NEWS FROM
THE JEROME ROBBINS FOUNDATION
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In this issue of the Jerome Robbins Foundation newsletter, we recognize the importance of creating, maintaining, and utilizing archival tools and materials relating to the art of dance. Inspiration for this focus comes from an article written by Jerome Robbins that appeared in the *New York Times* on Sunday, November 24, 1963.

"We must have a library of dance film. First, everything that has already been recorded—by television, amateurs, professionals, art films, and 'hot film' (grabbed illegally during a performance)—must be collected and preserved before it disappears or is destroyed. Spadework has been done, and an impressive amount of film is available. The television networks have promised cooperation, and the private collections have been researched.

Secondly, every year we must film dance works during actual performances to have a stage record of how and what is danced. These films could be made with the cooperation of the theater unions and guaranteed to be used for noncommercial purposes by being placed in a film library similar to that at the Museum of Modern Art."

—from Jerome Robbins, "Recording the Dance," *New York Times*

The Matter of Archives

by Peter Kayafas

One thing certain about cultural treasures is that at some point—typically around the time they were originally made—they weren't considered treasures. For a thing to survive often requires a fortuitous combination of timing, money, intent, and perceived relevance, along with the power and prescience of individuals who have faith in the future. Institutions in positions to care for these treasures—and their supporters as well—have a moral responsibility to be proactive in ensuring that future scholars, artists, and the general public are able to use them for purposes that may or may not seem obvious at the time of acquisition. Archival materials are essential to our cultural heritage.

Another given is that the writing of history—complex as that is no matter when and by whom it is done—is fraught, and fallible. The letter handed to a lover left behind as the Titanic departed had a very different meaning to the recipient (to say nothing of posterity) just five days later. There are as many similar examples—albeit not always as dramatic—as there are disparate items in archives. And for every potentially valuable recording, photograph, letter, sketch, draft, or bit of ephemera that is lost or tossed, a small (or large) piece of the future may never unfold.

Some artists center their artistic practice around archival materials. Think of contemporary practitioners such as sculptor and photographer Christian Boltanski, writer and photographer Sophie Calle, fine artist and composer Christian Marclay, multidisciplinary and performance artist Taryn Simon, and dancer and choreographer Pam Tanowitz, among many others throughout history. The work each of them makes looks back at aspects of history from today's vantage point, reinvigorating the past to give it contemporary relevance that subsequently has its own future (not to mention its own archival map). It's hard to imagine a more dynamic and inspiring synergy than that.

If you're an artist not yet needing to consider what to do with your archives (though that time will come sooner than you think), it's worth noting a few basics to enhance your archival materials in ways that might make them more attractive to potential institutions. Keep everything associated with process (diaries, drafts, sketches, working models, book maquettes, project notes, correspondence with collaborators, press clippings and reviews, etc.) and organize these items in labeled folders (both paper and electronic) or boxes for ease of processing. Keep in mind what we ask of archives in general: that they preserve materials of as yet unknown value to future scholars, or even to the artist choosing what to preserve. Your personal archives may end up providing a wellspring of inspiration for new projects well before other artists or scholars are motivated to research more about how you made your work. If you're still making work and archiving materials related to it, avoid ever having to say, "I wish I'd saved that!"

When the time comes to consider places that might accept the responsibility for housing your archives, look for ones that already have other materials that may resonate with your own work. And consider giving it away. The main obstacle for archival collections has always been finding the appropriate storage space, which ultimately is expensive to build and maintain. A well-organized archive takes up less space. If you are one of the lucky few artists whose work commands remuneration, consider donating your archive with the stipulation that in lieu of payment, the receiving organization creates a reserve fund for the acquisition of other less "valuable" archives.

A measurable monetary value may be associated with archival materials, especially for those who were famous during their lifetime. This fact makes it easier for institutions to justify such acquisitions because the complicated work of assessing value has already been done for them. But this makes the acquisition of less measurably valuable materials more at risk, and in some cases more important.

Of course, we cannot save everything, and I am not advocating for cultural hoarding. Instead, we must trust in the discernment of the most important people involved with archives after the makers themselves: the curators, archivists, and librarians whose job it is to recognize, advocate, and care for these materials. These individuals have spent their careers educating themselves about relevant histories and inherently understand which materials may be most useful for future generations. Their responsibility and expertise are paramount.

History repeats itself, sure, but it's also important to learn from it through access to historical records. (Getting people to actually pay attention to the lessons of history is another matter altogether.) The keeping of archives is an investment in our collective cultural capital. It is nothing short of an act of faith in humanity, and should be a social, institutional priority on par with our investment in advances in science and technology. Without a consistently robust commitment to archives, we ourselves are lost to history.

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I am mindful that I'm writing this short *cris de coeur* in a publication about dance—the most ephemeral of arts—where readers are likely already steeped in the benefits of archives, because, after all, the moment a live performance ends, all we have is the stuff of archives (including individual accounts of the event itself). But I'd like to make the point that in a way dance has it easier, at least compared to other mediums, where the abundance of archival stuff mostly overwhelms potential hosts. Dance/performance archives are fundamentally about the negative space—the absence of the live performance—around which everything collectible and related to that absence provides the scaffold. There's a kind of clarity to this scenario: if there are only a handful of photographs in existence of Nijinsky dancing, you put them in the archive. Same for his diaries, or Jerome Robbins' diaries, or Lincoln Kirstein's diaries—diaries being their own auto-archives, if you will—to say nothing of the totality of company archives like Martha Graham's, or Alvin Ailey's. And then there is film/video and photography. What could we know about how a dance looked without them? So, in many ways the question of what to collect is less of a mystery with dance. It's simply archives or nothing! ■

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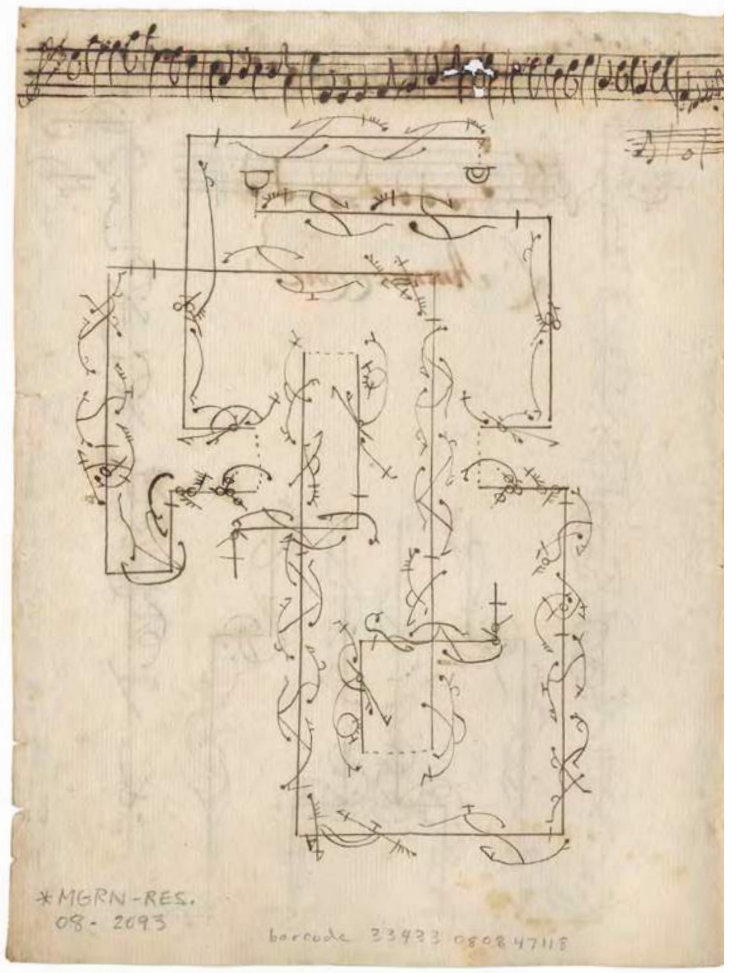


Top: Dance notation for *L'Amazzone*, 1725, creator unknown. Courtesy New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Bottom: *La Loïe Fuller: Vivante Fleur*, from a watercolor album by students from the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1895. Courtesy New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts is one of the world's great repositories for collective memory, and it stands firmly against the loss of live performance. Linda Murray, the Division's curator, eloquently describes the challenges of archiving dance—logistical, institutional, cultural, and philosophical—and presents successfully implemented solutions to those challenges. Anyone who has a love of dance and of history, and of the dynamic relationship between the two, must be grateful for the Division's seventy-five years of existence and its service to the community in perpetuity. It serves as an institutional model and as a reminder that, in Murray's words, "a good dance archive is not only a steward of history; it is also a vital contributor to the future of the field."

—Nancy Lassalle and Peter Kayafas, from the introduction to *Dance Index* vol. 10, no. 2 (Fall 2019), in which the following essay appeared

Moving History

by Linda Murray

This year [2019] marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. While there are dance archives that predate the establishment of our collections, at the time of its creation the Division's mission was unique. Dance, as a subject, had never been thoughtfully and rigorously sought out for archival inclusion before 1944, and no one had considered what it meant to be a dance archive, nor specifically queried what kinds of materials to collect, what genres to include, what projects to initiate, and what services to provide.

Although the New York Public Library can trace holdings of dance materials back to its earliest days as part of the Music Division, 1944 is generally embraced as the beginning of serious archival practice in the field of dance because it coincides with the employment by the Library of Genevieve "Gegi" Oswald. Oswald began her NYPL career in her early twenties as part of the Music reference staff, and it was through her work with miscellaneous dance materials contained within larger music collections that she realized the need for librarianship and archival practices devoted exclusively to the description of dance. In her forty-three-year tenure as curator of the Division (originally called the Dance Collection), Oswald built the archive from a handful of Ballet Theatre publicity photographs and a modest collection of books into the world's largest repository of dance material and the only archive to actively collect internationally across all genres with a staff of subject specialist librarians, many of them former dancers themselves.

The obligations of what it means to be the international nexus point for dance history have inevitably changed in the timeline of the Division's existence, although core services essentially remain the same. The first two decades were dominated by the building of a foundational collection of books to establish a library, as well as the institution of practices for the acquiring manuscripts, prints, artwork, sculpture, and ephemera. The first dance librarians also had to build a dance taxonomy and vocabulary for cataloging, which did not yet exist, and many of the Library of Congress Subject Headings describing dance (which constitute the standardized language of search terms shared across libraries) were developed by the staff of the Dance Division.

Preservation of dance in motion

In the 1960s, conversations between Jerome Robbins and Oswald led to a commitment to introduce film into the archive so that a moving artifact of dance could be preserved. This brought about not only a change in collecting practices but also the beginning of the Dance Division's Original Documentations (Origidocs) program. The first Dance Division Origidoc was shot in 1967—fittingly it was a rehearsal of the Robbins ballet *Les Noces*—and it marked a radical new way of collecting. Archives had always been considered a passive partner in culture; the role was to wait for art to be made before providing a stable environment where it could permanently reside. The idea that an archive would create the archival object itself was unheard of and required Oswald and her team to develop best practices for dance documentation, which were then adopted globally.

The Origidocs program has now been continually running for more than fifty years. In New York City and national theaters on any given night, you can see Dance Division videographers at work, capturing performances that may only ever run live for three or four nights but which become part of the permanent narrative of dance in our archive. Along with the Division's Oral History Project (begun in

1974), it is one of our programs that serves the community on two fronts: the act of documentation provides an essential historical record for future generations, while the artists being filmed receive a free professional recording of their work which helps to fund and sustain their practice.

Perils, diplomacy, expansion

The 1970s were a decade of financial instability that saw Oswald fighting valiantly, with the support of the Division's Dance Committee (a group of dance philanthropists dedicated to the preservation of the field), to keep the reality of a dance archive alive. This she accomplished, but more remarkable was that in these same years when the entire building of the Library for the Performing Arts was at risk of closure, Oswald embarked on a third ambitious phase to expand the holdings of the Division to include a specialization in Asian dance. The work involved complex diplomatic negotiations but resulted in an unparalleled collection of rare film, manuscripts, and artwork that is consulted daily by scholars from across the globe.

Oswald stepped down in 1987 and was succeeded by Madeleine Nichols, who led the Division for the next eighteen years, until 2005. Nichols fostered a deep sense of inclusivity during her tenure and was beloved by the dance community, as evidenced by the many awards bestowed on her for her devotion to the field. Nichols was also the curator who was responsible for safeguarding the story of the community at the height of the AIDS crisis. One of the defining acts of her curatorship was the decision to divert additional funds into the Oral History Project so that staff member Lesley Farlow could interview young dance artists from the epidemic and record their stories before they were entirely lost to us.

The last two decades of the Division have been under the direction of Michelle Porter and Jan Schmidt. The latter, in particular, shepherded the Dance Division into the digital age, overseeing the migration of our copious physical audio and moving-image formats into digital files, and creating digital surrogates for our vast collections of photographs and prints. This work, which will only increase in the future, significantly expands our global reach and supports our goal of ensuring equitable access.

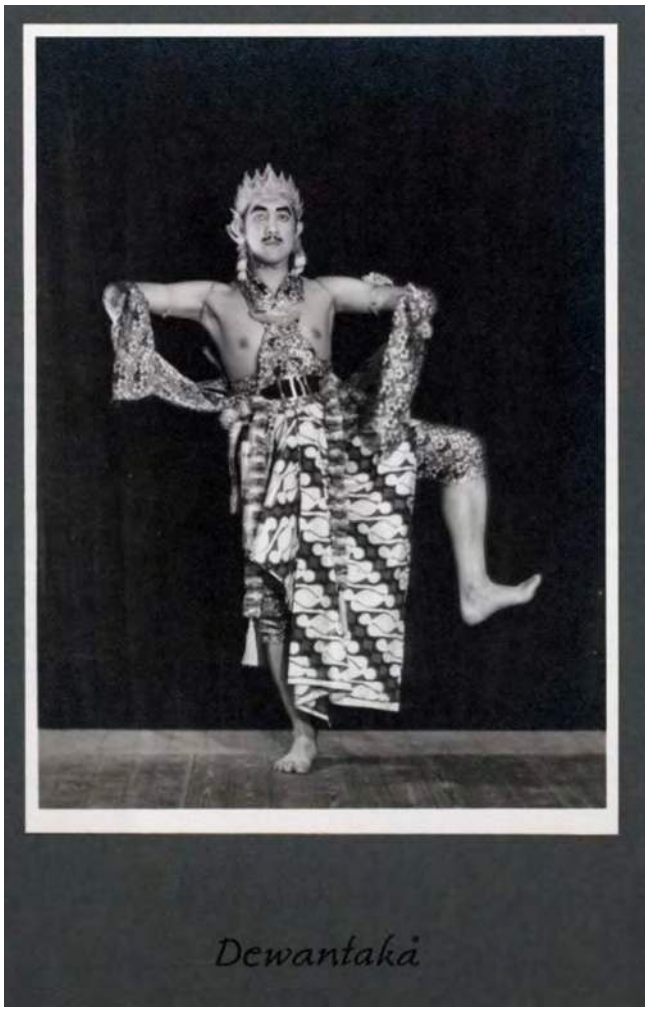
Now, well into the twenty-first century, a milestone anniversary becomes an opportunity to reassess once more what it means to serve an artistic and scholarly community as a dance archive.

Intimate and tactile engagement

The perception of archives is that they are dusty, static places. But those who work among them know that, on the contrary, they are flesh and bone, pulsating with the reverberations of stories and the loves and losses of people who still live through their collections. Engagement with an archive is an intimate and tactile act, ritualistic in nature. The physical and psychic connection of the researcher to the material reanimates its creator, temporarily opening a portal of communication between the two participants. Although the subject of the archive does not get to choose their confidant, the embodied link reascribes power to the author and enables a private and unique dialogue between the two parties.

The reality is that researchers in archives often know the depths of a person's thoughts and emotions better than any relatives or companion ever did. To immerse in an archive is to experience the miracle of revivification as the person's authentic self is temporarily brought back through the act of material contact. For a moment history and present overlap and the chasm of time evaporates. People are often surprised by how emotional it is to part with an archive or to experience it, but in fact nothing could be more obvious. In releasing an archive, we are letting go of that which is most secret and personal about ourselves, and in reading an archive we trespass into that sacred space without an explicit invitation. Although we tend to think of them in terms of tangible materiality, archives are psychological terrain, but the physical point of intervention is essential.

Given that archives are so much about individual emotional and even physical presence, it has always seemed ironic that dance, which is the embodiment of these ideas, has been relegated beyond the boundaries of archival space for much of human history. In his poem "Among Schoolchildren," W. B. Yeats contemplates the eternal question of immortality and a place in cultural legacy, and it feels inevitable that, as an analogy for the tension between living in the present



Top: Helen Barnes in *Ziegfield Follies*, c. 1915–18. Photo by White Studio, NY. © Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Bottom: *Dewantakâ*, Indonesia, 1939, photographer unknown. Courtesy New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

and the gift of immortality, he chose dance. Dance is about inhabiting the present to the exclusion of all else, but is also the connective tissue that holds together our cultural memory across bodies. The earliest evidence of man suggests that we have always danced, that we have always found it moving to move. Why then has dance struggled to create a space for itself in our cultural repositories?

Dance and remembrance

At its core, archiving is an act of remembrance. We safeguard materials not for the inherent value of the object itself (although financial considerations invariably play a role) but rather to cherish the narrative it contains. As a species concerned with recording our history, we innately understand the importance of placing material in an archive. One of today's most prominent archival theorists, Terry Cook, wrote a seminal paper in 2011 in which he made the famous declaration "We are what we keep." The article itself examines the history of appraisal and the means by which materials are selected by archives and museums, but at its core the phrase cuts to an essential truth about the practice of collecting.

