
INVENTORY OF THE FIREHOUSE THEATER COMPANY ARCHIVES, 1963-1974

Collection number: D-064

Department of Special Collections
General Library
University of California, Davis
Davis, California

Contact Information:

- Ms. Daryl Morrison
- Department of Special Collections
- General Library
- 100 North West Quad
- University of California, Davis
- Davis, CA 95616-5292
- Phone: (530) 752-1621
- Fax: (530) 754-5758
- Email: dmorrison@ucdavis.edu

Processed by:

Lola Aguilar

Encoded by:

Melissa Tyler

Date completed:

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Firehouse Theater Company Archives,

Date (inclusive): 1963-1974

Collection number: D-064

Creator: Firehouse Theater Company

Extent: 4.7 linear feet

Repository: University of California, Davis. General Library. Dept. of Special Collections.
100 North West Quad Davis, California, 95616-5292

Abstract: In the summer of 1963, University of Minnesota graduate student Marlow S. Hotchkiss, artist James F. Faber, actor John Shimek, and actor and director Charles Morrison III renovated an 1894 fire station in Minneapolis, Minnesota as the Firehouse Theater. The group conceived the theater as a venue for avant-garde drama and as a vehicle for new playwrights in the Twin Cities area. The company relocated to San Francisco in 1969. The Firehouse Theater Company Archives (1963-1974) includes scripts, scores, director's notes, posters, programs, photographic prints, films, workshop notebooks, reviews, correspondence, legal and financial documents, blueprints, and promotional material.

Physical location: Researchers should contact Special Collections to request collections, as many are stored offsite.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research under regular Reading Room rules and copyright restrictions.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Firehouse Theater Company Archives, D-064, Department of Special Collections, General Library, University of California, Davis, California.

Acquisition Information

In 1974, Nancy Walter donated this collection to the Library. Additional material was donated in 1984 by Ms. Walter under her changed name, Norah Holmgren.

Processing Information

Lola Aguilar processed this collection and created its finding aid. Melissa Tyler encoded the finding aid.

Administrative History

In the summer of 1963, University of Minnesota graduate student Marlow S. Hotchkiss, artist James F. Faber, actor John Shimek, and actor and director Charles Morrison III renovated an 1894 firestation in Minneapolis, Minnesota as the Firehouse Theater. The group conceived the theater as a venue for avant-garde drama and as a vehicle for new playwrights in the Twin Cities area. The Firehouse Theater Company's first play *The Connection* by Jack Gelber, opened on August 22, 1963. The evening included a post-play discussion between the audience and the cast and director, which became a regular feature of Firehouse Theater productions.

The Firehouse Theater Company changed direction in 1965 with the departure of Shimek and Morrison. Marlow Hotchkiss, now managing director, brought on Sydney Schubert Walter, a member of the Open Theater in New York, as artistic director. The theater group reincorporated as a non-profit organization and acquired grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Hotchkiss and Walter also increased the number of original plays they produced and conducted workshops for the ensemble's personal development.

American playwright Sam Shepard premiered his play *Fourteen Hundred Thousand* in 1966 at the Firehouse Theater. In the same year, the group also performed Open Theater playwright Megan Terry's new play, *Viet Rock*. In 1968, the Firehouse Theater Company premiered Terry's new play, *Jack-Jack* at the Firehouse Theater and in-house playwright Nancy Walter's first play, *Rags*. In addition to new plays, the Firehouse Theater Company continued presenting plays by Ionesco, Brecht, Beckett, and other Theater of the Absurd playwrights. Audience participation developed as part of the group's experimentation with acting as a shared discovery.

After losing their lease at the old fire station in Minneapolis in 1969, the Firehouse Theater Company relocated to San Francisco, where they opened a theater on California Street at Polk and experimented with communal living. Their first season in San Francisco opened with *Blessings* on March 20, 1970.

By 1974, many of the original Firehouse Theater group had left to pursue other interests. Sydney Walter returned to school to complete a doctorate in psychology. Marlow Hotchkiss decided to concentrate on films. He also moved out of the commune. Nancy Walter continued writing plays and books. The company's original group of actors also moved on. The Firehouse Theater Company no longer produced experimental works. Instead, they turned towards other styles of theatrical productions.

Sources:

Aronson, Arnold. *Avant-garde Theatre: A History*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Schechner, Richard. "Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre." In *The Drama Review: Thirty Years of Commentary on the Avant-garde*, ed. Brooks McNamara and Jill Dolan, 151-171. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986.

Shank, Theodore. *American Alternative Theater*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1982.

Szilassy, Zoltan. *American Theatre of the 1960s*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1986.

