
Collection number: BANC MSS 81/184 c

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: Magic Theatre records
Date: 1967-1990
Collection Number: BANC MSS 81/184 c
Creator: Magic Theatre
Extent: Number of containers: 12 cartons, 3 oversize boxes, 16 oversize folders, 1 volume, 2 tubes
Linear feet: ca. 181
Digital object (1 image)
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Abstract: The Magic Theatre records contain the administrative, production, financial, and publicity records of a theatre company that grew from a handful of graduate students to a well respected company known for its support of new theatrical works. The collection, which spans the period of John Lion’s tenure as Artistic Director and General Director, includes correspondence, bylaws, manuscripts of writings and speeches, programs, posters, financial statements, and clippings. Includes documents relating to the relationship between the Magic Theatre and Sam Shepard, who followed Michael McClure as an important playwright for the company.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English
Physical Location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library’s online catalog.

Access
Collection is open for research, with the following exception: In Carton 6: Salary Surveys by the Theatre Communications Group are restricted.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Magic Theatre records, BANC MSS 81/184 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Alternate Forms Available
Digital reproductions of selected items are available.

Title: Magic Theatre Scripts,
Identifier/Call Number: BANC MSS 81/14 c

Photographs have been transferred to Pictorial Collections of The Bancroft Library.
Videotapes/sound recordings have been transferred to the Microforms Collection of The Bancroft Library.

Acquisition Information
The Magic Theatre Scripts were received as part of the Magic Theatre Records, purchased by The Bancroft Library, via Serendipity Books, in three installments, in 1980, 1988, and 1990.

Funding
Funding for the 1980 acquisition provided by a gift from The Friends of The Bancroft Library, and with donations made in memory of Theodore R. Meyer. Funding for the 1988 and 1990 additions were provided by the Richard Henry Chabot Dieckmann Fund.

Organizational History
The Magic Theatre was founded in 1967 in Berkeley, Calif., with a production of Eugene Ionesco's, The Lesson, by a group of University of California, Berkeley graduate students, headed by John Lion, who had an interest in the newly emerging, avant-garde European playwrights, including Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett. They had no intention of starting a theatre, but with the success of The Lesson, the company moved into the Steppenwolf Bar on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, and began producing plays as the Magic Theatre, a name adopted from Hesse's novel, Steppenwolf.

European playwrights dominated the Magic Theatre's early productions, but these were soon augmented by American authors emerging from the political, social, and artistic ferment of the 1960s, including Leroi Jones, Michael McClure, and Sam Shepard. The work of the Magic Theatre reflected the social upheaval of the time, with the intention of presenting different aspects of a chaotic world without becoming polarized to one point of view. Magic Theatre's goal was to concentrate its efforts on newly scripted works, with the purpose of developing new playwrights and giving an alternative, experimental forum to established writers. They drew not only from the theatrical community but from the talents of people in many areas of the arts -- painters, sculptors, film makers, poets, musicians, and dancers, and deliberately represented no particular political point of view except that of free expression.

Over the past twenty-five years, the Magic Theatre was housed in some ten locations, not including touring bookings. There were several stints each at Steppenwolf and Mandrake's Bars in Berkeley. They also performed at the University Art Museum, and in a theatre the staff built in an old building at the corner of University and Shattuck Avenues until 1972, when the company moved permanently to San Francisco. It was located briefly in the Firehouse Theatre (now the Lumier Cinema), the Museum of Erotic Art (now defunct), the Intersection Theatre, and the Rose and Thistle Pub on California and Polk Streets. In 1977, the Magic Theatre finally moved to a permanent home at Fort Mason, and eventually built two playhouses of its own.

From the very beginning, John Lion assumed the role of general and artistic director, and brought the theatre from a group of college students with no base and no funding to become the Bay Area's leading producer of new plays. In 1976, Lion recruited the British theatre critic and essayist, Martin Esslin, as dramaturg. His early books on Brecht, the theatre of the absurd, and avant-garde European plays had been the strongest guidelines to the originators of the Magic Theatre.

Not every production at the Magic Theatre has been a smashing success. But the experimental theatre has witnessed an increasing number of subscribers and plays each year, and both local and national critics have been following their progress with much interest and acclaim.

Scope and Content
The Magic Theatre Records, 1967-1990, contain the administrative, production, financial, and publicity records of a theatre company that grew from a handful of graduate students to a well respected company known for its support of new theatrical works. The collection, which spans the period of John Lion's tenure as Artistic Director and General Director of Magic Theatre, includes correspondence, bylaws, manuscripts of writings and speeches, programs, posters, financial statements, and clippings. An extensive collection of scripts received with the company's archives have been separated
from these records and are collected as Magic Theatre Scripts, 1966-1990 (BANC MSS 81/14 c).