As humans we instinctively place value on any items that survive across time, but we ascribe special meaning to items that were purposefully kept. The knowledge that our ancestors took extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of particular objects informs our reading of them. Consequently, we assume the legitimacy of those items as part of our cultural legacy. Thus, the act of placing a collection in an archive assures its longevity, not just physically but as part of the continuum of intellectual and artistic inquiry. Space in museums and archives is finite, and we are defined by the history that we curate for ourselves. But if, as Cook notes, we are what we keep, then it necessarily follows that we are not what we don't keep, meaning that the voices eliminated and/or excluded from an archive are erased from human history. This awareness and recalibration of thinking in recent decades is generating radical investigation of the centuries-old practice of appraisal and acquisition.

The evanesence of choreography

When the Dance Division began collecting in 1944, the entire discipline had been all but absent from the protection and legitimacy of archives. Museums and archives are built on the collection of tangible artifacts and dance lacked the ability to provide a core manuscript. Although all performing arts archives have to acknowledge the central absence of live performance from their collections, only in dance does this translate to loss of authorial intent. Music has a score and theater has a script, so although the contributions of musicians, directors, and actors may wane, the status of the composer and playwright remains intact across centuries. However, dance has no corresponding universally accepted mode of transmission, and this fact relegates choreographers and their kinetic texts to the margins of human memory. Different notational systems have had, at best, a limited ability to convey the full range of movement and intention of a body passing through time and space. Although many assume that the arrival of video solved this problem for dance, it provides only a partial document since the true intention of the choreographer remains obscured. Without a fixed account of the choreography, dance was deemed too unstable and impermanent to be enshrined within archival walls.

Of course, dance does have a mode of transmission that is cherished and tightly guarded in the communication of technique and roles from body to body. Essential to the very definition of dance, this methodology relies on physical proximity, verbal cues, and an emotional connection. It taps into the very foundation of what it means to be human and can be understood on a basic level by everyone, but simultaneously requires a level of heightened awareness and responsiveness that leaves it beyond the grasp of all but trained dancers. This mode of sharing knowledge is not replicated in any other academic or artistic discipline.

Dancers and choreographers rely on this language between bodies to build and disseminate creative work, but it is also an idiosyncratic system that all but guarantees that over time original choreographic intent will be skewed. Relaying information in this way is at its base a giant game of international and intergenerational telephone, with each degree of separation from the original choreographer resulting in modifications to placement, steps, and intention in performance. Of course, in part this is what makes dance special. As much as we would like to hold the choreographic vision steady, it is dance's adaptability to sit and morph on different bodies that defines its authenticity and draws us to it as an audience.

But dance's liminality also creates a vacuum of knowledge that diminishes the choreographer's status within the cultural landscape, has a negative impact on funding, and continues to undermine academic respect for the field. Without a stable understanding of what came before, dance artists expend energy attempting to recover something that can never fully be grasped. Additionally, choreographers often create in an abyss, being forced to rediscover or reinvent because there is only a partial trace of what preceded them. And if that weren't damning enough, lack of representation in an archive also inevitably means lack of research and critical discourse, which further negates the validity of a subject and continues a vicious cycle of exclusion and ignorance.

"Collecting around an absence"

For her part, Oswald always stated that her philosophy for building a dance archive was to acknowledge that one was collecting around an absence. Rather than apologize for what was not there, she developed a set of collecting practices that would establish dance's credentials without the need of a foundational score. Of course, dance notation is an important part of what the Division began to collect, and many examples of the various forms of notation that have been implemented over the centuries can be found in our stacks. However, the collection also sought out sketches, prints, and sculpture to inform researchers about the dancing body; designs, costumes, and shoes to illuminate how these elements would have enhanced or inhibited movement; along with photographs, film, and manuscripts to understand original choreography. This unorthodox and eclectic gathering of materials made the Division's collecting practices unique. It forced the staff to borrow principles from libraries, archives, and museums (which typically have three clearly defined and distinct roles) as well as from the arts community in order to create a space that would truly speak to, and on behalf of, dance artists.

Shoes, steps, theories, designs, debates

What, then, can a visitor to the Dance Division expect to find? You can see the costumes of Isadora Duncan, swathes of silk and chiffon, cut into unhemmed squares with simple stitching on the shoulders to hold the garment in place — the lack of ornamentation fundamental to understanding Duncan's physical philosophy of freedom and movement. You can see statuettes of the Romantic-era ballerinas Fanny Elssler and Marie Taglioni, the only fully dimensional understanding we have of their physicality. You can consult the diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky and look at his choreographic notation.

There are paintings by artists including Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali, Natalia Goncharova, Leon Bakst, Jean Cocteau, Alexandra Exter, and Mikhail Larionov. There are original costume designs from the court of Louis XIV. You can see one of the earliest documents on the subject of dance, *Trattato dell'arte del ballo* (nicknamed the "Giorgio" manuscript) from 1463, by Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, the Jewish dancing master of the Medici household.

You can see Irina Baronova dance in *Firebird*, witness Katherine Dunham performing *Rara Tonga*, and watch Balinese dancers ripple through back isolations in the 1930s. There are love letters between Isamu Noguchi and Ruth Page, sweet and catty correspondence between Lincoln Kirstein and Jerome Robbins, and scientific exploration between Loïe Fuller and Marie Curie. There are endless boxes of shoes, the satin pointe shoes of Anna Pavlova, Tanaquil Le Clercq, and Margot Fonteyn, the cowboy boots worn by Agnes de Mille in *Rodeo*, and the purple velvet zori given to Ted Shawn by the Emperor of Japan. And there are photographs, too many to number, by some of the most established photographers in history including Henri Cartier-Bresson, Carl Van Vechten, Fred Fehl, Max Waldman, Carmine Schiavone, and Soichi Sunami.

In short, there is a treasure trove of objects and ephemera for any dance lover.

Inclusion/exclusion

Multiple generations of divisional staff have availed themselves of Oswald's roadmap and have sought to overcome the loss of dance within the matrix of cultural memory. But the intervention is relatively recent, and the negligence of centuries has meant a severe cost. Countless dance works are irretrievable, and many important figures will forever remain unknown. This absence is shared across

the field, but sadly and all too reliably, has particularly discriminated against artists of color. Unfortunately, it is not one issue but many that have led to such an imbalance of representation. In the Dance Division's case, ballet and modern dance were the initial focus in building a repository. This decision was made in response to both the availability of particular kinds of materials and the demands of the researchers and artists using the collections, but it also reflects the biases of twentieth century collecting practices. Sadly too, artists of color often had no archive to give when approached by the Division.

Even for the artists who did work in ballet and modern dance, the racism and exclusion they had experienced over the course of their careers meant that they had not had the luxury to think about documenting and safeguarding their work, and rejection from mainstream performance venues and newspapers had limited evidence such as review clippings, programs, and photographs. As for those who worked in other forms such as tap, social dance, or traditional styles, the systematic denial of their very existence in the field left many of those artists with a sense that their voice would never be accepted. Thus, they never sought a conversation about their legacy.

While past archival imbalance can never be redressed, the collecting practices of today are vigilant about creating a more equitable space that fully reflects the diversity of voices and perspectives in the community. We have been aided in this work by the community itself, which is now more self-aware and engaged in ongoing dialogue about inclusion. This activity reveals an essential truth about cultural institutions. They are not so much the sum of who we are in a given moment but rather a mirror of how those in power think.

All cultural institutions reflect inequity in their collections, and curators and archivists are now grappling with how to identify and remedy the problem. In reviewing the Dance Division's archive for weaknesses, we noted that our holdings, unsurprisingly, heavily favored concert dance (i.e., dance performed onstage for an audience). This seems completely logical and was the obvious place for the Division to seek material. However, the stage was not always a welcome space for immigrants and artists of color, whose work found its way into the alternate realms of social and traditional dance where gatherings were not for a paying audience and the work was unlikely to be recorded or critiqued.

While we acknowledge that important information about these dances is irretrievably lost, the Dance Division is now able to provide studio space on a short-term basis. We have a purpose-built floor, which converts one of our exhibition spaces into a studio, and we predominantly make this available for community residencies where multiple generations can come together to recover work and legacy. Choreographer and dancer Jean Butler was instrumental in helping us think through this template in her residencies with us, uncovering the lost history of Irish solo step dances within the New York diaspora.

In addition, in 2020 b-girl and choreographer Ephrat Asherie will be working during a residence to reclaim the performances of some of the founding members of the hip-hop community. This new workflow continues our process of documentation but now adds the element of the archival space becoming the site of the creative process. It is a further reinvention, following Oswald's vision for the Dance Division to its logical conclusion.

Conversation with our community also illuminated areas where we had no representation at all. Through the work of Dance/NYC and the generosity of the choreographer Alice Sheppard, we examined our holdings and discovered that archives held almost no material of disabled artists—and ours was no exception. There is an incredible amount of work still to be done in this area, but thanks to support from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Division was able to undertake two years of documentation of work by dance artists with disabilities, and choreographers Heidi Latsky and Pelenakeke Brown have contributed enormously to the larger conversation by holding master classes and town hall discussions in our space.

While diversity within the archive is important, the other issue we have been actively tackling in recent years is the demographic of our patrons. As a division of the New York Public Library, we want the people using our collections to reflect the city that houses them. In 2016, we added an education position to the Division's staff, expanding our collective skill set, for the first time in our history, to include expertise in writing curricula and teaching. Kathleen Leary is the staff member who serves as liaison between the Division and educators, helping them to plan class visits and exhibition tours, and providing resources for them back at their schools. It is due to her work that the largest group using the Division is now K-12 patrons, predominantly from public schools. For us, engagement with this younger audience is essential, because part of the obligation of the Division is to educate broadly on the subject of dance. If dance as an ecosystem is to survive, it is not enough to train the next generation of dancers; we must also help form the next generation of dance writers, researchers, teachers, librarians, and audience members. Dance can be intimidating to the uninitiated, but early exposure removes trepidation and encourages young students to evaluate and contextualize work without fear. The Division aims to be that safe space where questions can be asked, ideas can be tested, and where experiments can succeed or fail without judgment.

Risks of the digital age

These shifts on our thinking and practices are internal to the Dance Division, but there are larger forces in the world which have turned archival practice on its head. Invariably, the question most often addressed to the Division from artists today is how to manage their archive in the digital age. If one considers the objects that traditionally make up an archive—correspondence, clippings, photographs, films, manuscripts—it quickly becomes clear that none of these entities is created in physical form anymore. Correspondence has been replaced by email, clippings by web links, photographs and films are on people's phones and social media platforms, and manuscripts live as Word documents and PDFs.

While all of these advances have made dissemination of information easier in the short term, there are long-term archival perils. Digital files are not seen and are easily forgotten. If they are not stored well and maintained, the files often end up no longer being supported or they live on obsolete platforms from which it becomes difficult to retrieve them. Although we live in a time when people assume greater certainty of the safety of their information because of digitization, many archivists are bracing themselves for an imminent gap in cultural knowledge because we have not yet evolved in our collecting practices.

This is not to suggest that digitization is bad. On the contrary, the Dance Division's best practice for preserving all of its audio and moving-image holdings is to create digital files. However, we undertake that practice knowing that its maintenance will require constant monitoring and regular intervention and migration. The labor required to achieve this far exceeds the reach of the average artist, and so an adaptation must occur in the relationship between the dance maker and the Division. Traditionally, archives were received by a repository toward the end of a person's career. Materials collected over a lifetime and safely stowed in boxes were transported to the Library for permanent care. However, the lifespan of digital objects means that artists now need to be in frequent communication with the archive and that they need to deposit material throughout their career rather than exclusively at its end. This will entail a new kind of relationship, more collaborative on both sides than before, but such an adjustment is essential if dance history is to survive.

Communicating with the community

What does it mean to be a dance archive and library in the twenty-first century? For the staff of the Dance Division the most important constant is communication with the community. This translates not only to conversation about archival material, but also means attending performances and participating in public dialogue, providing a forum for conversations on every scale to take place, and making the community an active participant in the curation process.

An excellent example of this last point is a recent series of tap oral histories that were undertaken as part of the Division's Oral History Project. In advance of the work, the coordinator of the project, Cassie Mey, and her assistant, Emma Rose Brown, surveyed the tap community for a list of dancers who should be interviewed within the parameters of our oral history best practices. They then prioritized the list based on the feedback received. Some of the candidates were already under consideration, but by convening the community other names emerged and the importance of particular dancers to tap as a form became more clear. Empowering the community itself to name the artists that they wanted to have in the archive to represent them creates a more inclusive practice than an archive typically provides.

Top: Allegra Kent and Francisco Moncion, 1951. Photo by Martha Swope. © New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Bottom: Carmen de Lavallade, 1955. Photo by Carl Van Vechten. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. © Van Vechten Trust.

Conversely, as much as the community must engage in the archival process, the archive itself needs to be at the center of the artistic process. The work we collect should fuel and inspire new work, support reconstructions, and offer space and resources for research in the gaps that exist in dance history.

The Division's Dance Research Fellowship has been instrumental in guiding and supporting both more traditional modes of scholarship and practice-based research. The Fellowship has connected some of the most compelling dance artists working today to the material contained within our archive. Their engagement recontextualizes and repositions accepted histories and narratives and sustains the relevancy of older work by connecting it to issues in the present. Hiie Saumaa's 2018 project, which interwove her creative writing with that of Jerome Robbins to open up a shared emotional narrative between the two, redirected focus onto Robbins's extensive collection of personal writings, many of which allow for deeper readings of his ballets. In another instance, Netta Yerushalmy's performance piece, which interspersed archival footage of Merce Cunningham with her own text and movement, created a compelling dialogue between two artists separated by time but bound through shared intellectual practice and reunited through the archive.

The Dance Division still collects lithographs, rare books, and manuscripts about French court dance and Romantic ballet. However, we now also collect bootleg footage of b-boy battles from the earliest days of hip-hop; oral histories of ballroom dancers in the Bronx; performances of environmental, site-specific and multimedia dance; videos of the African dance diaspora; and more. We acquire email, web sites, and all manner of electronic records in addition to papers, photographs, and physical forms of audio and moving image. Staff is still present at the reference desk, but can also be found in classrooms across New York City and at community outreach events. Members of the staff are participants in town hall meetings and other forums where issues of the dance field are discussed. They are embedded in the community in a unique way that allows the Division to be nimble and responsive to its needs. That connection between the Dance Division and the community it serves has always been there and is at the core of what makes the Division special. But that relationship is now essential in the field of twenty-first-century curation where the agency of the dance artists in articulating their narrative is the driving factor of an acquisition.

A good dance archive is not only a steward of history; it is also a vital contributor to the future of the field. Our films and notation sustain repertory but also, we hope, serve as catalysts for new work. We lovingly care for thousands upon thousands of linear feet of manuscript materials so that researchers can write the books that will enhance the legitimacy of our field. We seek out ways to help the community beyond their expectations of what a library and archive can and should provide. Our collections are only valuable when they are accessed.

Seventy-five years is a significant period of time in the lifespan of a human, but it is the blink of an eye in archival terms. The Dance Division is still young and has a lot of ground to cover to bring about a larger comprehension of dance's place within the landscape of cultural legacy. Collections are constantly added, layering the voices and perspectives housed within the archive. Services are added. Conversations continue. We are still seeking the right equilibrium to be the perfect repository for the dance community, the home it deserves, but serving as that space is an ever-moving target, fitting for an art form perpetually in motion. Our seventy-five years also demonstrate that we are a reliable partner and resource.

The Jerome Robbins Dance Division is now a permanent idea, an important step forward for our field. The nature of archiving and librarianship will inevitably change and the trajectory of dance will shift, but we will adapt with those transitions; we will transform and recalibrate. The only way to stand our ground is to keep moving. ■

Reprinted courtesy of Eakins Press Foundation. eakinspress.com/danceindex

Linda Murray is Curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division and serves as Associate Director for Collections and Research Services at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. She previously worked at the Library of Congress and ran a multidisciplinary arts organization in Washington, D.C., where she was the recipient of the Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts and a Helen Hayes Award. She has an undergraduate degree in French and Russian from Trinity College Dublin and holds postgraduate degrees in performance and library science. She has been named one of the fifty most influential Irish women working in the U.S.

How a Lack of Dance Criticism in the U.S. Affects International Dancers' Visa Applications

by Zachary Whittenburg

With the following article, we continue the focus on the importance of maintaining archives in dance. A sometimes-overlooked benefit of such archives is their usefulness in fundraising.

One of the dance industry's greatest assets is its internationality. Many techniques are practiced worldwide, and few performances incorporate speech, helping dance artists and productions cross borders and seas. Throughout history, dancers have used their talents to travel, at times to escape persecution or poverty, and countries including the United States have put dance groups at the forefront of their cultural-diplomacy efforts.

Although a lot of dance slips easily past language barriers, its global circulation is increasingly expensive and relies heavily on the written word. To be approved for domestic employment, professionals without a U.S. passport need extensive paperwork. Called a petition, it's a stack of documents literally printed on paper and mailed to a federal government agency called USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security). Often handled by the employer or presenter, the process takes months, currently costs about $500—more on that later—and, for individuals and touring groups, part of that stack needs to be evidence supporting the petitioner's claim that the dancer or ensemble is one of a kind and something special. The evidence should include dance reviews; petitions without them may be unsuccessful. For dance companies in cities without critics, this could ultimately mean fewer international artists.

While most choreographers and companies welcome advance press—interview-based articles that report from a creative process or contextualize a coming premiere—they may be wary of the help or harm a review has in store. One thing is clear about dance reviews today—mainstream media outlets in the U.S. generally don't publish them, with a handful of exceptions in a few cities with many, many millions of residents.

This, of course, is old news. I gave a presentation about diminishing critical coverage, and its impact on the cultural nonprofit industrial complex, at a Dance/USA conference in 2011. At the time, I was a magazine editor who published three or more reviews weekly; within months, I began to work in public relations.

Critical dialogue in dance today takes many forms, none in short supply. There might even be more cultural exchange and dance collaboration than ever, thanks to audience-engagement programs, the algorithms of video-based networks, and an image-heavy attention economy. (As a result, and a delightful consequence, many people encounter dancing bodies in the real world more frequently than they used to.) But reviews of live dance performances, in print or online, in publications with at least a few thousand readers, do not exist in most media markets.

