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Guide to the Walther Volbach Collection on Adolphe Appia

GEN MSS 1014



Beinecke Staff

November 2013

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 1014

CREATOR: Volbach, Walther R. (Walther Richard), 1897-1996

TITLE: Walther Volbach Collection on Adolphe Appia

DATES: 1890-1969

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.79 linear feet (8 boxes) + 1 broadside

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection includes correspondence, writings, newspaper and journal articles, photographs, and publications relating to Walther Volbach's research and writings on Adolphe Appia. Included are over sixty typescript essays, articles, and scenarios by Adolphe Appia, many bearing the stamp of the Fondation Adolphe Appia, Geneva. A typescript of Volbach's translation of many of these writings which was published as *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Articles, and Scenarios* in 1989, is included in the collection. The majority of correspondence consists of letters received by Volbach in the course of his research from Appia's relatives and friends including Appia's cousins Edmond Appia and Blanche Bingham, Appia's pupil and friend Jean Mercier, as well as librarians and fellow researchers, and colleagues with whom Volbach corresponded regarding publications by the American Educational Theatre Association. One reel of microfilm contains letters to Houston Stewart Chamberlain. A stage design by Appia for Act I, scene 1 of *Parsifal* is the only original design in the collection; however, his designs are represented by copy photographs that were used as illustrations for Volbach's book, *Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile*.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.volbach>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.volbach>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 9 (microfilm reel): Use of original is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Walther Volbach Collection on Adolph Appia is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

The collection is comprised of material formerly classed as MS Vault Shelves Appia.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during basic processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Adolphe Appia (1862-1928)

Adolphe François Appia was born in Geneva in 1862, the son of Louis Paul Amédée Appia, a successful surgeon and one of the founders of the Red Cross. While a youth, he became fascinated with the theater, but since his family considered it an inappropriate career choice, he studied music at Geneva, Paris, Leipzig, and Dresden. In 1884 Appia met Houston Stewart Chamberlain and became devoted to the works of Richard Wagner. With the help and encouragement of Chamberlain, he decided to become a designer and stage director.

Although he received scant recognition during his lifetime, Appia is regarded today as the father of modern stage lighting and design. His reforms of the antiquated nineteenth-century practice of stage design emphasized the significance of time and space, the relation of stage and auditorium, and the contrast of light and shadow. He devoted much of his lifework in particular to creating new productions of the operas of Richard Wagner. Appia died on February 29, 1928, in a nursing home near Nyon, Switzerland.

Appia set down his theories on stage set design in two books and several essays, but much of his writing was published only in the 1950s and 1960s. The Fondation Adolphe Appia has as its objective the publication of all his works and the furtherance of his ideas. For further biographical information, see Walther R. Volbach's *Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile* (1968).

Walther Volbach (1897-1996)

Walther Volbach was born in Mainz, Germany in 1897. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Munster in Westphalia in 1920, after completing his dissertation "The Development of Realism on the German Stage." In the 1920s he was an assistant to Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, and also worked as a stage director of plays and operas at the State theaters in Stuttgart and Berlin, at the Municipal theaters in Zurich, Danzig and Kiel, and at Vienna's Volkstheater and Volksopera. He also served as an instructor at academies in Berlin, Vienna, and Kiel. After moving to the United States in the 1930s he taught and directed theater and opera in Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin. He was a professor in the Department of Theatre at Texas Christian University from 1946 until his retirement in 1965. His publications include *Problems of Opera Production* (1953); *Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile* (1968); and *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Articles, and Scenarios* (1989). He died in 1996.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes correspondence, writings, newspaper and journal articles, photographs, and publications relating to Walther Volbach's research and writings on Adolphe Appia. Included are over sixty typescript essays, articles, and scenarios by Adolphe Appia, many bearing the stamp of the Fondation Adolphe Appia, Geneve. A typescript of Volbach's translation of many of these writings which was published as *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Articles, and Scenarios* in 1989, is included in the collection. The majority of correspondence consists of letters received by Volbach in the course of his research from Appia's relatives and friends including Appia's cousins Edmond Appia and Blanche Bingham, Appia's pupil and friend Jean Mercier, as well as librarians and fellow researchers, and colleagues with whom Volbach corresponded regarding publications by the American Educational Theatre Association. One reel of microfilm contains letters to Houston Stewart Chamberlain. A stage design by Appia for Act I, scene 1 of *Parsifal* is the only original design in the collection; however, his designs are represented by copy photographs that were used as illustrations for Volbach's book, *Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile*.

