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Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Leonardo Shapiro papers

1959-1996

Compiled by Kit Fluker.

Summary

Creator: Shapiro, Leonardo

Title: Leonardo Shapiro papers

Date: 1959-1996

Size: 9.48 linear feet (23 boxes)

Source: Donated by Michael Preston, 1998.

Abstract: Leonardo Shapiro (1946-1997) was a theater director, writer, production designer, and founder of the Shaliko Company, an experimental theater group based in New York City. The Leonardo Shapiro papers date from 1959 to 1996 and document Shapiro's work as a student at New York University (1966-1969); as the creator of the Appleseed Circus, a guerilla theater group (1969-1971); as artistic director of the Shaliko Company (1972-1992); as director of the Trinity College/La MaMa Performing Arts Program (1986-1992); and as an independent director and writer. The collection contains scripts, production notes, programs, fliers, posters, clippings and articles, photographs, correspondence, financial and administrative records, and video and sound recordings.

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Processing note: Most materials were refoldered. Original labels were maintained. Compiled by Kit Fluker.

Creator History

Leonardo Shapiro was an American director, writer, and designer for experimental theater. He founded the Shaliko Company in 1972. During the next 20 years, Shapiro directed, wrote, and designed productions for the company, as well as working as an independent director. Shaliko was based at the Public Theater from 1974 to 1976, and at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club from 1983 to 1992.

Many Shaliko productions were original works which Shapiro adapted from other sources, such as 1986's *The Yellow House*, based on Vincent Van Gogh's correspondence with his brother Theo, 1987's *Punch!*, adapted from *Punch and Judy*, and 1990's *Strangers*, which incorporated texts such as news stories and court transcripts.

From the 1970s onward, Shapiro led theater workshops and taught classes at various universities. In 1986, Shapiro worked with Trinity College to establish a New York-based performing arts program, in conjunction with La MaMa. Shapiro directed the Trinity/La MaMa Performing Arts Program from 1986 to 1992.

Partially in response to difficulties in obtaining funding for Shaliko, Shapiro dissolved the company in 1992 and moved back to New Mexico. There, he worked on scripts for radio and television, as well as *Who Stole Summer?*, a show performed by children in 1994. In 1993, he traveled to India to direct a Bengali-language production of *Endgame*.

Scope and Content Note

The Leonardo Shapiro papers date from 1959 to 1996 and document Shapiro's work as a student at New York University (1966-1969), as the creator of the Appleseed Circus, a guerilla theater group (1969-1971), as artistic director of the Shaliko Company (1972-1992), as director of the Trinity/La MaMa Performing Arts Program (1986-1992), and as an independent director and writer. The collection contains scripts, scores, production notes, research and background materials, programs, fliers, posters, clippings, articles, photographs, correspondence, financial and administrative records, and video and sound recordings.

The collection holds files for Shapiro's theatrical productions from 1972 to 1996. Most production files include programs, promotional materials such as fliers and posters, and clippings of reviews. Photographs are present for the majority of productions; *Roadkill*, in particular, is documented extensively through photographs. The production files hold scripts for many of the plays, some with annotations or revisions. Among Shapiro's original productions, scripts are present for *Collateral Damage*, *Strangers*, *Whirligig*, *Who Stole Summer?*, and *The Yellow House*. Scores are present for *Children of the Gods*, *Strangers*, and *The Measures Taken*. Shapiro's notes on concepts, direction, and design are present for *Children of the Gods*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Ghosts*, *Mystery History Bouffe Goof*, *The Seagull*, *Strangers*, *Tartuffe*, and *The Yellow House*. Rough sketches and original designs are present for some productions. Some files contain a small amount of correspondence. *Endgame* records consist mostly of travel information and correspondence regarding Shapiro's trip to India. Some production files contain handwritten inventories, which may be incomplete.

Records for *Kafka: Father and Son* document the 1985 and 1992 American productions, the 1990 Russian production, and also hold correspondence and itineraries from Shapiro's initial trip to the USSR in 1984. In addition to *Kafka* programs, fliers, photographs, and articles, the files contain Russian-language programs and booklets from various Soviet theaters and museums; transcripts of interviews with *Kafka* playwright Mark Rozovsky; and a translated transcript of Yuri Lyubimov in rehearsal for Nikolai Erdman's *The Suicide*. An audio recording of Lyubimov's rehearsal is present. The *Kafka* files also hold draft manuscripts by Trinity/La MaMa student Lynn Grant on Soviet theater and her experiences visiting the USSR.

The collection holds audiovisual materials for the following productions: *Blue Heaven* (original title: *Going to Iraq*), *Collateral Damage*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Kafka: Father and Son*, *The Measures Taken*, *Punch!*, *Roadkill*, *Strangers*, *Who Stole Summer?*, *Tartuffe*, *Thrombo*, and *The Yellow House*.

Production files also contain records of some of Shapiro's unproduced projects from the early 1990s. These include multiple drafts of an original radio script, *Nothing is Ever Lost*, and of an original television script, *Runaway Sam in the Promised Land*. Scripts, notes, and background materials for two unfinished projects, *Wishful Thinking* and *Ethel and Julius: A Love Story*, are here. Other scripts by Shapiro, written in the 1960s, can be found in his student records.

The collection also holds scripts written by colleagues of Shapiro's. Shapiro intended to use some of the scripts in workshops, but otherwise these scripts were not directed by him. Scripts include plays by Wallace Shawn, Elena Nicholas, Charles Dizenzo, and an adaptation of *Mrichchhakatika* by Supidto Chatterjee. A small number have annotations. Some related correspondence is present with the scripts, as is a flier for *The Other*, by Elena Nicholas.

