Forest Theater Collection

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Forest Theater Collection
Dates: 1910-1962
Collection Number: F67
Creator/Collector: Forest Theater (Carmel, Calif.)
Extent: 3 archival boxes
Repository: Harrison Memorial Library
Carmel-by-the-Sea, California 93921

Abstract: This collection is made up of Forest Theater programs, a list of productions, and a study of renovations done to the theater. The Forest Theater is the oldest outdoor community theater west of the Rockies. Founded in 1910, the first production at Carmel's Forest Theater was attended by 1000 people who saw "David," written by Constance Skinner and directed by the well-known professional coach, Garnet Holme from the University of California. It was Mary Austin, author of The Arrowmaker, who first suggested the Forest Theater about 1908. She was joined by poet and dramatist, Herbert Heron, and author Michael Williams. They shared a vision of an open-air theater where plays could be produced by locals, who would also have fun doing the acting, directing, lighting, costuming and staging. With the cooperation and support of a local real estate firm, the beautiful site in the forest of pines and cypress was acquired.

Language of Material: English

Access
Materials are open for research.

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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Donated by the Forest Theater

Biography/Administrative History
The Forest Theater is the oldest outdoor community theater west of the Rockies. Founded in 1910, the first production at Carmel's Forest Theater was attended by 1000 people who saw "David," written by Constance Skinner and directed by the well-known professional coach, Garnet Holme from the University of California. It was Mary Austin, author of The Arrowmaker, who first suggested the Forest Theater about 1908. She was joined by poet and dramatist, Herbert Heron, and author Michael Williams. They shared a vision of an open-air theater where plays could be produced by locals, who would also have fun doing the acting, directing, lighting, costuming and staging. With the cooperation and support of a local real estate firm, the beautiful site in the forest of pines and cypress was acquired. Situated close to the heart of downtown Carmel, the location provided ideal acoustics within a natural amphitheater. The original stage was built on a slope between two great pines that form the proscenium arch, sixty feet wide. There wasn't a curtain and there were no electric lights. The roads and paths to the theater were lit by bonfires and two stone fireplaces on either side of the stage, which are still kindled every evening of a performance. The theater was deeded to the City of Carmel in 1937 and became public property. When the wooded theater started to show signs of deterioration, community residents rallied to raise funds to renovate the decaying structure. The world theater community heard the appeal and Dame Judith Anderson returned to the Forest Theater stage to headline a benefit performance. Her appearance helped persuade the city to supplement the proceeds of her performance to refurbish the theater.

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection is made up of Forest Theater programs, a list of productions, and a study of renovations done to the theater.

Indexing Terms
Theater
Theater programs
Carmel, Calif.