In its 2023 season, the Joffrey Ballet had visas to manage for as many as 19 employees, supporting company dancers as well as artistic staff and academy faculty. USCIS is considering changes that could double or even triple the cost per petition, renewed every one to three years depending on the type of visa. (A separate fee, for consular processing, also went up.) So, expense is a serious issue, as is the ever-less-predictable turnaround time, regardless of whether reviews mentioning a dancer by name exist or not.

It's an administrative, scheduling, and financial tightrope even for a major ballet company in Chicago with a diverse roster. Meanwhile, in San Francisco, Smuin Contemporary Ballet's immigration attorney is also concerned—due to scant review opportunities there, aside from outlets like the *San Francisco Chronicle*—about Smuin's petitions on behalf of its international artists. USCIS agents who approve petitions are not likely to be dance experts. "Bloggers and small papers don't have the weight in the eyes of the government," Smuin's Ellen Gaintner, special projects manager, told *Dance Magazine*. "The *New York Times* is still providing extensive New York coverage, but there is a whole country out here."

Consider, in these circumstances, the situation facing a nonprofit dance organization that centers people of color and a non-European art form, poised and eager to welcome an international artist to its community of dancers, students, fans, and friends. Perhaps the local daily newspaper reviewed that company in the past year. If so, did it mention anyone by name? A newsroom editor might assign a dance review now and then. One is probably of a local, annual production of *The Nutcracker*, the other might be a performance by a touring company, and that could be it for the whole year.

Intrepid, socially networked marketing and communications staff are some of the most passionate, effective workers in the dance field. Through sustaining relationships with numerous people and keeping track of who's where and writes about what (which ain't easy), an organization can land enough media mentions in enough outlets for a petition to make up in volume what its press hits might lack in name recognition. Those mentions might also help program officers and other arts grantmakers, working for public funding agencies and foundations in dance philanthropy, substantiate the case that a local nonprofit deserves a new grant or a higher grant amount. Receiving that grant might mean the students get an amazing master class, the studio ceiling stops leaking, and the Wi-Fi works better for the often-underpaid arts administrators who make it all happen.

When there's no international exchange between artists and no money to pay people, it's harder to incentivize the full-time commitments to an art form that produce extraordinary experiences for the public. In March 2023, the Performing Arts Visa Working Group, whose members include Dance/USA and OPERA America, submitted comments to Homeland Security on the proposed fee increases and other changes to the visa petition process, signed by more than 120 organizations nationwide. Half of the potential $1,195 fee increase per petition, due whether you're a dance company or a corporate employer, would subsidize the department's spending on an asylum program.

Even the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy weighed in on the price of employing international workers, telling USCIS that the policy change would make it "cost prohibitive for small businesses and small nonprofits to hire necessary staff."

"Arts petitions are a sliver of the casework USCIS adjudicators contend with," state the Performing Arts Visa Working Group's comments to Homeland Security. "This latest fee proposal would render this benefit completely inaccessible to many arts petitioners in the U.S. and could threaten the ability of some entities and their related industries to continue operations." ■

"Side Effects: The Disappearance of Local Dance Criticism Matters More Than You Might Think" by Zachary Whittenburg originally appeared in the July 2023 issue of Dance Magazine. *This article has been updated and is reprinted with permission from* Dance Magazine. *Certain changes to visa application policies and processes have been implemented since publication; visit artistsfromabroad.org and uscis.gov to learn more.*

Zachary Whittenburg has worked in Chicago since 2002, in arts advocacy and journalism, marketing and communications, and as a consultant on a variety of programs for artist support and equitable funding. A regular contributor to Dance Magazine, Zac is founding board secretary for the Chicago Dance History Project and, as associate director of marketing and communication at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, he represented the organization on the Chicago Dancemakers Forum consortium. He is currently a program officer at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

The 2025 Dance Symposium

Mikhail Baryshnikov: Beyond Boundaries

Since 2015, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center has run its Dance Research Fellowship program, welcoming a class of dancers, choreographers, and scholars, to focus on a particular topic using the Library's archives. At the end of the program cycle, the fellows present their work through lecture, performance, and discussion at a Symposium.

The 2025 Dance Symposium, a day-long exploration of Mikhail Baryshnikov and his legacy, celebrated the 50th anniversary since his arrival to the U.S. from the Soviet Union, and took place on January 31, 2025. Baryshnikov donated his archive to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 2011. This archive was the focus of the fellows' research and work. The Mikhail Baryshnikov Archive holds awards, choreographer files, contracts, correspondence, photographs, press clippings, programs, scripts, and other materials documenting his career.

"Last year, the fellowship focused on the Martha Graham archive for the centennial celebration of her dance company, and it proved a fruitful opportunity for researchers, artists, and dancers to explore Graham's work more closely. This year, we're thrilled to celebrate and explore the career of Mikhail Baryshnikov, an artist who has not only changed the trajectory of dance worldwide but has been a great friend and supporter to the Dance Division," said Linda Murray, the Anne H. Bass Curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

The Dance Symposium consisted of six presentations by a range of artists and scholars focusing on different themes of Baryshnikov's work. This year's class featured Marina Harss, Jordan Demetrius Lloyd, Alessandra Nicifero, Marcelline Mandeng Nken, Brian Seibert, and Maria Vinogradova.

At the start of David Gordon's *Made in USA*, a dance-theater work broadcast on "Dance in America" in 1987, Mikhail Baryshnikov stated, "I did all there was to do, I wanted to do more, more was somewhere else, so I went."

With the presentation "You Can Never Go Home—Baryshnikov, Balanchine, Ratmansky, émigré artists in New York," writer Marina Harss compared the trajectories of Baryshnikov with George Balanchine and Alexei Ratmansky, who also left their home countries to pursue their career in dance. Next, interdisciplinary artist Marcelline Mandeng Nken presented "Queening the Knight: Baryshnikov's Vulnerability and Masculinity on Display," which examined Barsyhnikov's acclaimed performance in *Giselle* in 1977, which Nken argued challenged traditional ideals of masculinity in dance. With "Baryshnikov and the Kirov Cohort: Their Soviet Years on 8mm Film," historian Maria Vinogradova shared her insights after having watched nearly 1,500 minutes of 8mm footage in Barsyhnikov's archive to better understand how film influenced and shaped the work of dancers, and especially Soviet dancers. With "Baryshnikov, the American Dancer," author Brian Seibert explored the process by which Baryshnikov became American, artistically and as a public figure. Exploring Baryshnikov's multidirectional influences and mentorships, dance scholar Alessandra Nicifero examined Alvis Hermanis' *Brodsky/Baryshnikov* and Trisha Brown's *Homemade*, which starred Baryshnikov. Dance artist Jordan Demetrius Lloyd's "Mikhail Baryshnikov: Registers of Performance in 2024" looked beyond Baryshnikov's classical ballet training to explore his place in "downtown dance."

The 2024-25 Dance Research Fellowship was generously sponsored by the Geraldine Stutz Trust. ■

Jordan Demetrius Lloyd, Marcelline Mandeng Nken, Alessandra Nicifero, Maria Vinogradova, Marina Harss, and Brian Seibert at the 2025 Dance Symposium. Photo by Alex Teplitzky.

Dance Research Fellow Marcelline Mandeng Nken (speaking into the microphone) at the 2025 Dance Symposium. Photo by Alex Teplitzky.

The 2025-26 Dance Research Fellowship will focus on Bill T. Jones and his archive, which is preserved by the Dance Division. Cerebral and provocative, Bill T. Jones is one of the most fearless artists working in the U.S. today. With a body of work that defies neat categorization, Jones' multifaceted career has encompassed collaborations with visual artists, international commissions and Broadway productions, as well as a rich repertory for his own company. Jones' work is often rooted in personal experience and speaks authentically to many across a spectrum of communities.

The 2025-26 Dance Research Fellows are Robert Coe, McClain Groff, Raja Feather Kelly, Alicia "Jubilee" Moore, Carlo Antonio Villanueva, and uwazi zamani. These Fellows will present their projects at the annual Dance Symposium at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts on January 30, 2026.

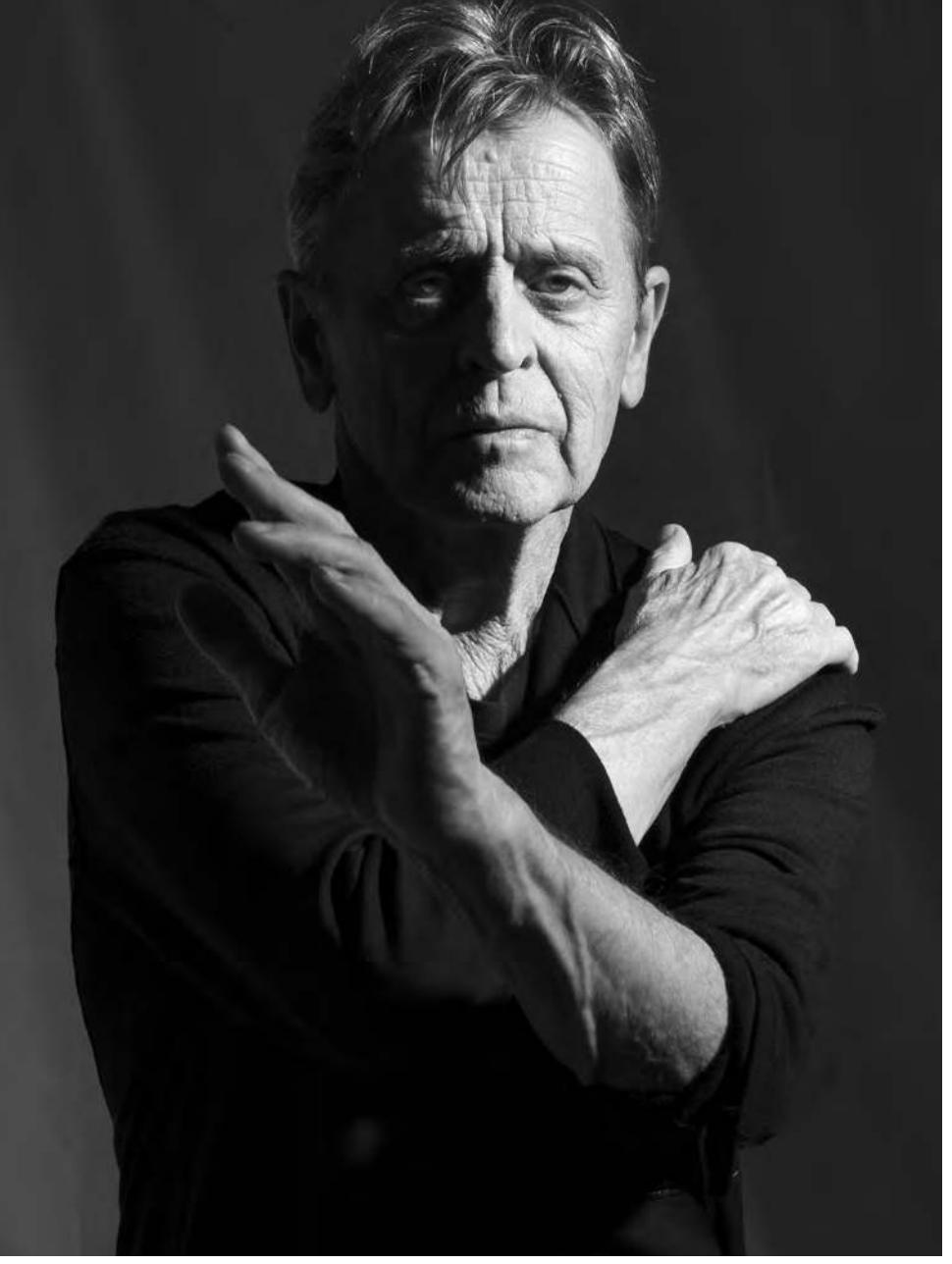


Photo by Thea Traff, courtesy of Baryshnikov Arts.

Mikhail Baryshnikov on Creating and Collaborating

In January 2025, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' Jerome Robbins Dance Division presented "Mikhail Baryshnikov: Beyond Boundaries," a symposium that was the culmination of the 2024 Dance Research Fellowship. The Fellows presented research and performance inspired by Mikhail Baryshnikov on the 50th anniversary of his arrival to the West. Mr. Baryshnikov, who met with the Fellows at a reception after the symposium, later answered a few emailed questions for this newsletter (JRN) about the presentations and other topics.

JRN In her presentation, *You Can Never Go Home—Baryshnikov, Balanchine, Ratmansky, émigré artists in New York*, Marina Harss spoke of your training and its relationship to Balanchine's origins in Russia. She described differences between what you had been taught and the form it took in what Balanchine eventually created. What was your reaction to the Balanchine style and technique?

MB The first Balanchine performance I saw was his beautiful *Jewels*, which was paired with *Violin Concerto* in 1972, before I came to the U.S. What a combination, I thought. It was, of course, revelatory—a giant step forward into the unknown. Everything was in service to the music. I had a lot of sleepless nights after that, thinking about what he was creating.

JRN In his presentation, *Baryshnikov, the American Dancer*, Brian Seibert quoted dance writer Arlene Croce, who wrote that "the man who dances is somehow separate from the being that exists onstage. That is why the most lucid classical dancer of our time is also the most enigmatic." To what do you attribute your gift for being at home in so many styles of dance?

MB I don't ever evaluate my minuses or pluses in any style of dance, but even as a very young dancer I had the opportunity to try on different styles as part of the repertoire practice of the Riga Choreographic School. We were required to learn various children's roles in ballets and operas so perhaps that early exposure to many ways of moving and *being* on stage is part of the explanation.

JRN In her dance and video presentation, *Queening the Knight: Baryshnikov's Vulnerability and Masculinity on Display*, Marcelline Mandeng Nken claimed that your emotional vulnerability and athleticism (through your portrayal as Albrecht in *Giselle*) challenged traditional ideals of masculinity in dance. Were you aware of the impact your presence had on the boundaries of performative masculinity in the U.S. during the 1970s and 80s? Were you aware of the impact you had on boys in the U.S. taking ballet class?

MB The first few years in the U.S. I was focused on what I was doing and not on the effect it might be having on others. Later, I suppose I became aware that there were some stereotypes about male ballet dancers in the U.S., so, if anything I've done has made it easier for young boys to try ballet, then I'm happy about that.

Mr. Baryshnikov also responded to questions not related to the symposium.

JRN When did you first see Jerome Robbins' choreography? What were your thoughts about it?

MB In Japan, at the end of the 1960s, I saw the film *West Side Story*, and then, in 1972, I saw *Dances at a Gathering* in Leningrad. I loved the lyricism, the vulnerability of the dancers, the stylistic restraint…it was very moving and sort of the opposite of the Russian bravura style. When the dancer in brown knelt to simply touch the floor of the stage, my heart stopped, and I remember absorbing at that moment how profound art can be.

JRN In *Opus 19/The Dreamer*, did your character control the dream, or was he drawn into it?

MB I've always felt the main character is drawn into the dream by the music, by the brooding tone of loneliness and longing. It makes sense to me that the character surrenders to that.

JRN Jerry choreographed *A Suite of Dances* on you in 1994. How did that come about?

MB He called me one day and asked, "How busy are you?" He had just heard Yo-Yo Ma's interpretation of Bach's "Cello Suites" and was inspired to choreograph some of them. He had a reverence for the music and wanted to see what might be possible. I pretty much cleared my calendar for the project.

JRN Looking back, are there certain things that you learned from Jerry?

MB He was an enormous influence on me. He was instrumental in me joining New York City Ballet, which was formative, of course. But I think I learned mostly about discipline, tenacity, and working through one's own inner challenges. He was very hard on himself and that sometimes translated into him being hard on others, but he was mostly very patient and kind with me.

JRN Do you have any other memories of Jerry that you'd like to share?

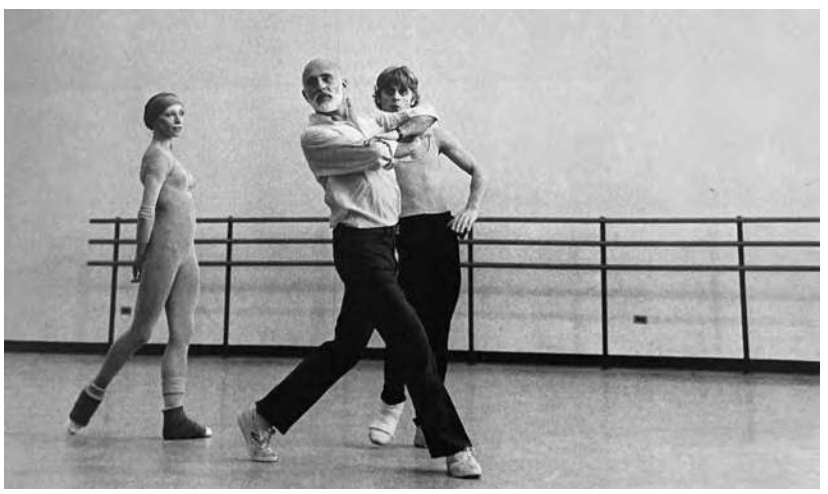
MB I visited him in Watermill, Long Island, several times and we'd take long walks on the beach. He was curious about the history of Russian ballet, the Vaganova style…he was endlessly curious. He had a fascinating circle of friends: Sono Osato, Arthur Gold, Bobby Fizdale, Eugenia Doll, Aidan Mooney, and others… I was welcomed into their company with great ease and generosity. It was fun to be around them. It's widely known that Jerry rarely seemed happy in the conventional sense, but when he truly was, he was luminous—just glowing with enjoyment!

