

**Nashville Community Playhouse and Theatre Nashville Records,
ca. 1950-ca. 1996 (bulk ca. 1950-ca. 1977)**

Collection Summary

Creator: Theatre Nashville (Nashville, Tenn.)
Nashville Community Playhouse

Title: Theatre Nashville Scrapbooks and Recordings

Inclusive Dates: ca. 1950-ca. 1977

Summary/Abstract: A collection of documentary sources, circa 1950-ca. 1977, pertaining to the history of two theatre groups of Nashville: 1) The Community Playhouse, and 2) Theatre Nashville.

Physical Description/Extent: 2.1 cu. ft.

Series: I. Nashville Community Playhouse; II. Theatre Nashville; III. Recordings

Accession Number: Acc. 2004.032

Language: English

Stack Location: Closed stacks workroom range 4 section 6

Repository: Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library, 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37219

Chronology

- 1907 "The Stagecrafters," theatre group performed locally and would later develop the Nashville Community Playhouse.
- 1935 The Nashville Community Playhouse was established by the theatre group known as "The Stagecrafters." By 1955, the organization had expanded to include a board of directors and seven standing committees.
- Mar. 26, 1955 The Nashville Community Playhouse Library Committee reports on plans to create a F. K. W. Drury Memorial Library to house all the scripts and books in the possession of the Playhouse. The namesake, Francis Keese Wynkoop Drury (1878-1954) was active for many years in the Nashville Community Playhouse, acting in several theatrical productions and serving as treasurer.
- 1958 Circle Players briefly merged with Nashville Community Playhouse to become Theatre Nashville, later reestablished as a separate entity.
- 1959 Bob Binkley, a graduate of Peabody College, assumed the job of music director of Theatre Nashville. Actress Nancy Wyckoff, who had performed several leading roles with Theatre Nashville, married director

Binkley.

- Feb. 1, 1975 Theatre Nashville presented "The Mikado" at Theatre Nashville Playhouse, 4700 Charlotte Avenue. Directed by Gerald Arthur and staged by Helen Hudson.
- Mar. 1975 "Sweet Charity" became Theatre Nashville's 250th production, directed by Ruthmary Cobb; Musical Director by Frank Greer; Choreography by Kyle Ellis; and produced by Helen Cohen. Renae Pickens played the lead role of Charity, the heroine of the Neil Simon play.
- Apr. 30, 1975 Theatre Nashville presented a gala preview of "The King and I" to benefit Nashville Pro Musica. Ann Bishop served as general chairman for the event.
- June 1975 Tennessean drama critic Clara Hieronymus presented the plaque for "Best Production" to Julie Martin and Angela Ellis for their work in Theatre Nashville's "The King and I." Some of the other honorees in the annual awards program included Helen Hudson, who played Anna in "The King and I" and George Schutt, who designed and directed the musical. Eddie King received the President's Award for his services during the 1974-1975 season, presented by Theatre Nashville president Helen Cohen.
- Aug. 1975 Newly elected board members of Theatre Nashville are Anne Bowden, Eddie King, Joseph Zaro, and Helen Cohen, Mrs. Billy Batson, and Angela Ellis.
- March 1978 Theatre Nashville opened "The Importance of Being Earnest" at Z. Alexander Looby Theater on Metro Center Boulevard.
- 1980 Theatre Nashville ended theatrical production in 1980.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Theatre Nashville has a rich theatrical history, originating from the Nashville Community Playhouse established in 1935. The predecessor organization was founded by a dedicated and talented group who had operated informally since 1907 as "The Stagecrafters," it made an auspicious beginning by purchasing the Hillsboro Movie Theatre, known then as the "Nashville Community Playhouse" at 2102 Belcourt Avenue. By 1955, the theatrical organization had expanded to include a board of directors and seven standing committees. The board often met at the Richland Country Club, typically with a dinner prior to the formal meeting, at other times meeting in the homes of members. Circa 1958, the organization was renamed "Theatre Nashville" in a consolidation of the Nashville Community Playhouse and the Circle Players for a brief period of a year, and later

continued as a separate entity. Theatre Nashville operated the first season of 1958-59 for both the Circle Theatre and the Community Playhouse, presenting a unified season of eight plays, four at each theater. In 1959, Bob Binkley, a graduate of Peabody College, assumed the job of music director of Theatre Nashville. Theatrical productions were staged in various venues, including the Theatre Nashville Playhouse at 4700 Charlotte Avenue. Circa the early 1960s, the group held a "Thieves Market" bazaar at Charlotte Square Shopping Center that helped raise money for their building campaign. In 1964, Theatre Nashville celebrated the opening of its thirtieth season with a special production of "Show Boat" at the Belcourt Playhouse, directed by Bud Browning, with Fred Massey as producer. In 1966, Theatre Nashville experienced a setback when their performance venue at the Veteran's Administration Theater on White Bridge Road was destroyed by fire. The organization sold their Belcourt Avenue property in the midst of financial problems. The 38th season opened on Oct. 31, 1968 with a performance of "Dark of the Moon" at West High Auditorium, where all the performances took place in that year. In 1975, the musical "Sweet Charity" became the 250th theatrical production. Among the talent that has emanated from its workshops and theatrical productions are Delbert Mann, Fred Coe, Frank Sutton, Hank Fort and Jack Orwin.

