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Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the
Yvonne Patterson and William Dollar papers
1925-2002 [bulk 1934-1998]
(S) *MGZMD 259

Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2011

Summary

Creator: Dollar, William

Title: Yvonne Patterson and William Dollar papers

Date: 1925-2002 [bulk 1934-1998]

Size: 8.06 linear feet (20 boxes)

Source: Gift of the estate of Yvonne Patterson, 2011

Abstract: William Dollar (1907-1986) was an American ballet dancer, choreographer, and ballet master associated with numerous American companies for more than 30 years. Yvonne Patterson, (1910-2010) was an original Balanchine ballerina and dance teacher. The Yvonne Patterson and William Dollar papers document their work as dancers, educators, and choreographers.

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Preferred citation: The Yvonne Patterson and William Dollar papers, (S) *MGZMD 259. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2011 Folders created for half the collection, water damaged scrapbooks disassembled. A plaque presented to Yvonne Patterson in 1988 by the Korean Cultural Foundation for staging Le Combat was removed from the collection and is stored separately at LPA.

Creator History

Yvonne Patterson, (1910-2010) was an original Balanchine ballerina and dance teacher. She was born in Melbourne, Australia. Her father, Ambrose Patterson, was a celebrated painter who exhibited

alongside Matisse in the 1905 First Salon d'Automne. After moving his family to the United States, he established the Department of Art History and Design at the University of Washington, Seattle. Patterson had dance lessons as a child in Hawaii and California, and moved New York City in her teens to join the Radio City Ballet.

Patterson was in the first class of dancers accepted to the School of American Ballet when George Balanchine arrived in the United States in the mid-1930s. She worked with the famed choreographer for most of her career. Patterson and Dollar met while dancing for Balanchine, and both performed in the debut of his ballet "Serenade" in 1934. During her career, she performed with the Ballet Russe, Le Grand Ballet du Monte Carlo, Ballet Caravan, Ballet International, and many other companies.

In the 1950s, she retired from performance and taught dance with Dollar, working with dance companies in Brazil and Japan, and founding a national ballet company in Iran before moving to Philadelphia. After Dollar's death in 1986, she assisted regional companies with recreations of Dollar's choreography.

Patterson continued to teach dance at the Rock School of Ballet in Philadelphia until she was 95 years old.

William Dollar (1907-1986) was an American ballet dancer, choreographer, and ballet master associated with numerous American companies for more than 30 years. Dollar received his training in the United States, studying under George Balanchine and Michel Fokine and with Mikhail Mordkin and Pierre Vladimiroff, both formerly star dancers in Russia. Dollar was a leading dancer with the American Ballet (1936–37), Ballet Caravan (1936–38), and the American Ballet Caravan (1941)—predecessors of the New York City Ballet, which was established in 1948. Dollar and Patterson were among the artists who toured South America in 1941 with Ballet Caravan – premiering American ballets throughout the continent under Balanchine.

Dollar went on to choreograph many ballets, starting with *Classic Ballet* (later known as *Constantia*) in 1944. His best known composition is *Le Combat*, or *The Duel*. This piece was first staged in performed in London by Les Ballets de Paris and continues to be performed today, all over the world. Other pieces by Dollar include *Jeux*, *Concerto*, *Five Gifts*, and *The Lady of the Camellias*.

Scope and Content Note

The Yvonne Patterson and William Dollar papers document their work as dancers, educators, and choreographers. The papers consist of material from various ballet companies where one or both of the couple was engaged, choreography, correspondence, subject files (which include a manuscript by Dollar and personal and professional photographs) and teaching materials. While much of the material is related to Dollar's work as a choreographer, Patterson was not only his wife, but his life long collaborator. Her hand can be seen in many of his documents.

Key Terms

Subjects
Choreographers -- United States
Dance -- Education

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Photographs
Scores
Scrapbooks

Names
American Ballet Caravan (New York, N.Y.)
Ballet Caravan, Inc. (New York, N.Y.)
Metropolitan Opera (New York, N.Y.). Ballet
New York City Ballet

Container List

Series I: Ballet Companies 1931-1996 (5 boxes)

This series contains correspondence, programs, photographs, and other materials relating to Patterson and Dollar's work with various ballet companies and performing arts institutions. These records reflect all aspects of the couple's artistic endeavors, whether as performers, teachers, or choreographers. Files dated post-1988 usually reflect Patterson's services as a consultant in the recreating and performance of Dollar's most famous works, often *Le Combat*. Of note is the material relating to the National Ballet School of Iran, which Dollar and Patterson founded together in the mid 1950s. Arrangement is alphabetical by company or institution.

b. 1 f. 1-2 The American Ballet

American Ballet Theatre

Photographs

b. 1 f. 3 *Alma Matter* 1935

b. 1 f. 4 *Errante* 1935

b. 1 f. 5 *Goldwyn Follies* 1938

b. 1 f. 6 *Reminiscence* 1935

b. 1 f. 7 *Sebastian* undated

b. 1 f. 8 *Transcendence* 1935

b. 1 f. 9-10 South American Tour 1941
As Ballet Caravan.