The records of the Magic Theatre provide insight into how a theater company can survive and become established in financially difficult times, while maintaining the avant garde spirit of its original productions. For this reason, much of its financial records consist of grant applications and funding requests, while publicity records contain mostly information about ticket subscription campaigns. In the administrative files, correspondence documents the company's contact with playwrights, actors, and contractors concerning the theme of the plays, payment, and stage design, and along with the organizational files, present an overview of Magic's general operation, mission, and history. The artistic relationship between Magic Theatre and Sam Shepard, who followed Michael McClure as an important playwright for the company, is well documented. In its attempt to support other artists, Magic Theatre also sponsored exhibits of contemporary art in its lobby and hallways, took part in arts festivals, and sponsored interns and training programs.

The public reaction to Magic Theatre's plays was best reflected in the production files, which contains reviews of individual plays, and in the press reviews, which contains articles about the company. The collection also includes posters from many of Magic Theatre's productions from its earliest years until the early 1980's.

List of Files

**SERIES 1: ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS. 1968-1990.**

Physical Description: Cartons 1-5; Carton 6, folders 1-12; Oversize Box 1, folders 1-4; Oversize folder 1, Tube 1

Content/Description

Divided into six sub-series: Correspondence, Organizational Files, John Lion's Files, Special Programs, Press Reviews, and Other Organizations. Correspondence includes general administrative correspondence, as well as General Director John Lion's letters to actors, playwrights, and others, and Production Manager Suresa Dundes' letters regarding scripts the company received. Organizational Files concern Magic Theatre's general operation, mission, and history. John Lion's Files contain his personal papers relating to his position as General Director of Magic Theatre, as well as to his other ventures in the theater world. Special Programs contains the papers related to exhibitions Magic Theatre sponsored in its lobby and hallways; special events the theatre took part in, including arts festivals and benefits; and the training programs and internships that the Magic Theatre sponsored with local colleges and universities. Press Reviews contains reviews of the Magic Theatre, as well as reviews and general information about playwrights and actors that worked with Magic Theatre, including an extensive collection of materials regarding Sam Shepard. Other Organizations includes information gathered by the Magic Theatre about other theatres, theater organizations, and art associations.

Contains correspondence, statements, clippings, contract agreements, speeches, notes and writings, and resumes.

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Finding Aid to the Magic Theatre
Records, 1967-1990

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carton 4, folder 11  Photogram by Peter Goin 1983
carton 4, folder 12  Landscape Painting by Cherie Pinsky 1984
carton 4, folder 13  Exhibit press release list 1984-86

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carton 4, folder 14  Halloween fashion show and costume sale 1980-81

carton 4, folder 15  San Francisco Arts Festival 1981

carton 4, folder 16  San Francisco Summer Festival 1981-82

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carton 4, folder 18  Book signing party 1982

carton 4, folder 19  Liberty ship project, S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien 1982

carton 4, folder 20  "A Magic Night on the Town" 1984

carton 4, folder 21  San Francisco Fair 1985

carton 4, folder 22  Bay Area Playwrights Festival 1987

carton 4, folder 23  Invitations to benefit parties 1980-83

oversize-box 1, 
folder 2

Training Programs and Internships

carton 4, folder 24  Techniques for Experimental Theatre 1973-74

carton 4, folder 25  Courses on acting and directing 1977

Symposia

carton 4, folder 26  Playwright and Contemporary Theatre 1985

carton 4, folder 27  Visions and Revisions 1989

Internships

carton 4, folder 28  UCLA Arts Magnet program 1979

carton 4, folder 29  Northwestern University 1980-81

carton 4, folder 30  Work Study/Teaching Requests undated

Work Study Programs

carton 4, folder 31  General information undated

carton 4, folder 32  University of San Francisco 1976-78

carton 4, folder 33  Youth work program 1980

carton 4, folder 34  City College of San Francisco 1981

carton 4, folder 35  University of California, Berkeley 1980-83

carton 4, folder 36  San Francisco State University 1980-81

PRESS REVIEWS. 1968-1988

Reviews of Magic Theatre 1968-88 undated

Reviews/General information on actors and playwrights:

Bauer, Wolfgang 1978-83
Benjet, Rosalyn 1981
Cohn, Ruby

Book jacket mock-up undated

Coyote, Peter 1980-83
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Book jacket mock-up undated

Getty, Martine undated
Haynie, Jim 1976-88
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<td>Mabou Nines Performing Artservices, Inc. 1980 New Dramatists 1986</td>
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Physical Description: Carton 6, folders 13-67; Cartons 7-8; Carton 9, folders 1-17; Oversize Box 2, folders 1-4; Oversize folders 2-8; v. 1

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by production season.

