

Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin Papers
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Washington, D.C.
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Prepared by Donna Ellis

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Collection Summary

Title: Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin Papers

Span Dates: 1921-1993

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1940-1959)

ID No.: MSS85114

Creator: Gordon, Ruth, 1896-1985

Creator: Kanin, Garson, 1912-1999

Extent: 5,900 items

Extent: 19 containers

Extent: 7.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2004085114>

Summary: Author and actress Ruth Gordon and her husband Garson Kanin, actor, author, producer, and director. Correspondence with colleagues in the entertainment industry.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Bagnold, Enid--Correspondence.

Bagnold, Enid. Chalk garden. 1956.

Bagnold, Enid. Matter of gravity : a comedy in three acts. 1978.

Beaton, Cecil, 1904-1980--Correspondence.

Beaumont, Hugh, 1909-1982--Correspondence.

Chevalier, Maurice, 1888-1972--Correspondence.

Cohn, Harry, 1891-1958--Correspondence.

Cukor, George, 1899-1983--Correspondence.

Evans, Edith, 1888-1976--Correspondence.

Gordon, Ruth, 1896-1985. Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin papers. 1921-1993.

Guthrie, Tyrone, 1900-1971--Correspondence.

Holliday, Judy.

Kanin, Garson, 1912-1999. Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin papers. 1921-1993.

Mainbocher, 1891-1976--Correspondence.

Olivier, Laurence, 1907-1989--Correspondence.

Schary, Dore--Correspondence.

Tracy, Spencer, 1900-1967.

Organizations

Columbia Pictures Corporation. It should happen to you. 1954.

Columbia Pictures Corporation. Marrying kind. 1952.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Actress. 1952.

Subjects

Fashion--United States.

Motion picture actors and actresses.

Motion picture industry--United States.

Symbolism.

Theater--England--London.

Theater--United States.

World War, 1939-1945--Theater and the war.

Titles

Garson Kanin papers

Ruth Gordon papers

Occupations

Actors.

Authors.

Motion picture directors.

Motion picture producers.

Theatrical directors.

Theatrical producers.

Provenance

The papers of Ruth Gordon, author and actress, and Garson Kanin, actor, author, director, and producer, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 2004. Material given by Ed Slakter in 2003 was added to the collection in 2006.

Transfers

A dictaphone record has been transferred to the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division where it is identified as part of these papers.

Related Material

The Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin Papers complement separate collections of their papers, the Ruth Gordon Papers and the [Garson Kanin](#) Papers, which are also held by in the Manuscript Division.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Ruth Gordon

Date	Event
1896, Oct. 30	Born, Wollaston, Mass.
1915	Appeared as Nibs in <i>Peter Pan</i> (play)

1918	Married Gregory Kelly (died 1927)
1936	Appeared as Margery Pinchwife in <i>The Country Wife</i> (play)
1940	Appeared as Mary Todd Lincoln in <i>Abe Lincoln in Illinois</i> (film)
1942	Married Garson Kanin
1946	Wrote <i>Years Ago</i> (play)
1949	Wrote <i>Adam's Rib</i> (film)
1952	Wrote <i>Pat and Mike</i> (film)
1953	Wrote <i>The Actress</i> (film based on play <i>Years Ago</i>)
1955	Appeared as Dolly Levi in <i>The Matchmaker</i> (play)
1965	Appeared as Mrs. Clover in <i>Inside Daisy Clover</i> (film)
1968	Appeared as Minnie Castevet in <i>Rosemary's Baby</i> (film)
1969	Won 1968 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in <i>Rosemary's Baby</i>
1971	Appeared as Maude in <i>Harold and Maude</i> (film)
1978	Appeared as Ma Boggs in <i>Every Which Way But Loose</i> (film)
1985, Aug. 28	Died, Edgartown, Mass.

Garson Kanin

Date	Event
1912, Nov. 24	Born, Rochester, N.Y.
1932-1933	Attended American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New York, N.Y.
1933	Appeared as Tommy Deal in <i>Little Ol' Boy</i> (play)
1942	Married Ruth Gordon (died 1985)
1946	Wrote <i>Born Yesterday</i> (play) Directed <i>Years Ago</i> (play)
1949	Wrote <i>Adam's Rib</i> (film)
1952	Wrote <i>Pat and Mike</i> (film)
1955	Wrote and directed <i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> (play)
1964	Directed <i>Funny Girl</i> (play)
1990	Married Marian Seldes
1999, Mar. 13	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Ruth Gordon (1896-1985) and Garson Kanin (1912-1999) span the years 1921-1993, with the bulk of the material dating from 1940 to 1959. Gordon and Kanin were a married couple prominent in the American theater and film industry as actors and writers for half a century. They used their collaborative relationship as a model for their film *Pat and Mike* starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. The papers consist mainly of correspondence with attached and related newspaper clippings and printed ephemera. An addition to the collection includes more correspondence and miscellaneous personal files.

