnetic tape.

Donehue's career as a director on Broadway began with his staging of Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* with Lillian Gish in 1953. This was followed by Foote's *Traveling Lady* (1954), Tennessee William's *Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton* (1955), Dore Schary's *Sunrise at Campobello* (1958), Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* (1959), Morris L. West's *Daughter of Silence* (1961), S. N. Behrman's *Lord Pengo* (1962), Arthur Schwartz's *Jennie* (1963), and Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert's *Catch Me If You Can* (1965). He also directed two films: *Lonelyhearts* (1959) and *Sunrise at Campobello* (1960) both produced by Dore Schary.

Vincent Donehue received a Tony Award and a Film Daily Award for his direction of *Sunrise at Campobello* and a Director's Guild Award for his television direction of *Peter Pan*. He died of Hodgkin's disease on January 17, 1966 in New York City. He was fifty years old.

Scope and Content Note

The Vincent J. Donehue correspondence and ephemera includes letters, written primarily by Vincent Donehue to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote, bookstore owners and friends from Albany, New York, whom he met while attending school at SUNY Albany. The collection appears to have belonged to Helen Fay, since it contains materials primarily addressed to her. Some of the letters include book orders placed by Donehue for Christmas and birthday gifts to friends and professional contacts. Other materials in the collection include cards, newspaper clippings of plays, movies and television programs involving Donehue and some personal photographs.

Organization

- Series I: Correspondence to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote
- Series II: Ephemera

Container Listing / Series Descriptions

Series I: Correspondence to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote, 1930-1973

6 folders

Chronological

This series consists primarily of letters from Vincent J. Donehue to his friends, Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. Letters relate to their friendship and news about his professional work. Included as well are book orders for holidays and special occasions with instructions for sending to various friends. One folder of correspondence contains letters about Vincent Donehue from other friends and acquaintances.

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|------|------|---|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence / Vincent J. Donehue
1 folder
Undated correspondence, probably from the 1930s, to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Correspondence / Vincent J. Donehue, ca. 1936-1940
1 folder
Correspondence to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | Correspondence / Vincent J. Donehue, 1953-1959
1 folder
Correspondence to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. |
| b. 1 | f. 4 | Correspondence / Vincent J. Donehue, 1960-1965
1 folder
Correspondence to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. |
| b. 1 | f. 5 | Correspondence regarding Vincent J. Donehue, 1937-1973
1 folder
Correspondence about Vincent J. Donehue from various friends and associates primarily to Helen Fay. |
| b. 1 | f. 6 | Book orders from Vincent J. Donehue
1 folder
Correspondence with attached book orders to Helen Fay and Eleanor Foote. |

Series II: Ephemera

16 folders

This series contains Christmas cards sent to Vincent Donehue, clippings and reviews about his professional work, some personal photographs and Vincent Donehue's eulogy written by Dory Schary.

Most of the materials appear to belong to Helen Fay with the exception of the Vincent Donehue Christmas cards.

- b. 1 f. 7 Christmas cards to Vincent J. Donehue
1 folder
Christmas cards sent to Vincent J. Donehue from friends and business associates.
- b. 1 f. 8 Eulogy for Vincent J. Donehue / Dore Schary, January 17, 1966
1 folder
Eulogy delivered by Dore Schary at the funeral of Vincent J. Donehue.
- b. 1 f. 9 Posthumous articles about Vincent J. Donehue, 1966
1 folder
Articles written about Vincent J. Donehue after his death.
- b. 1 f. 10 Clippings / Vincent J. Donehue
1 folder
Clippings about the life and career of Vincent J. Donehue.
- b. 1 f. 11 *Daughter of silence* / Morris L. West
1 folder
Clippings about the play *Daughter of Silence*.
- b. 1 f. 12 *Gentlemen be seated* (Musical) / Jerome Moross
1 folder
Clippings about the musical *Gentlemen Be Seated*.
- b. 1 f. 13 *Julius Caesar* / William Shakespeare
1 folder
Clippings about the Orson Welles' production of the play *Julius Caesar*. Includes a program.
- b. 1 f. 14 *Lord Pengo* / S. N. (Samuel Nathaniel) Behrman, 1962
1 folder
Clippings about the play *Lord Pengo*.
- b. 1 f. 15 *My fair ladies* / Arthur Jarrett
1 folder
Clippings about the play *My Fair Ladies*.
- b. 1 f. 16 *Peter Pan* (Musical) / Moose Charlap
1 folder
Clippings about the musical *Peter Pan*.
- b. 1 f. 17 *Reunion in Vienna* (Television program), 1955
1 folder

Clippings about the television program *Reunion in Vienna*.

- b. 1 f. 18 *Sizeman and son* (Television program), 1956
1 folder
Clippings about the television program *Sizeman and Son*.
- b. 1 f. 19 *The sound of music* (Musical) / Richard Rodgers
1 folder
Clippings about the musical *The Sound of Music*.
- b. 1 f. 20 *Sunrise at Campobello* / Dore Schary
1 folder
Clippings about the play *Sunrise at Campobello*.
- b. 1 f. 21 *The trip to Bountiful* / Horton Foote
1 folder
Clippings about the play *A Trip to Bountiful*.
- b. 1 f. 22 Personal photographs / Vincent J. Donehue
1 folder
Personal photographs of friends of Vincent J. Donehue.

Separated Materials
Photographs

- 1 - *Julius Caesar* - B file
- 1 - Autographed photo of Vincent Donehue