University of Delaware Library Special Collections
Selections from the Manuscript Collection
Performing Arts

The main subject of each of the following collections pertains to the performing arts. The manuscripts and papers may include one or all of the traditional performing arts: dance, music, and theatre.

MSS 308 American Academy of Music papers, 1852 - c. 1940 (bulk dates 1896 - 1919), 1.6 linear ft.

The Philadelphia-based Academy opened one of America's grandest nineteenth-century opera houses in 1857. Widely known as a venue for opera and classical music, the hall also hosted political and religious gatherings, educational lectures, and, around the turn of the twentieth century, travel talks featuring lantern slides and early motion pictures. This small collection provides an incomplete but useful glimpse at the Academy's institutional structure and entertainment programming. Administrative correspondence, a small body of programs, and promotional flyers from 1873 to c. 1940 are preserved in the collection.

MSS 332 BBC Third Programme Radio scripts, 1940 - 1969, 3.3 linear ft.

The collection consists of 232 radio scripts (and a few production notes) produced by Douglas Cleverdon for BBC's "literary magazine of the air," The Third Programme. The majority of the scripts are adaptations and productions of works by noted authors, playwrights, and poets, such as Dylan Thomas, Sylvia Plath, and Henry Mayhew.

Samuel Beckett papers

This collection is unprocessed. Please contact a Special Collections reference librarian for assistance.

Paul Bowles papers supplement.

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MSS 270 Ralph Delauney collection related to Tennessee Williams's The Rose Tattoo, 1947 - 1953, .6 linear ft.

The papers include the playscript, as well as revisions, correspondence, bills and receipts, budgets, clippings, notes, itineraries, theater programs, and sketches of the set. The material was gathered by Ralph Delauney in his role as stage manager for both the 1950 world premiere production of Tennessee Williams's The Rose Tattoo at Erlanger Theatre in Chicago, and the 1951 New York run at the Martin Beck Theatre.

Delaware resident and syndicated journalist Rita Katz Farrell amassed these extensive reference and research files, programs, production notes, and promotional material about dance and theatre in the last half of the twentieth century. The collection is especially strong at documenting the performing arts in Delaware and the greater Delaware Valley region.

MSS 374 Irish Theatre journals, 1793 - 1901 (bulk dates 1868 - 1901), .6 linear ft.

The Irish Theatre journals comprises six bound volumes of clippings, programs, articles, and autograph notes regarding theater in Dublin, Ireland. The scrapbook/journals form a collection of research material, possibly for a book or articles on the history of theater in Dublin.

MSS 205 Philadelphia Theatrical papers, 1877 - 1943, 1.2 linear ft.

National in scope but focusing on the business of Philadelphia theater, the collection contains correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, advertisements, programs, playbills, financial documents, ledgers, obituaries, postcards, contracts, broadsides, scrapbooks, and telegrams. Material from several production agencies and touring companies is also included, with the majority of the documents relating to the theatrical management team of Nixon and Zimmerman.


With primary interests in dramatic art and Irish literature, Robert Hogan founded the Proscenium Press in 1965 "to publish new work by new writers and to republish neglected work by established writers." In addition to the Journal of Irish Literature, the Press published The Short Play Series, which included unpublished work by Brendan Behan; The Adaptations Series; The Contemporary Drama; Gallery Books Series; The Irish Play Series; The New Abbey Theatre Series; and The Phoenix Theatre Series of New Plays. Numerous playscripts, manuscripts, librettos, theater programs, and biographical files on playwrights and directors are found in the publishing archives.

MSS 335 The Ulster Theatre plays, 1912 - 1928, 6 items

The Ulster Theatre plays collection contains scripts of six plays by Ulster writers that were produced by the Ulster Theater in Northern Ireland in the early 1900s. Playwrights represented in the collection include Shan F. Bullock, Bernard Duffy, N. Richard Hayward, and Gerald MacNamara.
MSS 213 Ricardo Viñes collection of music manuscripts, 1903 - 1928, 35 items

The Catalan pianist Ricardo Viñes lived in Lérida, Spain, during the late 19th century. The collection consists of thirty-six original piano works, piano transcriptions, and cadenzas from his personal music library. Thirty-five of the works are music manuscripts and several bear the composer's original autograph.

 Plays, Playscripts, and Playwrights

MSS 419 The Bassoon, 1889 - 1892, 5 v.

The Bassoon collection contains amateur plays written by a small club of teenage boys who attended the all-male Central High School of Philadelphia.

MSS 324 Paul Bowles letters to John Martin, 1975 - 1990, .3 linear ft.

The collection contains Paul Bowles's English translation of Mohammed Mrabet's play, Earth (from the original Moghrebi, a Moroccan vernacular).

MSS 323 Paul Bowles letters to William Saroyan, 1937-1942, 12 items.