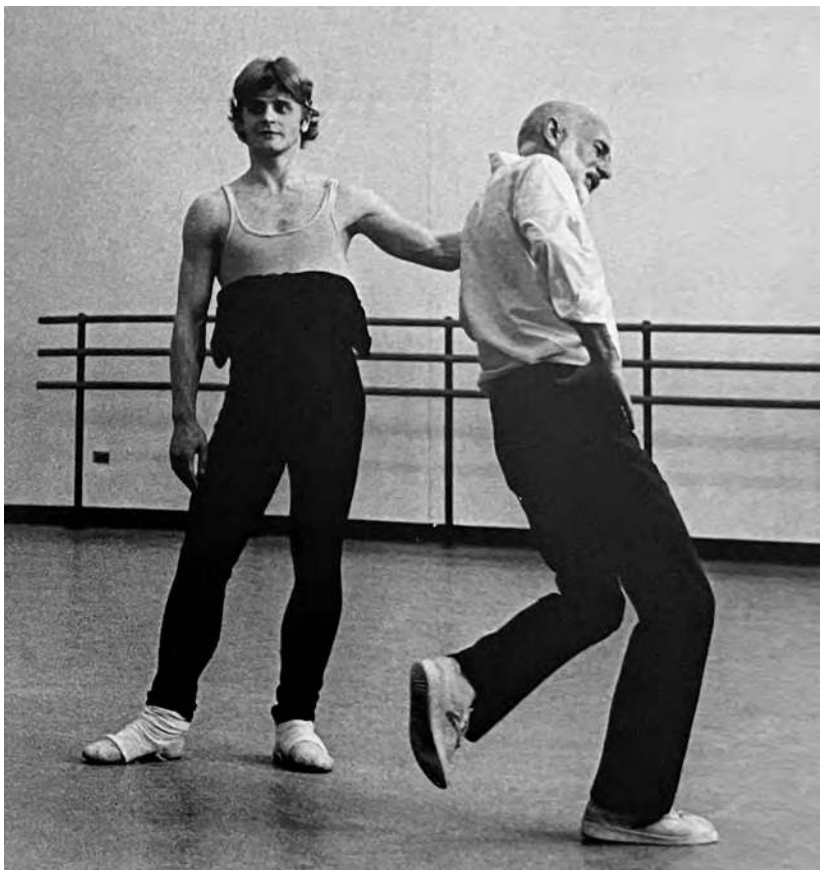
JRN In 2005 you founded Baryshnikov Arts Center. How did that come to be?

MB Originally, I wanted a studio where White Oak Dance Project could rehearse, but Christina Sterner, the first executive director of our production company, was approached by commercial producers Alan Schuster, Jeffrey Seller, and Kevin McCollum, about a possible building venture on the far West Side. The project evolved from a single studio with an office to a few floors with several studios that could be rented at commercial rates. It's a miracle we were able to scrape together the money to get it built. I put in whatever I could manage. Several close friends and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs helped considerably. A few years later, with the generosity of the Jerome Robbins Foundation, we were able to buy and rebuild the theater on the third floor, which became the Jerome Robbins Theater. Since then, Baryshnikov Arts has dedicated itself to providing space and support for artists at all stages of their careers. It's still incredible to me that our initial idea has grown to support so many creative people.

JRN What goals have you achieved at Baryshnikov Arts (BA) during the past 20 years?

MB I'm deeply proud of our residency program, and I'm delighted that we have been financially solid for all 20 years. I'm definitely grateful for all the talented and generous people who've made that possible. In particular, BA owes its resilience to its staff and dedicated executive directors, who understood and furthered BA's mission. Christina Sterner, Stanford Makishi, Georgiana Pickett, Cora Cahan, and Sonja Kostich have been pivotal to BA's ability to support and present new work, to develop and refine the residency program, and to build the beginnings of an educational program.





Jerome Robbins, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Natalia Makarova in rehearsal for *Other Dances,* 1976. Photos by Martha Swope, courtesy of Baryshnikov Arts.

JRN What moments at BA stand out the most in your memory?

MB Acquiring the third floor and renovating it into the Jerome Robbins Theater was a big moment since it radically changed what we were able to do. Presenting isn't our primary focus, but obviously having a theater allows us to present work of all kinds including pieces by former residents if we feel they are ready. Also, I'd say two other big moments were when we named the Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Studio in honor of sustained contributions from the Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Foundation, and the Nureyev Studio, in honor of a substantial gift from the Rudolf Nureyev Foundation.

JRN Are there any goals that BA has yet to fulfill?

MB We need BA to remain financially sustainable for decades to come, which means we need more large-scale support from private donors, corporations, and foundations committed to sustaining the arts. Also, we are just now launching an educational program to introduce young kids to various forms of art. We've wanted to do this for a long time, but just recently got a generous grant to get it underway. In an ideal world, we would find additional space near our current building so that this program can expand.

JRN In 2022, you wrote an open letter to Vladimir Putin in which you stated, "I have lived as a person of the free world for almost 50 years now—with no roles forced onto me by others…" How did the concepts of freedom and creativity become so ingrained in you as a young dancer?

MB It's always tricky to connect politics and art, but all I can say is that I've been privileged to have the freedom to express myself and it's a freedom I believe every human deserves.

JRN Do you have any opinion about what artists can do to protect their art in the current era, both in the East and in the West?

MB I truly don't know where we're headed, but the best defense against restrictive and revisionist policies is to keep creating, keep collaborating…keep sharing ideas in whatever ways we can. It won't guarantee that the art will be respected or appreciated, but it will be what keeps us human.

The conversation between Gregory Victor, editor-in-chief of the Jerome Robbins newsletter, and Mikhail Baryshnikov continued at a later date at his artistic home base, Baryshnikov Arts, in Manhattan.

GV I feel that one aspect of your art doesn't get enough attention, and that is your gift for acting. I'd like to ask you about that. What was your first exposure to the theater or acting? When you were growing up, did you go to see theater?

MB Yes, my mother took me with her to the theater. She arrived in Riga with my father in 1946, which is where he was stationed as a Soviet army officer. Neither he nor my mother spoke Latvian, of course, but she was fascinated by Latvian culture. She went to Latvian choir performances, dance, opera…and she dragged me everywhere with her.

GV Where had she come from?

MB The town of Kstovo on the beautiful Volga River, which is in central Russia.

GV Was your first exposure to dance in the form of Latvian dance?

MB Maybe. I'm not sure, but when I went to the ballet and to the opera, I saw children onstage and said to myself, "Why am I here, and not there?" Because I really liked it, without understanding what I was watching. My mother took me to a children's dance group called Mazais Dārziņš [Little Garden], which was run by a retired dancer from, I think, the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow. Some of the children became dancers and some did not, but they became a good audience, let's say. I had the same experience with the theater. I remember when I was about ten years old, I spoke some Latvian, and my mother would go with me to see this very famous actress, Vija Artmane. She was a beautiful woman, and very dramatic. My mother was totally entranced. She would turn to me and ask, "What did she say? She's crying! Why is she crying?" And I would give her my translation. The people in the audience would shush us because I'm sure the explanations were long and loud! And that was my first theater. Then, in the late 1950s, I was accepted to the choreographic ballet school for the Latvian National Opera in Riga. There was an Armenian woman, Helēna Tangijeva, who was the artistic director of the ballet company for the opera. She actually graduated together with my teacher Alexander Pushkin in Saint Petersburg in 1924. She gave me the opportunity of a lifetime by casting me in the children's roles, and she was very particular about what role I was given and how I should act. The ballet artists were very kind to me and encouraged me. They would give me corrections if I did too much—overacting, over smiling, over jumping—trying to attract attention to myself. They would say, "Just don't do that," or "This is not about you." That was just the ham in me, I guess. And then, of course, when I moved in 1964 from Riga to Saint Petersburg there were serious acting lessons at the Vaganova School.

GV What type of acting exercises did you do there?

MB Well, they were related to dance, like gestures of the arms and body movement while communicating something—balletic pantomime. Sometimes we would learn little scenes from specific ballets. And later on, I graduated with a scene from *Petrouchka*. The scene in Petrouchka's room.

GV At that point, were you feeling confident in your acting?

Mikhail Baryshnikov as Pope Benedict XVI in the film *The White Helicopter* (2024, dir. by Alvis Hermanis). Image by Andrejs Strokins, courtesy of Jaunais Rīgas Teātris.

MB Not too confident, but interested. We had free entrance to the best theaters, like the Leningrad Philharmonic, the Kirov, and others. Any theater we wanted, we could go ahead of time and reserve a student ticket. Almost every week, I went to several performances with friends.

GV Were you also going to see films at this point?

MB I don't remember going to films as much as I went to the theater. I saw some good Russian productions, some foreign films, including some American trophy films seized by the Russians in Berlin at the end of the Second World War. I think I saw *Tarzan* as a kid, and then clips of Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, and James Cagney. In my teens, I saw Polish films, notably some by the director Andrzej Wajda, some of the Italian Neorealists—Rossellini, Antonioni, and others—a couple of Bergman's early movies, and Indian romantic films with Raj Kapoor.

GV When you arrived in the West, had you taken any formal acting classes yet?

MB When I started to act a little bit in television and movies, I worked with a couple of really wonderful coaches, Sandra Seacat and Penny Allen. Both became good friends of mine.

GV I was able to watch your performance in the film *The White Helicopter* [2024, dir. by Alvis Hermanis]. You created such a complex and yet sympathetic character out of what seemed to be an almost impossible to relate to situation. The film takes place on the final day of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy, as it explores the possible circumstances and reasoning for his resignation as he interacts with his secretary and immediate staff. It's an astounding performance. Are there plans to release it further?

MB Well, it has been shown in some festivals in Europe and as a feature in Riga, but it's not quite a film, and it's not quite a play so I'm not sure of future showings.

GV And you created the part on stage in Riga in 2019, in a production directed by Alvis Hermanis, who also directed the film, correct?

MB Yes. I should add that the play was the second time I worked with Alvis. He directed me in *Brodsky/Baryshnikov* a few years earlier. Then we did the film after that.

GV Was the rest of the cast the same?

MB Oh yes. It's the same set as well. It's just that the film is 360 degrees instead of the design for a proscenium theater. Some text was cut as well.

GV Well. I loved the film. Three times.

MB Thank you. I'm glad you enjoyed it. It is a juicy role, so working on it was interesting and a privilege. The script was written by Alvis Hermanis, not by a playwright or dramaturg. It was done by the director with the scissors in hand, because all the remarks are quotes from interviews, from his speeches, his writings, his books. I read two or three—his *Introduction to Christianity* and *Jesus of Nazareth*, and I skimmed through a couple of others. He wrote forty or fifty books during his life as a professor of dogmatic theology. I found the character fascinating. And nobody to this day really understands why he resigned. It's not quite believable for him to say, "Oh, I'm just too tired. I think it's enough," you know? That's the question our director posed—why?

GV In preparation for the role, did you read *The Glass Bead Game* by Herman Hesse? I know that it is mentioned in the film. I have not read it. How was it?

MB Quite boring. (*laughing*) Boring to start because I had to look words up all the time, but then I tried to figure out why he was so fascinated with it. It was one of his first obsessions. He even mentioned the date and the year when he read the book for the first time, and he came back to it again and again.

GV One quote from the film that struck me was, "I don't belong to the old world anymore, but the new world is—"

MB "—is not quite here yet." Yeah. That's his quote. It's not invented.

GV I want to ask about the ballet *Other Dances*. It was choreographed by Jerome Robbins in 1976 to the music of Frédéric Chopin and designed to showcase the artistry of both you and Natalia Makarova.

MB Well, it's called *"Other" Dances*. Jerry wanted to do a piece for Natasha and me together. The project was commissioned by Eugenia Doll as a benefit for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

GV How was the idea to do this ballet presented to you?

MB Ms. Doll introduced me to Jerry. When we finally met, I said to him, "I want to do something on Broadway, Jerry." Stupid me. Jerry laughed and said, "What? Sit down!" Dancing on Broadway was one of my wild fantasies. A few months later he called and said, "I have an idea." I think he and Ms. Doll must have come up with it together, to do a duet with Natalia Makarova. That was such an exciting proposal. I happily agreed. At that time, I already had a lot of engagements, so it took a little while, but I cleared my schedule as much as I could. It was an extraordinary experience. Jerry was a wonderful dancer—graceful and unmannered, and the way his body moved was absolutely honest. I just tried to soak it up, to embody his way of moving. Later on, when I joined New York City Ballet, I was invited to give a televised performance at the White House for President Carter. Part of the program was a compilation of Chopin dances from different pieces—excerpts from *Dances at a Gathering, Other Dances*, and finishing with the new waltz, which Jerry choreographed for this occasion—

GV You're talking about the pièce d'occasion that was performed at the White House called *Three Chopin Dances,* danced by you and Patricia McBride.

MB Yes. That was precious for me. When I got the White House invitation, I felt I should ask permission to take time away from the company's season, so I went to Balanchine and said, "Mr. B"—Well, actually, "Georgi Melitonovitch"—I talked to him in Russian when nobody was around, using his full name— and I asked his permission, he said, "That's great. It's good for you, good for us." Something like that. Very optimistic. "Maybe you could tell me what you want to do, and I could suggest something, but I will allow Jerry to manage everything." I said, "That's great." And Jerry suggested that maybe I could do a little *Rubies* duet and something like *Tarantella*, both with Heather Watts, and the section of *Harlequinade* with Patty McBride and the children from the School of American Ballet. It was a big program, actually. I really adored Carter's family. What he and Rosalynn did after his retirement, building homes with Habitat for Humanity, was an extraordinary personal commitment.

GV A true lifetime of service.

MB Indeed.

GV One more question. Beyond technical skill, what has been the most profound feeling or truth that dance has allowed you to communicate?

MB You know, being on stage is a simple process, but there's nothing precious about it. It's the audience that decides if something has been communicated or not, not me. But I've been at it for over 70 years and I'm grateful for every minute. ■

In 2005, **Mikhail Baryshnikov** launched Baryshnikov Arts in New York City, a creative space designed to support multidisciplinary artists from around the globe. Among Mr. Baryshnikov's many awards are the Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Arts, the Commonwealth Award, the Chubb Fellowship, the Jerome Robbins Award, and the Vilcek Award. In 2010, he was given the rank of Officer of the French Legion of Honor, and in 2017 he received Japan's prestigious Praemium Imperiale International Arts Award in Theatre/Film. Born 1948 in Riga, Latvia, Mikhail Baryshnikov is considered one of the greatest dancers of our time. After commencing a spectacular career with the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad, he came to the West in 1974, settling in New York City as principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre (ABT). In 1978 he joined New York City Ballet, where he worked with George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. A year later he was appointed artistic director of ABT where, for the next decade, he introduced a new generation of dancers and choreographers. From 1990 to 2002, Mr. Baryshnikov was director and dancer of the White Oak Dance Project, which he and choreographer Mark Morris co-founded to expand the repertoire and visibility of American modern dance. As an actor, he has performed widely on and off Broadway, as well as in television and film, receiving a Tony Award nomination and a Drama Desk Award nomination for *Metamorphosis* directed by Steven Berkoff, and an Academy Award nomination for Herbert Ross' film *The Turning Point*. Other theatrical productions include *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and the Patient* directed by Rezo Gabriadze, *Beckett Shorts* by JoAnne Akalaitis, *In Paris* by Dmitry Krymov, *Man in a Case* by Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar, *Brodsky/Baryshnikov* by Alvis Hermanis, and *The Old Woman* and *Letter to a Man* by Robert Wilson. Recent projects include *NOT ONCE.*, a cinematic installation developed in collaboration with Jan Fabre and Phil Griffin; a theatrical production and film directed by Latvian director Alvis Hermanis entitled *The White Helicopter*; an adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* directed by Igor Golyak; and most recently François Girard's *The Hunting Gun*.

Dancers from Perm State Opera & Ballet in Jerome Robbins' *The Four Seasons*, 2017. Scenery and costumes by Elena Solovyova. Photo by Anton Zavyalov.


RDI

Santo Loquasto and Jerome Robbins Ballets

by Arnold Wengrow

In *The Designs of Santo Loquasto* (United States Institute for Theatre Technology, 2017), the distinguished New York production designer Santo Loquasto, creator of settings and costumes for theater, opera, dance, and film, talked about his work with choreographers in a chapter called "Physics of Dance." What intrigued him, he said, was how dance costumes work. "You make the pants so there's weight for the drop of the trouser. It's the physics of dance clothes that interests me in many ways, not just the surfaces."

Between 1974, when he had his first dance assignment, through the end of 2016, Loquasto had designed costumes, sometimes along with settings, for 140 pieces. He had worked with, among others, American Ballet Theatre [ABT], New York City Ballet [NYCB], Joffrey Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and National Ballet of Canada. His collaborators included Agnes de Mille, Jerome Robbins, Eliot Feld, Glen Tetley, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor, Gerald Arpino, David Gordon, James Kudelka, Mark Morris, David Parsons, Helgi Tommason, John Cranko, and Alexi Ratmansky.

For *The Designs of…*, Loquasto chose to focus on his work with Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor, and James Kudelka of the National Ballet of Canada. Tharp and Taylor were his most sustained dance partnerships. Kudelka's *Nutcracker* was one of his most elaborate and enduring creations.

Where was his work with Jerome Robbins, the towering figure in American dance, second only to Balanchine in any hierarchy of American ballet choreographers? Gregory Victor, the editor of the Jerome Robbins Foundation newsletter, asked me to investigate the Robbins archives at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. What might they tell dance and design historians about the Robbins and Loquasto collaborations? My friend and frequent research associate John Quilty, a New York theatrical photographer, did the searching for me. He found a small but intriguing group of documents. This is my report on those findings.

How it all began

Between 1976 and 1996, Loquasto designed five pieces for Robbins: costumes for *Other Dances* (ABT, 1976); costumes for *Interplay* (NYCB, 1978); scenery and costumes for *The Four Seasons* (NYCB, 1979); scenery and costumes for *Gershwin Concerto* (NYCB, 1982); scenery and costumes for *Piccolo Balletto* (NYCB, 1986); and costumes for *A Suite of Dances* (NYCB, 1994).

Loquasto was 32 when he began working with the 57-year-old Robbins. But the young designer had some earlier brushes with the famous choreographer. In April 1968, while a student at the Yale School of Drama, Loquasto received a letter from John Weeks, writing on behalf of Robbins, inviting him to submit some of his designs for consideration for an exhibition of young designers at the American Theatre Laboratory on West 19th Street. He had been recommended by Michael Annals, a British theatre designer then teaching at Yale. Loquasto had assisted Annals on a production of *Prometheus Bound* directed by Jonathan Miller the previous spring.

