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Billy Rose Theatre Division**

Gene Feist Papers
1930s-2000
*T-Mss 1997-010

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Summary

Main entry:	Feist, Gene
Title:	Gene Feist papers, 1930s-2000 (bulk 1944-1997)
Size:	31 linear feet (71 boxes)
Source:	This collection was donated to the New York Public Library by Gene Feist in 2004.
Abstract:	Gene Feist (1923-) is an American artistic director, playwright, producer, director and teacher. In 1965 he co-founded the Roundabout Theatre Company, of which he served as Artistic Director until 1988. The Gene Feist Papers document the personal and professional life Gene Feist and the history of the Roundabout Theatre Company. Types of materials in this collection include personal correspondence, production files, topical files, drafts of scripts, photographs, playbills and programs, reviews, publicity materials, business files and personal ephemera.
Access:	Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.
Preferred citation:	Gene Feist Papers, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.
Special formats	Photographs, Playbills, Scripts, Sound recordings

Biographical note

Gene Feist (1923-) is an American artistic director, playwright, producer, director and teacher, who has been professionally active since the late 1940s. Feist was born in New York City on January 16, 1923. In 1951 he graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology with a BFA in Directing and Playwriting. In 1952 he received an MA from New York University in Educational Theatre. Over the next few years he studied with Lee Strasberg at the American Theatre Wing. In 1957, Feist married Kathe Snyder (Elizabeth Owens) with whom he had two daughters, Nicole and Gena.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Feist worked for several different theatre companies, serving as Producer and Resident Playwright for the Two by Four Theatre; as General Manager and Production Coordinator at the Stamford Playhouse; as Founder and Executive Producer of the Renata Theatre; as General Manager and Publicist at the Sharon Playhouse; and as Producer and Artistic Director of the New Theatre Nashville. From 1962-1964 he was a drama critic for the *Chelsea-Clinton News*. He was also writing constantly during this period and he directed his plays *Lust for a Nightingale* and *A Toy for the Clowns* at the Actors' Studio, and *Wretched the Lionhearted* at the East End Theatre.

Gene Feist and his wife, actress Elizabeth Owens, conceived the idea of the nonprofit Roundabout Theatre Company in 1965. Feist wanted to do classic plays by authors like Ibsen and Shaw and thought that a subscription series at an affordable price would be of interest to New Yorkers. Roundabout's first production of Strindberg's *The Father* was presented in a 150-seat theatre in the basement of a supermarket in Chelsea. In that first season, the company had four hundred subscribers who paid only \$5.00 for three plays. In their early years, the Roundabout also produced original plays, which attracted well-known actors such as Kim Hunter, Vincent Price, Irene Worth, Tammy Grimes, Malcolm McDowell, and Philip Bosco.

While Roundabout was growing artistically, the company was struggling financially, filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 1978. By 1983, the company had an accumulated \$2.5 million deficit on a \$1.5 million budget. Todd Haimes, came on board as Managing Director. Just two weeks later, the Board voted to close the theatre due to financial troubles. Board member Christian C. Yegen agreed to write checks to cover the payroll, and within two years, Roundabout emerged from Chapter 11 protection. In 1984, Roundabout staged its most acclaimed production up to that time, Peter Nichols' *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* starring Jim Dale and Stockard Channing. The production moved to Broadway where it won the 1985 Tony®, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Outstanding Revival. Roundabout's growth continued with the opening of the 17th Street Theatre on January 30, 1985 with *The Playboy of the Western World*, starring Kate Burton and Ken Marshall.

