



The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Bessie Breuer papers

1948

*T-Mss 2003-042

Summary

Creator: Breuer, Bessie, b. 1893

Title: Bessie Breuer papers

Date: 1948

Size: (1 portfolio)

Abstract: Bessie Breuer (1893-1975) was a journalist, novelist, short story writer and playwright whose only produced play, *SUNDOWN BEACH* (1948), was one of the first efforts of the Actors Studio. After an early career in journalism as reporter and editor, Breuer began publishing short stories and, in 1935, her first novel, *MEMORY OF LOVE*. During World War II she wrote radio scripts for the Office of War Information. After the war a health crisis compelled Breuer to go south to recover, and in Florida she met the recuperating Air Force fliers who became the central figures of her play *SUNDOWN BEACH*. In later years Breuer continued to write novels. She died in New York City in September 1975 at the age of 81. The Bessie Breuer papers consist of documents concerning the Broadway run of Breuer's play *SUNDOWN BEACH*, which opened at the Belasco Theatre on Sep. 7, 1948, and closed on the 11th after seven performances. Directed by Elia Kazan, *SUNDOWN BEACH* marked the first Broadway venture of the newly-formed Actors' Studio. The cast featured several young actors who went on to notable careers, including Julie Harris, Cloris Leachman, Martin Balsam, Nehemiah Persoff, and Phyllis Thaxter. The play concerned the rehabilitation of World War II fliers suffering from combat trauma. Despite some public support, the play received mostly negative reviews and closed in less than a week. Much of the Bessie Breuer collection consists of letters offering emotional support in the wake of the production's failure. Among the correspondents are writers John Dos Passos and Stark Young, as well as Julie Harris. There are also several typed pages of notes from Breuer to director Elia Kazan, apparently written during the play's rehearsal process; Kazan's replies to Breuer are pencilled in the margins.

Preferred citation: Bessie Breuer papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Bessie Breuer (1893-1975) was a journalist, novelist, short story writer and playwright whose only produced play, *SUNDOWN BEACH* (1948), was one of the first efforts of the Actors Studio. After an early career in journalism as reporter and editor, Breuer began publishing short stories and, in 1935,

her first novel, MEMORY OF LOVE. During World War II she wrote radio scripts for the Office of War Information. After the war a health crisis compelled Breuer to go south to recover, and in Florida she met the recuperating Air Force fliers who became the central figures of her play SUNDOWN BEACH. In later years Breuer continued to write novels. She died in New York City in September 1975 at the age of 81.

Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence

Subjects

Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

Breuer, Bessie, b. 1893

Breuer, Bessie, 1893-

Harris, Julie, 1925-2013

Kazan, Elia

Actors Studio (New York, N.Y.)