Loquasto sent off a portfolio of his sketches, only to receive a letter from Robbins a few weeks later: "Thank you very much for taking the effort and time to send us your sketches. Due to the limited space for the exhibit we find we are obliged to limit this show to models rather than renderings. Therefore, we would like to return your sketches to you and hope that we can consider them again at another time." Loquasto recalled the letter as "very generous and, of course, completely overwhelming for me."

Loquasto's second brush with Robbins came in 1973, when he designed the early Italian opera *La Dafne* for the New York Pro Musica at the Spoleto Festival. Robbins was there at the same time, assembling *Celebration: The Art of the Pas de Deux*. The young lighting designer Jennifer Tipton was Robbins' lighting designer, and her design for *Celebration* was something of a career breakthrough for her. It's likely that Robbins saw *La Dafne*.

Loquasto was impressed by Tipton's work and recommended her to Joseph Papp at the New York Shakespeare Festival for a 1974 production of *The Tempest* he was designing for the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre at Lincoln Center. The scenic designer and the lighting designer worked on two more productions that year, and Tipton recommended Loquasto to Twyla Tharp, who was beginning work on *Sue's Leg*.

The careers of Loquasto and Tharp began to intertwine. "I was, of course, riding on her coattails," the designer remarked in a 2007 interview for the PBS *American Masters* program *Jerome Robbins: Something to Dance About*. Then, another element was added to the mix with *Push Comes to Shove* in 1976, Tharp's breakthrough work for Mikhail Baryshnikov at American Ballet Theatre. The classical Russian virtuoso had recently defected, and here he showed a playful, comic style that some critics called his "Americanization." It was a breakthrough role for Baryshnikov, as well as Tharp.

It was arguably also a breakthrough for Loquasto as a designer of dance costumes in his signature style of theatricalized rehearsal clothes.

Meanwhile, Robbins came to American Ballet Theatre in May 1976 to choreograph *Other Dances* for Baryshnikov and Natalia Makarova. He would certainly have been aware of Loquasto's work on *Push Comes to Shove*. Jennifer Tipton had designed the lighting for the Tharp piece, and she may have reminded Robbins of *La Dafne* at Spoleto. So, it was an easy choice for Robbins to ask Loquasto to design costumes for *Other Dances*. "I was a bit of the new kid at the ballet," Loquasto told the PBS interviewer. "*Push Comes to Shove* was such a triumph and Misha had seemed to be fond of me."

Looking into the archive

The Robbins archive holds only a few documents relating to Santo Loquasto. Besides the letters inviting him to participate in the American Theatre Laboratory exhibition, there are two reference images for historical costumes for *The Four Seasons* and a series of sketches by Robbins of ideas for costumes and setting for *Gershwin Concerto*. Some are quick sketches on notebook paper; others are more finished, detailed drawings on heavy weight paper torn from a sketchbook.

The Four Seasons costume reference images were more applicable for the allegorical figures in the ballet than for the dancers and were of no interest to Loquasto. "When he started it," Loquasto recalled, "he had done 'Spring.' It was lovely and went together very quickly." "Winter" and "Autumn" were not, in Loquasto's view, as lovely.

"The last section, 'Autumn' was pretty appalling," he said. 'Winter'—a stage full of little girls from the ballet school dressed like snowflakes—had a kind of charm. But he would ask for things that I really always sort of squirm about, like snowflakes hanging off the sleeves of the men. I did them, but I felt they were all cloying. it's hard to pull off that kind of ballet recital costume in New York City, and I wasn't interested in doing things like that. Although, ultimately, I wound up doing a version of what he initially requested."

Facing page: Santo Loquasto, scenic design for Jerome Robbins' *Piccolo Balletto*. Above: Santo Loquasto, costumes for Jerome Robbins' *Piccolo Balletto*. © Santo Loquasto

Robbins was exhibiting his famous indecisiveness. "We would meet and meet and meet, and I would show him other research pictures and other inspirations. The struggle was a shared struggle."

The Robbins *Gershwin Concerto* sketches were also of little use to the designer. The choreographer wanted an Art Deco look. Loquasto told the PBS interviewer that Robbins "took you on a circuitous route often on the *Gershwin Concerto*. He asked for terrible things, things that I was not capable of really doing. Someone like Willa Kim or Erté, I said to him, can do Art Deco costumes that are architectural, and a dancer can wear them, [but] I can't believe you will like that."

For a backdrop, Robbins made a sketch of elaborate Art Deco swirls. Loquasto asked for another reference. Robbins gave him a book on Art Nouveau and Art Deco bookbindings, along with a note: "Dear Santo, Enjoy—& use! Love, Jerry." What Loquasto gave him was a sleekly modern Art Deco backdrop with a huge G. As Anna Kisselgoff described it in the *New York Times*, "The asymmetry of the Art Deco motifs in Santo Loquasto's very effective blue backdrop—dramatically enhanced by Thomas Skelton's lighting—is continually expanded upon by Mr. Robbins. Asymmetry is, emphatically, the overriding formal theme of the choreography's own very grand design." Was this a case of Loquasto giving a choreographer what he wanted before he knew he wanted it?

Where to go from here

I hope this brief overview of the collaborations of Santo Loquasto and Jerome Robbins will prompt dance and design historians to investigate how these two important artists worked together. Two of their five pieces, *Other Dances* and *A Suite of Dances*, are both considered late masterpieces by Robbins. While Loquasto's interview with PBS reinforces some of our perceptions of Robbins's personality and manner of working, the designer has a fuller story to tell. ■

Arnold Wengrow is the author of *The Designs of Santo Loquasto* (USITT, 2017) and numerous articles about contemporary designers for *Theatre Design and Technology*, *Theatre Crafts International*, and *Entertainment Design*.

"Time keeps moving…"

A Conversation with Shane Horan

What follows is an edited transcript of an episode of the "Conversations on Dance" podcast featuring Shane Horan, editor for the George Balanchine Foundation Video Archives, in conversation with hosts Michael Sean Breeden and Rebecca King Ferraro. Shane Horan shares about the work the Balanchine Foundation is doing to expand its scope in preserving the Balanchine legacy. This podcast was released on March 6, 2025.

Michael Sean Breeden On today's episode, we are joined by editor of the George Balanchine Foundation, Shane Horan. Shane tells us about how he was brought on board as an editor learning the craft, and the work the Foundation is doing to expand its scope in preserving the Balanchine legacy. Shane, thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

Shane Horan Thank you so much for having me.

MSB When you were at the end of your dancing career, and thinking about transitioning, did you have an inkling about what you were going to do?

SH Yes. I started editing for the Balanchine Foundation while I was still dancing.

Rebecca King Ferraro How did that come about?

SH When I was at Ballet Idaho, I did my first Balanchine ballet, which was *Agon*. The stager for it was Paul Boos, who was a dancer under Balanchine, and is a répétiteur for the Balanchine Trust and was working with the Foundation. He came back the year after and I did the corps of *Allegro Brillante*, and we stayed in touch. During the COVID-19 pandemic he became the Director of the Video Archives for the George Balanchine Foundation. He knew from the very beginning my passion about the work, and I mentioned that if there was ever an opportunity to do some work, that it would be a dream come true. An opportunity came in March 2022. I started working on my trial edit, and I was scared because I wasn't really prepared for it. I got my first shoot, which was Bottom's pas de deux from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Kay Mazzo and Bart Cook, who are so wonderful to listen to. I could listen to them talk for hours. And they were working with Miriam Miller and Preston Chamblee on the pas de deux. I was sort of overwhelmed at first. They just sent me a hard drive and said to see what I could do with it. And it was very stressful. But, you know, I think it's a dancer's work ethic to just go into it. And I didn't know if it was going to be good enough, but I did the most I could with it, with the time I had, and tried to make it something. Then I submitted it, and I got the most beautiful email from Nancy Reynolds, who is the Director of Research for the George Balanchine Foundation, and who conceived the Balanchine Video Archives, and who is a former dancer with New York City Ballet, and who has several wonderful publications about the work of Balanchine. And that was really nice to hear. And lo and behold, I got my second shoot. And now I'm on my fifth or sixth one. I just love it. It's a dream to just delve in.

RKF Sure. I did want to talk about video editing. What was your experience with editing any video up to this point? Were you just self-taught, figuring this out as you go?

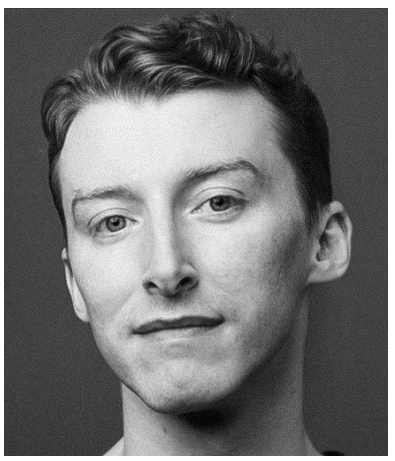
SH Yes.

RKF It's such a dancer mentality.

MSB It's so dancer.

SH But the thing is, I remember I was talking to the Rehearsal Director/Associate Artistic Director at Ballet Idaho. Her name is Anne Mueller. I was talking to her about it—because that's when I started talking to Paul about any potential opportunity—and her husband works in film. And I asked, "Well, what do you recommend?" And he said to just learn everything. Find what you can and learn everything. And when I started at the Foundation, I asked Gus Reed, who's the Senior Editor at the Foundation what he recommends, and he said you sort of just learn yourself. There's no one correct, foolproof way to edit. And every time I go into edit, I find myself learning new things or shortcuts.

Michael Sean Breeden and Rebecca King Ferraro. Photos by Leigh Esty and Julian Duque.



Shane Horan. Photo by Virginia Trudeau.

RKF I think that it could be very easy to say, "We need a video editor to do work like this." But they know that what matters more is your understanding of the dance. The dancer's perspective is there. And you'll figure out the rest of it because what they need is your eye.

MSB It's not a path that many people are choosing to take, but it's essential work. What you're doing is so important to the lifetime of these ballets as they continue to be performed and, you know, keeping that standard and authenticity up. Can you tell us about how people can access these archives?

SH They're distributed to libraries all over the world. Ideally, they are for scholars in the performing arts, like dancers. As far as I know, anyone who wants to learn about it is welcome to apply to view a coaching session and they'll get access to a link for two weeks to view.

MSB I should do that right now, I'm thinking, because—I'm very lucky—I started working a little bit with New Jersey Ballet, as rehearsal director. It's the very first time in my life I've ever gotten to run a rehearsal for a Balanchine ballet. Yesterday, I ran *Concerto Barocco* corps.

RKF Were you having the most fun ever?

MSB Yeah, I love it so much. And we had extra time, and you know what I did? I put that second cast in, and they were so happy. But I'm just realizing this is an amazing opportunity for me then to go in with this resource. But today is the first day for Serenade staging, too. So, that's starting to happen. So, I've got to go see who they've got in the archives for *Serenade*.

SH I think there's one with Pat Wilde rehearsing Russian.

MSB Oh, that must be good.

SH I apologize to the Foundation if they're now getting an influx of people who want to do recordings. But that's the point of it.

RKF That's what it's for.

SH For the legacy to continue and live on, and for these archives to be experienced in that way. Obviously, it's copyrighted material. You're not authorized to go ahead and stage anything based on these. I will say the purpose of these recordings is not to go into rehearsal and say, "On the Balanchine Foundation recording, I saw so-and-so did it, and…" That's not the point because, again, there are many iterations. And I will tell you the stagers have access to the archives as well. So, I'm sure they're going back and cross-referencing details from the past, and how they reflect with their experience, and so on and so forth. Do not go into rehearsal and say, "Pat Wilde said…"

MSB I'm just LOL-ing at that because it's something I experience all the time as a stager. But it's a little bit different. It's more like, "Well, the person on this video did this…" People, jokingly, call it "versionitis."

RKF I mean, how many times have we been in a rehearsal? That's like, what's this video doing? What's this arm doing? And this and that? And at some point, you've just got to pick which version you're doing.

SH Exactly.

RKF I did want to mention that I looked on the website and there is a way you can apply to view coachings. And I think this is so amazing because, as a dancer, I always felt that if you're not in New York and you can't go to the New York Public Library, it's hard to research these old videos. So, this is incredible for dancers who are not able to access that on a regular basis.

SH It's such a long legacy. Some of these ballets have been going for almost 100 years. So, of course, someone's going to say, "Well, I danced in 1963, and I love my version," or someone's going to say, "Well, in 1982, it was the last thing we did." There are always arguments. And I want everything documented.

RKF What do you have envisioned for your future continuing on with the Balanchine Foundation? Do you have goals in mind?

SH More of this.

MSB That's a good answer. That means you're happy.

SH Yeah, honestly. As far as the Foundation goes, I am very happy to have this as an outlet to dip into and lose myself. I'm not there. I'm not in the room. I don't know these people, but when you watch them—I've done some of Patty McBride's, I've done Suzy Pilarre's, Suki Schorer is so wonderful and eloquent and to the point. You get to know these people through watching their work for hours and hours and hours and hours.

MSB Last question. "Lost Balanchine Ballet you most wish could be revived?"

SH That's tough, because some of them have come back, lately. Like, *Bourrée* [*Fantasque*] came back at New York City Ballet. I did watch a reconstruction video of *Le Chant du Rossignol*, which I don't think would ever come back, and I enjoyed that. Balanchine at one point did a full three-act Raymonda, which is lost.

RKF I have one more that just came to mind. "What would be a dream coaching session"—one of these rehearsal sessions, for you to sit in on, and be there, and then edit it after?

SH That's a goal of mine is to go to New York and be in the room. ■

Michael Sean Breeden began attending the School of American Ballet on scholarship in 2002. Mr. Breeden joined Miami City Ballet as an apprentice in 2006 and was promoted to the corps de ballet in 2008. Michael also danced for Boston Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre and Suzanne Farrell Ballet. In 2016, Breeden co-founded the Conversations on Dance podcast with Miami City Ballet colleague Rebecca King Ferraro. The duo has worked diligently to grow Conversations on Dance into the highest-rated dance podcast on Apple Podcasts.

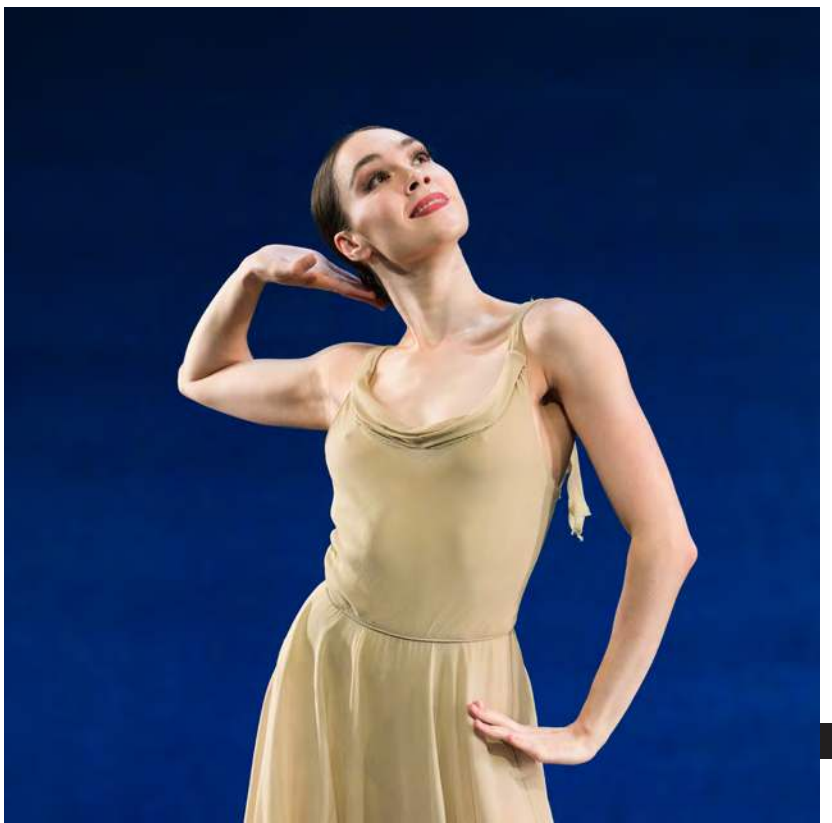
Rebecca King Ferraro joined Miami City Ballet in 2007 as a company apprentice and was promoted to corps de ballet in 2008. From 2010 to 2016, she served as a Company Representative on behalf of the dancers, a role similar to a union representative. Ms. King retired from Miami City Ballet in 2018, after an 11-year career with the company. Rebecca has taught ballet master classes across the country. In 2016, King co-founded the Conversations on Dance podcast with Miami City Ballet colleague, Michael Sean Breeden.

Shane Horan is an editor for The George Balanchine Foundation and a former dancer with Nevada Ballet Theatre and Ballet Idaho. Over his ten-year professional career, he performed featured and leading roles in works by George Balanchine, Lar Lubovitch, Septime Webre, Trey McIntyre, Ben Stevenson, and others, culminating in his retirement from the stage in 2023. In 2022, Shane joined The George Balanchine Foundation as an editor for its video archives, contributing to the documentation and preservation of Balanchine's masterpieces for future generations to come.

Conversations on Dance is part of the ACAS Creator Network.
For more information: conversationsondancepod.com

From Conversations on Dance (435)—Shane Horan, editor for the George Balanchine Foundation Video Archives, March 6, 2025: podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/conversations-on-dance/id1128237763?i=1000698137050&r=3470

Apply to view Balanchine Foundation videos: balanchine.org/video-archives/interpreters-archive-archive-of-lost-choreography/



“Not Just Another Show”

Interview with Tiler Peck, Curator of *Ballet Festival: Jerome Robbins*

In August 2025, The Joyce’s Ballet Festival returned for a one-week celebration of the life and legacy of Jerome Robbins. This year’s festival featured curation and performances by award-winning New York City Ballet Principal Tiler Peck, alongside a selection of top talent from globally recognized ballet companies, all showcasing the timeless vitality and vision of Robbins’ choreography.