In 1989, Gene Feist retired and Todd Haimes was appointed Artistic Director, but Feist continued to work with the Roundabout in the official capacity of Founder and Consultant. During the five years that followed, Roundabout's productions were nominated for 79 awards, including Tonys®, Drama Desks, Outer Critics Circle and Olivier Awards. Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* was followed by other acclaimed productions, such as Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* with Jane Alexander and Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie* starring Natasha Richardson and Liam Neeson, which won the 1993 Tony, Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Awards for Best Revival. Later that season, Haimes expanded the theatre's mission to produce musicals, and Roundabout introduced its Great American Musical series with *She Loves Me*, directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Rob Marshall, which successfully transferred to Broadway and was also produced in London, where it received five Olivier awards. In September 1995 the Roundabout produced the American premiere of Harold Pinter's *Moonlight*, starring Jason Robards and Blythe Danner. Roundabout had some of their biggest hits with the Tony Award® winning revivals of *Cabaret*, starring Natasha Richardson and Alan Cumming and Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical *Assassins*, directed by Joe Mantello. Since 1965, the Roundabout has grown from a small, off-Broadway theatre into one of the leading cultural institutions in New York City.

*From www.roundabouttheatre.org/history, retrieved 12/23/2010

Scope and content note

The Gene Feist Papers document the personal and professional life of American artistic director, playwright, producer, director, and teacher Gene Feist and the history of the Roundabout Theatre Company, one of New York's most acclaimed and successful non-for-profit theatre companies. Types of materials in this collection include personal correspondence, production files, topical files, drafts of scripts, photographs, playbills and programs, reviews, publicity materials, business files and personal ephemera.

Series I, Gene Feist consists of materials pertaining to Feist's personal and professional life apart from his work with the Roundabout Theatre Company. Feist's pre-Roundabout professional activities include his work as a playwright, critic, teacher, and director. This material includes correspondence with colleagues such as the renowned acting teachers Yale Wexler and Stella Adler, the latter of whom was also a longtime close personal friend of Feist and his wife. Correspondence with other friends includes, most substantially, letters to and from Thelma Laird Magers Lauer. Feist dated her in the 1940s and they remained lifelong friends after their marriages to other people. His extensive correspondence with her, over a period of fifty years, provides an invaluable autobiographical documentation of his adult life. Other correspondents include Feist's wife, Kathe, and their daughters, Gena and Nicole.

Feist's Writings consist mainly of drafts of plays Feist wrote, adapted or translated and his articles and reviews for the *Chelsea-Clinton News*. Other writings include drafts and excerpts from novels, short stories, and poems, his thesis, and a proposed nonfiction work on the history of the American theatre. There are also files and scrapbooks concerning, regional and community theatres, schools, and camps where Feist served as director, artistic director or producer. These include New Rochelle High School, Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts in Parry Sound, Ontario and the New Theatre Nashville. There are also subject files on people, places, productions, schools as well as significant topics/events, such as Feist's teaching certifications.

Feist also worked on *Theatron: A Festival of Four Staged Readings of New Israeli Plays*, produced at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, in association with the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Education. Of particular interest are several scripts of plays, in translation, by Israeli authors submitted to the Theatron for inclusion in the festival.

Series II: Roundabout Theatre Company contains institutional files of the Roundabout, from its founding in 1965 through 2000. Materials include an extensive collection of production shots from Roundabout productions, as well as playbills, programs and posters. Other production files include scripts, correspondence, set designs and publicity materials. Company records include subject files on individuals and organizations with which the Roundabout had contact; business files, including contracts, negotiations, legal and financial records. Also included are administrative files on classes, conservatories and conferences run by the Roundabout, including transcripts of classes taught by Feist. Scrapbooks of articles, correspondence, designs and photographs document the Roundabout's moves over the years between seven different theatres in Chelsea and Midtown. The production shots, posters and playbills in this collection are an extraordinary resource, visually documenting the Roundabout's history from its inception through the 1990s. Although Feist stepped down as Artistic Director in 1988, this collection also covers the following 10 years, when Feist was still actively involved in the Roundabout's productions as a consultant.

