



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Marion Andersen papers**

1930-2002 [bulk 1970-1999]

(S) \*MGZMD 289

Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2011

## Summary

**Creator:** Andersen, Marion

**Title:** Marion Andersen papers

**Date:** 1930-2002 [bulk 1970-1999]

**Size:** 11.3 linear feet (27 boxes, 1 tube)

**Source:** Donated by LeRoy Brandt, 2002.

**Abstract:** Marion Andersen (1924-2002) was a modern dancer, choreographer, and instructor. The Marion Andersen papers, dated 1930 to 2002, document her choreography work; creation of dance departments and performing companies at Utah State University and the University of Washington; and founding of the Valley Dance Ensemble in Logan, UT. The collection consists of choreographic notes, scripts, photographs, programs, posters, correspondence, and research materials on May O'Donnell, a modern dance choreographer and Andersen's mentor.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Folders containing university students' personal information are restricted until 2024. To request materials, contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)) in advance. Inquiries regarding audio-visual materials from the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio-visual materials may be subject to preservation and migration prior to access.

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**Preferred citation:** Marion Andersen papers, (S) \*MGZMD 289. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2011 Material with private financial information has been deaccessioned. Duplicate programs and 5 1/4" floppy discs were returned to LPA. Audio-visual material was previously separated from the collection, and is cataloged separately.

**Related Materials:**

Gertrude Schurr papers. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Creator History**

Marion Andersen (1924-2002) was a modern dancer and choreographer. Born in New Jersey, Andersen received formal training in New York City under May O'Donnell and Gertrude Shurr in the modern dance style of Martha Graham. She joined the New York-based dance companies of May O'Donnell in 1951 and Norman Walker in 1960. She performed for both companies while also working as a teaching artist in California and Finland. May O'Donnell had a lifelong influence on Andersen; she performed and choreographed O'Donnell's seminal works throughout her career, and devoted much of her time in the late 1980s and 1990s to researching O'Donnell's career in modern dance.

Beginning in 1958, May O'Donnell's company, along with faculty from the New York High School of Performing Arts, was awarded an annual residency at Utah State University ("USU") in Logan, Utah. Andersen joined the company in teaching and performing in Utah each summer for almost a decade. In 1967, she was appointed Artist-in-Residence in Dance at Utah State University. Andersen established USU's first dance company as well as a dance program within the theatre arts department.

Andersen left Utah State University in 1974 and joined the faculty at the University of Washington ("UW") in Seattle. As in Utah, she founded UW's first performing dance company, the University of Washington Dance Theatre. Andersen also contributed to the development of a dance curriculum and department at UW, in which she taught historical and modern dance.

Returning to Logan, Utah in 1983, Andersen established Valley Dance Ensemble, a community-based modern dance company for which she served as choreographer and artistic director. She coordinated, choreographed, and directed dance concerts each season for the company, and hosted guest artists to perform and teach. Andersen also ran Valley Dance Ensemble's dance school, which offered modern dance classes to students of a wide range of age and skill.

Andersen was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in the late 1990s, but continued to direct and choreograph until her death in 2002.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Marion Andersen papers document the work of the modern dancer, choreographer, and teacher as an artist-in-residence at Utah State University, professor of dance at the University of Washington, and the founder/artistic director of Valley Dance Ensemble in Logan, UT. The papers, dated 1930 to 2002 (bulk: 1970 to 1999), consist of choreographic notes, scripts, photographs, programs, posters, and correspondence. In addition to detailing Andersen's artistic vision for her performances and productions, the papers also highlight her approaches to dance instruction in both the academic and community settings. Andersen's research on the career of her mentor May O'Donnell, as well as O'Donnell's programs, photographs, and correspondence, constitutes a significant portion of the collection.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Choreography  
Dance companies  
Modern dance  
Women dancers -- United States

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Photographs  
Posters  
Programs

### **Names**

O'Donnell, May, 1906-2004  
Valley Dance Ensemble

## Container List

### Series I: Choreography Notes 1969-2001 (7.75 boxes and one oversize folder)

This series contains Andersen's stage directions, scripts, sketches, photographs, contact sheets, and notes on dance pieces, with material arranged by title. The series, dating from 1969 to 2001, is divided into two sub-series, the first of which includes warm-up and rehearsal exercises suited for a variety of skill levels. Though the exercises are undated, they likely originate from Andersen's work in Valley Dance Ensemble's modern dance school.

The second sub-series holds material related to dance performances choreographed and directed by Andersen from her earliest concerts at USU, to her last with Valley Dance Ensemble. Andersen's notes detail her reactions to rehearsals, ideas for casting, responses to viewing her earlier productions of the piece, and stage directions. Portions of the notes are written in shorthand. These files generally consist of notes from multiple productions of a work, with photographs and costuming choices showing how Andersen refined directorial decision throughout her career. Her concerts with Valley Dance Ensemble represent the largest portion of the subseries. The files also show the range of dances she staged—from May O'Donnell works such as *Drift* and *Suspension* to Renaissance and historical pieces.