The correspondence contains incoming letters and copies of outgoing letters. Chief correspondents are Enid Bagnold, Cecil Beaton, Hugh ("Binkie") Beaumont, Main R. Bocher, Maurice Chevalier, Harry Cohn, George Cukor, Edith Evans, Tyrone Guthrie, Laurence Olivier, and Dore Schary. Letters from Bagnold discuss the symbolism and characterizations in the plays *The Chalk Garden* and *A Matter of Gravity*. The correspondence from Bocher contains an inventory of Gordon's collection of *haute couture* designed for her by Mainbocher. The letters of Cohn and Cukor provide insight into film personalities, especially Judy Holliday and Spencer Tracy. They discuss all aspects of production for films such as *The Marrying Kind*, *The Actress*, and *It Should Happen to You*. Evans and Guthrie describe the state of London theater during World War II.

An addition contains further correspondence as well as contracts, insurance policies, investment material, printed matter, and Gordon's and Kanin's marriage certificate.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged alphabetically by correspondent, followed by an addition arranged alphabetically by type of material.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Correspondence Acheson, Dean and Alice, 1961-1969, undated Aldrich, Richard, 1948 Alsop, Joseph, 1969-1977 Anderson, Judith, 1950-1952 Anderson, Maxwell and Gertrude (“Mab”) Higger, 1946-1951, undated Aronson, Boris, 1955-1963, 1974-1975 Ashcroft, Peggy, 1953, undated Atkinson, Brooks and Oriana, 1951-1952, 1958-1959, 1969, undated Aumont, Jean-Pierre, 1954 Bagnold, Enid, 1953-1974, 1981, undated Barry, Philip, 1949 Baylis, Lilian, 1937 Beaton, Cecil, 1936-1938, 1944-1972, undated (4 folders) Beaumont, Hugh (“Binkie”) 1946-1953 BOX 2 1954-1972, undated (7 folders) Behrman, S. N., 1950, 1958-1963, undated Benny, Jack and Mary, 1969-1974 Berlin, Irving, 1970 Bloomgarden, Kermit, 1955 Bocher, Main R., and Douglas Pollard, 1943-1969, 1975-1978, undated (6 folders) BOX 3 Bolger, Ray and Gwendolyn, 1950, 1987, undated <i>Born Yesterday</i> , cast of, undated Brisson, Frederick See Container 13, Russell, Rosalind Brynnner, Doris (Mrs. Yul), 1966 Burke, Billie, 1957, 1970, undated Calder, King, 1943 Carlisle, Kitty See Container 9, Hart, Moss Champion, Gower, 1965 Chatterton, Ruth, 1946-1951, 1960, undated Chayefsky, Paddy, 1946-1947, 1955-1958, undated Chevalier, Maurice Correspondence, 1948-1969, undated Miscellany, 1921-1944, 1950, 1964-1967, undated Clair, René, 1941, 1952, 1958, 1971-1974 Claire, Ina, undated Coca Cola Co. See Container 7, Farley, James

Container List

Container

Contents

	Cohn, Harry, 1950-1954, undated (3 folders)
	Colbert, Claudette, 1954
	Columbia Pictures Corp. <i>See same container, Cohn, Harry</i>
	Cornell, Katharine, 1941-1973, undated <i>See also Container 11, McClintic, Guthrie</i>
	Cotten, Joseph, undated
	Coward, Noel, 1938
	Craven, Frank, undated
	Crawford, Cheryl, 1956
	Crawford, Joan, 1959, 1969-1970
	Crouse, Russel, 1946-1950, 1959, 1966, undated <i>See also Container 11, Lindsay, Howard</i>
	Cukor, George
	Correspondence
	1941
BOX 4	1942-1952 (7 folders)
	1953
	Jan.-Apr.
BOX 5	May-Nov. (2 folders)
	1954-1971, 1978, 1992 (5 folders)
	Undated (1 folder)
BOX 6	(1 folder)
	Miscellany, 1951, 1962-1965, 1988, undated
	Dauphin, Claude, 1946-1952
	Davis, Bette, 1962, 1975
	De Mille, Agnes, undated
	Derwent, Clarence, 1956
	Dieterle, William, 1939-1942, 1969-1970, undated
	Dietrich, Marlene, 1954, undated
	Dietz, Howard, 1941-1942, 1950-1952
	Dunnock, Mildred, 1948, undated
	Evans, Edith
	1937-1949 (3 folders)
BOX 7	1950-1973, undated (2 folders)
	Evans, Maurice, 1956, 1971
	Farley, James, 1953
	Ferber, Edna, 1942-1943, 1965-1966, undated
	Ferrer, José, 1947, 1954, 1975, 1983-1986, undated
	Field, Betty <i>See Container 13, Rice, Elmer</i>
	Fine, Sylvia <i>See Container 10, Kaye, Danny</i>
	Fontanne, Lynn, and Alfred Lunt, 1941-1962, 1969-1977, undated (2 folders)

