

Guide to the Federal Theatre Project playscript and radioscript collection, 1930s

Federal Theatre Project playscript and radioscript collection
1930s

A Collection in Special Collections and Archives C0002
George Mason University Libraries
2011

History

Processed by: Special Collections and Archives Staff

Title Statement

Guide to the Federal Theatre Project playscript and radioscript collection, 1930s

Subtitle: Federal Theatre Project photograph

Collection: C0002

Author: FINDING AID AUTHOR

Publication Statement

Date: 2006 By George Mason University Libraries. All rights reserved.

Publisher: George Mason University Libraries

Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from being created directly into EAD, created by FINDING AID ENCODER, FINDING AID ENCODED DATE

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Collection number

C0002

Date

1930s

Language

English

Abstract

The Federal Theatre Project Playscript and Radioscript Collection contains over 200 copied playscripts and radioscripts, written and performed in the 1930s for the Federal Theatre Project.

Creator

Federal Theatre Project

Physical Characteristics

36 linear ft.

Repository

George Mason University. Special Collections and Archives.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Donated by the Federal Theatre Project.

Processing Information

Processed by Special Collections and Archives staff.

Preferred Citation

Federal Theatre Project playscript and radioscript collection, Collection #C0002, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Special Collections and Archives holds the Federal Theatre Project collection, which includes numerous personal and organizational records as well as oral histories.

Alternative Form Available

The scripts are also available as a series in the [FTP digital collection](#).

Historical Information

The Federal Theatre Project was a division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which provided employment for large numbers of artists, writers, and performers during the Great Depression (1929-1939). The Federal Theatre began in 1935 and, until its end in 1939, flourished as the first and only federally sponsored and subsidized theater program in the United States. Directed by Hallie Flanagan (1880-1969), it was a way for theatrical professionals to gain employment during the Depression. Jobs were provided for many people, including actors, playwrights, scene designers, scene builders, seamstresses, lighting experts, ushers, box-office men, and stagehands.

Like many New Deal programs implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Federal Theatre Project was intended not only to benefit its participants, but also to enrich the condition of the nation. Theater was a distinguished part of American popular culture, but the economic downturn of the Depression had bankrupted the entire theater industry. As the theater houses closed down, the nation was left without an outlet for theatrical creativity. According to Hallie Flanagan, this hurt the nation as much as it hurt the theater industry - indeed, the nation was their audience and the theater could provide entertaining distractions from the effects of Depression as well as offer commentary on present conditions.

But it was not enough to simply return to the pre-Depression concept of theater. In the first meeting her staff Flanagan expressed her willingness to follow Roosevelt's experimental approach to public policy: "In a changing world, a world of experiment, the stage too must experiment - with ideas, with the psychological relationship of men and women, with color and light.... The theatre must grow up."

Flanagan pursued her ideal of developing the relationship between the Federal Theatre and the federal government: "Any theatre sponsored by the government of the United States should do no plays of a cheap, trivial, outworn or vulgar nature, but only such plays as the Government can stand proudly behind in a planned theatrical program, national in scope, regional in emphasis, and American in democratic attitude." To Flanagan, it was imperative that this new theater should be progressive and experimental, yet within a patriotic and informative framework.

The productions that best embodied Flanagan's views on theater were the Living Newspapers. These hard-hitting, poignant plays dealt with contemporary factual material, dramatizing issues such as housing, agriculture, labor, and destitution. Always ending on an upbeat note, Living Newspapers underscored the

importance of hard work and morality in overcoming difficult times. Living Newspaper titles include: Triple A Plowed Under, Injunction Granted, One Third of a Nation, and Spirocheta.

The Federal Theatre was noted for employing black Americans at a time when the Federal Government did not actively protect the rights of minorities. The "Negro Theater" (as it was called in the 1930s) was an established industry before the Depression, and it greatly contributed to the success of the Federal Theatre Project. Some of the most spectacular productions were put on by black theater professionals, for example: Macbeth, Haiti, Turpentine, Run Little Chillun, and The Trial of Dr. Beck.

Scope and Content

The Federal Theatre Project Playscript and Radioscript Collection contains over 200 copied playscripts and radioscripts, written and performed in the 1930s for the Federal Theatre Project. Also included is a collection of 62 copied Federal Theatre programs, handbills given to the audience at the beginning of a production. There is also a copy of The Flexible Stage, a book by Emmet Lavery about the history of the Federal Theatre Project. And there are the works of several noted authors in the collection, including Upton Sinclair, Orson Welles, Sinclair Lewis, Arthur Arent, and Langston Hughes.

Index Terms

Corporate Names:

Federal Theatre Project (U.S.)

Subjects:

Theater--United States--History--20th century.

Arrangement

Organized alphabetically.