Container list

Series I: Gene Feist, circa 1930-1996

41 boxes

Correspondence, 1944-1992

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1-5	Adler, Stella
	6	Beresford-Clark, Lady
	7	Blumberg, Ellie Simon
	8	Burliuk, David
	9	Calcango, Lawrence
	10	Chall, David
	11	Delighter, Harry
	12	Dunn, Edward
	1-3	Feist, Gena
	4-6	Feist, Kathe (a.k.a. Elizabeth Owens)
	7	Feist, Nicole (Nikki)
2	8	France, Richard
	9	Fried, Michael
	10	Garber, Fern
	11	Gassman, Morton
	12	Hoguet, Tom
	13	Linnard, Stephen
3	1-16	Magers, Thelma Laird
4	1-13	Magers, Thelma Laird
5	1-8	Magers, Thelma Laird
6	1-2	Magers, Thelma Laird
	3	Pazer, Mitzi and Perry
	4	Phillips, Lois
	5	Rice, Drury
	6	Satumi, Katsingo and Lu family
	7	Senter, Evelyn
	8-9	Wexler, Yale
	10	Wurtzel, Stuart

Writings, 1949-1991 (See also: Scrapbooks)

Plays

7	1	<i>Adventures of a Sensitive Butcher</i>
	2	<i>The Bargain Hunter</i>
	3	<i>A Bride, a Son, a Groom</i>
	4-7	<i>Building Blocks</i>
	8-9	<i>Casey and the Bat</i>
	10	<i>Chasing Rainbows</i>
	11	<i>Cheri</i>
	12	<i>Civil War play</i>
	13	<i>Climb a Golden Stair</i>
	14	<i>Coming Through</i>
	15	<i>Coney Island</i>
8	1	<i>Dirty Faces</i>
	2	<i>Everywhere I Roam</i>
	3	<i>Falling Off Place</i>
	4	<i>Fifty Grand</i>
	5	<i>Gangster story</i>

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
8	6	<i>Golden Stranger</i>
	7-8	Governor's play
	9	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
	10	<i>Hedda Gabbler</i>
	11	Hollywood script
	12	<i>How Do You Spell Murder?</i>
	13-18	Ideas for plays
	19-22	<i>James Joyce's Dublin</i>
9	1-3	<i>James Joyce's Dublin</i>
	4	<i>Jet Heron</i>
	5-7	<i>Jocasta and Oedipus</i>
	8	<i>Joseph Burk</i>
	9	The Lady from Maxim's
	10	<i>Lady Trouble</i>
	11	<i>Larchmoor is Not the World</i>
	12	<i>Leftover Life to Live</i>
	13-17	<i>A Little Waltz, a Little Tango</i>
	18-19	<i>Lust for the Nightingale</i>
10	1-3	<i>Lust for the Nightingale</i>
	4-5	Martha's play (<i>Mirror</i>)
	6	Nightclub act
	7	Off-Broadway play
	8	<i>Old Ones</i>
	9	<i>Picnic on a Battlefield</i>
	10	<i>Rabbits</i>
	11-13	<i>Relative Strangers</i>
	14	<i>The Roaring Boy</i>
	15	<i>Scenario for Violence</i>
	16	<i>Sixty Something</i>
11	1	<i>Sparta is Not the World</i>
	2	Spiritualism play
	3	<i>Tiger in the Parlor</i>
	4	<i>Time Out</i>
	5-6	<i>Today Just Like Tomorrow</i>
	7	<i>Toward No Spring</i>
	8-11	<i>A Toy for the Clowns</i>
12	1	<i>Viva</i>
	2-3	<i>We Arrive as Strangers</i>
	4-5	<i>Weber and Fields</i>
13	1	Welfare play
	2	<i>Witchcraft</i>
	3	<i>Woman of Distinction</i>
	4-7	<i>Wretched the Lionhearted</i>
	8	<i>You Need a Pogrom to Tell a Rabbi</i>
	9	Poetry
14	1-4	Reviews
		Short stories and novels
15	1	<i>Act of Love</i>
	2	<i>Bleecker Street</i>
	3	<i>Coney Island</i>
	4	<i>Donna</i>

