



Using archival material to study performing arts and audience reception

Presentation for CANA / ENGL / THEA 4501
January 23, 2017

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Dalhousie University Archives



Today's agenda

1. Issues in performing arts archives
2. Overview of Dalhousie theatre archives
3. Accessing archival material for your assignment
4. Citing archival material

Performing arts archives

Braden Cannon.
"Evidence of
Artistic Process
in Performing
Arts Records."
*Canadian
Theatre Review*
156, no. 156
(2013): 35-39.
[http://muse.jhu.
edu/article/524
247](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/524247) (accessed
January 20,
2017).

Issues in performing arts archives

1. Temporality and ephemerality
2. Performing arts as process
3. Representation of performance

Dr. Roberta
Barker's
assignment
handout for
archival
research paper
assignment in
CANA / ENGL /
THEA 4501.03:
Canadian
theatre since
1968

Temporality and ephemerality

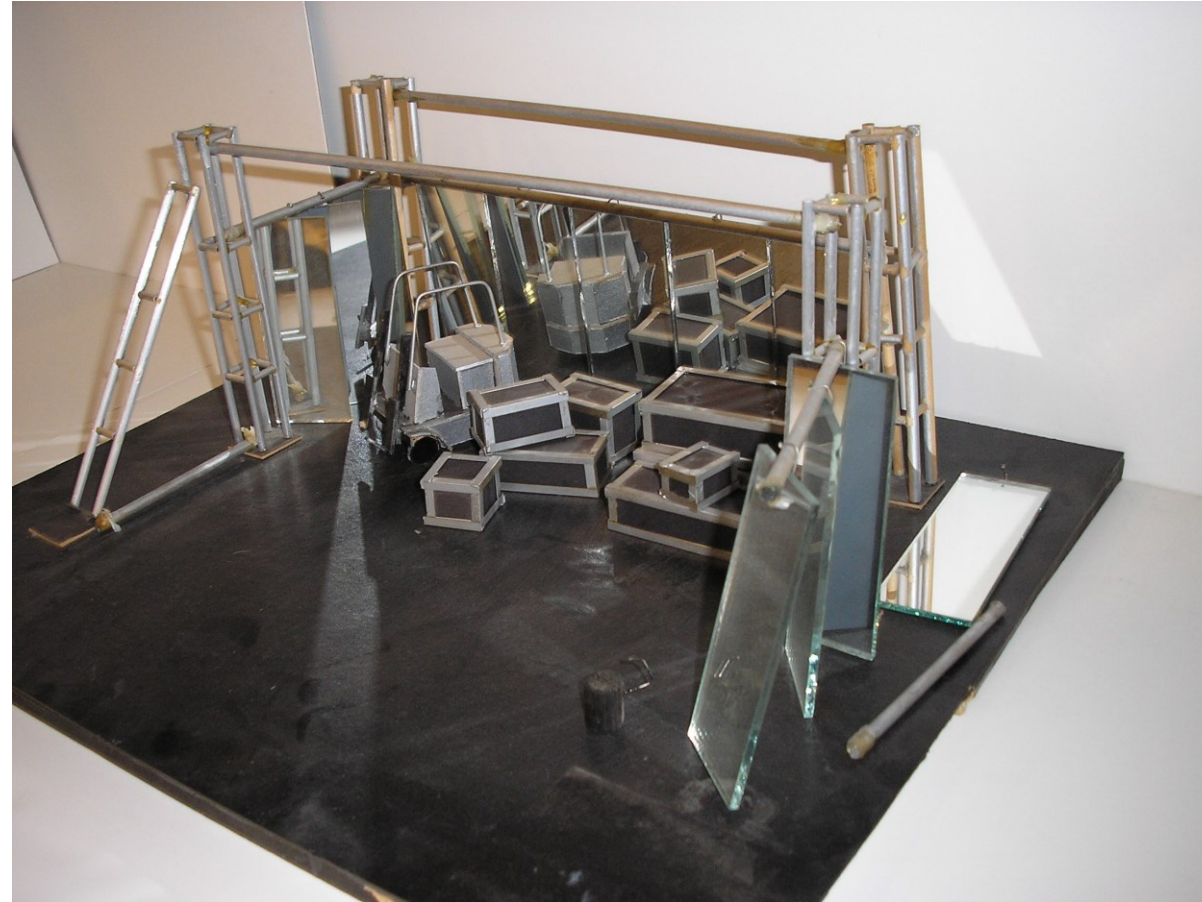
“Theatre is an ephemeral art; once ended, a production leaves only a few traces by which we can measure its characteristics, its quality, and its contributions to the cultural life of the community in which it took place.”