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	Frankfurter, Felix 1941-1969 (6 folders)
BOX 8	1977, 1982-1985, undated Fry, Christopher, 1955 Gernreich, Rudi, undated Gershwin, Ira, 1968 Gibbs, Wolcott, 1947 Gilson, Joanna, 1954-1956, undated Gish, Dorothy, 1941-1942, 1948, 1960-1964, undated Gish, Lillian, 1940-1964, 1977-1980, undated Goddard, Paulette, 1966-1969 Golden, John, undated Grant, Cary, undated Guthrie, Tyrone 1936-1963 (7 folders)
BOX 9	1964-1971, undated (2 folders) H. M. Tennant, Ltd. <i>See Containers 1 and 2, Beaumont, Hugh</i> Halliday, Richard <i>See Container 11, Martin, Mary</i> Hammerstein, Oscar (1895-1960), 1946-1951 Hammett, Dashiell, 1947, 1965 Harris, Jed, 1926-1931, 1962, 1980, undated Harrison, Rex, 1950-1954, 1966, undated Hart, Moss, and Kitty Carlisle, 1947-1960, undated Hayes, Helen, 1931-1985, undated (3 folders) Hayward, Leland, 1943, 1949-1968, undated Head, Edith, 1969
BOX 10	Hellman, Lillian, 1942-1948, 1964-1976, 1984, undated Helpman, Robert, 1946-1950, 1962, undated Hepburn, Audrey, 1954, 1963-1969, 1976 Hobson, Laura Z., 1971-1975 Holliday, Judy, undated Hurlock, Madeline <i>See Container 14, Sherwood, Robert</i> Hurok, Sol, 1969 Inge, William, 1959-1963, 1969 Johnson, Nunnally, 1942, 1954-1957, 1963, undated Kasha, Lawrence, 1964 Kaufman, George S. and Leueen, 1942-1960, undated (2 folders) Kaye, Danny, and Sylvia Fine, 1942-1961, 1968-1971, undated Keller, Helen, 1956-1958, 1969 Korda, Alexander, 1956 Krasna, Norman, 1941-1970, undated (2 folders)

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	Laughton, Charles, circa 1942, 1950
	Lawrence, Gertrude, 1952
	Le Gallienne, Eva, 1982
	Lefkowitz, Nat, 1961
BOX 11	Leigh, Vivien, 1961-1967, undated <i>See also Containers 11 and 12, Olivier, Laurence</i>
	Leighton, Margaret, 1956, 1962-1963, undated
	Lerner, Alan Jay, 1961, 1967-1973, 1983, undated
	Lillie, Bea, 1954-1955
	Lindsay, Howard, 1943-1950, 1956-1959, 1966-1968, undated <i>See also Container 3, Crouse, Russel</i>
	Loesser, Frank, 1953-1961, undated
	Loos, Anita, 1947-1971, 1978-1981, undated
	Luce, Claire Booth, 1966-1969
	Lunt, Alfred <i>See Container 7, Fontanne, Lynn</i>
	Mainbocher, Inc. <i>See Container 2, Bocher, Main R.</i>
	March, Fredric and Florence, 1947-1952, undated
	Martin, Mary, and Richard Halliday, 1955-1958, 1965, undated
	Marx, Groucho, Harpo, and Susan, 1947-1949, 1956-1969, 1986, undated
	Massey, Raymond, 1946-1947, 1959, 1965, 1976-1979, undated
	Maugham, W. Somerset, circa 1942, 1958, 1965-1969, undated
	McBride, Mary Margaret, 1950
	McClintic, Guthrie, 1931, 1939-1960, undated <i>See also Container 3, Cornell, Katharine</i>
	Meredith, Burgess, 1941-1942
	Mielziner, Jo, 1950, 1956-1965
	Miller, Arthur, 1955
	Minnelli, Denise, Lee, and Liza, 1968, 1982-1986
	Miscellaneous, 1938-1951, 1963, undated
	Molnár, Ferenc, 1948
	Murphy, George, 1969
	Murphy, Gerald, 1943
	Nathan, George Jean, 1930, 1946
	Nesbitt, Cathleen, 1964-1965, undated
	Oberon, Merle, 1967-1969, 1975
	Odets, Clifford, 1942, undated
	Ogden, Angela, 1967
	Olivier, Laurence <i>See also Container 11, Leigh, Vivien</i>
	1940-1942
	1946
	Feb.-Aug.
BOX 12	Sept.-Nov.
	1947-1988, undated
	(12 folders)
BOX 13	O'Neill, Carlotta Monterey (Mrs. Eugene), 1956
	Osborn, Paul, 1949, undated
	Paley, William S., 1980-1986, undated
	Palmer, Lilli, 1950, undated
	Papp, Joseph, 1975-1988