Ballet Festival: Jerome Robbins programs featured the following works by Jerome Robbins: *A Suite of Dances*, *Concertino*, *Dances at a Gathering* (excerpts), *Four Bagatelles*, *In the Night*, *Other Dances*, and *Rondo.* Dancers included Dominika Afanasenkov, Aran Bell, William Bracewell, Chun Wai Chan, David Gabriel, Brooks Landegger, Paul Marque, Roman Mejia, Chloe Misseldine, Mira Nadon, Sae Eun Park, Tiler Peck, Unity Phelan, Marcelino Sambé, Taylor Stanley, Devon Teuscher, Cassandra Trenary, Emma Von Enck, and Indiana Woodward.

Following the performances, ballet enthusiast and scholar Edward Brill discussed the event with Tiler Peck. Here is their conversation.

Edward Brill Congratulations to you, first, on your wedding, and, also, on the great success of *Ballet Festival: Jerome Robbins* at the Joyce Theater. Now that the Festival has ended—about ten days ago—I wonder if you’ve had a chance to reflect on it at this point.

Tiler Peck Yes. First of all, we’re all missing each other. After a week, we felt like this little company, for a second, getting to experience these ballets together. So, when we didn’t show up at the Joyce on Tuesday—on Monday we were all there shooting, so, it was funny, we got to be there—but on Tuesday, it was really strange. We thought, *Wait, we’re supposed to be at the Joyce, doing the Robbins Festival!* I’m just so proud of what we did with it. Everybody danced so well, and it was so wonderful to see these ballets so intimately, and in a new light that they had never been seen in before, because of the stage proximity. To get to share the ballets with different dancers was wonderful. To see people taking on Robbins works for the first time—some people were doing that—or to see somebody doing something for maybe just the second time they’d ever done a Robbins ballet, and then to see people doing the ballets they know, but with different people, it was really a special week for all of us.

EB Talking about people doing something for the first time, the Festival included your own premiere doing *A Suite of Dances*, as the first woman ever to dance that. I have a few questions about that, which I’m going to get to, but let me start by asking about the Festival and how you first got involved.

TP I think Linda [Shelton] and Allen [Greenberg] were the ones who came up with the idea to do it at the Joyce. I think between the Robbins Rights Trust and the Joyce, they decided to come to me and ask if I would be interested. So, Linda and Ross [LeClair] asked me, and I remember the first thing I asked was, “Well, does the Robbins Trust know? Does J-P [Jean-Pierre Frohlich] know?” I know all these people have more experience with the Robbins ballets than I. I wanted to make sure. And they said yes, of course. I felt honored that the Trust would believe in me and trust me to do something like this. That’s putting a lot of trust in one person. I felt a lot of responsibility, and I wanted to make them proud. I wanted all the dancers involved to feel like it was not just another show, but more of an experience for all of us, and a time when we all could grow as artists.

EB There were so many Robbins ballets to choose from. How did you go about choosing the ones to present?

TP Well, I was given a nice list, from the Trust, that they thought could work in the space, and also with the music, because I did not want to use taped music. That was important to me. I felt that there were enough Robbins ballets that we could do where we could use live music. So, that shortened the list. For example, we couldn’t do *Fancy Free*, or *The Concert*. Then, the question became, realistically, how many dancers could we have on the stage in order to do the ballet? But my first thought was that we *had* to do *Dances at a Gathering*. That was

my first thought, and that was not on the list. Everything I did had to be run past the Trust. We did it together. I had the ideas of the dancers I wanted to dance the roles. Then, J-P and I brought it to the team, and they decided that it was good. They were apprehensive about *Dances at a Gathering*, because of the size of the stage. I think I went back to them three times, saying that I think that this would be a beautiful way to bring the festival together. I let them know that I didn't want it to be a bunch of pas de deux or trios. I wanted it to feel like we were showcasing his ballets. What better way than to bring all of these dancers, from different companies that dance these ballets, together in *Dances at a Gathering*? I couldn't think of anything better than that ending moment, where everyone is facing front, in that space. So, the Trust finally came around to a shorter version of the ballet, which was fine.

EB It was about half of it.

TP Yes, it was a good thirty-to-thirty-five-minute version. They said that Jerome had done it this way before, so they came back to me with an excerpted version of it. He himself put a shortened version of *Dances at a Gathering* together. They felt that it was appropriate, since he had already done it.

[Note: Jerome Robbins assembled an abbreviated version of *Dances at a Gathering* in 1980, when the ballet appeared on television on NBC's "Live from Studio 8H: An Evening with Jerome Robbins and Members of the New York City Ballet." This version of the ballet also appeared when he presented the Jerome Robbins Chamber Dance Company in the People's Republic of China in 1981. The version presented at the Joyce Theatre in 2025 was a variation on the previous shortened version and was approved because it was on a program consisting entirely of Jerome Robbins' works.]

EB On the program, there were three lesser-known works that you presented—*Four Bagatelles*, with music by Beethoven, *Concertino*, with music by Stravinsky, and *Rondo*, with music by Mozart—three composers not usually associated with Robbins.

TP That was very important to me. I wanted to show his range as a choreographer. He could do something like the Broadway work that we weren't able to show, and also something like *Four Bagatelles*, *A Suite of Dances*, or *In the Night*, and you'd wonder *How did this same choreographer choreograph all three of these to three different composers*? That was also important to me when I was structuring it—making sure that the composers were all different. He did do a lot of work to music by Chopin, but I didn't want it to be an evening of just Chopin. That affected which works I picked.

EB Were there any other dances that you would have liked to include, but weren't able to because of either the limitations of the time you had or for other reasons?

TP No. I think we ended up with everything we wanted to do. There was talk at one point about doing *Interplay*, which would have been fun to showcase, but musically it would have been tricky. So, it all worked out exactly as my idea of what I wanted the festival to be. The Trust ended up accepting everything that I had proposed.

EB You've said that one of the goals was to invite dancers from different companies—not only New York City Ballet, but also American Ballet Theatre, Royal Ballet, and Paris Opera Ballet. Why was that important to you?

TP Because New York City Ballet isn't the only company that dances his works. I don't feel that it would have been a great representation for a festival celebrating him. I wanted dancers from other companies who dance his works to be able to celebrate him, and especially the ones who don't dance his work.

EB Many Robbins ballets require a different type of movement—dancing for each other rather than for the audience—and I wonder how you prepared some of the dancers from the other companies, who may not have been as experienced in dancing the Robbins works to feel comfortable in that style.

TP I cannot take credit. I did not rehearse the dancers. That had to be left to the rehearsal rep directors. Jean-Pierre Frohlich did a lot of the ballets, and Christine Redpath did a lot, and then Rebecca Krohn did one, *Concertino*. I feel that the Robbins dances do need a particular type of dancer, and I felt that those qualities already existed in the people I suggested.

EB When you were choosing the dancers, were you looking for certain special combinations? For example, Mira Nadon danced *Rondo* with Chloe Misseldine, and you danced with Marcelino Sambé in *Dances at a Gathering*. Were these combinations things that you had in mind when you were choosing the dancers?

TP Yes. From the minute I suggested *Rondo*, I wanted to see Chloe and Mira dance it together, because I thought, *What a wonderful moment to see two rising stars dancing side by side. They're very different dancers, and it would be so nice to see them bring out different qualities in one another.* I thought it would be such an exciting moment for the audience, and also a big growing experience for the both of them. And that was Chloe's debut performance in any Robbins ballet, so it was a wonderful welcoming to his works. I wish she would have more opportunities to dance in them, and maybe she will one day, but I didn't feel that we should exclude the ABT dancers just because they don't do it in their repertoire. Marcelino and I have always wanted to dance together. I remember Roman [Mejia] watching in the wings every time we did *Dances…* because Roman does the same part as Marcelino, and how nice to see a different interpretation. He said, "It was so beautiful. I could see that he was really looking at you. I know how it feels when I dance with you, but to see somebody looking at you with that sincerity was beautiful." That's what this whole festival was about. Every dancer who was not dancing was in the wings, watching, because they were so inspired.

EB It was interesting watching Mira Nadon dance with Chloe Misseldine, and then, a few nights later, dance the same role with Devon Teuscher, which seemed completely different to me.

TP Exactly. I feel like Devon was already more of a Robbins-type dancer, so I feel she had a bit more security in that sense, because I think she'd also danced it once before. The more you do things, the more comfortable they become. Depending on who's on stage with you, it brings out something totally different, depending on the night.

EB Most of the dancers that you chose were principals or soloists with their companies, except for two. You had Dominika Afanasenkov, from City Ballet, and Brooks Landegger, who recently left Miami City Ballet to join ABT. Both of them danced with Taylor Stanley in *Concertino*. Why did you choose those two younger dancers?

TP Well, it was actually a debut for Taylor. He had never done *Concertino*, and I felt like when you look at who Robbins created his works on, they were star dancers. His works stand alone, but he also—when you look at *Dances at a Gathering*, or *Other Dances*, with Misha [Baryshnikov] and [Natalia] Makarova—he used star dancers. I never met him, but I think it was important for him for his dancers to know who they are, as individuals and as artists. Somebody like Dominika, I wanted to give her a big opportunity, because I think she's a special dancer. So, this was my way of giving her the confidence, knowing that we believed in her, and that she could bring something special to this. The same thing with Brooks. We really wanted Miami City Ballet to also be involved, and this was a very nice way. If I'm not mistaken, *Concertino* was made for Merrill Ashley, Sean Lavery, and Mel Tomlinson. Three very different individuals. To me, Brooks is similar to a Sean Lavery type dancer, and Taylor is this interesting artist that is similar to what that type of dancer was.

EB And Dominika, of course, even in her first year in the company she danced *Afternoon of a Faun,* so she does have some experience with the Robbins work.

TP Exactly. Jean-Pierre is a fan of Dominika.

EB One of the highlights of the festival was your performance in *A Suite of Dances*, as the first woman to dance it since it was choreographed thirty-one years ago, for Mikhail Baryshnikov. How did this come about?

TP I think I had asked in 2014 or so if they would ever consider letting me learn it. I don't know if I asked to perform it somewhere, but I asked how they would feel if I learned it, and the answer was that they wanted to keep it the way Jerry had it, which I understood. So, when they came to *me*, asking if I would want to do it this time around, I was surprised. And shocked. And excited. I just had taken their no as a, "No, we don't want this." I think J-P told me, "We weren't ready at

Previous page: Roman Mejia in Jerome Robbins' *A Suite of Dances*, 2025; Marcelino Sambé and Tiler Peck in Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* (excerpt), 2025; Mira Nadon in *Dances at a Gathering* (excerpt), 2025. Facing page: Unity Phelan and William Bracewell in *Dances at a Gathering* (excerpt), 2025. Photos by Steven Pisano.

that time, but we've thought about it, and if there is ever a woman to dance it, that should be you, and it should be done while the people who knew Jerry are still around and can teach it." So, I got to learn it with him, and I got to work with Misha on it. When I danced it for the first time, on Saturday, as soon as I finished it, I was in the dressing room, and I immediately started crying. It surprised me because I'm an emotional dancer, but not an emotional person. I had really put so much pressure on myself that I didn't even realize was there until after I finished the show. I wasn't crying because anything went wrong. I was really pleased with the debut, but I had put so much pressure on the fact that I was given this opportunity, and I had better pull through, to give space for people who might then want to do it after me. Or if it didn't go right, then maybe they'd never let anyone ever do it. I put all of these scenarios in my head that I didn't realize until after I performed. Then, when I danced it again, I was able to enjoy it. When I danced it a second time, on Sunday, I really understood it. After the show, Misha was there and he said, "You know, that was just right. You understood exactly what it was about." And he said to me, "You should be doing this at the theater." That was all I needed. Even if I don't ever do it again, hearing that come from him—somebody who worked on and created this work, as the original—I felt it inside. I felt on Sunday, *I really did get it*, and I could be proud of the performance. And I'm tough on myself, so for me to feel that way is a big deal.

EB You insisted the choreography remain the same. How difficult was it to do that choreography that was made for somebody like Baryshnikov, who was famous for his bravura technique?

TP It was made later in his career. I think he was in his forties. So, when you watch someone like Roman dance it, it's different from what Misha did. What's interesting about the ballet is that it depends on the dancer dancing it. I feel like maybe I understand it in a way that's similar to how Misha understood it at that time, because I'm more at that point in my career than somebody who's 25 years old. It was obviously very daunting. Clearly, I cannot jump as high as the men, but I really wanted to respect the piece, and I wanted to wear the costume, and do the choreography. I did not want it changed for me.

EB Were there things that you did differently because you're a woman?

TP Yes. In the rehearsals, J-P would say, "It's so interesting to see this done. Even the way you walk, and stand, is so different than I've ever seen it, just because you're a woman. It's not better or worse, it's just different." After the Saturday performance, I couldn't feel my legs for about 15 minutes after the show, just because it was using different muscles. Ballerinas are always up, using our calves a lot, and this is so weighted and heavy, and uses more of the quads, which is nothing that I normally do. It was interesting to see the difference that I felt post-performance.

EB Your husband, Roman, debuted in the role last season at New York City Ballet, and also performed it at the festival. What was that like, to be sharing the same role?

TP It was so fun, because we could really help each other. I was in the back of the room when he was learning it during the season, because J-P had decided that it would be good for me to get comfortable with it before I started learning it. I would raise questions to help Roman find his way, and then he would do the same for me. So, we helped each other. I think we both respect each other's eyes a lot. When he watched from the front, he even said to me, "That's one of my favorite *Suite of Dances* I've ever seen. I loved the way that it grew, from movement to movement, when I watched you do it." It was so wonderful sharing it.

EB One thing I noticed was that you seemed to have a special connection with the cellist, Hannah Holman. Of course, she's always onstage with the dancer, but there was something special about your connection with her. Had you worked with her before?

TP She actually played at our wedding, which was special. And then during the four days leading up to the performances at the Joyce, she came to the rehearsal room every single day, which doesn't usually happen. Normally, you'd probably get two rehearsals on stage. And she said it was a luxury, getting to be in the rehearsal room. And Misha had said to me, "Every night you do it, it's going to be different. You're going to feel like you want to look at her then, and then the next night you might not feel that way. And then, look at her at another moment. It's never planned. It's very spontaneous." And I felt that. I did it differently Saturday and Sunday. I *did* have a nice connection with her, and the movement in particular that I felt was different from when I had seen it with a male dancer was the third movement, the slow movement. Sometimes when I watch it, it feels quite long,

and yet I felt, *This is the section I feel most comfortable in, because I'm used to holding that kind of space as a ballerina*—filling out the music. That movement came naturally to me right away.

EB That's a special part of the work, I think.

TP Yes. Because it's a long solo, you have to keep it interesting.

EB I understand the festival is going to be presented in the spring, at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

TP Yes. In March. I think it will be the same two programs, on two different days. But it might change a little bit.

EB Are you bringing a different set of dancers?

TP I don't think we can do the exact same cast, because of availability, but we will see.

EB Are there thoughts about doing it elsewhere?

TP I hope. I know the Royal Ballet dancers suggested that we do it in London, at Sadler's Wells, or somewhere. That would be so wonderful. I think if there's more interest, the dancers would definitely want to do it.

EB Looking back on the festival, were there any surprises for you?

TP I don't think so. Strangely enough, it came together and went off the way I hoped it would. I was happy with the program—the choices that we made—and I was thrilled with how everybody danced the works. So, I feel lucky that it all went the way I dreamed it would.

EB Had you ever worked with the people at the Joyce before?

TP No. That was the first time, and I said to Linda and Ross that it was one of the loveliest experiences that I've ever had. They were so easy to work with, they were there anytime we needed them for anything, and everybody was just so kind. It was just, altogether—between dancers, musicians, staff—the best week of all of our lives. ■

Tiler Peck is celebrated as one of today's greatest American ballerinas, distinguished not only as a principal dancer with New York City Ballet (NYCB) but also as an Olivier-nominated choreographer and multifaceted artist. Renowned for her extensive repertoire, Peck's career highlights include directing the inaugural Artists at the Center for New York City Center, which evolved into the acclaimed *Turn it Out with Tiler Peck & Friends*, captivating audiences at venues like London's Sadler's Wells and across California. She has choreographed for prestigious companies including Boston Ballet, Northern Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, and Ballet X, with her recent work for NYCB, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, marking another milestone in her choreographic journey. Beyond ballet, Peck is an author, designer, and actress, having made significant contributions to film and television, choreographing for J*ohn Wick: Chapter 3 — Parabellum* and appearing in productions such as Netflix's *Tiny Pretty Things*, Hulu's documentary *Ballet NOW*, and Prime Video's *Étoile.* @tilerpeck

Ed Brill is a retired lawyer who fell in love with ballet when he attended the opening night of the historic Stravinsky Festival shortly after moving to New York in June 1972. He has led classes on Jerome Robbins and George Balanchine at the Lifelong Learning Program at The New School and CUNY Graduate Center. Ed is a former member of the Board of Dance NYC.

The Joffrey Ballet in Jerome Robbins' *Glass Pieces*, 2018. Photo by Cheryl Mann Productions.

Beyond the Ephemeral

Cataloging Choreographic Works for the Future

by A.M. LaVey

Since 2024, librarians from the New York Public Library (NYPL), in collaboration with research institutions across the United States, have been updating more than 21,000 choreographic work name authority records in the Library of Congress/Name Authority Cooperative (LC/NACO). This will align these records with Resource Description and Access (RDA), the international standard for descriptive cataloging adopted by NYPL in 2013.

In an authority record for a choreographic work, a controlled access point provides a standardized way of representing a resource about a specific choreographic work across cataloging systems. This ensures resources such as a performance capture of Jerome Robbins' *The Cage*, photographs from *Dances at a Gathering,* or books about *The Firebird* are cataloged consistently. As libraries move toward linked data bibliographic systems, standardization is crucial—particularly for institutions like NYPL, which shares dance resources with Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, and soon Yale. The Library of Congress, functioning as the de facto national library of the United States, manages authority files, which are also widely adopted by institutions in the Anglosphere and beyond.