“This assignment invites you to complete original primary research, using archival sources to encounter the traces left behind by productions from Nova Scotia's theatre companies.”

Performing arts as process

Photograph of
maquette for
1979 production
of *18 Wheels* by
John Gray.

*This maquette
was held on
deposit for a
number of years
and then
returned to
Neptune
Theatre in 2009.*



Representation of performance

Photograph of 1979 production of *18 Wheels* by John Gray.

This maquette was held on deposit for a number of years and then returned to Neptune Theatre in 2009.



Dalhousie theatre archives

Kathryn Harvey
and Michael
Moosberger.

"Theatre
Archives'
Outreach and
Core Archival
Functions."

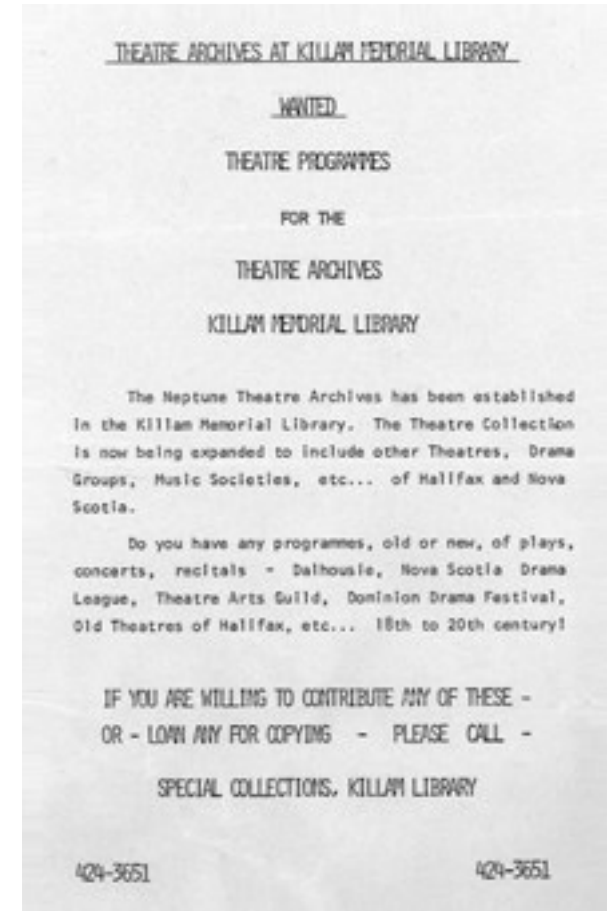
Archivaria 63,
(Spring 2007):
35-54.

[http://archivaria
.ca/index.php/ar
chivaria/article/
view/13126/143](http://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13126/143)

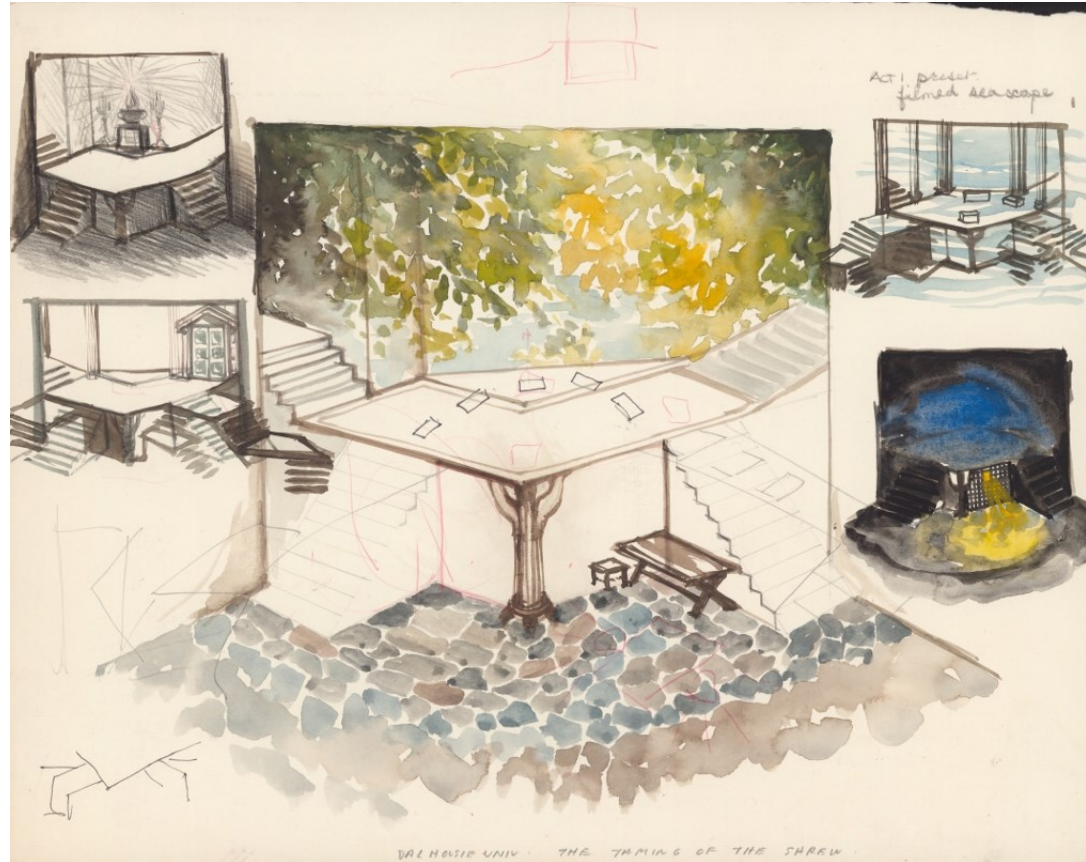
65 (accessed
January 20,
2017).