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
15	5	<i>Firecrackers</i>
	6	<i>43 Pipes and Bogart's Grave</i>
	7	<i>Franz Swann</i>
	8	<i>Glenn</i>
	9	<i>Leonard</i>
	10	<i>Oriental Atelier</i>
	11	<i>Saturday Night</i>
	12	Stories
		Various
	13	<i>History of the American Theatre</i>
	14	Queen Elizabeth II (Cruise Ship) Mystery
	15	Thesis, <i>The Dance of Death: August Strindberg</i>

Regional theatres, camps and schools, 1945-1993
(See also: Scrapbooks)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
16	1-15	Carnegie Institute of Technology
	16-19	Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts
17	1-8	Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts
63	2	Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts
17	9-28	New Rochelle High School
18	1-9	New Rochelle High School
	10-14	New Theatre Nashville
19	1-22	New Theatre Nashville
20	1-9	New Theatre Nashville
	10	Renata Theatre, Inc.
	11-16	Sharon Playhouse
	17-21	Stamford Playhouse/Argo Productions
21	1	State College, Pennsylvania
	2	Valley Community Theatre

Subject files, 1947-1995

	3-11	Actor's Studio, The
	12	American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA)
	13	American Theatre Wing
	14	Biographies
	15	Civil Service commission
	16	Certification (Teaching of Speech in Secondary Schools, New Jersey)
	17	Certification (New York)
	18	Columbia University
	19	Family
22	1-4	Feist, Kathe, nee Snyder (Elizabeth Owens)
	5	Hungary
	6	Katz, Harvey
	7	Madden, Donald
	8	Montana State College
	9	New York School of Printing
23	1	New York University
	2	Obituaries
	3	Profile of Feist by Bill Stevenson
	4	Regosin Institute

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
23	5	Sackville-West, V.
	6	Warhol, Andy (Donna De Salvo)
	7	West Point
	8	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf</i> (Edward Albee)
	9	Wills
		Scrapbooks (circa 1930-1965)
	10-12	Actors and actresses (Feist fan books)
63	1	Actors and actresses (Feist fan books)
24		<i>Babes in Arms, New Faces, Good News</i> , Bayonne
63	3	<i>Biggestuff</i> Newsletter of Biggs Army Airfield, Corporal Eugene Feist, editor
25		<i>Bye Bye Birdie</i>
62		Carnegie Tech
26		Hillside High School-International Theatre & Argo
27	1-2	Jocasta and Oedipus
	3	Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts
28		Manitou-wabing Camp of Fine Arts
29		<i>New Faces</i>
30-32		New Theatre Nashville
33		<i>The Pajama Game</i> , Sharon Playhouse
34		Stamford Playhouse, <i>Sugar and Spice</i>
35		<i>Two by Four, Wretched the Lionhearted</i>
36		Writings, various productions
37	1-4	Appointment books, journals and address books, 1982-1996
38-39		<i>Theatron: A Festival of Four Staged Readings of New Israeli Plays</i> In association with the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Education, at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre.

Series II: Roundabout Theatre Company, 1965-2000

30 boxes

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
		Administrative files, 1984-1988
40	1	Actors, designers and directors, lists
	2	Feist, Gene
	3	Haimes, Todd
	4-6	History of Roundabout, early years (Includes photographs)
	7	Meetings
	8	Seifter, Harvey
	9	Stationary
	10-17	Awards and tributes, 1987-1994 (Includes Roundabout gala)
		Contracts, legal negotiations and finances, 1976-1993
41	1	Babitt, Judge Roy
	2-5	Bankruptcy/Chapter 11
	6	By-laws
	7	Equity workshop dispute
42	1	Feigner, Ron
	2-3	Finances
	4-5	Fried, Michael
	6-7	Incorporation
43	1	Liabilities
	2	NYCA protest campaign
71	1-2	Original contributors and first subscribers
43	3	Yaegan, Chris
	4	Various
		Conservatories, conferences, classes, 1976-1996
	5-10	Conservatory at St. Peter's, 1994
	11-12	Lectures
	13	Masterclass, Feist (Transcripts)
	14-15	Scene study class, Feist (Transcripts)
44	1-2	Writers' conference, Santa Barbara
69	1	Costumes designs, 1979
		Includes <i>The Learned Ladies</i> , Denver Center Theatre
		Notes, 1970-1990
44	3	Daily notes
	4	Directors' notes
		Photographs and slides of productions, 1967-1973, n.d.
		Photographs
<u>Box</u>	<u>Vol</u>	
64	1-2	1967-1969 (Scrapbooks)
65	1	1969-1970 (Scrapbook)
66	1-2	1970-1971 (Scrapbooks)
67	1-2	1971-1973 (Scrapbooks)
<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
44	5-6	Unsorted
45	1-4	Unsorted

