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Double Edge Theatre Records

1970-2002
28 boxes (15.5 linear ft.)
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Read collection overview

Since its founding, Double Edge Theatre has embraced a two-fold mission: to develop and promote the highest quality of original theatre performance, and to create a permanent center of performance, practice, training research, and cultural exchange. The collection documents the theatre's focus on research, international collaboration, and the elevation of artistic performance above and beyond stage work into the realm of cultural exchange.

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Background on Double Edge Theatre



A Bold Stroke for a Wife

Double Edge Theatre, founded in 1982, views itself as having a two-fold mission: to develop and promote the highest quality of original theatre performance, and to create at its home, "The Farm," located in Ashfield, Massachusetts, a permanent center of performance, practice, training research, and cultural exchange. The group's focus is on "living culture," a term used to describe both their unique method of research, exchange and collaborations in many parts of the world, and the belief that their work has the ability to transform an audience. This vision is exemplified in *The Song Trilogy*, a performance cycle more than ten years in the making about the life of the Jewish community in diaspora and its relationship to the various cultures which it confronts.

The group first performed in Allston, a district of Boston, before purchasing the Farm in 1995 both to escape the high cost of rent in the city as well as to expand the activities of the center. The 105-acre farm, one of oldest dairy farms in rural Ashfield, hosts artists, students, and community exchange, and permits the theatre to more fully embrace the practice of "living culture." From the Farm's opening in 1997, DET has premiered four of its own performances, created extra-theatrical research and exchange projects, long-term residencies, and collaborations with over a dozen artists and countries from across the United States, Asia, Latin America and Europe. In 1999 Double Edge initiated the first artist's think tank in this country to research theatre, culture, and creation, and to provide a place for professional artists to work free from the demands of daily survival.

Scope of collection

The records of Double Edge Theatre trace the history of this experimental company from their first performance featuring an all-female cast to their more recent collaborations and projects, which have secured them a prominent place in the international theater community. The collection documents the theatre's focus on research, international collaboration, and the elevation of artistic performance above and beyond stage work into the realm of cultural exchange.

The collection is organized into five series that together document Double Edge's productions and performances, their involvement and relationships with other theaters and cultural projects, as well as the administrative side of operating the theatre.

Series descriptions

[Series 1: Productions and Performances](#)

1982-1999
4.75 linear ft.

Bringing together research material, rehearsal notes, and scripts with programs, flyers, and reviews, this series documents the entire creative process from a project's conception to its performance before an audience. Each of the theatre's major productions is represented, and often times individual performances of these productions, demonstrating how they have evolved over time.

Beginning with the group's first production, *Rites*, which later became part of the *Women's Cycle*, through *The Song Trilogy* and *Republic of Dreams*, this series also provides a record of their artistic growth and thematic movement. Over the years, Double Edge has changed, but they have always stayed true to their mission of training, research, performance, and cultural exchange.

Of particular importance is their work on *The Song Trilogy* developed from 1987 to 1998. Consisting of three productions, *Song of Absence*, *Song of Songs*, and *Keter*, the *Crowing Song*, the Trilogy deals with the Jewish diaspora and its relationship to the cultures it encounters. Out of this performance cycle emerged *Republic of Dreams*, an international Jewish / American / Central European cultural exchange project, which focused on breaking through cultural and social isolation by unearthing remains of Jewish culture and other indigenous cultures through music, celebration, research, and oral histories of Holocaust and Stalinist survivors.

[Series 2: Theatres and Cultural Collaborations](#)

1972-2002
4.5 linear ft.

Double Edge Theatre has been involved in international study, exchange, and collaboration since its earliest days. Their first major collaboration was with Poland's Gardzienice Theater Association, a collaboration that since 1986 has included producing one another's work, hosting pedagogical sessions, symposia, and creating projects together, such as *Republic of Dreams*. This series documents the theatre's collaborations with Gardzienice as well as with many other theater companies around the world and in the U.S., including Odin Teatret, Diablolmundo, Charlestown Working Theater, and *Women in Theater Festival/Next Stage*. Also covered are cultural exchanges seminars and symposia, residences and research, as well as international guest artists performing with DET.

[Series 3: Correspondence and Topical Files](#)

1973-2002
2.5 linear ft.

This series consists almost entirely of correspondence between Double Edge and other artists or companies from around the world. Critical to understanding the development of the theatre are the correspondence, speeches, and writings of Stacy Klein, founder of Double Edge. There is some overlap between the correspondence series and the other series in this collection, in particular, Series 2: Theaters and Collaborations. Many of the proposals and exchanges discussed in the letters found here were later developed into the projects and collaborations documented primarily in series 2. For the most comprehensive view of the evolution of projects from research to performance, both series should be consulted.

[Series 4: Administration](#)

1982-2001
2.25 linear ft.

Dealing chiefly with the more prosaic details of operating a theatre group, this series includes records that reveal details about the company's day-to-day activities, covering financial, legal, and fundraising aspects. Minutes of meetings from the early years of the theatre are of particular interest as well as the notes and financial records documenting the formation of the *Conversation project*, a symposia for directors from Central Europe and the U.S. which concluded in a public forum for fifty arts professionals.

[Series 5: Photographs and Videos](#)

1970-1998
1.50 linear ft.

The series consists mostly of photographs of Double Edge productions and collaborations, again documenting the evolution of their productions. Beyond capturing the staged performances of the theatre's work, though, this series also includes images of the company's training and life on the Farm, providing a unique behind-the-scenes look at this artistic community.

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