This article explores the history of cataloguing choreography and NYPL's pivotal role in shaping these practices. It details the current authority control project, with a particular focus on my work with Jerome Robbins and George Balanchine records. Lastly, it addresses the significance of this effort for balletomanes, choreographers, dancers, educators and researchers alike.

Dance bibliography and choreographic cataloging

NYPL's Jerome Robbins Dance Division, the world's largest and most comprehensive dance archive, plays an instrumental role in cataloging dance resources. As former Dance Division librarian Arlene Yu noted, "perhaps the most significant undertaking of the Division…has been in the field of knowledge organization."[1] When Genevieve Oswald, the Division's founding curator, undertook the decade-long task of cataloging dance resources for the library and the creation of the 1974 *Dictionary Catalog of the Dance Collection*—the first comprehensive dance bibliography—she set new precedents in both dance and library science.

Historically, dance bibliography was subsumed under music bibliography. For example, cataloging practices outside NYPL often listed the composer as the primary creator of a work, sidelining the choreographer. A performance of Jerome Robbins' *Glass Pieces* might have been cataloged under:

Glass, Philip. Glassworks.
Glass, Philip. Akhnaten.
Robbins, Jerome.

NYPL challenged this practice by making the choreographic work the primary access point—e.g., Glass Pieces (Robbins)—to better reflect user research and differentiate multiple choreographic works with similar titles, such as *Afternoon of a Faun*.

In the 1990s, NYPL, Harvard, and the San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum formed the Dance Heritage Coalition to integrate NYPL's choreographic authority records into national cataloging systems. This effort led to the adoption of **Glass Pieces (Choreographic work: Robbins)** as a standardized format, which the Library of Congress began codifying in 1994—50 years after Oswald's pioneering work.

The 2013 RDA revision mandated another change: choreographic works would now be formatted as Robbins, Jerome. Glass Pieces. Beyond mere formatting, this evolution reflected broader semiotic challenges in documenting dance. Unlike literature or music, which have established textual traditions, dance exists primarily in embodied form, making structured cataloging systems vital for preservation. Semiotician Juri Lotman's concept of *self-description*—the way cultures organize and define themselves—underscores why choreographic authority records are essential for dance as a discipline.[2]

Updating Balanchine and Robbins records

In 2024, a team of librarians from Brigham Young University, Harvard University, Manhattan School of Music, Michigan State University, New York Public Library, and Yale University was assembled to manually update the records in the LC/NACO authority file, prioritizing the most prolific choreographers.[3] Given my expertise in Balanchine and New York City Ballet archives, I began with his records.

Balanchine Working with the George Balanchine Foundation's Lauren King, we updated the choreographic works catalogue for both institutions. In addition to the mandated updates, we conducted quality checks on all Balanchine

choreographic work, and integrated linked data to connect these works with external reference sources.

Traditionally, authority files functioned as controlled vocabularies to standardize names, but linked data transforms them into dynamic networks of relationships. For example, rather than treating Balanchine, George as a static entry, linked data connects his name authority record to his choreographic works, collaborations with Robbins, and foundational role at City Ballet. This ensures metadata for *Serenade* or *Apollo* is not just an isolated record but part of a structured web of information that ties together performances, archival materials, and verified documentation of his choreographic legacy.

For dance, where works and attributions evolve over time, linked data provides necessary disambiguation and contextualization. We used the digital *Balanchine Catalogue* to verify and refine authority records, ensuring that choreographic works were accurately attributed, and that their relationships to productions, companies, and music sources were well-defined. By integrating the *Balanchine Catalogue* into a linked data framework, name authority records gain deeper contextual grounding, allowing users to trace a work's history across different institutional repositories while maintaining scholarly rigor.

Linked data in name authority files aligns with broader digital archival methodologies, particularly in how metadata functions as both a structuring and dynamic element in archives. Semioticians Maarja Ojamaa and Indrek Ibrus argue that digital archives are not static repositories but engines of creativity, establishing relationships between elements.

Metadata defines an archive's communicative function. It allows dance cataloging to move beyond preservation into active cultural self-description, where choreographic metadata contributes to a living, evolving digital semiosphere. In this way, the integration of the *Balanchine Catalogue* into linked data frameworks ensures that authority records remain not just discoverable but meaningfully connected within the broader cultural and bibliographic discourse.

This approach is particularly significant for early Balanchine works, where archival sources diverge on details of performances and attributions. The NYPL Dance Division and the Balanchine Foundation archival holdings were fundamental in improving entries on Balanchine's earlier works before coming to America—some of the most challenging records in the project. Other challenges included phantom pieces such as the 1944 *La Farandole*, unfinished works like the 1983 *Birds of America*, and conflicting records such as *Nothing Doing Bar*, which NYPL records indicate was performed in 1924 in St. Petersburg but is listed in the *Balanchine Catalogue* as *Le Bœuf sur le Toit*, and only as rehearsed—not performed.

Robbins Robbins' authority records, largely created at NYPL and later refined by the Dance Heritage Coalition, were more straightforward to update. Working with Gregory Victor, on behalf of the Jerome Robbins Foundation, I verified data against the *Robbins Catalogue* and resolved inconsistencies and missing works, including a phantom *Appalachian Spring* production purportedly staged at Teatro alla Scala in 1953–54, for which no supporting documentation could be found.

Additionally, duplicate records for both Robbins and Balanchine were discovered, merged, and recommended for deletion. Others were cleaned up and reformatted to differentiate and standardize titles, such as Balanchine's *Pas de trois* (Glinka) and *Pas de trois* (Minkus), and Robbins' *A Suite of Dances* (1994) and *Suite of Dances* (from *The Dybbuk Variations*) (1980).

Why this matters

Beyond technical cataloging, this project has tangible benefits for balletomanes, choreographers, dancers, educators, and researchers. For choreographers and dancers, accurate and well-structured metadata prevents misattributions or omissions in archival and library collections. Dance companies and repertory directors rely on precise cataloging to reconstruct performances, track choreographic lineage and verify historical productions. By linking authority records to external resources like the Balanchine and Robbins catalogues, this project makes it easier to navigate the vast networks of dance history, enriching both scholarly research and public appreciation of dance.

Dance authority librarianship is a vital act of cultural preservation, blending historical accuracy, metadata standardization, and digital innovation. By updating Balanchine's and Robbins' records, this project does more than organize data—it shapes how future generations engage with their legacies. ■

Thank you to Dominique Bourassa, Lauren King, and Arlene Yu for their assistance with this paper, as well as my colleagues and leadership at NYPL.

1. Arlene Yu, "The Jerome Robbins Dance Division of The New York Public Library: A History of Innovation and Advocacy for Dance," *Dance Chronicle* 39, no. 2 (2016): 218–233, https://doi.org/10.1080/01472526.2016.1183459.
2. Juri Lotman, *Universe of Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 129.
3. Representing the NYPL are dance cataloguers Diane Pearson and myself, performing arts metadata specialist Emma Clarkson and rare materials cataloguer Helice Koffler, as well as music cataloguer Dustin Ludeman who manages the technical aspects of catalogue database integration.

A.M. LaVey is an archival scholar-practitioner specializing in east Slavic spaces, with research interests spanning archives and creativity, costume and textile studies, dance documentation, and visual culture. Currently, LaVey serves as a dance cataloger at the New York Public Library, contributing to the accessibility and preservation of dance heritage.

In 2019, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts celebrated its 75th anniversary by focusing on topics selected by the curators who have overseen the collection during its history. Elizabeth Zimmer, a Dance Curator Fellow, focused on the Selma Jeanne Cohen Collection, presenting remarks about the pioneering dance historian, writer, and educator. What follows is the second installment (of two) of her remarks presented at the Symposium, which served as the culmination of the Fellowship. The first installment appeared in the previous issue of *Jerome Robbins* [Vol. 11, No. 1 (2024)].

A Catalyst and Her Cat

Selma Jeanne Cohen and American Dance Scholarship

by Elizabeth Zimmer

Tamara Khanum and Selma Jean Cohen at Seattle Soviet Theatre Arts Exchange in Tashkent, 1989.

Selma Jeanne Cohen accepted short-term offers to teach all over the continent, notably at York University in Toronto, which developed North America's first M.A. program in dance history. York invited her to apply to be chair of its department, an offer she turned down. Instead of a full-time job, she juggled multiple part-time and temporary assignments and projects of her own devising.

In a celebration on the occasion of Selma Jeanne's 75th birthday in 1995, Judith Bennahum, who'd trained with her at the High School of the Performing Arts, quoted her as saying, "You must realize that this is guerilla warfare. You have to infiltrate other departments and colleges. Get them to believe you are as good as they are; you must know more and be better." This language echoes the clarion calls of second-wave feminists and African Americans in the '60s and '70s. Dance had to do battle with the widespread belief that women in academe were not serious, that they were just out to catch husbands.

Selma Jeanne Cohen was not out to catch a husband. She never married, and her files turn up no evidence of affairs of the heart. Early on, she apparently carried a torch for Eugene Loring, but he, like many men in the dance world, was gay. Selma Jeanne was interested in cooking, clothes, décor, even flower arranging, and had regular appointments to style her red hair, but mostly she worked.

I've been tempted to characterize her as a kind of "dance nun," but in fact she was the Mother Superior. She counseled people who wanted to study dance history but found no place to do it; she advised programs so students could have somewhere to go.

She joined academic organizations, like the American Society of Aesthetics and the American Society for Theater Research and wound up on their boards. She contributed annual bibliographies to several of them. She gave talks at their annual meetings; at one, in Detroit, she observed that "We've lost the habit of thinking about dance."

At Connecticut she taught another Selma, a young woman from Illinois who came to the American Dance Festival in 1963 and became Selma Jeanne's "most cherished protogée"[sic]. Selma Landen Odom took an MA in theatre history at Tufts, because graduate work in dance history was still a distant dream, and wound up at York where she taught for decades before retiring in 2009. She was sure she got the job because Selma Jeanne recommended her. Their correspondence lasted decades, one Selma writing to another, heartwarming in the enthusiasm each had for the other. The American Dance Festival was where Selma Jeanne started building her community, her network of critics and scholars; she caught them young. To enter her writing class, her notes declare, "Serious interest and a respectable command of language are the only prerequisites."

Critic Marcia Siegel, who later taught these workshops on both coasts, witnessed a panel of dance writers one summer at ADF, and wrote to Festival director Charles Reinhart, in 1969, "We all know how badly dance needs intelligent coverage outside of New York. It seems to me eminently practical to make contact with people already employed as working reporters and critics and give them a basic familiarity with the field…If we can send half a dozen people per year back to their newspapers with the enthusiasm and sense of community that are so characteristic of dance, I think we'll have won a major point."

I benefited directly from this strategy; in 1977 the Canada Council sent me from Vancouver to New London to study with Siegel, Deborah Jowitt, and a succession of guest critics.

Like Lincoln Kirstein, Selma Jeanne was a person of independent means, which enabled her to travel, live well, and pick and choose her professional assignments, avoiding the drudgery of full-time academic work. But she took seriously grading papers and writing recommendations. Remember how you waived your right to see the letters your teachers and mentors sent to universities? Well, some of those letters are in her files. She pulled no punches. Writing even about her young favorites, she began with compliments, briskly listed her reservations, and proceeded to highly recommend.

Her real talents were as writer, editor, and lobbyist for the art form that won her heart. She wrote for the *Saturday Review* and *Kenyon Review. Dance Perspectives* astounded its international readership, who thought it beautiful and intelligent. Her goal, she said, was to attract an audience to reading about dance. "We try," she told one writer, "to take a very small subject and explore it in depth." She started the magazine she wanted to work for and supported it for years with her own funds.

Each issue consisted of one 15- to 20,000-word piece, profusely illustrated and designed, mostly, by Karl Leabo, who also worked for *Playbill.* He donated his services to *Dance Perspectives* for years before he resigned, telling her, in 1969, that "we have jointly created the best dance magazine in the world. It's not viable in the ordinary commercial sense." At that point Selma Jeanne was facing more than $9000 in unpaid bills, much of that money Leabo had laid out for supplies, services and equipment. The writers received about $150 for their labors in 1971. Her 3000 readers were largely members of the dance audience. She wrote to a colleague, "Getting [the general public] interested in historical material is really a struggle. I have no intention of giving it up."

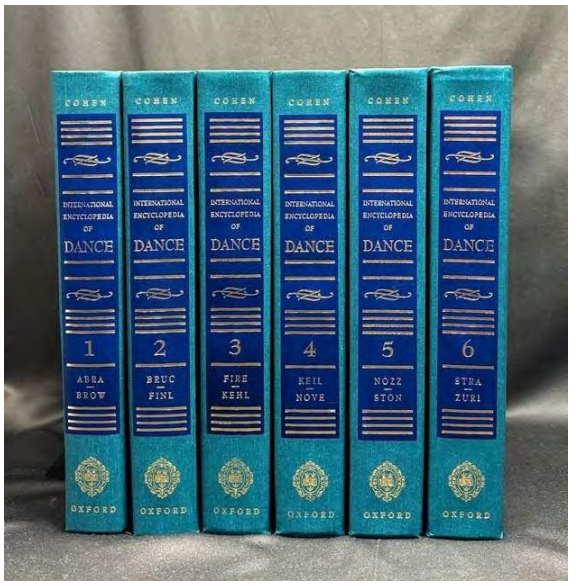
John Martin, after he retired from the *Times*, moved to California, but kept in touch, serving as a member of the *Dance Perspectives* editorial board. He wrote to Selma Jeanne in 1968, "To have upped the subscription list by 50 percent in three years is damn good for a highbrow sheet about a chichi subject such as high-kicking and all that jazz."

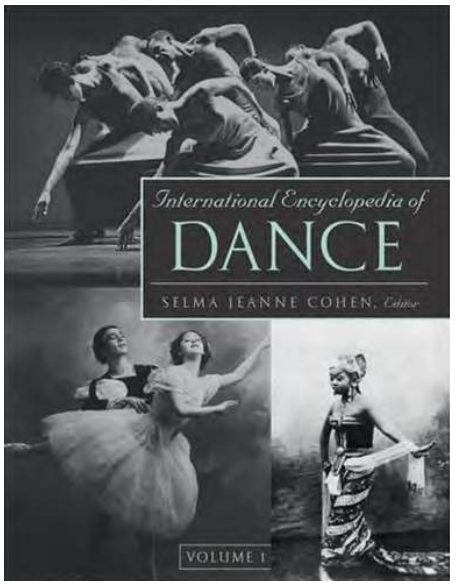
Word of her unique publication spread far and wide. Scholars, dancers, and members of the public sent in ideas or entire manuscripts. A whole folder in the archives consists of polite rejection letters; Selma Jeanne had clear standards and strategies. Queries that were totally inappropriate, and job applications from people who wanted to work with her, were treated with respect. She said she wanted articles that were "original and provocative as well as informative."

In 1974 she turned down a proposal about Twyla Tharp because, she said, "I don't feel she has reached the stage where we can obtain a 'perspective' on her work. And this perspective is the guideline that we use to determine which contemporary figures merit an issue." She rejected articles about black choreographers for similar reasons. By the mid '70s the magazine was paying writers $250 an issue. Her favorite among them, she said, was the one focusing on Erik Bruhn: "I'd ask one question and he'd talk for an hour." It sold thousands of extra copies all over the world.

In an oral history in the Library, Selma Jeanne discussed Doris Humphrey with William Bales, who danced in Humphrey's company. Referring to the quarterly appearance of *Dance Perspectives*, she observed that she had "four children a year…and I feel that way about every one of them." Her speaking voice was low, languid, almost honeyed: a mid-westerner, not a harried New Yorker, though she learned our ways in her 55 years in the city, jumping from crisis to crisis.

In the late 1960s she began compiling her textbook for dance history studies, *Dance as a Theatre Art*, which included primary sources from as far back as 1581





Selma Jean Cohen, 1980.

and as recently as Merce Cunningham, George Balanchine, Alwin Nikolais, and Meredith Monk. When the book finally appeared in 1974, after inordinate delays, it revolutionized the teaching of dance history. Reviews were uniformly enthusiastic. She wanted to keep the volume cheap enough for students to afford, so she had to omit sections she cherished, like an essay by antic choreographer Jamie Cunningham, a startling favorite. She called him "very bright, very avant-garde, and very much in touch with the kids today."

Dance is an art of motion; film, and later video, were central to her teaching. One of her early writing workshops included a young professor of political science at the University of Rochester, John Mueller, who offered a dance history course using a lot of film. She made an exception in letting him in, since he was not a working journalist, but he went on to issue guides to dance on film and a book about Fred Astaire.

By then Selma Jeanne had regular visits from an office assistant and a maid. In 1973 she turned the dance critics' training course, by then supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, over to Deborah Jowitt of the *Village Voice*.

Doing research in the Selma Jeanne Cohen papers is like eating fruitcake; amid stretches of ordinariness, wonderful nuggets pop up. Like the jumpy typeface of letters written by Paul Taylor on his manual typewriter. Like thank-you notes from Merce Cunningham, to whom Selma Jeanne apparently made regular donations. Like comments from young colleagues who sent her photos of their new babies. Like a letter from Tennessee Williams—and a letter from me, alphabetized under A for ArtsConnection, where I worked in the early 1980s. She became a sort of Miss Manners or Ann Landers of the dance world, handing out advice on an enormous range of subjects. She was a strategist, hooking people up with jobs, mentors, dissertation subjects, and often her spare room in Manhattan as a place of refuge to lay their weary heads. Susan Au, an early student who later collaborated with her on a book, called her the "Johnny Appleseed" of dance history.

The archives contain "teaching materials" for her summer course: reviews by critics Edwin Denby, Doris Hering, Arlene Croce, and even James Waring. She encouraged young correspondents to practice all kinds of dance writing: criticism, of course, but also reporting, interviewing, features, and historical essays. Given the utter lack of educational options for dance historians, she urged them to come to New York City and major in journalism.