Theatre archives at Killam Memorial Library

Early 1970s: "The Neptune Theatre Archives has been established in the Killam Memorial Library. The Theatre Collection is now being expanded to include other theatres, drama groups, music societies, etc...of Halifax and Nova Scotia."



Goal of theatre archives: document artistic process, performance, and reception of Nova Scotia theatre



Set design for
The Taming of
the Shrew,
Robert Doyle
fonds, MS-3-18,
Box 6, Folder 15,
Item 1,
Dalhousie
University
Archives,
Halifax, Nova
Scotia, Canada.
<http://findingaids.library.dal.ca/set-design-for-taming-of-shrew>.

Evidence of artistic process in the Neptune Theatre fonds



Photograph of rehearsal of Neptune Theatre's 1974 production of Godspell, Neptune Theatre fonds, MS-3-1, PC3 Box 4, Folder 16, Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Broad coverage of visual and performing arts



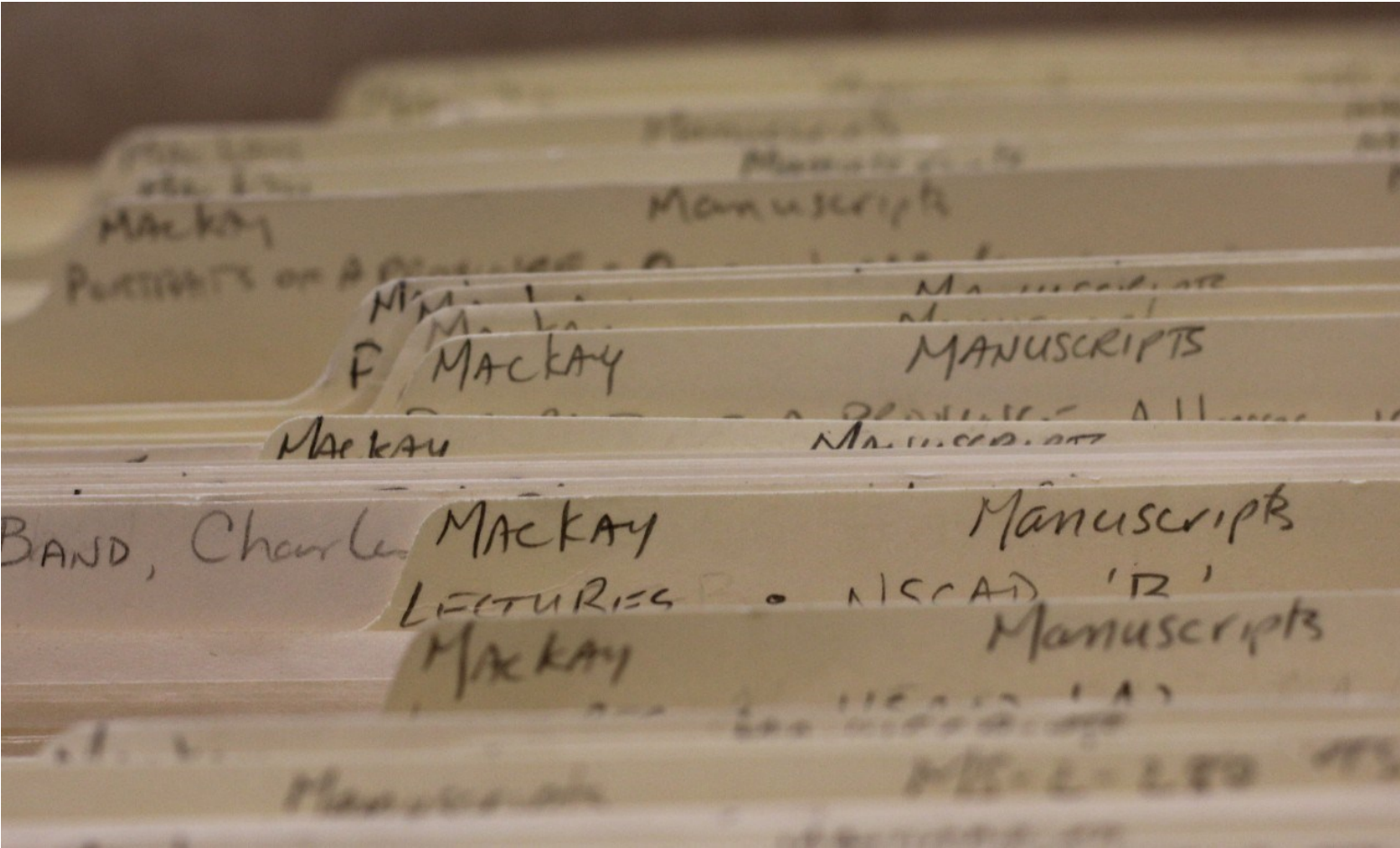
Photograph of a person watching television, Centre for Art Tapes fonds, MS-3-46, Box 54, Folder 16, Item 4, Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. <http://findingaids.library.dal.ca/photo-graph-of-person-watching-television-2>

