Bernard Shaw Letters to Bernard Partridge
1893-1928 (bulk 1894)

MS.2005.039

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# Summary Information

- **Library Unit**: Archives and Manuscripts Department
- **Creator**: Shaw, Bernard, 1856-1950
- **Title**: Bernard Shaw letters to Bernard Partridge
- **Date [bulk]**: Bulk, 1894
- **Date [inclusive]**: 1893-1928
- **Extent**: 0.25 Linear feet (1 box)
- **Language**: English

**Abstract**

Eleven letters written by Irish playwright Bernard Shaw to Bernard Partridge, an actor who worked under the stage name of Bernard Gould. Most of the letters are regarding Partridge's performance in Shaw's play *Arms and the Man*.

**Preferred Citation note**

Identification of item, Box number, Folder number, Bernard Shaw letters to Bernard Partridge, MS.2005.039, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
Administrative Information

Publication Information

Processed by Valerie Manos, 2005; Anne Marie Anderson, 2010; and Stephanie Hall, 2017. This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit.

Restrictions on access

Collection is open for research.

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Provenance

Purchased from Napier Williams in 2005.

Processing Information note

The form of Shaw's name in the collection title (and throughout the finding aid) was changed during reprocessing in 2017 from George Bernard Shaw to Bernard Shaw to reflect the authorized form of his name according to the Library of Congress.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note


Biographical note: Bernard Partridge

Bernard Partridge, artist, cartoonist, and actor, was born in London, England, on October 11, 1861. He was educated at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, and later studied at the West London School of Art. After graduating, Partridge began working as a stained glass designer. At the same time, he began acting under the name of Bernard Gould and played the part of Sergius Saranoff in the first performance of Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* in 1894. Partridge corresponded with Shaw frequently that year, discussing the play.

Shaw later wanted Partridge to play the part of Frank Gardner in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, but it did not happen, perhaps because the play’s production was delayed by censors. Shaw and Partridge remained friends. Partridge painted two portraits of Shaw, one in 1894 and one in 1925. Both of these watercolors are in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Partridge had joined the staff of *Punch* in 1891, and in the mid-1890s he gave up the theater and turned exclusively to illustration. He was hired as a junior cartoonist and was promoted repeatedly over the next eighteen years until he became principal cartoonist in 1909. His career began by creating exclusively humorous and theatrical cartoons, but he added political cartoons to his repertoire in 1899. Though Partridge did not return to the stage, his cartoons expressed the influence of the theater through his specific mode of drawing, shading, and expression.

Partridge married Lydia Faith in 1897, and the couple had no children.

In 1925, Partridge was knighted.

Partridge retired from *Punch* in 1945, and died later that year, on August 9.

Sources:


Biographical note: Bernard Shaw

Bernard Shaw was born George Bernard Shaw on July 26, 1856, at number 3 Upper Synge Street (now 33 Synge Street), Dublin. He was the third and last child of George Carr Shaw, a grain merchant, and Elizabeth (Gurly) Shaw, a singer who instilled an appreciation for music in her young son. Shaw disliked the name George and never used it, although he signed his initials "G.B.S." He attended school until the age of 15, when he left to become an office clerk. He left Dublin for London in 1876 and did not return for 30 years. He began his writing career in the late 1870s with the publication of several articles in journals and political newspapers, along with a series of novels published in socialist periodicals. Most of this early fiction was not well received, and Shaw's primary reputation was as a journalist, critic, and political ideologue, especially after he joined the Fabian Society in 1884, of which he became a prominent member. He moved into playwriting in 1892 when his first play, Widowers' Houses, was performed by J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre. This ran for only one performance, and his next two plays, Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893) and The Philanderer (1893), were not performed for many years. He achieved success, however, with the plays Arms and the Man (1894) and Candida (1897), which were well-received in both London and New York.

In 1898 Shaw married Charlotte Payne-Townsend, a wealthy Irish heiress and fellow Fabian, and their marriage lasted until her death in 1943. Shaw wrote prolifically around the turn of the century, producing some of his best known plays during this time, including The Devil's Disciple (1897), Caesar and Cleopatra (1898), You Never Can Tell (1899), and Captain Brassbound's Conversion (1899). During this period he also wrote John Bull's Other Island (1904), which was performed for King Edward VII in 1905, Major Barbara (1905), Man and Superman (1905), and The Doctor's Dilemma (1906). In 1913 he wrote Pygmalion, which was produced first in Vienna, then in London in 1914, and later adapted into the musical My Fair Lady in 1956.

Shaw's dramatic production slowed during the First World War as theatre costs increased and Shaw's pacifist stance grew highly unpopular. He reemerged after the war to write three of his great plays: Heartbreak House (1920), Saint Joan (1923), and The Apple Cart (1929). Saint Joan helped him win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925, and for the rest of his life he was awarded many honors and titles, few of which he accepted. As he grew older he began to spend more time at his cottage at Ayot St. Lawrence in Hertfordshire, which he purchased in 1906 and would later become known as "Shaw's Corner." When he died on November 2, 1950, at the age of 94, he left behind a prolific bibliography that included more than fifty plays. According to his instructions he was cremated and his ashes were mingled with his wife's and spread in the garden at Shaw's Corner.

Sources:


Scope and Contents note

This collection comprises eleven original letters from Bernard Shaw to Bernard Partridge. The first nine of the eleven letters discuss the rehearsals for and staging of the first performance of Shaw’s play *Arms and the Man* at the Royal Avenue Theater, Westminster, in 1894. Partridge, who Shaw addressed by his stage name Bernard Gould in most of the letters, played Sergius Saranoff. Rehearsals started on April 11, and the play opened on April 21. In the final two letters Shaw writes to Partridge about personal matters.

Arrangement note

Chronological.
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