The letters document Bowles's thoughts on collaborating with Saroyan on an opera, from choosing a subject to describing his work on the score for Opera, Opera and finally to the ultimate demise of the project in 1942, when Bowles writes that Opera, Opera is "dead."


The papers of American novelist and playwright Joseph K. Caldwell include numerous manuscripts of his plays and television play scripts. Caldwell received two "John Golden Fellowships in Playwriting" at Yale University (1956-1957) and an American Broadcasting Company Fellowship in Playwriting, also at Yale. His plays have been produced off-Broadway, as well as transformed into television scripts.

The papers of American poet and novelist Emily Holmes Coleman contain literary, personal, and family materials. Numerous "plays, dramas, and dialogues" (most of which are theological in nature) are found with her essays, stories, and poems in Series III.

MSS 147 Padraic Colum papers, 1927 - 1970, 80 items

Padraic Colum signed the original charter of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, and wrote some of its earliest plays. Series III contains typescript drafts of Monasterboice, Balloon, and The Wakefield Second Nativity Play. An autograph draft of Justinian and Theodora are also housed in the collection, as well as correspondence with theatrical producer Basil Burwell.

MSS 264 Montgomery Evans II collection of Lord Dunsany manuscripts, 1912 - 1935, 21 items

Lord Dunsany (Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett) was an Irish poet, playwright, and short story writer. Series I contains the galley proofs of Dunsany's collection of plays, Plays of Gods and Men.


Included are two 1953 publications and two playscripts, The Stranger (1960) and After the Show (n.d.), both inscribed by English author and critic, Angus Wilson.

MSS 101 Mark Harris papers, 1937 - 1982, 23 linear ft.

The collection is a comprehensive archive that documents every facet of the life and career of this American author. Series IV contains six of his plays.

MSS 344 James Leo Herlihy papers, 1959 - 1986, 1.6 linear ft.

The papers of American author and playwright James Leo Herlihy consist of manuscripts of novels, stories, and plays, reviews, interviews, correspondence, publicity material, and notes.


The papers of American poet Katherine Hoskins include typescripts of five of Hoskins' plays that were produced but never published. The plays date from the late 1940s and the early 1950s.

In addition to the poems of this Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, the collection also contains librettos, operas, plays, stories, and prose, as well as several ideas for novels.

MSS 99 F531 Anita Loos letters to Ray Pierre Corsini, 1962 - 1979, 22 items

Letters from American novelist and playwright Anita Loos to her agent and friend, Ray Pierre Corsini. The letters discuss, for example, the writing and editing of Loos's later works.

MSS 136 Frank J. Hugh O'Donnell papers, 1911 - 1974 (bulk dates 1918 - 1954), 1.3 linear ft.

Irish businessman and amateur playwright Frank J. Hugh O'Donnell was noted for his political efforts on behalf of an Irish Free State. Series I contains letters written to O'Donnell that communicate his efforts to stage performances of his plays. The collection also includes letters from managers of Irish theatres, Irish playwrights, artists, and literary figures.


Series I includes ideas for a screen treatment of Slapstick. The series also includes magazines that contain excerpts from Vonnegut's musical Requiem. Series II contains materials on performances, productions, and exhibitions based on work by Vonnegut.


The papers of the African-American novelist, poet, and publisher, Ishmael Reed include plays, sound recordings, audiovisual recordings, and miscellaneous ephemera.

MSS 102 Bernard Shaw collection, 1887 - 1947, 56 items

In addition to being a renowned playwright, Bernard Shaw is also remembered for the challenging prefaces he wrote to his plays and books. Prefaces, which was published in 1934, is a collection of a number of these works. The manuscripts in this collection include galley proofs and reviews of his works.

MSS 194 Sam Shepard collection, 1968 - 1979, 7 items

The collection is a group of seven incidental items related to the dramatic work of this American playwright, who is also known as an actor, author, and film director. The collection includes three playscripts, two programs, a contract, and a poster.

MSS 138 John Wieners papers, 1961 - 1968, 20 items
The papers of American Beat poet John Wieners provide a chronologically and thematically fragmented, yet detailed, glimpse at his life. This small collection includes the manuscript of *Asphodel in Hell's despite*, a one-act play by Wieners.

**MSS 422 William John Williams papers**, 1876 - 1923 (bulk dates 1876-1896), .7 linear ft.

The last series of this collection houses between five and eight plays (three of the items may be different acts from the same play). These playscripts suggest the possibility that Williams participated in various amateur theatrical productions.

**MSS 112 Tennessee Williams collection**, 1939 - 1990, 4.6 linear ft.

Half of the collection is comprised of manuscripts of plays, poems, essays, and other work written by playwright Williams. The other half of the collection is supporting material such as photographs of the writer and productions of his plays, programs and playbills from performances of his work, correspondence related to his playscripts, articles about Williams or his work, and theatrical and film ephemera.

**MSS 99 F265 Kurt Vonnegut. Slapstick**, 1981, 1 item

Includes a mimeographed typescript of the original screenplay.