General Shaliko Company records mostly date from 1987 to 1992, and consist of board meeting minutes from 1990 to 1992; financial statements; applications, reports, and correspondence related to funding from the New York State Council of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts; and promotional and informational materials such as programs, posters, prospectuses, slides, and videos.

There is a small amount of Appleseed Circus materials, consisting mostly of Shapiro's notes and correspondence from people who wanted to join the Circus. Fliers and a poster are also present.

Trinity College materials consist mostly of Trinity/La MaMa Performing Arts Program records, dating between 1987 and 1992. These consist of reports, student evaluations, correspondence, photographs, and video recordings of workshops and classes. A poster for *Lighthouse*, directed by Trinity College professor Judy Dworin, is present. A small amount of Trinity records predate the Performing Arts Program; these include audio recordings from a 1983 playwrights' symposium.

Records of Shapiro's student work date between 1960 and 1970, and consist mostly of materials from Shapiro's time as a student at New York University. Records include school notes, programs from shows that Shapiro directed, and two scripts he wrote: a film, *Long Trips and Short Visits*, and a play, *Time of the Child*. The student records also hold poetry he wrote from 1960 to 1964, two programs from plays he acted in at Miami-Dade Junior College (1963-1964), and various production notes.

General professional and biographical files date from 1977 to 1996; the bulk are from the early 1990s. The files contain resumes, photographs, correspondence from theater directors and managers, letters of recommendation, contracts, and autobiographical essays, notes, and timelines.

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

Arrangement: Materials are arranged in seven categories: general professional and biographical records, Appleseed Circus materials, productions, scripts, Shaliko Company records, and Trinity College materials. Productions are arranged alphabetically, with unproduced work listed at the end.

Key Terms

Subjects

Experimental theater

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Scores

Scripts

Sound recordings

Theater programs

Video recordings

Names

Rozovskii_, Mark

La Mama Experimental Theatre Club

New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater

Shaliko Company

Container List

- b. 19 f. 6-12 General Professional and Biographical Records 1977-1996
- b. 19 f. 4-5 The Appleseed Circus 1969-1970
 - Productions
 - b. 16 f. 5 The Arbor 1983
 - b. 1 f. 1-6 Children of the Gods 1973
 - b. 12 f. 1-10 Collateral Damage 1991
 - b. 5 f. 8-9 Doctor Faustus 1988
 - b. 6 f. 1 Doctor Faustus 1988
 - b. 16 f. 10-11 Endgame 1992-1993
 - b. 16 f. 2 Friends 1980
 - Ghosts
 - b. 1 f. 13 1975
 - b. 2 f. 1-3 1975
 - b. 23 f. 13-14 1975
 - b. 16 f. 9 Jerusalem for Reconciliation 1991
 - Kafka: Father and Son
 - b. 3 1984-1992
 - b. 4 f. 1-2 1991
 - b. 23 f. 3 1992
 - The Measures Taken
 - b. 2 f. 3-9 1974-1975
 - b. 23 f. 11-12 1974-1975
 - b. 23 f. 14 1975
 - b. 8 f. 13 The Midnight Visitor 1981
 - b. 16 f. 6-7 The Misanthrope 1977
 - Mystery History Bouffe Goof
 - b. 4 f. 3-7 1987
 - b. 5 f. 1-7 1987
 - b. 23 f. 4-5 1987
 - Punch!
 - b. 6 f. 2-7 1987
 - b. 23 f. 6 1987
 - o. 2 Poster 1987
 - b. 16 f. 4 Richard III 1980
 - b. 23 f. 7 Richard III 1980
 - b. 12 f. 11-12 Roadkill 1992
 - b. 13 Roadkill 1992
 - b. 8 f. 9-12 The Seagull 1995-1996
 - Strangers

Productions (cont.)
Strangers (cont.)

- b. 9 1959, 1979-1990
- b. 10 1989-1990
- b. 11 1989-1991
- b. 16 f. 1 Tartuffe 1979
- b. 6 f. 8 Thrombo 1984-1985
- b. 16 f. 8 The Wall Breaks! 1989
- Whirligig
- b. 6 f. 9-16 1989
- b. 7 f. 1-3 1989
- b. 23 f. 8 1989
- b. 14 f. 1-3 Who Stole Summer? 1994
- b. 1 f. 7-12 Woyzeck 1975-1976
- b. 23 f. 9 Woyzeck 1976
- The Yellow House
- b. 8 f. 1-8 1984-1986, 1990
- b. 23 f. 10 1986
- b. 7 f. 4-10 1986-1987
- b. 16 f. 3 Youth Hostel 1977
- b. 18 f. 6 Youth Hostel Script 1977
- Not annotated.
- b. 15 f. 1-10 Unproduced Work 1969-1978, 1990s
- b. 14 f. 4-13 Unproduced Work 1993-1995, undated

Scripts

For scripts from Shapiro's productions, see production files.

- b. 16 f. 12-15 1960s-1992
- b. 18 f. 1-5 1970s-1983
- b. 17 1970s-1995

The Shaliko Company

- b. 21 f. 1-16 1970s-1991
- b. 20 1987-1993
- b. 23 f. 1 Scarecrow Design by David Navarro Velasquez 1986
- o. 1 Poster 1989

Student Work

- b. 18 f. 7-15 1960-1970
- b. 19 f. 1-3 1966-1967
- b. 15 f. 11 Long Trips and Short Visits 1966, 1990s

Trinity College

- b. 21 f. 17-20 1983-1989
- b. 22 1987, 1990-1992
- b. 23 f. 2 Lighthouse 1988