
Newcomb and Grace Condee Theater Playbill scrapbooks, 1913-1970s

Finding aid prepared by Lauren Jung with assistance from Julie Graham; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

UCLA Library Special Collections

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Title: Newcomb and Grace Condee Theatre Playbill scrapbooks

Collection number: 2140

Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 2.4 linear ft.(6 flat boxes)

Date (bulk): Bulk, 1930-1960

Date (inclusive): 1913- ca. 1970s

Abstract: The collection consists of theatre playbills and programs collected and compiled into six scrapbooks by Newcomb and Grace Condee.

Language of Materials: The materials in this collection are in English.

Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. Advance notice required for access. Contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Newcomb and Grace Condee Theatre Playbill Scrapbooks (Collection 2140). Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

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Processing Information

Processed by Lauren Jung in 2013.

Biography/History

The grandson of a Forty-Niner in the Gold Fields of the Feather River who later became the first medical doctor in the village of Riverside, Newcomb Condee was born in that village on June 26, 1898. He was seriously stage-struck from an early age. At the age of twelve, he sat in the upper balcony at the Mason Opera House in downtown L.A. watching a production of *Ben-Hur*, complete with an onstage chariot race (on a treadmill), and thinking he had died and gone to heaven. He got to know his future wife Grace Lawrence when he cast her as his wife in the Inglewood High School production of *The Mastermind*, a mildly-risqué Broadway vehicle that later became an early "talkie" starring Lionel Barrymore. Grace hailed from Park City, Utah, where her earliest memories was of the great stage actress Maud Adams returning home to Salt Lake City to play Peter Pan, the part James Barrie wrote for her in London; Grace's parents left her behind and she howled like a banshee. Her father, a Swedish-born silver miner and anarchist union organizer, opened a boarding house and the first silent movie theater in Inglewood, where Grace provided accompaniment on piano. Her first date with her future husband involved a Pacific Electric trolley ride Downtown to see the great English thespian Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson as Hamlet - front-row seats, for which Newcomb paid fifty cents each. Los Angeles was the biggest theater center west of Broadway in those days, and the place where the motion picture industry found many of its early stars, among them Mary Pickford and a fine Shakespearean actor turned cowboy star, William S. Hart. Newcomb might have stuck with the theater himself, but when his father's chicken farm went bust his High School Principal urged him to attend a "poor boy's school," Stanford University, which in those days had no tuition, only a fee of \$23 a quarter. Finishing his B.A. and J.D. in five years, Newcomb rushed back south to marry his high school sweetheart and hang up a shingle in his hometown, but continued to see all the theater Los Angeles had to offer. They were Mark Taper Forum subscribers from its first season, and saw all the big touring shows - from the D'Oyly Carte Light Opera to Peter Brooks' production of *Midsummer Nights' Dream* - and traveled abroad to Stratford-Upon-Avon several times to see the Royal Shakespeare Company in its home theater.

Shakespeare was Newcomb's greatest love. He claimed to have seen over eighty productions of Hamlet and all of the greats, from Gielgud to Burton. He also loved the work of George Bernard Shaw as well as more middlebrow fare, especially the plays of Maxwell Anderson. Beginning in 1951 he was able to return to his first love, producing and directing plays at the 2,300-seat Masonic Lodge Temple on Wilshire Boulevard, and writing his own dramas, including *Architects of Freedom*,

about the writing of the U.S. Constitution, which won a national award and featured William McKesson, the District Attorney of Los Angeles, as Benjamin Franklin. Newcomb performed for seventeen years in these amateur productions -- as Shakespeare's Claudius and as Falstaff (with Grace as Mistress Quickly), as Shaw's Julius Caesar, and as Martin Luther in an historical drama he penned himself, among other roles. His powerful, resonant baritone was memorable in every show he did. He always said that the great theme of Shakespeare's theater was the passing of generations, which was his professional interest, too: his three-volume work *California Probate Court Practice* can still be purchased online.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of theatre playbills and programs collected and compiled into six scrapbooks by Newcomb and Grace Condee. The playbills document Los Angeles-area drama and musical productions from theatres such as Biltmore Theater, the Greek Theater, the Huntington Hartford, the Pasadena Playhouse, the Philharmonic Auditorium, and the Shubert Theater, among others. A small number of items represent productions from other cities in California, the United States and Europe.

Organization and Arrangement

There is no specific arrangement to the collection.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Playbills.

Theater programs.

Box 1	1913-1970s
Box 2	1922-1929
Box 3	1930-1949
Box 4	1950-1959
Box 5	1930-1953
Box 6	1953-1960s