Featured fonds

1. [Neptune Theatre fonds](#)
2. [Pier One Theatre fonds](#)
3. [David Renton fonds](#)
4. [Linda Moore fonds](#)
5. [Catherine Banks fonds](#)

Accessing archival material

Normally, you have to search and browse...



Photograph of files in the D.C. Mackay fonds (Photograph taken in 2014 by Creighton Barrett)

Karen Gross
reviewing
records from
Neptune
Theatre's 1977
production of
King Lear
(Photograph
taken in 2013 by
Creighton
Barrett)

We will provide an initial set of archival records for each production



Tip: Give yourself enough time to review all of the files in your production.

Archives staff cannot retrieve additional files after 4:00 p.m.

Access archival material

1. Hours: 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday
2. Drop in and request records for the production you have selected (e.g., “Can I have the records for Neptune Theatre’s 1988 production of *Blood Relations*?”)
3. Request additional files in person or by email: archives@dal.ca
4. Include “reference codes” or use “clipboard” feature to save a list of search results as a PDF and attach your list

Tip: If you are using a digital camera or mobile phone to photograph documents, write the full “reference code” on a small strip of paper and make sure the strip of paper is included in the photograph.

It will help when you need to cite your sources!

Archives and Special Collections Reading Room

1. Strict no food or drink policy
2. Pencils only
3. View materials one folder at a time
4. No flash photography

Reminder: ask me questions! I am happy to help:
creighton@dal.ca

Guide to archival research

1. Comprehensive guide for first-time and experienced researchers
2. Tips for first-time archives researchers:
<http://dal.ca.libguides.com/c.php?g=257178&p=1717152>
3. How to search the Archives Catalogue:
<http://dal.ca.libguides.com/c.php?g=257178&p=1717150>
4. How to browse the Archives Catalogue:
<http://dal.ca.libguides.com/c.php?g=257178&p=1717151>

Tip: do not rely on the archives document delivery service if you are in a pinch for time. The free service can take up to two weeks depending on staff availability.

Archives document delivery service

1. Students, faculty, and staff can request **free digital copies** of files and items found in the [Archives Catalogue and Online Collections](#)
2. Log into [Document Delivery Request Form](#) and submit an “Archives Request”
3. See “[Guide to Archival Research](#)” for more information about eligible and ineligible material, turnaround times, and instructions on completing the archives request form

Citing archival material

Visit our
citation guide:
[http://dal.ca.libguides.com/archivalresearch/citation](http://dal.ca/libguides.com/archivalresearch/citation)

Tip: Always
check with your
professor to
confirm
preferred
citation style.

Citing archival material

- 1. Chicago footnote or endnote for “ephemera”:** Poster for Dalhousie Student Union event, "In Search of the Supernatural," 1986, MS-1-Ref, Box 16, Folder 27, Dalhousie University Reference Collection, Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.
- 2. MLA reference page:** Dalhousie Student Union. "In Search of the Supernatural" [poster]. 1986. MS-1-Ref, Box 16, Folder 27. Dalhousie University Reference Collection. Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Questions?

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Feedback, please!

“Canada hosts relatively few theatrical archives, so Canadian students rarely have the chance to experience the exciting process of primary theatre research. Please make the most of this opportunity, dig in to the archives and feel free to give us lots of feedback on how we can improve your experience!”