Contents List

Federal Theatre Project Playscript and Radioscript Collection

Playscripts

Federal Theatre Project Programs A-Z

Container 1 (Folder)

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Scope and Content

Adelante, Battle Hymn, Beyond the Horizon, Big Blow, Black Empire, Both Your Houses, Children's Autum Festival, Class of '29, Cradle Will Rock, Dance of Death, The Devil Passes, Dr. Faustus, Emperor's New Clothes, Fantasy 1929, Frankie and Jonny, Fly Away Home, Green Grow the Lilacs, Hell Bent for Heaven, Help Yourself, Horse Eats Hat, How Long Brethren, Doris Humphrey-Charles Weidman Dance Program, It Can't Happen Here, Jonny Johnson, Judgement Day, Justice, Like Falling Leaves, The Lonely Man, Long Voyage Home, Madame X, The Man-The Tree, Merchant of Venice, The Milky Way, Night Must Fall, O Say Can You Sing, One Sunday Afternoon, One-Third of a Nation, Outward Bound, Pinocchio, Power, Prologue to Glory, Pursuit of Happiness, Ready! Aim! Fire!, Redemption, Revolt of the Beavers, Sing for Your Supper, Six Characters in Search of an Author, Spirochete, Story of Ferdinand, Sun and I, Sun Rises in the West, Swing Parade, Taming of the Shrew, Theatre of the Southwest, Trojan Incident, Twelfth Night, Twilight of the Theatre, When Knighthood Was in Flower, Young Choreographers Laboratory, Young Tramps

\$595 F.O.B.

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\$595 F.O.B.

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Scope and Content

by George H. Corey

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Altars of Steel

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by Paul Green; Music by Kurt Weill; A Legend of American Life

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Scope and Content

by Georgia Douglas Johnson

Frederick Douglass

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Scope and Content

by Georgia Douglas Johnson

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Scope and Content

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Living Newspaper Follies

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Run Little Chillun

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Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

by J. A. Smith and P. Morell; A folk drama of the Florida Pine woods

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Container 8 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

Life Among the Lowly

Unto Such Glory

Container 9 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Utopia, Ltd. 1935

Container 10 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

by Eden White; A Rollicking Comedy

Waiting for Lefty

Container 11 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Waiting for Lefty

Container 12 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

Play Reader Report

War

Container 13 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

War and Taxes

Container 14 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

Living Newspaper

Living Newspaper

War and Taxes

Container 15 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

Living Newspaper

Water and Wine 1933

Container 16 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

by Frances Gordon Strunsky

We Live and Laugh Revue 1937

Container 17 (Folder)

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Scope and Content

translated from the Yiddish by Julius Schmerler and Isidore Edelman

We the people

Container 18 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

by Elmer Rice

Will Shakespeare

Container 19 (Folder)

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Scope and Content

by Clemence Dane

The Women of Destiny 1933

Container 20 (Folder)

Container 7 (box)

Scope and Content

by Samuel Jesse Warshawsky

The Wreck 1933

Container 21 (Folder)

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Scope and Content

by Molly Day Thacher

Radioscripts

13 - 15 Minute Plays March 1939

Container 1 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

American Troubadour hour

Container 2 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

The Banshee August 24, 1938

Container 3 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by maxine Schiel; Mystery Dramas

The Case of the Girl with the Dark Eyes October 18, 1938

Container 4 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by John Fleming; Mystery Dramas

The Case of the Skeleton Hands August 10, 1938

Container 5 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by John Fleming; Mystery Dramas

Caves of Aladdin September 20, 1938

Container 6 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by John Fleming; Mystery Dramas

Clock on the Mantel September 27, 1938

Container 7 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Jack Barefield; Mystery Dramas

The Duchess of Padua November 9, 1937

Container 8 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Oscar Wilde; adapted by Donald Macfarlane; Oscar Wilde Cycle

An Enemy of the People July 13, 1937

Container 9 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Hendrik Ibsen; adapted by Harry Goldsmith; Ibsen Cycle

Ghosts September 21, 1937

Container 10 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Hendrik Ibsen; Ibsen Cycle

The Importance of Being Earnest October 5, 1937

Container 11 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Oscar Wilde; adapted by Donald Macfarlane; Oscar Wilde Cycle

by Oscar Wilde; adapted by Donald Macfarlane; Oscar Wilde Cycle

John Gabriel Borkman July 27, 1937

Container 12 (Folder)

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Scope and Content

by Henrik Ibsen; adapted by Harry Goldsmith; Ibsen Cycle

Lefty Peroni August 3, 1938

Container 13 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Georgia Backus; Mystery Dramas

Little Eyolf August 31, 1937

Container 14 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Henrik Ibsen; adapted by Donald Macfarlane; Ibsen Cycle

The Living Dead Man September 13, 1938

Container 15 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Maxine Schiel; Mystery Dramas

The Lonely Man January 19, 1939

Container 16 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Howard Koch; adapted by Lawrence Levey; Federal Theatre of the Air

A Matter of Mirrors October 11, 1938

Container 17 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Ben Hawthorne; Mystery Dramas

A Mystery of Mountain Manor October 25, 1938

Container 18 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by John Fleming; Mystery Dramas

Pillars of Society August 17, 1937

Container 19 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Henrik Ibsen; adapted by Charles Crompton; Ibsen Cycle

Salome November 23, 1937

Container 20 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

adapted by Lewis W. Moyer; Oscar Wilde Cycle

Treasure Island of 1939 1939

Container 21 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

Audition Program

Who Shall Deny It April 16, 1938

Container 22 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Benet Costa

The Wild Duck July 6, 1937

Container 23 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Henrik Ibsen; adapted by Georgia Fawcett; Ibsen Cycle

The Women of the Day

Container 24 (Folder)

Container 8 (box)

Scope and Content

by Leo Fontaine; A Radio Series