Walsh, Richard. *Radical Theatre in the Sixties and Seventies*. Halifax, England: British Association for American Studies, 1993.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Firehouse Theater Company Archives is arranged in three series: 1. Plays, 2. Business Records, and 3. Memorabilia. Items span the years 1963 to 1974. The first series is devoted to plays performed by the Firehouse Theater Company and includes scripts, scores, director's notes, posters, programs, films, photographic prints, and reviews. Scripts and scores primarily relate to Firehouse Theater

playwright-in-residence Nancy Walter's plays. Business records include general correspondence, grant proposals and related correspondence, legal documents, financial documents, building records, workshop material, and promotional material. Memorabilia includes a scrapbook and a manuscript.

Related Collections

Other materials related to Firehouse Theater Archives may be found in the following collections at Special Collections:

D-055: Cole, Toby Archives

D-187: Living Theater Archives

D-061: San Francisco Mime Troupe Archives

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online access catalog:

Subjects

Firehouse Theater Company

Faber, James F.

Hotchkiss, Marlow

Morrison, Charles

Shimek, John

Walter, Nancy, 1939-

Walter, Sydney Schubert

American Drama--20th century

Dramatists

Experimental theater

Theater--Political aspects

Theater of the absurd

Series 1. Plays, 1963-1974.

Physical Description: 201 folders

Scope and Content Note

Arranged alphabetically by play title. Includes posters, programs, photographic prints, reviews, scripts, scores, director's notes, and films.

Box 1:1-4 ***Acts without Words*,1967,1969.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:5-7 ***Antigone*,1969.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:8-9 ***Baal*,1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:10-13 ***The Birthday Party*,1967.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:14-17, Folio ***Blessings*,1970, n.d.**

Box 5:1

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:18-19 ***The Brass Butterfly*,1963.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:20-21 ***The Brig*, 1964.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:22-23 ***The Caretaker*, 1963, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:24-26 ***Carne Man*, 1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:27 *The Connection*, 1963.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:28-29 *The Dance of Death*, 1964.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:30-31 *Danton's Death*, 1965.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:32-33, Folio *Doomed*, 1973.

Box 5:1

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:34-36, Folio *Dreamscapes*, 1972-1973.

Box 5:1

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:37-39, Folio *Endgame*, 1966, n.d.

Box 5:2

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:40-44, Box 4:1 *Escape by Balloon*, 1970-1972, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:45-48 *Faust*, 1969, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:49 *A Few Skits and Songs about Things Right and Wrong with the World, the Church, and You*, 1964.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:50-51 *Fourteen Hundred Thousand*, 1966.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:52 *The Future is in Eggs*, 1966.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:53-54 *The Gloaming, Oh My Darling*, 1965.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:55 *Grab and Grace*, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:56-58 *Happy Days*, 1968.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:59 *A House by the Stable*, 1963.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:60-62 *The Hostage*, 1964.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:63-64 *The Immoralist*, 1964.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:65-68, Box 4:2, Folio Box 5:3 *Iphigenia Transformed*, 1966, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:69 *It Should Happen to a Dog*. 1963.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:70-71, Box 4:3, Folio Box 5:4 *Jack or the Submission*, 1966, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 1:72-77 *Jack-Jack*, 1968, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

- Box 1:78-83 ***Keep Tightly Closed in a Cool, Dry, Place*, 1965,1968, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 1:84-87 ***Krapp's Last Tape*, 1967, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 1:88 ***Look Back in Anger*, 1964.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 1:89-91, Box 4:4 ***Lord Halewyn*, 1965.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:1-4 ***A Man is a Man*, 1968, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:5 ***The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*, 1965.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:6-9 ***Mortality or the Passion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire*, 1967.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:10-12 ***Mysteries, Miracles, and Moralities*, 1967.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:13-14 ***Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad*, 1965.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:15-17, Folio
Box 5:5 ***Peer Gynt*, 1967, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:18-21 ***The People vs. the Ranchman*, 1967, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
-

- Box 2:22-24 ***The Play, 1967.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:25 ***Psychedelic Voyage, n.d.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:26-33 ***Rags, 1968-1969, 1971, n.d.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:34-35 ***Red Eye of Love, 1964.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:36 ***Santa Claus, 1963.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:37-39 ***Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, 1965.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:40-44 ***The Sideshow, 1966, n.d.***
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:45-48, Folio ***A Song for All Saints, 1966, n.d.***
Box 5:6
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:49-52, Folio ***Stab and Dance, 1973-1974.***
Box 5:1
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 2:53-56, Box ***Still Falling, 1971.***
4:5, Map Case
III:Drawer P
Physical Description:
Note

Box 2:57 ***Sweeney Agonistes*, 1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:58-61 ***The Thing Itself*, 1967.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:62 ***The Three Men of Gotham*, 1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:63-66, Folio ***Traveling Light*, 1972, n.d.**

Box 5:1

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:67-71 ***Trunity*, 1968, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:72-74, Box ***Victims of Duty*, 1967, n.d.**

4:6-7, Folio Box 5:7

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:75-79 ***Viet Rock*, 1966.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:80-84 ***Waiting for Godot*, 1966.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:85-87, Folio ***Where's de Queen*, 1966, n.d.**

Box 5:8

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:88 ***The Window*, 1972.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 2:89-95, Folio ***Woyzeck*, 1968, 1971, n.d.**

Box 5:1

Physical Description:

Note

Series 2. **Business Records, 1963-1974.**

Physical Description: 44 folders

Scope and Content Note

Divided into seven subseries: General Correspondence, Grants, Legal Documents, Financial Documents, Building Records, Workshops, and Promotional Material.

