K0031

Blevins Davis (1903-1971) Papers
ca. 1918-1955
40 cubic feet, 23 scrapbook volumes

*Research materials, scripts, plays, photographs, printed materials, correspondence, scrapbooks, and memorabilia of Davis, an internationally prominent playwright and producer.*

**BIOGRAPHY:**

Blevins Davis, an internationally known theatrical producer and playwright, grew up in Independence, Missouri. The only son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Davis, Blevins was long-time friend of Mr. and Mrs. Harry S. Truman and their daughter Margaret. He attended the old Kansas City Junior College, Princeton University, and the University of Missouri graduating in 1925. Following graduation, Davis taught at William Chrisman high school, Independence, Missouri. He took post graduate work at Yale University and later became supervisor of educational programs at N.B.C in New York.

Davis was married in 1946 to Mrs. Margaret Sawyer Hill, widow of a railroad executive. The former Mrs. Hill was an heiress, social leader and art patron in New York. After a brief marriage, Mrs. Davis suffered a heart attack, and died at St. Luke’s Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 18, 1948. Davis became heir of her 9 million dollar fortune. He returned to Independence, Missouri where he rebuilt and refurbished his residence, Glendale Farm.

In 1949 Blevins Davis purchased an estate, Claremont, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which he renamed “Trianon”. At that time, he was president of the Ballet theater of New York and member of the board of directors of the American National theater association. Also in 1949, Davis presented the first American production of “Hamlet” at the Elsinore Castle in Denmark. He also produced “Porgy and Bess” with an all-Negro cast starring William Warfield, Leontyne Price, and Cab Calloway. In 1952, Davis sold “Trianon” to the Sisters of St. Francis Seraph.
Davis moved to Lima, Peru in the mid 1950’s. He made his home there for a decade. While on a business trip to London in 1971, Blevins Davis suffered a fatal heart attack. Much of his wealth had been donated during his lifetime to the performing arts.

PROVENANCE:

The papers were transferred from the General Library at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to Western Historical Manuscript Collection as accession KA0035 on August 21, 1980. An additional accession, KA0044 was received on September 29, 1980.

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DESCRIPTION:

The papers consist primarily of research materials, scripts, plays, photographs, printed materials, correspondence and scrapbooks.

INVENTORY:

BOX 001.

Great Plays, A-P, 1940-1941 season
BOX 002.

Great Plays, R-W, 1940-1941 season;
five 3-ring binders of plays, 1938 season

BOX 003.

Play scripts - some with transmittal correspondence

BOX 004.

Great Plays - no arrangement

BOX 005.

Great Plays - seems to include most of 1939-1940 season

BOX 006.

Great Plays - filed in folders - perhaps early drafts

BOX 007.

Plays - no arrangement, some transmittal correspondence

BOX 008.

Jesus: a production for the screen - includes drafts and working material

BOX 009.

Series of radio plays which were broadcast, with a listing, 1929-1937
“Pilgrimage of Poetry” - radio scripts for weekly poetry session by Ted Malone, 1939-1940
“Art for Your Sake” - radio presentations on art and artists, 1939-1940

BOX 010.

Jesus - research notes and scripts
Other screenplays and movie shorts that Davis was involved in

BOX 011.

Coronations - materials related to Davis’ coverage of the English coronations, 1937, 1953

BOX 012.

Coronations - materials and clippings
Elizabeth the Queen - script and associated materials

BOX 013.

Clippings - Jubilation, also South Shore Players
BOX 014.

Great Plays - early drafts, correspondence

BOX 015.

Plays - no arrangement - scripts which may have been evaluated for radio use

BOX 016.

ca. 1938 - ca. 1955
- NBC education articles
- Lena River script
- Program - talent - sales
- ANTA - Hamlet/SNEAF - Huebues address
- General Washington correspondence re: cultural program - State Dept.
- Record letters
- NBC Concert Bureau facts
- NBC drama survey
- American Educational Theatre California speech, clippings, 12/27-29/1939
- Nelson Rockefeller - South America
- K. Cornell
- St. John Devine
- ALA convention
- A.G. Boesel
- [Great Plays] (2)
- [Michael Doele]
- R.J. Potts, Lana Trower account
- Mrs. Atwell, Mrs. Lawrence Wood Robert
- Liberty Jones
- Your Rights and Mine
- Equity franchises
- John’s Manville Co.
- Boys Club program
- Educational stations
- [Queen Elizabeth clippings]
- [Jubilation]
- Defense industries parade
- Ronald Rogers
- Queen Elizabeth clippings
- Radio/Maxwell House/Coronation (envelope)
- Motion picture shorts - 48 states - list of 48 States scripts
- American Royal
- Interdepartment Great Plays
- “Aspects of Modern Drama” Chandler
Passion play
Dowling
Great Play - “Don’t Forget”
Playbills - Great Plays
Sarnoff speeches
Sources on Democracy
New England Drama Festival
NBC Master Play List
Series III: Great Plays 1939-1940 - interoffice and list
Wechsler memo and outline
Lena Rivers
Great Plays, 1940-1941
Boucicaults “The Octoroon” (16)
Drama Survey - catalogues
Theatre Guild on the Air
[American National Theatre and Academy]

BOX 017.

Scrapbooks:

“Weirton’s 9th Annual Labor Day Celebration - photos of army units, etc., 1942
Hamlet - including correspondence, clippings, photos (in folder)
Hamlet - photos
Ballet Theatre, 1950
Washington, DC photos

BOX 018.