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Contents

- Peekskill Declaration signers, 1949
Pollard, Douglas *See Container 2, Bocher, Main R.*
Porter, Cole, 1949-1951, 1960
Rattigan, Terence, 1956, 1963-1966
Redgrave, Michael, 1939-1943, 1954-1960, 1971-1976, undated
Remick, Lee, 1959, 1963-1965, 1980
Revson, Charles (Revlon Products Corp.), 1950-1951
Rice, Elmer, and Betty Field, 1940, 1947-1957, undated
Richardson, Tony, 1955
Ritter, Thelma, 1956
Roberts, Rachel, 1970, undated
Robinson, Edward G., 1952-1957, 1970
Robson, Flora, undated
Rodgers, Richard, 1947-1950, 1958-1970
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1939-1941, 1947, 1955-1962
Rose, Billy, 1941, 1946-1950, 1961-1962
Rosenthal, Jean, 1957
Rubinstein, Arthur, 1954, 1961, undated
Russell, Rosalind, and Frederick Brisson, 1957-1970, undated
(2 folders)
Saroyan, William, 1942-1943, 1959
Schary, Dore
1942-1951
BOX 14 1952-1980, undated
(3 folders)
Schildkraut, Joseph, 1954-1964, undated
(2 folders)
Schneider, Alan, 1936, 1947-1948, 1963
Seberg, Jean, 1961-1967
Selznick, David O. and Daniel, 1943-1948, 1956, 1968
Selznick, Irene, 1947-1960, 1969
Severeid, Eric, 1970-1978
Shaw, Irwin, 1970
Shawn, Ted, 1956
Sheldon, Edward, 1940-1949, undated
Sherwood, Robert E., and Madeline Hurlock, 1927, 1938-1939, 1948-1961, 1967
Shubert, Lee and Marcella, 1949-1971, undated
Silvers, Phil, 1942-1943, 1955-1962, 1971, undated
Skinner, Cornelia Otis, 1956, 1964
Snow, Carmel, 1949, undated
BOX 15 Spewack, Bella and Sam, 1937, 1952, 1967-1970, 1979
Streisand, Barbra, 1983, undated
Sturges, Howard, 1949, undated
Tarkington, Booth and Susannah, 1921-1929, 1940-1966, undated
(2 folders)
Taylor, Laurette, 1941-1947, 1967, undated
Todman, William ("Bill"), 1963

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	Tracy, Spencer, 1941-1969, undated (4 folders)
	Truman, Bess Wallace, 1947
BOX 16	Ulric, Lenore, 1943-1950, 1956, undated (3 folders)
	Van Druten, John, 1950
	Vidor, Doris (Mrs. Charles), 1956, 1974
	Vidor, King, 1956, undated
	Vreeland, Diana, 1960, 1969-1976, undated
	Walker, Nancy, 1961
	Wallis, Hal B., 1977
	Waring, Fred, 1977-1978
	Warren, Robert Penn, 1986
	Webb, Clifton, 1951-1953
	Webster, Margaret, undated
	Whitney, John Hay, 1963-1964, undated
	Widmark, Richard, 1968
	Wilder, Thornton, 1948-1949, 1964, 1970, undated
	Williams, Emlyn, 1949-1952, 1962-1971, undated
	Wilson, Earl, 1959, 1976
	Wood, Natalie, 1962-1974, undated
	Wood, Peggy, 1956-1965
	Woolcott, Alexander, 1936-1947, 1974, undated
BOX 17	Addition
	Contracts, 1942-1946, 1969
	Correspondence
	“A-G” miscellaneous, 1934-1984, undated (8 folders)
	“Ha” miscellaneous, 1955-1971, undated (2 folders)
BOX 18	“He-Hu” miscellaneous, 1949-1983, undated (4 folders)
	“K-V” miscellaneous, 1939-1993, undated (8 folders)
BOX 19	“W” miscellaneous, 1967-1977, undated
	Unidentified, 1969, 1983, undated
	Insurance, 1944-1948
	Investments, 1946-1947
	Marriage certificate, 1942
	Mielziner, Jo, set designs for <i>Violence</i> (play), undated
	Miscellany, 1943, undated
	Printed matter, 1943, 1949-1954, 1983-1985, undated
	Receipts for clothing and jewelry, 1958-1959
	Research material, 1944-1945