Collection Contents

Appia writings		
b. 1	"Adolphe Appia Essays and Scenarios" translated by R. Volbach, typescript, title page-page 492 <i>6 Folders</i>	1979
b. 1	Appia essays, typescripts <i>3 Folders</i>	circa 1891-1927
b. 2	Appia essays, typescripts <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1891-1927
b. 2	Appia essays, newspaper and journal articles	1912-1964
b. 2	"Appia's scenarios for Wagner's music dramas," typescripts <i>3 Folders</i>	1891-1926, undated
b. 2	"Adolphe Appia clippings and letters," photographic prints from microfilm <i>3 Folders</i>	circa 1890-1929
b. 3	"Adolphe Appia clippings and letters," photographic prints from microfilm	circa 1890-1929
b. 9	Negative microfilm reel of letters from Adolphe Appia to H.S. [Houston Stewart] Chamberlain <i>1 microfilm_reel</i> Use of original microfilm is restricted. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information	undated
Volbach research files		
b. 3	Articles about or related to Appia <i>3 Folders</i>	circa 1899-1969
b. 4	Articles about or related to Appia <i>4 Folders</i>	circa 1899-1969
Annotated publications about or relating to Appia		
b. 4	Dussane, Béatrix. <i>Dieux des planches</i> . Paris: Flammarion	1964
b. 4	Faure, Élie. <i>La Conquête</i> . Paris: Éditions George Crès Et Cie	1917
b. 4	<i>Gordon Craig</i> . Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale	1962
b. 5	<i>In Memoriam Hellerau</i> . Freiburg: Romach and Co.	1960
b. 5	<i>Jacques Copeau</i> . Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale	1963
b. 5	Martin, Frank, et al. <i>Emile Jaques-Dalcroze</i> . Neuchâtel: Baconnière	1965
Correspondence regarding Appia research		
b. 5	Appia, Edmond and Germaine	1957-1962

Correspondence regarding Appia research (continued)

b. 5	Bingham, Blanche Includes three postcards from Adolphe Appia to Blanche Bingham and one to R. Penel, as well as reproductions of Appia letters from the "Bingham Collection."	1924-1967
b. 5	Mercier, Jean	1960-1968
b. 5	Penel, Raymond	1961-1965
b. 5	Reyle, K.	1962-1969
b. 5	Veinstein, Andre (Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal)	1958-1964
b. 5	Zinsstag, Adolfe	1961
b. 6	Various correspondents <i>5 Folders</i>	circa 1957-1969
	Copy photographs of Appia, set designs, family crest, and other materials used as illustrations for Volbach's Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
b. 7 (Oversize)	Copy photographs of Appia, set designs, family crest, and other materials used as illustrations for Volbach's <i>Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theatre: A Profile</i>	undated
b. 8 (Broadside)	Appia set design drawing of <i>Parsifal</i> , Act I, scene 1	undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Opera -- Production and direction
Opera -- Stage-setting and scenery
Set designers -- United States
Set designers -- United States
Theater -- Production and direction
Theaters -- Stage-setting and scenery

Genres / Formats

Photographs
Set design drawings

Names

Appia, Adolphe, 1862-1928
Appia, Edmond, 1894-1961
Bingham, Blanche
Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, 1855-1927
Volbach, Walther R. (Walther Richard),
1897-1996
Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883 (Performances)

Corporate Body

American Educational Theatre Association

Contributors

Volbach, Walther R. (Walther Richard),
1897-1996
Appia, Adolphe, 1862-1928