Hamlet photos (in box, duplicates, badly curled)
Mock-up of booklet “Veloz and Yolanda”
Photos - “Movie Stars”
“Murder in the Cathedral”
Hamlet folders
“Song of Venice” photos
Oversize photos of works of art
Works of art
Personal photos
Set design for “Human Element”
Portraits of ballerinas
Play photos (Hamlet?)
Photo of party
Copper printing block - Harry S. Truman

BOX 019.

WWII Army show materials
BOX 020.

WWII Army show materials
“A Century of Progress, 1833-1933” - dedication of Jackson County Courthouse (8 annotated copies)

BOX 021.

Plays - no arrangement, includes “Complete File of Joy Freuer”

BOX 022.

Plays - no arrangement

BOX 023.

Playbills and pamphlets - miscellaneous topics

BOX 024.

Literary and play manuscripts - includes versions of “In the Shadow of the Spotlight” by E.D. Price, written for and described to Blevins Davis and Ardelia Palmer

BOX 025.

Literary, play, and music manuscripts
Articles from magazines and newspapers

BOX 026.

School notes from high school in Independence and Yale University;
Scripts of student productions;
Correspondence to parents, 1940-1941

BOX 027.

Annie Laurie Williams
“Radio and Public Response” by Franklin Dunham
Yale Alumni in Drama
Correspondence, 1937-1938
“Drama and Its Place in Radio” by Blevins Davis
“Music - A New Force in American Life” by Dr. Franklyn Dunham
“Radio and Its Part in Education
“Radio as a Social Force”
“Shadow in the Spotlight” (?)
NBC yearly report by Sarnoff, 1939
Ed Padula’s tv program and ball, 1939
“The Story of Corn”
“Drama of and for Radio”
“These Our Freedoms”
State Nurses Association of Connecticut  
NBC statistics, 1936  
Pratt Institute speech, 1940  
Talk at Roosevelt High School, 1940  
Warrensburg talk, 1939  
Teanack High School, 1939  
Trenton speeches, 1939  
National English Council, 1939  
American Library Association, Los Angeles  
Correspondence, 1937  
Allied Teachers Association, 1939  
Library Association, KCMO 1938  
National Speech Conference, Cleveland, 1938  
Light of a Star  
Pilgrimage of Poetry program  
PTA meeting  
New Theatre School  
“Broadcasting in a Democracy” by David Sarnoff  
NBC service to schools  
Typescript note by Blevins Davis  
Local play notes  
Correspondence - John P. Jones, 1942  
Dramatists Guild, 1945  
New Gate of Castle Arms  
Clippings, pamphlets, misc.

**BOX 028.**

Appointment books, 1946, 1947, 1953, 1956  
“Glendale” autograph book of visitors to the farm  
“Marge and Blev” book  
Jackson County History  
Bluelines - National Theatre project  
Poetry selected by Blevins Davis  
Leather notebook - gift, pages empty except for inscription  
Postcards, pamphlets, photo, misc. (including illuminated Easter card, Longview booklet)  
“Siddon Collection” - list of autograph items?  
EBT audition - “World Traveler - A Play”  
American National Theatre and Academy  
Blev-Ray Realty Corp.  
Correspondence - Richard Cowell, 1950  
Correspondence, 1930-1948  
Correspondence - Cheryl Crawford (misc. items)  
Clippings, 1943  
Correspondence - Jr. Chamber of Commerce, 1950
Correspondence - Nico Kamp
Correspondence - Angela Carabella
Correspondence
Culea Ballet
G-W Direction List, 1953
China Essay Contest Dinner, 1940
Misc. Blevins Davis items
Poulney Collection - index of a play in manuscript
Awards

**SCRAPBOOKS:**

- Volume 1. Great Plays - clippings, 1938-1939
- Volume 2. Great Plays - clippings, 1938-1940
- Volume 3. Great Plays - correspondence, 1938
- Volume 4. Great Plays - correspondence, 1938
- Volume 5. Great Plays - correspondence, 1938-1939
- Volume 6. Weirton Pageant, 1941
- Volume 7. Weirton Pageant, 1942
- Volume 8. Weirton Pageant, 1943
- Volume 9. Army War Show - Chicago, Cleveland, Louisville
- Volume 10. Army War Show - Indianapolis, St. Louis, Dallas, Houston
- Volume 11. Army War Show - Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh
- Volume 12. Army War Show - Milwaukee, Des Moines, Omaha
- Volume 13. Army War Show - New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta
- Volume 14. Army War Show - Pittsburgh, Akron, Detroit
- Volume 15. Coronation
- Volume 16. Coronation
- Volume 17. Ballet Theatre
- Volume 18. Howard Players to Europe, 1948
- Volume 19. General scrapbook, 1918-1934
- Volume 20. General scrapbook, 1935-1940
- Volume 21. General scrapbook, 1940-1947
- Volume 22. General scrapbook, 1947-1949
- Volume 23. General scrapbook, 1949-1950
Much of the material in BOXES 29-32 deals with the presentation of *Porgy and Bess* in Russia.

BOX 029. (was 01x.)

Theatre programs, reviews of *Porgy and Bess* in the USSR, clippings, scrapbooks, photographs

BOX 030. (was 02x.)

Theatre programs, manuscripts, music, scripts, photographs, clippings, correspondence

BOX 031. (was 03x.)

Printed music, photographs, clippings, notes, correspondence

BOX 032. (was 04x.)

Theatre programs

BOX 001x3

Oversize drawings