b. 1 f. 11 Programs

Asami Maki Ballet

b. 1 f. 12-13 Correspondence 1975-1996

b. 1 f. 14-15 Photographs 1974-1996

b. 2 f. 1-3 Programs 1974-1996

b. 2 f. 4 Ballet Caravan undated

Ballet International

b. 2 f. 5-7 Photographs 1942-1944

b. 2 f. 8 Programs 1944

b. 3 f. 1 Ballet du Nord 1988

Ballet Theatre

b. 3 f. 2 Correspondence 1959

b. 3 f. 3 Photographs undated

b. 3 f. 4 Programs 1958

b. 3 f. 5 Royalties 1957-1958

b. 3 f. 6 Dallas, Texas State Fair 1952

b. 3 f. 7-8 Detroit City Ballet 1964-1969

b. 3 f. 9 Dance Theater of Harlem undated

b. 3 f. 10 Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo 1947-1948

b. 3 f. 11 Houston Ballet undated

b. 3 f. 12 Metropolitan Opera undated

National Ballet Academy of Iran

b. 3 f. 13 Correspondence 1956-1957

Series I: Ballet Companies (cont.)
National Ballet Academy of Iran (cont.)

b. 3 f. 14 Photographs undated

b. 3 f. 15 Programs 1955-1957

b. 4 f. 1 Portugal Opera 1962

b. 4 f. 2 Pennsylvania Ballet Company 1964

b. 4 f. 3 Philadelphia Grand Opera 1931

b. 4 f. 4 Teatro Colon 1964-1966

b. 4 f. 5 Teatro Municipal de Rio de Janeiro 1965

b. 4 f. 6 Theatre d'Art du Ballet 1964-1967

Universal Ballet Company

b. 4 f. 7 Correspondence 1989

b. 4 f. 8 Programs 1989

b. 5 f. 1 Washington School of Ballet 1963

b. 5 f. 2 Y.M.H.A. Performances 1940-1943

Series II: Choreography 1959-1979 (4 boxes)

Series II contains notes, photographs, and other materials documenting William Dollar's work as a choreographer. The materials are arranged by composition where possible, and consist of handwritten notes describing choreography. Occasionally, correspondence relating to the creation of the work, costume sketches, or photographs of the work in performance are present. A set of choreographic notebooks are included at the end of this series. These notebooks are filled with sketches, inspiration, and ideas jotted down by Dollar during his career, and are not tied to any one composition. Arrangement is alphabetical by dance, with the general notebooks at the end.

b. 5 f. 3 *Annabel Lee* undated
Photographs only.

b. 5 f. 4 *Circus Life* 1959

Le Combat

b. 5 f. 5-6 Choreographic Notes undated

b. 5 f. 7 Correspondence 1967-1979

b. 5 f. 8-9 Copyright information 1982

b. 5 f. 10 Costume and Lighting Notes undated

b. 5 f. 11-12 Photographs undated

b. 5 f. 13 Press Material undated

b. 5 f. 14 Rehearsal Notes undated

b. 6 f. 1-2 Scores undated

Concerto
Mendelssohn

b. 6 f. 3 Choreographic Notes undated

b. 6 f. 4 Photographs undated

Constantia

b. 6 f. 5-6 Choreographic Notes undated

b. 6 f. 7 Costume Designs undated

b. 6 f. 8-9 Rehearsal Notes undated

Photographs

b. 6 f. 10 Debut Performance
With Yvonne Patterson

Series II: Choreography (cont.)
Constantia (cont.)
Photographs (cont.)

b. 6 f. 11 Japan 1977
b. 6 f. 12 *Danzas Criollas* 1978-1979
b. 7 f. 1 *Divertimento* undated
Five Gifts
b. 7 f. 2-3 Choreographic Notes undated
b. 7 f. 4 Photographs undated
b. 7 f. 5 Scores undated
Jeux
b. 7 f. 6 Choreographic Notes undated
b. 7 f. 7 Design Sketches undated
b. 7 f. 8 Photographs undated
The Lady of the Camillias
b. 7 f. 9 Choreographic Notes undated
b. 7 f. 10 Scores undated
b. 7 f. 11 *The Nutcracker* undated
b. 7 f. 12 *Sebastian* undated
b. 7 f. 13-14 General Notes and Notebooks undated
b. 8 f. 1-6 General Notes and Notebooks undated

Series III: Correspondence 1941-2001 (5 boxes)

The correspondence series contains letters to and from William Dollar and Yvonne Patterson, Todd Bolender, and others. Dollar and Patterson's correspondence with each other is rich in dance detail, as they were often separated by their work. They were not only husband and wife, but choreographers, dancers, teachers, founders and artists together. They discuss other dancers, the production of new works, why a certain dance was a failure or a success, and rehearsal details along with their personal life.

