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Guide to MS651 Festival Theater collection

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Guide to
MS651
Festival Theatre collection

Span Dates, 1926-1973

Bulk Dates, 1968-1971

10 inches (linear)

Processed by Margot Chavez North

Front Matter by Margot Chavez North and Abbie Weiser

January 10, 2018

Donated by Richard Worthington on October 16, 2017.

Citation: Festival Theatre collection, MS651, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department
University of Texas at El Paso

Historical Sketch

The Festival Theatre was a non-profit community theater in El Paso that opened in 1965. El Pasoans William Kastrin and his daughters, Veronica Kastrin and Linda Abraham, along with Ken Letner of San Francisco, first conceived the idea of the Festival Theatre. The purpose of the theater was to produce plays for the community by the community. The theater was located at 2501 Montana Avenue (now home of the El Paso Playhouse). The building was purchased with funds donated by William Kastrin, and the building underwent remodeling in February 1965. On April 8, 1965 the theater's first production, *Under the Yum Yum Tree*, opened under the direction of Ken Letner. Letner served as artistic director of the Festival Theatre for its first five years. The Festival Theatre was often supported by donations from people attending its productions. A board of directors made financial and administrative decisions. The theater was also supported by a Women's Guild which was involved in the theater's management, fundraising, and operations. In 1972 the Festival Theatre Guild produced a Spanish-language version of *West Side Story*. According to the August 4, 1972 issue of the *El Paso Herald-Post*, this was "the first time a bilingual production has been staged in our border city." Some of the plays and musicals that were put on by the Festival Theatre included *The Little Foxes*, *Henry IV*, *West Side Story*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Camelot*. During the late 1960s and early 1970s the Festival Theatre also ran an acting school. Due to financial problems, the Festival Theatre later combined with another local theater group, the Upstairs Theatre, to form the El Paso Playhouse.

[Sources: *El Paso Herald-Post*; *The Prospector*, October 23, 2007; Festival Theatre collection, MS651]

Series Description or Arrangement

This collection is minimally processed.

Scope and Content Note

The Festival Theatre collection dates 1926 – 1973, bulk 1965 – 1971. This collection is minimally processed. Types of records include programs, clippings, receipts, business records, and a manual. The collection also contains earlier programs from music recitals and plays from the mid-1920s.

Provenance Statement

Donated by Richard Worthington on October 27, 2017. Mr. Worthington purchased the collection at an estate sale. Prior provenance is unknown.

Restrictions

No deed of gift. No rights to materials.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the Festival Theatre collection must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, Festival Theatre collection, MS651, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Container List

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	1	Economic reports	1970-1971
1	2	Board of Directors manual	1969
1	3	Programs	1926-1972
1	4	Programs	1926-1972

1	5	Programs	1926-1972
1	6	Acting School flyer	1968
1	7	Agreement of the Festival Theatre	1965-1966
1	8	Newspaper clippings	1969-1971
1	9	Awards, Harlequin	1966-1968
2	1	Invitations	1967
2	2	Theatre Finances	1967-1969
2	3	Ticket Receipts	1970-1971
2	4	Businesses L-P	1971-1973
2	5	Guild	1969
2	6	Front facade [photograph]	undated