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Edward Gordon Craig Collection

Digital

1951-1956

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 344



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A noted figure in modernist theater, Edward Gordon Craig was born in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, on Jan. 16, 1872, the illegitimate son of the renowned actress Ellen Terry and the architect Edward William Craig. Although the most productive portion of his career was brief, he exerted a strong influence on the field of set design and lighting, and was fairly prolific as a writer on theatre.

The six audio recordings that comprise the Craig collection originated from a series of BBC radio talks in the early 1950s. The reel to reel tapes include Craig's reminiscences of Ellen Terry, Isadora Duncan, the old school of acting, celebrities, masks, and how he played Hamlet in Salford, Lancashire, but are more generally his thoughts on acting, the theater, and artw.

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Background on Edward Gordon Craig Collection

A noted figure in modernist theater, Edward Gordon Craig was born in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, on Jan. 16, 1872, the illegitimate son of the renowned actress Ellen Terry and the architect Edward William Craig. Drawn to the stage as a young man, Craig began his acting career with Henry Irving's Lyceum Company (1885-1897), where his mother was leading lady, but gradually became disenchanted with the limitations of the realist theater of the day.

As Craig's ideas on directing, acting, and scene design evolved, he emerged as one of the most influential stage designers of the early twentieth century, becoming an innovator in the use of mobile, non-representational screens and in stage lighting. Famously viewing actors as little more than marionettes, he abandoned his own acting career in 1897 in favor of working in theatrical design and production. Winning acclaim for productions in Germany and for his collaboration with Constantin Stanislavsky on the Moscow Art Theatre production of *Hamlet*, he settled in Florence, Italy, and founded the Gordon Craig School for the Art of the Theater in 1913. Thereafter, his insistence on total control resulted in less and less work on his part. He remained active in the theater as editor of the magazine *The Mask* (1908-1929) and he was author of five books on the theater, including a biography of his mother (1931).

Craig's personal life matched his mother's in energy. At the age of 21, he married Helen (May) Gibson in 1893, with whom he had five children, but he was equally prolific in extramarital affairs. Between 1903 and 1905, he had three illegitimate children with the violinist Elena Fortuna Meo; in 1906, he had a daughter (who died tragically at the age of seven) with the dancer Isadora Duncan; and in 1916, he had a son with the poet Dorothy Nevile Lees. Craig lived much of his life in France, dying in the town of Vence in 1966.

Scope of collection

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Inventory

Reminiscences of Ellen Terry

1951 July 14

Tape 1

Reminiscences of Ellen Terry and Henry Irving

1951 July 14

Tape 2

On the old school of acting

1951 Oct. 21

Tape 3

Isadora Duncan

1952 May 31

Tape 4

A note on masks

1952 Dec. 25

Tape 5

Two celebrities I have met

1953 Dec. 31

Tape 6

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Walther Richard Volbach via Vincent Brann, 1990.

Digitized content

The recordings have been digitized and may be listened to online through SCUA's digital repository Credo.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2015.

Language:

English

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Cite as: Edward Gordon Craig Collection (MS 344). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Actors--Great Britain

Dancers--Great Britain

Duncan, Isadora, 1877-1927

Terry, Ellen, Dame, 1847-1928

Theater--Great Britain

Contributors

Craig, Edward Gordon, 1872-1966 [main entry]

Genres and formats

Sound recordings

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