In 1974, she was instrumental in starting the Dance Critics Association. Bill Littler, a Canadian music journalist who took her Connecticut class, became the founding chair of the organization.

A highlight of the archive is her extensive correspondence with José Rollin de la Torre Bueno of Wesleyan University Press, the first publisher to develop a list of dance studies titles. She called him Bill.

Selma Jeanne's tasks included not only conceiving and assembling or writing her books, but also marketing them. In 1982 she sent a publisher a list of 181 colleges offering courses in dance history, theory, and appreciation. The total number of colleges with dance majors was 241, and with minors and non-degree courses, 320.

That year she and several colleagues established, at the University of California, an intercampus MA in dance history. And she wrote a letter to the producer of NPR's *Sunday Show* that demonstrates her rapier instincts: "I'm quite interested in serving on your advisory committee. After hearing all these conversations with stars, it would be good to listen to some real ideas about the arts."

She tried unsuccessfully to get Wesleyan to take over as publisher of *Dance Perspectives*, noting that "the trouble is my utter bewilderment with the business aspects of the magazine. I don't understand anything connected with numbers or money, or the law, and I don't want to have to try. But I must and I will." Bill Bueno told her she was the power behind the throne at Wesleyan's dance book list. Her correspondence with him spans close to 20 years, from the time of *The Modern Dance* to his death from lung cancer in 1980.

Giving back

In 1973 Selma Jeanne engineered, and named after her friend, the de la Torre Bueno Prize for the best unpublished dance manuscript of the year, supporting it with funds from the Dance Perspectives Foundation…which is to say, initially with her own money. The first winner was her friend and colleague, Sister Mary Grace Swift of Loyola University in New Orleans, who co-taught with her the Chicago seminar on the Romantic ballet.

Recipients of the Prize over the years have included Deborah Jowitt, Thomas DeFrantz, John Mueller, and practically every other smart dance-book author in the western world. Selma Jeanne held cocktail receptions in her living room honoring the winners, welcoming as many as 50 guests. The award is now administered by the Dance Studies Association, formed after the Society of Dance History Scholars and CORD merged in 2017. The Society of Dance History Scholars realized, in the 1990s, Selma Jeanne's long-held dream of having dance represented in the American Council of Learned Societies.

DeFrantz wrote, about the impact of his 2005 award: "[It] acted as a validation for me; it affirmed that the choices I made to pursue African American performance as the heart and hearth of my academic work could be visible and celebrated…[It] told me, and the institutions I worked for…that it mattered to write about dance in a caring and careful manner."

At midlife, Selma Jeanne resolved to learn Russian, attended the language school at Middlebury College, and developed epistolary relationships with dance writers in the Soviet Union.

She sent them books (and issues of *Dance Perspectives*) that they could not get any other way, and they reciprocated, even sending her birthday cards. In the late '80s and early '90s, as the USSR was collapsing, she proposed that *Dance Magazine* publish articles from *The Sovietskii Ballet,* and vice versa.

During her year in Massachusetts, she arranged to let *Dance Perspectives* go, a tragedy for dance scholarship, but quickly replaced by *Dance Chronicle*, a journal initially edited by her friends Jack Anderson and George Dorris.

Taking on the world

Next she started seriously studying Russian and developing her life's major undertaking, the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*. She won planning grants from the Endowments and assembled a team of editors including Dorris, Nancy Goldner, Beate Gordon, Nancy Reynolds, David Vaughan, and Suzanne Youngerman.

In 1980 she got a $5000 fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation to write a book on dance aesthetics, a project that became *Next Week, Swan Lake*. Initially rejected by Houghton Mifflin, it was published by Wesleyan in 1982. Her grant application says she'd studied dance for 20 years, from 1933 to 1953, with McRae, Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, and José Limón. When she gave up classes she began swimming, but bemoaned the loss of her technical studies, especially when arthritis kicked in. "I wish I had kept them up," she wrote to a

dancing friend. “All I can do is swim, and the health clubs don’t play Chopin and Schubert at the pool, and I wish I were back at the barre.”

In 1981 she received a *Dance Magazine* award, the first scholar to be so honored. The next year, dancer Billie Mahoney recorded a video interview in which Selma Jeanne identified herself as a “terpsichologist,” a word she equates with *musicologist.* Later in this video she discusses her dissatisfaction with being a dance critic. She hated the pressure of overnight deadlines and “wanted to take weeks and months until I got it right.” That year she taught a once-a week class at the New School.

Busy steering the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, she began to keep cats, at first one named Benny, and then the vaunted Giselle. In 1993 she provided, for *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, a short piece on the “Aesthetics of the Cat.” At her 75th birthday celebration in 1995, she bemoaned the absence of her feline companion, Giselle, who, she reported, did receive an invitation and sniffed, “Will there be shrimp?”

She traveled to the USSR, and in 1989 visited Tashkent, on a mission to promote international cultural exchange. Then she led a dance tour to Leningrad, Moscow, and Tashkent, for People to People International. *Dance Magazine* published a piece on her trip to Uzbekistan. She wrote to a colleague, “I suspect the problems of intercultural meanings are not so different from those of inter-century meanings, which have interested me for some time (see *Next Week, Swan Lake).”*

Former dancer Celia Ipiotis, producer of the cable series *Eye on Dance,* moved to New York from Ohio and founded the program in 1981. Selma Jeanne, she observed, “was one of *Eye on Dance’s* godmothers. In 1985 she appeared on a program with Lutz Forster, in the Limón company at the time, and Letitia Ide. The title was ‘Terpsichorean Tales: Telling Stories Through Dance.’ We talked about *Othello*. She was my ballet-whisperer, my early-roots-of-modern-dance whisperer. I’d take notes, and then I’d go to the library and look people up. She was a fervent learner, a very dear person. She worked *Eye on Dance* into the fabric of the dance scholars’ community, because she saw it as a platform for them to be heard. It happened to be on TV, but it was serious. She had me introduce the winner of the de la Torre Bueno prize, so people would see me as a dance historian…”

Critic Robert Johnson, a longtime staffer at *Dance Magazine*, occasionally had drinks with her, and once observed the prim, proper, “old-fashioned elegant lady,” as he put it, in the front row at an Elizabeth Streb performance, “wearing a helmet and pearls, impeccably dressed as always. There was broken glass everywhere. She brushed the glass off her skirt. I remember this gesture more than anything else.”

During the years she was immersed in engineering the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, she also served as the dance specialist on the *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theater*, cracking her whip at its editors. This project was planned to release a volume a year over the course of seven years, as opposed to the dance encyclopedia, which took much longer but was finally released all at once.

The production of the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* became a decades-long saga. Initially taken on by Scribner’s, it migrated to the University of California Press, which listed it for the fall of 1991. Consequences of this move were horrific. Nancy Reynolds declared, “I believe we are all paying the price for the Press’s having engaged both copyeditors and a photo editor with no subject background.” Reynolds told me, “It took 24 years of my life, but it did get published. Selma Jeanne was promoted to editor emerita partway; things were going south in her mind. She had an amazing mind, but she began to lose things.”

Reading the massive files engendered by the encyclopedia project raises one’s blood pressure, even decades later. Furious with inadequate performance by a U.C. Press staffer, Selma Jeanne wrote, “If Alexandra is paid for doing a poor job, shouldn’t the editors be paid for correcting her mistakes?” That memo is signed, “Sincerely, Giselle’s Mommy.”

As time went by, people, both subjects and authors of *Encyclopedia* articles, kept dying. Many revisions became necessary.

The University of California Press withdrew from the project in the fall of 1993. In April of 1994, Selma Jeanne signed an agreement with Oxford University Press, then under the direction of Claude Conyers. This agreement commissioned her to supervise editorial review and assist in the preparation of materials, for $5000 plus expenses. Her editorial board and Oxford had by then figured out that she couldn’t do it alone, and assembled a crew, including Elizabeth Aldrich and Dance Perspectives board president Curtis Carter (also a graduate of one of Selma Jeanne’s critics’ workshops), to bring the project home. Its six oversize volumes finally appeared in March of 1998, comprising 4000 pages, costing $1400 and greeted by a mixed review in the *New York Times*. The name “Cohen” is printed in gold on the spine of each volume, above the title. Today, you can buy the *Encyclopedia* online, new, in paperback for about $188, and used, in hardcover, for less than that; or in an electronic format.

In 1994 the Society of Dance History Scholars established the Selma Jeanne Cohen Young Scholars Program in her honor, to support presentations at its annual conference. Six years later the Selma Jeanne Cohen Fund for International Scholarship on Dance was founded, that prize underwritten by its namesake. The Fund pays expenses for writers of dance history papers to travel to the annual gathering of Fulbright scholars and lecture, keeping excellent dance scholarship in front of a broad swath of academic stars. Recent recipients of this prize have included Millicent Hodson, Barbara Browning, Alice Blumenfeld, Román Baca, and Jonathan Hollander, who was entranced by Selma Jeanne when she invited him for tea: “How powerful were her passion and mission,” he told me, “to take dance and put it where it belonged, in the understanding of the world and how people lived. Her strategic mind understood that her legacy could be endowing people to talk about dance.” Awards are also given in Selma Jeanne’s name at the American Society for Theater Research, supporting a presentation that explores the intersections of theater and dance, and at the American Society for Aesthetics, which offers a biennial prize in dance aesthetics, dance theory, or the history of dance.

After Selma Jeanne’s death in 2005, author Susan Manning, mentored by her while she was in college and a former president of the Society of Dance History Scholars, spoke at a memorial at Columbia. Manning said, of Selma Jeanne’s presence at her dissertation defense in 1987: “After the customary rising of all committee members, several approached to embrace me. After they all had filed out, Selma Jeanne…in a tone of amused disbelief exclaimed, “no one ever kissed at a defense in my day!” Then we walked to…lunch, and she voiced her true assessment of my thesis: “There are ten books buried within that dissertation; now you have to figure out which one you want to write.”

Later Manning said of Selma Jeanne, “…her influence…far exceeded her official roles…her vision of dance studies as a passionately rigorous, multidisciplinary, and international inquiry continues to inform our mission.”

In 1995, Selma Jeanne’s 75th birthday was celebrated at the Dance Division, at a grand party hosted by George Dorris and Jack Anderson and videotaped by Nina Bennahum, Judith’s daughter and herself a dance scholar. On that occasion Gigi Oswald called Selma Jeanne “a woman of tremendous graciousness and poise…a one-woman task force.” Colleagues in the theater community pointed out that she brought dance history to the study of popular entertainment, wrote about dance in Shakespeare, and was more responsible for the spread of dance history and dance aesthetics than anyone else in the world.

Selma Jeanne began working in New York at the dawn of the dance boom, when artists like Merce Cunningham, Doris Humphrey, George Balanchine, and Twyla Tharp were in their prime productive years. She built a corps of scholars who took dance seriously as an academic discipline. We who follow her are grateful.

Epilogue

In 2020 we find ourselves looking at a reduced dance landscape, with many factors combining to keep viewers out of theaters. Audiences are shrinking. Hardly any professional outlets remain to publish criticism. An NYU dance teacher told me recently that her students don’t know who Martha Graham is. The New York real estate situation, which permitted so much creative ferment from the 1950s through the 1980s, is now impossible for most artists; many are returning to the universities that sheltered them initially; others are just giving up.

From peace and quiet and the wealth of resources, what I will miss most about my time in the Reading Room are the many guards, both members of the curatorial staff and of the security force outside the glass doors, who took turns protecting the collection from us human users. Frequent was the urge, when I found multiple copies of the same document in a file, to quietly lift one and save myself a stretch of note-taking. Knowing they were watching kept me on the straight and narrow. ■

Elizabeth Zimmer, a native New Yorker, has been writing about the arts, for print and electronic media, since 1971, when she began reviewing theater, film, books, and dance for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. After stints in Halifax, Vancouver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, in 1992 she accepted the position of dance editor at New York’s *Village Voice*, to which she has also contributed reviews and feature stories. She has also covered dance for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and written for *Dance Magazine*, *Ballet Review*, the *AARP Magazine*, and a variety of other publications. She edits manuscripts for *Persimmon Tree*, an online magazine of the arts, and for many individuals. She holds a BA in literature from Bennington College and a master’s degree from Stony Brook University, and has taught writing workshops around the country, most recently for the MFA program in dance at Hollins University in Roanoke, VA. In 2019 she received a fellowship from the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts to research the life and work of Selma Jeanne Cohen.

Quiet City

Alejandro Virelles and Joseph Taylor work with Robbins Rights Trust stager Robert La Fosse during a rehearsal of Jerome Robbins' *Quiet City* at London City Ballet, 2025. Photo by Kanako Hata.

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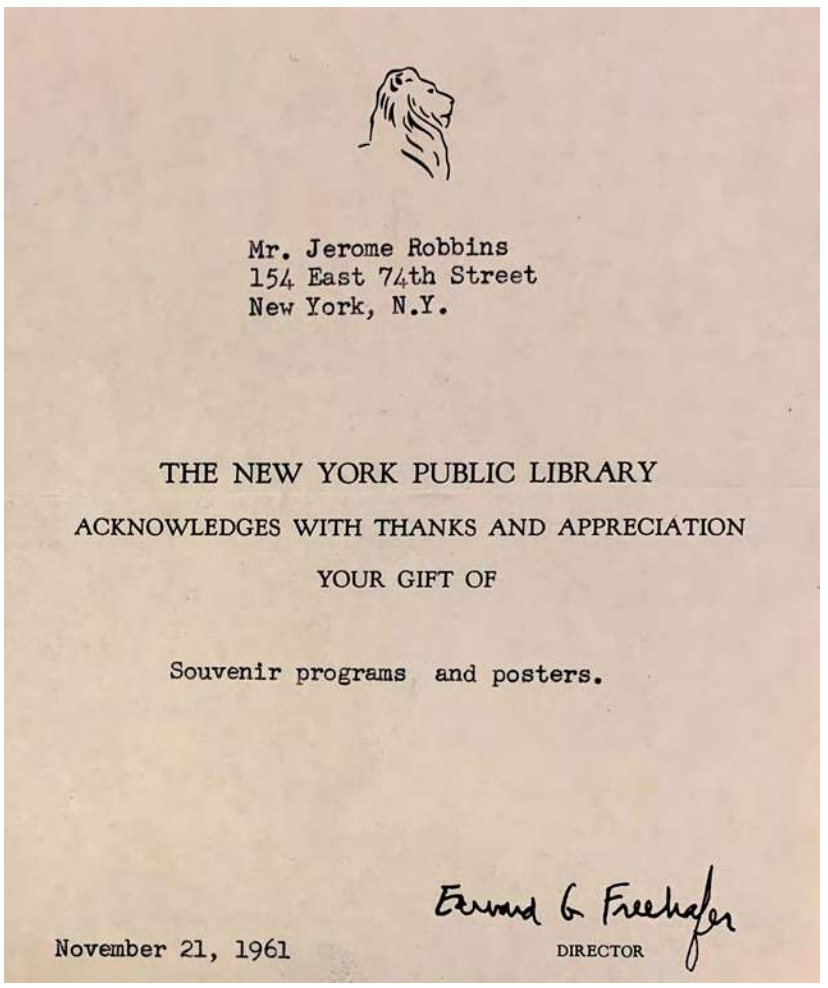
cover: Tiler Peck in Jerome Robbins' *A Suite of Dances*, part of *Ballet Festival: Jerome Robbins* at The Joyce Theater, 2025. Costume: Santo Loquasto. Photo by Steven Pisano.

below: Acknowledgment from the New York Public Library sent to Jerome Robbins upon his donation of ephemera from the 1961 *Ballets: USA* tour of Europe.



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November 21, 1961

Edward G. Freehafer
DIRECTOR

Select Upcoming Performances of Jerome Robbins Works

GOTTA DANCE with American Dance Machine
(featuring excerpts from *West Side Story*)
The York Theatre Company, New York City
November 25(e), 26(e), 29(m/e), 30(m), 2025
December 2(e), 3(e), 4(e), 5(e), 6(e), 7(m), 9(e), 10(e), 11(e), 12(e), 13(m/e), 14(m), 16(e), 17(e), 18(e), 19(e), 20(m/e), 21(m), 23(e), 26(e), 27(m)(e), 28(m), 2025

ANTIQUE EPIGRAPHS
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
January 23(e), 24(m/e), 25(e), 27(e), 28(e), 2026

OPUS 19 / THE DREAMER
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
January 29(e), 30(e), 31(e), February 3(e), 4(e), 7(e), 2026

DANCES AT A GATHERING
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
February 26(e), 27(e), 28(m/e), March 1(e), 2026

BALLET FESTIVAL: JEROME ROBBINS
Granada Theatre, Santa Barbara
March 3(e), 4(e), 2026

IN THE NIGHT
New Jersey Ballet, Mayo Performing Arts Center, Morristown, New Jersey
March 20(e), 21(m), 2026

INTERPLAY
State Street Ballet, Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara
March 21(m/e), 22(m), 2026

CIRCUS POLKA
Los Gatos Ballet, Mayer Theatre at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California
March 28(m/e), 29(m), 2026

WEST SIDE STORY SUITE / ANTIQUE EPIGRAPHS
Ballet West, Capitol Theatre, Salt Lake City, Utah
April 10(e), 11(m/e), 16(e), 18(m/e), 2026

FIREBIRD (co-choreographed with George Balanchine)
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
April 21(e), 24(e), 25(m), 30(e), May 2(m), 3(e), 2026

IN MEMORY OF…
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
April 22(e), 23(e), 25(e), 26(e), 28(e), May 8(e), 2026

DANCES AT A GATHERING
Boston Ballet, Citizens Opera House, Boston, Massachusetts
May 7(e), 8(e), 9(e), 10(m), 14(e), 15(e), 16(m/e), 17(m), 2026

OPUS 19/THE DREAMER
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
May 7(e), 2026 (NYCB Spring Gala)

THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS
New York City Ballet, David H. Koch Theatre, New York City
May 13(e), 15(e), 16(e), 21(e), 2026

Please note: Cancellations or postponements are always possible.