Scope and Contents of the Collection

A collection of documentary sources pertaining to the history of two theatre groups of Nashville: 1) The Community Playhouse, and 2) Theatre Nashville. The Community Playhouse documentation consists of minutes of the board of directors, spanning ca. 1950-ca. 1957. The documentary sources about Theatre Nashville include eight scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, photographs, and ephemera, spanning the dates ca. 1965-ca. 1977. Several reviews and articles by Nashville theatre critics Clara Hieronymus, Sara Sprott Morrow, and Emmie Caldwell are featured. The collection includes audio recordings (compact discs) of fourteen performances of Theatre Nashville.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

The collection of scrapbooks is composed of three series.

- Series I.** The Nashville Community Playhouse
- Series II.** Theatre Nashville
- Series III.** Recordings

Arrangement:

Each series is arranged chronologically, with the exception of the compact disc recordings in series III, which are alphabetized by title.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access: In library use only. Available by appointment.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction: This material may be protected by copyright (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Goldman, Robert
Bowden, Anne

Corporate Names/Organizations:

Nashville Community Playhouse
Theatre Nashville--History--Sources
Circle Players, Nashville--History--Sources

Subjects:

Community theater--Tennessee--Nashville
Drama
Performing arts--Tennessee--Nashville
Theater--Tennessee--Nashville
Theatrical companies--Tennessee--Nashville
Theaters--Tennessee--Nashville--Sources
Women in the theater--Tennessee--Nashville
Theatrical productions--Tennessee--Nashville

Places:

Nashville (Tenn.)--History--Sources
Nashville (Tenn.)--Social life and customs

Genre/Document Types:

Scrapbooks
Clippings
Programs
Photographs
Ephemera
Correspondence
Minutes

Occupations:

Actors--Tennessee--Nashville
Entertainers--Tennessee--Nashville

Associated and Related Material

Related materials includes the Scrapbooks of the Circle Players, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee. Acc. RT-206.

Administrative Information

Copyright: This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Preferred Citation: Theatre Nashville Scrapbooks and Recordings, Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Donated to the Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library by Anne Bowden on May 28, 2005 (Acc. 2004.032)

Ownership and Custodial History: Anne Bowden, affiliated with Theatre Nashville, held custodial stewardship of the materials prior to donating them to the division.

Processing Information: Processed by Leanne Garland in December, 2006.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

References to Works by or about Collection Creator/Topic

Related book: Ingram, Martha Rivers. *Apollo's Struggle: A Performing Arts Odyssey in the Athens of the South, Nashville, Tennessee*. Franklin, Tenn: Hillsboro Press, 2004. Location: Call nr. 792.0976855 I542a, Nashville Rm., Tenn.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Nashville Community Playhouse, ca. 1950-ca. 1972 (bulk ca. 1950-ca. 1957), .5 cu. ft.

Series Abstract/Description

This series consists of the minutes of the board of directors' meetings of the Nashville Community Playhouse. Includes information about board membership, committees, and fundraising. The series also includes a few newsletters, correspondence, and theatrical programs.

Arrangement

Arranged with the most recent minutes placed at the front end of the notebook.

Container List

Box 1 of 1

Env. 1 Minutes and by-laws, ca. July 1950-ca. 1954

Env. 2 Minutes, ca. 1952-ca. 1955 (notebook binder)

Env. 3 Minutes, ca. June 1955-ca. June 1956

Env. 4 Minutes, ca. June 1956-ca. May 1957

Env. 5 Miscellaneous business papers and correspondence, ca. 1959-1967

Env. 6 Newsletters and theatrical programs, ca. 1957-1972

Series II. Theatre Nashville Scrapbooks, ca. 1964-ca. 1976, 1.2 cu. ft.

Series Abstract/Description

A series of eight scrapbooks about the theatrical group "Theatre Nashville," comprised of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, photographs, ephemera, and correspondence. In addition to the scrapbooks, the series also includes minutes, photographs, correspondence, membership lists, publications, and miscellany.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically. The foldered items are arranged alphabetically.

