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Guide to the John C. Wilson Theater Collection on Noel Coward

GEN MSS 608



by Michael L. Forstrom

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 608

CREATOR: Wilson, John C., approximately 1899-1961

TITLE: John C. Wilson Theater Collection on Noel Coward

DATES: 1931-1955

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.92 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Collection, including playscripts, production files, and printed materials, documenting the professional collaboration between American theater producer and director John C. Wilson and British playwright Noel Coward.

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

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.coward>.

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
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, Inc. on the Frederick W. Hilles Fund, 2008.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Restricted Fragile papers in box 5 may be consulted only with permission of the appropriate curator. Preservation photocopies or photographic prints for reference use have been substituted in the main files.

Conditions Governing Use

The John C. Wilson Theater Collection on Noel Coward 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.

Preferred Citation

John C. Wilson Theater Collection on Noel Coward. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

John C. Wilson (1899-1961)

Born in Trenton, New Jersey and educated at Phillips Academy and Yale University, John C. Wilson worked briefly for C. D. Barney & Co. on Wall Street before becoming a producer and director. From the early 1930s to mid 1950s Wilson served as Noel Coward's personal manager and, in 1934, with Coward, Lynn Fontanne, and Alfred Lunt, he established Transatlantic Productions, with exclusive production rights to Coward's plays in the United States. Wilson also served as co-director of the Westport Country Playhouse from the early 1940s to mid 1950s.

Scope and Contents

The collection, including playscripts, production files, and printed materials, documents the professional collaboration between American producer and director John C. Wilson and British playwright Noel Coward from 1931 to 1955. The collection features scripts for several plays, including *Design for Living*, *Point Valaine*, *Time Remembered*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Present Laughter*, *Private Lives*, *Relative Values*, *Island Fling*, and *Quadrille*. Accompanying production files include correspondence, cast lists, financial records, photographs, and other material. The correspondence, which includes fan mail to Coward, consists chiefly of letters between Wilson and others relating to production. Printed materials include clippings (reviews) and playbills, most for productions in the eastern United States.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by title.

Collection Contents

<i>Blithe Spirit</i>		
b. 1, f. 1	Playscript	[ca. 1941-1942]
b. 1, f. 2	Production files	1941-1944, undated
b. 1, f. 3-4	Printed ephemera	1941, undated
<i>"Call"</i>		
b. 1, f. 5	Production files	1939
<i>Design for Living</i>		
b. 1, f. 6	Playscript	[1933]
b. 1, f. 7	Production files	1931-1935
b. 1, f. 8	Printed ephemera	1938-1939
<i>Easy Virtue</i>		
b. 1, f. 9	Production files	1936, undated
<i>In Which We Serve</i>		
b. 1, f. 10	Production files	1942, undated
b. 1, f. 11	Printed ephemera	1942
<i>Island Fling</i>		
b. 1, f. 12-15	Playscripts	1951
b. 1, f. 16	Production files	1949-1951, undated
b. 1, f. 17	Printed ephemera	1949, 1951
<i>Point Valaine</i>		
b. 2, f. 18	Playscript	1935
<i>Present Laughter</i>		
b. 2, f. 19-21	Playscripts	1946
b. 2, f. 22	Printed ephemera	1946, undated
<i>Private Lives</i>		
b. 2, f. 23-25	Playscripts	[1949?]
b. 2, f. 26	Production files	1947-1950, undated

b. 2, f. 27	Printed ephemera	1948-1949, undated
<i>Quadrille</i>		
b. 2, f. 28	Playscript	1953 June 14
b. 3, f. 29	Production files	19[54]-1955
b. 3, f. 30	Printed ephemera	1941-1942
<i>Relative Values</i>		
b. 3, f. 31-32	Playscripts	1951
<i>Set to Music</i>		
b. 3, f. 33	Production files	1938-1939, undated
<i>Time Remembered</i>		
b. 3, f. 34	Playscript	[ca. 1940]
Oversize <i>1.67 linear feet (1 box)</i>		
b. 4 (Oversize), f. 35-37	Printed ephemera	1939-1951
Restricted Fragile Papers <i>0.21 linear feet (1 box)</i> Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.		
b. 5, f. 38-45	Printed ephemera	

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

American drama -- 20th Century
Dramatists
Dramatists, English -- 20th Century
English drama -- 20th Century
Theater -- Production and direction -- United States

Genres / Formats

Clippings (information artifacts)
Photographic prints
Playbills
Playscripts

Names

Coward, Noel, 1899-1973
Fontanne, Lynn, 1887-1983
Lunt, Alfred, 1892-1977
Wilson, John C., approximately 1899-1961

Corporate Bodies

Transatlantic Productions
Westport Country Playhouse (Organization :
Westport, Conn.)