
Margrit Roma & Clarence Ricklefs Papers

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Margrit Roma & Clarence Ricklefs Papers

Dates: 1907-1995

Collection Number: 998.097

Creator/Collector: Ricklefs, Clarence /Roma, Margrit

Extent: 3 Boxes. 7 linear feet.

Repository: Museum of Performance and Design, Performing Arts Library
San Francisco, California 94124

Abstract: Margrit Roma was an actress and director, born in Zurich before moving to Berlin to pursue theatre. She studied under Max Reinhardt until fleeing to France during WWII where she starred in several films which led to a career in Hollywood. There she met Clarence Ricklefs, her husband who joined her in creating and managing a series of "little" theaters in the area. In 1966 they moved to San Francisco where they became involved in local theatre production which eventually became the New Shakespeare Company. This collection covers the period of 1907 to 1995 in the life of Margrit Roma and the life of Clarence Ricklefs after 1946, including information on both of their involvement in theatre, Margrit's career in Hollywood, and the New Shakespeare Company in San Francisco.

Language of Material: English

Access

Entire Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

Margrit Roma & Clarence Ricklefs Papers. Museum of Performance and Design, Performing Arts Library

Acquisition Information

The papers were donated to the San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum on May 6, 1998 by Margrit Roma and Clarence Ricklefs.

Biography/Administrative History

Margrit Roma was born in Zurich, November 27, 1907. Her maiden name was Baer. At an early age she ran away from home to Berlin to pursue a life in the active theatre life in that city. She met Max Reinhardt and was a student and actress in his famed school. Early on she was under the influence of the works of Bertolt Brecht and performed in his adaptation of Gorki's *The Mother*. By the mid 1930s, she fled to France when Hitler's dictatorship was persecuting Jews. In Paris she appeared in several films before moving on to America and eventually to Hollywood. In Hollywood, she worked for the studios with no real success, but in 1946, she met Clarence Ricklefs, a contractor, born in Iowa, and they married. Together they created and managed a series of "little" theaters in the area for twenty years. Artistically successful, the financial returns were meager. In 1966, they moved to the San Francisco peninsula and became involved in theater productions that, in 1969, evolved into the New Shakespeare Company in San Francisco. From the beginning, the Shakespeare Company centered on young actors, as well as young audiences. Touring the entire USA, they traveled to as many as fifty cities, including thirty-six college campuses, in the next two decades. Money was always a problem and the papers in the collection spell out the difficulties in continuing productions of not only Shakespeare but also Brecht and adapting children's classics for the stage. From performances in Golden Gate Park to Lake Tahoe and all over the country, the team of Roma and Ricklefs brought theater to the country for two and a half decades. This Collection describes the history of life in the theater in America when success is too often measured by financial rewards and not on artistic merit.

Scope and Content of Collection

This collection covers the period of 1907 to 1995 in the life of Margrit Roma, actress and director, with the early papers and correspondence mostly in German. It also includes the life of Clarence Ricklefs after 1946. The collection contains information on the couple's professional careers in the theater; Ms. Roma's career in Hollywood and the New Shakespeare Company in San Francisco.

Indexing Terms

Motion picture actors and actresses

Theater

Reinhardt, Max 1873-1943

New Shakespeare Company

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