The correspondence also contains a lengthy discourse between Todd Bolender and the couple, especially Patterson. Todd Bolender was a Balanchine trained dancer who became a noted teacher, choreographer and director. He led the Kansas City Ballet from 1980 to 1995, and those years are represented in this correspondence. This material is also especially rich, as Patterson and Bolender rediscovered each other late in life and the correspondence is filled with reminisces of the early days of the American Ballet Theatre. There is also family correspondence with Viola Patterson and Jane Alexander, the great-grand niece of Patterson's father Ambrose Patterson. Series is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Dollar, William
Bolender, Todd
b. 9 f. 1 1947 1947
b. 9 f. 2 1983-1985 1983-1985
b. 9 f. 3 General 1963-1985
b. 9 f. 4 Jambay, J.F 1964-1984
b. 9 f. 5-9 Patterson, Yvonne 1960-1977
b. 9 f. 10-13 Tucker, Peggy 1941-1956
Patterson, Yvonne
b. 20 f. 1-3 General 1929-2002
b. 10 f. 1 General 1970-2001
b. 20 f. 4 Alexander, Jane 1982-1994
b. 10 f. 2-13 Bolender, Todd 1986-1998

Series III: Correspondence (cont.)
Patterson, Yvonne (cont.)

b. 11 f. 1-6 Bolender, Todd 1999-2004

b. 11 f. 7-9 Dollar, William 1942-1964

b. 12 f. 1-8 Dollar, William 1965-1977

b. 20 f. 5-6 Patterson, Viola 1970-1982

Series IV: Alphabetical Files 1925-2002 (6 boxes)

Series IV holds a broad range of materials relating to Dollar and Patterson's personal and professional lives. Costume sketches, two diaries written by Patterson later in her life, scores, programs from various dance performances attended or worked on by the couple, photographs, financial materials, and Dollar's manuscript, *Old Granny Spreads Good Will* are contained here.

The photographs in this series are both personal (candid shots by year) and dance related. The dance related photographs are often professional studio shots of Dollar, Patterson, Balanchine and other dancers, some autographed. There are many pictures of Dollar with his dance partner, Marie-Jeanne, as well as shots of Patterson with Maria Tallchief. Patterson wrote identifying information on the back of almost every photograph, rendering these files especially useful. A family scrapbook created by Patterson around 1920 holds photographs of her siblings along with her mother and stepfather Herman Tucker.

The scores include several printed copies of scores that Dollar was considering for choreography and copies of musical compositions written by Paul Ramsier for a possible collaboration.

Letters from Patterson's stepfather Herman L. Tucker describe his courtship of Patterson's mother in 1918 and his interactions with her children. These letters were written to his sister Katherine.

Of note in this series is an unpublished, typed manuscript written by William Dollar during and shortly after the Ballet Caravan's South American tour. Entitled *Old Granny Spreads Good Will*, it describes backstage happenings among the company, with thinly veiled pseudonymous names given to the cast of characters. Included with the book is Yvonne Patterson's handwritten character key – identifying each person with their pseudonym. Persons depicted include Balanchine, Lew Chirstensen, Gisela Caccialanza, Marie-Jeanne, and Lincoln Kirstein.

Arrangement is alphabetical by folder title.

b. 18 Costume Designs undated

b. 13 f. 1-2 Diaries 1980, 1991
Patterson, Yvonne

b. 13 f. 3-4 Financial Notebooks undated

b. 13 f. 5-7 *Old Granny Spreads Goodwill* undated

Photographs

Dance

b. 14 f. 1 Balanchine, George undated

b. 14 f. 2-3 Dancers 1936-1947

b. 14 f. 4-7 Dollar, William 1925-1963

b. 14 f. 8 Marie-Jeanne undated

b. 14 f. 9 Mordkin, Michael undated

Patterson, Yvonne

b. 14 f. 10 Dancing undated

b. 14 f. 11 Teaching 1980-1994

b. 14 f. 12 Tallchief, Maria 1948

b. 15 f. 1-7 Personal 1940-2002

b. 20 f. 7 Personal 1918-1930

b. 15 f. 8 Programs 1941-1966

Series IV: Alphabetical Files (cont.)

b. 19 Scores undated

b. 20 f. 8 Scrapbook
Childhood photographs of Patterson.

b. 18 Scrapbook 1934-1936

b. 20 f. 9 Tucker, Herman L 1918

Series V: Teaching 1954-1978 (2 boxes)

Series V is composed of notes from William Dollar's career as a dance teacher. The notes are primarily handwritten, and are sorted either by the teaching venue, by subject, or by dance being covered. The most detailed papers are those under "General Course Notes" which outline class work for each level of dancer being taught. These course notes include barre work, repetitions, floor work, and what objectives he hoped to achieve with each class. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

b. 16 f. 1 Adagio undated

b. 16 f. 2-3 Ballet Theatre 1965-1973

b. 16 f. 4 Bolshoi Class undated

b. 16 f. 5-12 Cecchetti Council of America 1954-1978

b. 16 f. 13-16 Fokine Classes undated

b. 16 f. 17-19 General Course Notes undated

b. 17 f. 1-4 General Course Notes undated

b. 17 f. 5-9 Metropolitan Opera Ballet 1973-1974

b. 17 f. 10 Mordkin Classes undated

b. 17 f. 11 Obukoff, Anatole undated

b. 17 f. 12-14 Others' Course Notes undated