Box 3:1 Subseries 2.1. **General Correspondence, 1967-1974, n.d.**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note

Arranged chronologically. Does not contain correspondence relating to grants.

Subseries 2.2. **Grants, 1965-1974, n.d.**

Physical Description: 4 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes grant proposals and correspondence relating to grants.

Box 3:2 **Grant proposal, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:3 **Correspondence, Rockefeller Foundation, 1966-1970.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:4-5 **Correspondence, National Endowment for the Arts, 1966-1974, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Subseries 2.3. **Legal Documents, 1963-1965.**

Physical Description: 3 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes insurance and corporation records with enclosed memoranda.

Box 3:6 **Insurance Records, 1963.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:7-8 **Corporate Records, 1963-1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Subseries 2.4. **Financial Documents, 1963-1972.**

Physical Description: 11 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes ledgers, account books, bank records, and financial statements. Folders 16-19 are restricted. Access through Head of Special Collections.

Box 3:9 **General Ledger and General Journal, 1963-1965.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:10 **Bank Records, 1969-1970.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:11 **Petty Cash, 1969**

Physical Description:

Note

Folio Box 5:9 **Firehouse Theater Inc., Cash Receipts and Disbursements Journal, 1963-1966.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:12 **Operating Expenses, 1967-1968, 1971-1972.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:13 **Joseph C. Mangin, CPA, Financial Statements, Dec. 31, 1968.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:14 **Mangin & Brodkorb, CPA, Report on Examination of Financial Statements, Dec. 31, 1967.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:15 **Mangin & Brodkorb, CPA, Financial and Operating Statements, Dec. 31, 1968.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:16-19 **Other Financial Documents, 1966-1969.**

Physical Description:

Note

[Restricted]

Subseries 2.5. **Building Records, 1970-1973, n.d.**

Physical Description: 3 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes blueprints, building permits, and construction and architectural reports for the theater in San Francisco.

Box 3:20 **Firehouse Theater-San Francisco, Addendum No. 1 to Osborn Construction Co., Oct. 1970.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:21 **San Francisco Building Permits, 1971, 1973.**

Physical Description:

Note

Map Case III:
Drawer P **San Francisco Building Blueprints, 1970-1972, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Subseries 2.6. **Workshops, 1969, n.d.**

Physical Description: 10 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes workshop notebooks and one film.

Box 3:22-29 **Workshop Books no. 1-8, n.d.**

Physical Description: 8 notebooks

Note

Box 3:30 **Workshop Book, *Faust*, n.d.**

Physical Description:

Note

Box 4:8 ***ESP Workshop on Beach*, a film by Marlow Hotchkiss, 1969.**

Physical Description:

Note

Subseries 2.7. **Promotional Material, 1963-1973, n.d.**

Physical Description: 14 folders

Scope and Content Note

Includes mailers, pamphlets, press releases, articles, one poster, and company photographs.

- Box 3:31 **Season Ticket Mailer, First Season, Aug. 1963-Jan. 1964.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:32 **Season Ticket Mailer, Second Season, Feb.-July 1964.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:33 **Season Ticket Mailer, Third Season, Aug. 1964-Jan. 1965.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:34 **Season Ticket Mailer, Fourth Season, Feb.-July 1965.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:35 **Season Ticket Mailer, Fifth Season, Aug. 1965-Jan. 1966.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:36 **Firehouse Theater, Minneapolis pamphlet, 1968-1969.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:37 **Firehouse Theater, San Francisco pamphlet, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:38 **Firehouse Theater, Press Releases, 1966-1973, n.d.**
Physical Description:
Note
- Box 3:39-40 **Company Photographic Prints and Contact Sheets, 1966-1969.**
Physical Description:
Note

Series 2. **Business Records, 1963-1974.**

Subseries 2.7. **Promotional Material, 1963-1973, n.d.**

Map Case III: **Firehouse Theater poster, n.d.**

Drawer P

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:41

Articles, 1967-1972, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

Box 3:42

"Marlow Hotchkiss-Sydney Walter." Interview by Todd S. J. Lawson and Joan Polzin, *Plaintiff*, (Fall, 1966): 18-21.

Physical Description:

Note

Series 3. Memorabilia, 1963-1968, n.d.

Physical Description: 2 items

Scope and Content Note

Includes a scrapbook and a manuscript.

Box 3:43

Donicht, Mark Allen. "A Search for Theater, a Search for Magic, a Search for Truth..." n.d.

Physical Description:

Note

[manuscript]

Legal Size Box 6

Firehouse Theater scrapbook, 1963-1968, n.d.

Physical Description:

Note