Content/Description
Contains programs, announcements, reviews, and clippings, along with biographical data and photographs of playwrights, actors, and actresses used to compile production brochures. Also includes sketches for stage design and drawings inspired by the productions. Production titles marked with an asterisk (*) indicate that a corresponding poster is included in Series 5: Publicity Posters.

Additional Note
An asterisk (*) indicates posters for these productions are included in Series 5: Publicity Posters.

1968 Season: 1968

- carton 6, folder 13
  - The Lesson / Jack, or, The Submission
- carton 6, folder 14
  - The Gas Heart
- carton 6, folder 15
  - Ubu Roi

1969 Season: 1969

- carton 6, folder 16
  - The Dutchman
- carton 6, folder 17
  - Gargoyle Cartoons:
    - The Cherub
    - The Charbroiled Chinchilla:
      - The Pansy
      - Spider Rabbit
      - The Meatball
    - Miles Gloriosus

1970 Season: 1970

- carton 6, folder 18
  - Gargoyle Cartoons:
    - The Brutal Brontosaurus:
      - The Shell
      - The Authentic Life of Bruce Conner and Snoutburbler
      - Spider Rabbit
      - Appleglove
      - The Meatball
- carton 6, folder 19
  - Strip Tease of Jealousy / Madness of Lady Bright
- carton 6, folder 20
  - Boticelli / Witness
- carton 6, folder 21
  - * La Turista
- carton 6, folder 22
  - Gargoyle Cartoons:
    - Sheriff Bill

1971 Season: 1971

- carton 6, folder 23
  - * The Fish
- carton 6, folder 24
  - * Four-in-One:
    - Stroganoff
    - Beau
    - Oppenheimer's Chair
    - The Growl
- carton 6, folder 25
  - The Genuine Lunatic
- carton 6, folder 26
  - Miles Gloriosus
- carton 6, folder 27
  - The Taming of the Shrew

1972 Season: 1972

- carton 6, folder 28
  - Polymorphous Pirates:
    - The Button
    - The Pussy
    - The Feather
- carton 6, folder 29
  - Plastic Panic
- carton 6, folder 30
  - The Great 200th Anniversary H-Bomb Crisis
carton 6, folder 32  
* Chamber Piece  
1973 Season: 1973

* Boxes
* auto-destruct
* The Great American Sports Machine:
  Ball Game  
  Donald Duck  
  Fans  
  Intermission

carton 6, folder 36  
Jimmy Bean

carton 6, folder 37  
The Beard/ Spider Rabbit

1974 Season: 1974

* Gorf
* American Vermillion
* Strike Zone:
  Strike Zone  
  In the Beginning of the End  
  FooFoo Raw  
  Dream Girl Ballroom  
  Cindy's Dead  
  The Inspector

1975 Season: 1975

* The Death and Life of Jesse James
* Action/ Killer's Head
* Fear of Heights/ Sweet Eros/ Strip Tease of Jealousy

1976 Season: 1976

* AC/DC
* Two for the Tricentennial:
  The Pink Helmet  
  The Grabbing of the Fairy

* Angel City


Sexual Perversity in Chicago/ Duck Variations
* Inacoma
* Alfred Dies
* Hospital
* Are You Lookin'?


Wolves
* The Wild Goose
* Minnie Mouse and the Tap-Dancing Buddha

Stage plans  
Sketch inspired by production

* Home on the Range

Stage plans

Shakespeare the Sadist/ Performance Landscape:
  A Wall in Venice/ 3 Women/ Wet Shadows

Buried Child
Emigrés
Tongues


Two O'Clock Feeding
Uncommon Women and Others
The Red Snake

Stage plans

Sight Lines
carton 6, folder 64  
Magnetic Kisses  
Etching inspired by production