Container List

Box 1 of 5

[1] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1964-ca. 1965. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, and ephemera about the theatre group and theatrical productions: "Showboat," "Carnival," "The Typists and the Tiger," "The Miracle Worker," and "Stop the World." Several clippings relate to the "Theatre Fashion Show" fundraiser held at the War Memorial Auditorium in March, 1965. Includes information about the re-organization of the board and election of Mrs. Sidney Reichman as president of Theatre Nashville. Includes a signed copy of the "Showboat" program.

[2] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1965-ca. 1966. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings and theatrical programs about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "South Pacific," "Mary, Mary," "The Glass Menagerie," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "Salad Days," and "Lost in the Stars." Includes 4 photographs of the "Fiddler on the Roof" production.

[3] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1966-ca. 1968. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, and correspondence about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," "Tiger at the Gates," "Death of a Salesman," "Gypsy," "Oliver," "Camelot," "Long Day's Journey Into Night," and "Philadelphia." Includes information about the August 1966 burning of the theatre group's building on White Bride Road, donations to aid the organization, annual business meeting, Theatre Nashville special awards, the sale of Theatre Nashville's Belcourt Avenue property to Fred Massey, and the group's new performance venue at Vanderbilt University Theatre. The sources are compiled in a notebook binder.

[4] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1968-ca. 1969. A scrapbook of primarily newspaper clippings, with a few theatrical programs, about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "Dark of the Moon," "Little Mary Sunshine," "The Miser," "Time of Your Life," and "Funny Girl." Contains information about the "Thieves Market" fundraiser bazaar and the annual awards party.

Box 2 of 5

[5] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1969-ca. 1970. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, photographs, and ephemera, about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "Little Mary Sunshine," "Joe Egg," and "Man of La Mancha."

[6] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1972-ca. 1973. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, photographs, and ephemera about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "1776," "Lost in the Stars," "We Have Always Lived in the Castle," "Butterflies are Free," "Forty Carats," and "Anything Goes." Includes 1 photograph of Jeannie C. Riley and a typed letter signed by the singer and related to her attendance at the premier of "1776."

[7] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1973-ca. 1974. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings, theatrical programs, and ephemera about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "Hello Dolly," "Pippin," "Night of the Iguana," "The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds," "Gingerbread Lady," and "No, No, Nanette." Includes documentation on the co-productions with Pro Musica: "The Old Man and the Thief," and "Trial by Jury."

[8] Theatre Nashville Scrapbook, ca. 1975-ca. 1977. A scrapbook of newspaper clippings and theatrical programs about the theatre group and theatrical productions, including "The Mikado," "Sweet Charity," "The King and I," "Carousel," "H. M. S. Pinafore," "Annie Get Your Gun," "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," and "South Pacific." Includes 4 photographs of the "Fiddler on the Roof" production. Includes a list of the Theatre Nashville board of directors, May 1977.

Box 3 of 5

f. 1 Clippings (a), ca. 1963-ca. 1976

f. 2 Clippings (b), ca. 1970s

f. 3 Correspondence, ca. 1960-1996 (bulk 1979-1982)

f. 4 Membership lists, ca. 1960-1977

f. 5 Minutes, ca. 1975-1980

f. 6 Miscellaneous publications and scores, ca. 1957-1980

f. 7 Miscellany, ca. 1957-ca. 1980

Box 4 of 5

f. 1 Milk and Honey: A Light Comedy, 1968

f. 2 Nashville Theatre Council, ca. 1977-ca. 1978

- f. 3 Photographs of South Pacific production, ca. 1965, 20 items
- f. 4 Playbill Magazine, 1970, 2 issues
- f. 5 Photographs, Miscellaneous, ca. 1975, n.d., 12 items
- f. 6 Photograph negatives from "The Drunkard," 1968, 3 items
- f. 7 Program and clippings, "The King and I," Aug. 1962
- f. 8 Programs, ca. 1962-ca. 1977

Box 5 of 5

Scarf and necklace from the "South Pacific" theatrical production.

Series III. Recordings, ca. 1965-ca. 1978, .4 cu. ft.

Series Abstract/Description

A collection of thirty-nine audio compact disc recordings of fourteen theatrical productions of Theatre Nashville, including a few co-productions with Pro Musica. Present in the collection are several duplicate copies, as well as multi-parts.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by title.

Container List

Box 1 of 1

Carousel, n.d.

Drunkard, The

Funny Girl

Guys and Dolls

H. M. S. Pinafore

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

King and I, The

Lost in the Stars

Man of La Mancha

Mikado

Purlie

1973 Sigma Delta Chi Gridiron Show; Mikado

South Pacific

Trial by Jury