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
46	1-4	Unsorted
47	1-5	Unsorted
48	1-5	Unsorted
68	1-4	Unsorted
69	2	Unsorted
70	1	Unsorted
48	6-7	Slides
68	5	Posters and drawings, Undated
70	2-3	Posters and drawings, 1968-1995
		Production files, 1978-1998
49	1	<i>Cabaret</i>
	2	<i>Candida</i>
	3	<i>The Country Girl</i>
	4	<i>Dance of Death</i>
	5	<i>Dance Umbrella</i>
	6	<i>A Day in the Death of Joe Egg</i>
	7	<i>Fanny's First Play</i>
	8	<i>The Father</i>
	9	<i>Ghosts</i>
50	1-2	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	3	<i>Missed Opportunities</i>
	4	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>
	5	<i>Rashomon</i>
	6	<i>The Rover</i>
	7	<i>The Seagull</i>
	8	<i>Selling Off</i>
	9-10	<i>She Stoops to Conquer</i>
51	1	<i>She Stoops to Conquer</i>
	2-3	<i>Tramway Road</i>
	4	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
	5-6	Various
		Production scrapbooks, 1966-1990
		Alphabetical
		This alphabetical sequence of scrapbooks of programs (and photocopies of programs) for Roundabout shows, sometimes including photographs and reviews.
52	1	<i>Ah, Wilderness-Dance of Death</i>
	2	<i>The Dark at the Top of the Stairs-Ghosts</i>
	3	<i>Hamlet-The Knack</i>
	4	<i>The Lady from Maxim's-Misalliance</i>
53	1	<i>The Miser-The Rivals</i>
	2	<i>Room Service-You Never Can Tell</i>
		Chronological
	3	1966
	4	1966-1967
54	1	1966-1967
	2	1967-1968

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
54		Programs, 1966-1995
		Alphabetical (Photocopies of programs)
	3	<i>Ah, Wilderness - Jeeves Takes Charge</i>
	4	<i>John Gabriel Borkman - Rosmersholm</i>
	5	<i>The Seagull - Yolanda Loves Me</i>
		Chronological
55	1	Early programs
	2	1966-1972
	3	1973-1976
	4	1977-1979
	5	1980
56	1	1981-1983
	2	1984-1985
	3	1985-1987
	4	1987-1988
	5	1988-1989
57	1	1989-1990
	2	1991-1995
	3-4	Unsorted
58	1-3	Publicity materials, 1986-2000
		Set designs, 1981-1989 (Photographs and drawings)
	4	17th St.
	5	23rd St.
	6	26th St.
		Submitted plays, 1988-1990
	7	<i>Mrs. Klein</i>
	8	<i>Their Finest Hour--Churchill and Murrow, In My Father's House</i>
	9	<i>The White Devil</i>
		Theatres, 1965-1995
59	1-10	17th St.
60	1-10	23rd St. (Halou Cinema)
61	1-11	26th St. (Susan Bloch American Jewish Theatre)
	12-13	28th St. (Church of the Holy Apostle)
	14	Lucille Lortel Theatre
	15	Theatre rentals