* Autobiography of a Pearl Diver  
The Barbecue  
Stage plans

* Suicide in B♭-Flat  
Stage plans

* Josephine: The Mouse Singer  
Stage plans

Skywheels  
Stage plans

Emperor Norton  
Proclamation by Dianne Feinstein  
Sheet music

Nightfall  
Stage plans

* Perfida  
* All Night Long

Charles the Irrelevant  
Drawing for poster design

Winterplay  
Stage plans

* Frankie and Johnnie: A True Story/The Saints of Father Lyons

The Man Who Killed the Buddha

* The Story/ Mr. Smith is Dying

Europa

Victims of War  
Stuck

Passing Shots  
Renaissance Radar  
The Debt

Off Center/ Possum Song  
Ghosts

* Fire at Luna Park  
Sketch inspired by production

Curse of the Starving Class

Sand Castles

Chucky's Hunch

Mt. Quad

* Secret Numbers
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* Fool For Love

carton 8, folder 4
* Voodoo Automatic/ Red Rain

carton 8, folder 5
Singapore Sling

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Sin, Sex and Cinema

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Playing in Local Bands

The Grass House

carton 8, folder 8-9
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City Preacher

carton 8, folder 10
These Men

carton 8, folder 11-12
The Sister Joseph Memorial Gymnasium

carton 8, folder 13-14
Superstitions/ The Sad Lament of Pecos Bill on the Eve of Killing His Wife
Skaters

Cutting Canvas

Aupsices of Blackbirds

Geniuses

* Outcalls/Riptides

* War Horses

* The Couch

* Angel City

* Neon Psalms

Love in the Third Degree

Buried Child

Scar

Wild Indian

The Detective

Bully

Sharon and Billy

Honeymoon

Cooking Harry

3 x Me -- Playing with Dolls and Words and Music

Aunt Dan and Lemon

Visions of Beckett

Roshi

True Beauties

The Beard/ Spider Rabbit

Between East and West

The Man in the Nile at Night/ Performance Landscape:
A Wall in Venice/ 3 Women/ Wet Shadows

The Coyote Cycle

Apocalyptic Butterflies

Spoils of War

Stage sketches (unidentified) undated

Stage sketches (unidentified) undated

Costume sketches [for Talk Radio?] undated

Physical Description: Carton 9, folders 18-57; Carton 10, folders 1-37

Content/Description

Divided into two sub-series: Funding Requests and Financial Records. The first, arranged alphabetically by agency or company, deals primarily with Magic Theatre's applications for grants from various funding sources, in which are summarized its mission, goals, achievements, and budget. The second, though incomplete, provides additional insights into Magic Theatre's financial management and fund raising activities.

Contains grant, loan and credit application forms and related documents, financial statements, budgets and financial analysis, letters of acknowledgement, and clippings.

FUNDING REQUESTS. 1972-1988

Funding Requests 1980-84

- American Broadcasting Company 1980-81
- American Express Company 1979
- Arthur Anderson & Company 1984
- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation 1976
- Atari, Inc. 1981-82
- California Arts Council 1976-77
- Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc 1980-84
- Citicorp (USA), Inc. 1980-83
- Coopers and Lybrand 1984
- Exxon Corporation 1983
- Fidelity Savings & Loan Association 1979
- Fireman's Fund Insurance Company Foundation 1980-83
- Ford Foundation 1974-76
- Foremost and McKeeson Foundation, Inc. 1977-78
- Foundation for the Extension and Development of the American Professional Theatre 1974-86
- Golden Grain Macaroni Company 1984
- Gulf & Western Foundation 1983
- Hotel Tax Board of San Francisco 1975-80
- Industrial Indemnity Company 1984
- Irwin Charity Foundation [1984]
- Jewett Foundation 1984
- Louis R. Lurie Foundation 1976-77
- National Endowment for the Arts 1972-1987
- Neighborhood Arts Program National Organizing Committee 1979
- Philip Morris, Inc. 1983-84
- Potlach Corporation 1979-81
- Rockefeller Foundation 1973-83
- Rockefeller Foundation 1976-77
- Sohio Petroleum Company 1981-85
- Twentieth Century-Fox Productions 1980-82
- United California Bank Foundation 1981
- Union Oil Company of California Foundation 1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carton/Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10, folder 13</td>
<td>United Vintners, Inc. 1981-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 14</td>
<td>Utah International 1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 15</td>
<td>William and Flora Hewlett Foundation 1976 1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 16</td>
<td>Wilsey Foundation 1984-85</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 17</td>
<td>Zellerbach Family Fund 1978-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 18-20</td>
<td>Reference notes for grant applications 1979-87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FINANCIAL RECORDS. 1973-1988

- Financial statements 1976-82 1986
- Financial planning study 1986
- Budget and financial analysis 1974 1978-88
- Credit applications 1978-82 1988
- Loans and grants 1973-80
- Membership research reference undated
- Clippings regarding funding 1984
- Acknowledgements of contributions 1975-85


- Physical Description: Carton 10, folders 38-40; Cartons 11-12; Oversize Box 1, folder 5
- Content/Description
  - Contains subscription brochures, background material, and other ephemera from ticket subscription campaigns, along with public relations material in the form of advertisements, ticket promotions, and donations of tickets and other items. Also includes materials from the press office and the Magic Theatre newsletter, as well as clippings and advertisements collected by the press office.

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<tr>
<th>Carton/Folder</th>
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<tr>
<td>10, folder 38-40</td>
<td>Subscription campaigns 1973-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>11, folder 1-32</td>
<td>Subscription campaigns 1981-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12, folder 1-11</td>
<td>Subscription campaigns 1986-88 undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, folder 12-13</td>
<td>Public relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, folder 14-16</td>
<td>General information 1978-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, folder 17-19</td>
<td>Advertisements 1977-85</td>
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<td>oversize-box 1, folder 5</td>
<td>Ticket promotions 1984-85 undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, folder 20-23</td>
<td>Ticket coupon and voucher mock-ups 1985-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, folder 20-23</td>
<td>Ticket donations 1980-87</td>
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Other donations 1980
Press office 1982-86
Newsletter compilation 1980-85


Physical Description: Oversize Box 3, folders 1-5; Oversize Folders 9-16; Tube 2
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by production season.
Content/Description
Divided into three sub-series: General Publicity, By Production, and Miscellaneous.
Includes subscription and production posters of the Magic Theatre as well as posters from
other theatres. Production titles listed in Series 2: Production Files are marked with an
asterisk (*) to indicate the existence of these corresponding posters.

GENERAL PUBLICITY. 1977-1987 undated

Magic Theatre posters
Magic Theatre posters
Magic Theatre postings
Magic Theatre postings

BY PRODUCTION. 1969-1983 undated
Season: 1969
Charbroiled Chinchilla

Season: 1970
La Turista
The Brutal Brontosaurus

Season: 1971
The Fish
Four-In-One

Season: 1972
Chamber Piece
Boxes
auto-destruct

Season: 1973
AC/DC

Season: 1974
Gorf
American Vermilion

Season: 1975
The Death and Life of Jesse James
Action/ Killer's Head
Fear of Heights/ Sweet Eros/ Strip Tease of Jealousy

Season: 1976
Two for the Tricentennial
Angel City
Season: 1976-1977
| Season: 1977-1978 | Inacoma  
| Alfred Dies  
| Hospital  
| Are You Lookin'?  
| **The Wild Goose**  
| Minnie Mouse and the Tap-Dancing Buddha  
| Home On The Range  
| Season: 1978-1979 | Autobiography of a Pearl Diver  
| The Barbeque  
| Suicide in B♭  
| Perfida  
| Season: 1980-1981 | All Night Long  
| True West  
| Season: 1982-1983 | Frankie and Johnnie  
| The Story  
| Secret Numbers  
| Fool for Love  
| Additional Note  
| This material was selectively digitized from a larger resource or collection.  
| Season: 1984 | Voodoo Automatic  
| Miscellaneous. undated | Promotional postings from production photos  
| **Outcalls/ Riptides**  
| War Horses  
| Angel City  
| Neon Psalms  
| Scar  
| Promotional posting for Sharon and Billy  
| Promotional posting for Sharon and Billy signed by cast  
| Promotional postings from other production companies, including:  
| Asian Resource Gallery (art exhibit)  
| Eureka Theater  
| Giraffe Theater  
| Grupo Contadores de Estorias  
| New Performance Consortium  
| San Francisco Internation Theater Festival  
| Savoy Tivoli
**Audio-Visual Collection**

**PHONOTAPES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tape</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
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</table>
| phonotape 2760 C : 1 | Joseph Chaikin, "The War in Heaven"  
Physical Description: (1 cassette) |
| phonotape 2760 C : 2 | Copland, "Billy the Kid" and "Fanfare of the Common Man," and "5 Madrigals -- Suggestions for Spider Rabbit Vision"  
Physical Description: (1 cassette) |
| phonotape 2760 C : 3 | Sheilah Glover and Nina Wise, "Singing My Mother to Sleep," 1984  
Physical Description: (1 cassette) |
| phonotape 2760 C : 4 | Music and sound design by Barney Jones and Jim McKee, Earwax Productions. ca. 1986  
Physical Description: (1 cassette) |

**MOTION PICTURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| reel 778 D | Josef Hartmann (director) and Z. A. Sokolovic (playwright), "Kill Hamlet," 12' excerpt by Maria Ginoux  
Physical Description: (1 VHS tape) |
| reel 779 C | Unidentified  
Physical Description:  
Dimensions: (16 mm) |