#### I. A. Exercises undated

- b. 1 f. 1      Advanced Exercises undated
- b. 1 f. 2      Beginning and Intermediate Exercises undated
- b. 1 f. 3      Drafts of New Sequences undated
- b. 1 f. 4      Floor Exercises undated
- b. 1 f. 5      In Place Exercises undated
- b. 1 f. 6      Travelling Exercises undated

#### I. B. Dances 1969-2001

- b. 1 f. 7      Miscellaneous Notes and Incomplete Dances 1977-1995, undated
- b. 1 f. 8      *Anima* undated  
              *At the Hawk's Well*
- b. 1 f. 9      Choreographic Notes and Research 1996
- b. 1 f. 10     Draft Scripts undated
- b. 1 f. 11     *Ave Verum and Dialogue* 1995, undated
- b. 1 f. 12     *Bach 300* 1985  
              *Black Angels*
- b. 2 f. 1      Notes undated
- b. 2 f. 2      Photographs undated
- b. 2 f. 3      Boxes 1984-2001
- b. 2 f. 4      *Canaries and Saeta* 1978-1979  
              *Canon*
- b. 2 f. 5      Notes 1981-1990
- b. 2 f. 6      Photographs 1980-1981
- b. 2 f. 7      *Cantus* 1997
- b. 2 f. 8      *Cheek to Cheek* 1983
- b. 2 f. 9      *Clutch of Poets: Effort at Speech Between Two People and Inner Space/Outerspace* undated
- b. 3 f. 1      *Dido and Aeneas, Don Giovanni, and Liebeslieder Waltzes* 1974-1978  
              *Drift (May O'Donnell)*

Series I: Choreography Notes (cont.)

I. B. Dances (cont.)

Drift (May O'Donnell) (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 2      General Notes and Photographs 1971-1972
- b. 3 f. 3      Early Revisions undated
- b. 3 f. 4      Revised Notes undated
- b. 28      Wood Models undated
- b. 3 f. 5      *Elements* 1995-2001
- b. 3 f. 6      *The Elephant's Child* undated
- b. 3 f. 7      *Enya* 1993-1994
- b. 3 f. 8      *Fancy's Fiddle* 1973
- b. 3 f. 9      *Figures in an Alien Landscape I and II and Spanish Dances (Renaissance)*  
1977
- b. 4 f. 1      *Flow* 1998-1999
- From Behind the Unreasoning Mask*
- b. 4 f. 2      Notes 1975-1980
- b. 4 f. 3      Photographs undated
- b. 4 f. 4      *A Glad Song* 1979
- b. 4 f. 5      *Ice* 1979
- b. 4 f. 6      *Imaging (Adams) and Themes and Variations (Schubert)* 1982-1990
- b. 4 f. 7      *Ionisation* 1983-1993
- b. 4 f. 8      *Jambalaya* 1980
- Jarrett 1978-1981
- b. 4 f. 9      General 1978-1981
- b. 4 f. 10      *Towards the Sun* 1998, undated
- b. 4 f. 11      *Legendary Forest (May O'Donnell)* 1970
- Making Tracks*
- b. 5 f. 1      Notes 1979-1986
- b. 5 f. 2      Photographs 1977
- Moog Pieces
- b. 5 f. 3      Notes 1976-1989
- b. 5 f. 4      Photographs undated
- b. 5 f. 5      *Night Figures* 1969-2000
- b. 5 f. 6      *Out of Doors* 1981, 1993
- b. 5 f. 7      *Out of Touch, Timesteps, and Raft* 1974-1981
- b. 5 f. 8      *Over Easy* 1977-1980
- b. 6 f. 1      *Play* 1979-1981
- b. 6 f. 2      *Pompous Circumstances* 1975-1978
- b. 6 f. 3      *Rameau Suite* undated
- Renaissance Dance
- b. 6 f. 4      Research and Notes 1999-2000
- b. 6 f. 5      *Twilight and Mader* 1977-1988
- b. 6 f. 6      *Songs (Gary Smith)* 1984
- b. 6 f. 7      *Spring Catch* 1988

Series I: Choreography Notes (cont.)

I. B. Dances (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 8 *Spring Light* 1995
- b. 6 f. 9 *Spring Run* 1983-1997
- Suspension*
- b. 7 f. 1 Part 1 1973-1994
- b. 7 f. 2 Parts 2 and 3 1973-1994
- b. 7 f. 3 Part 4 1973-1994
- b. 7 f. 4 Parts 5 and 6 1973-1994
- b. 26 f. 1 Sheet Music undated
- b. 7 f. 5 *Swamp* 1978-1991
- b. 7 f. 6 *Three for Three* undated

Series II: Personal Files 1950-2002 (2.25 boxes)

This series holds correspondence, clippings, photographs, journal-style notes, and presentations dating from 1950 to 2002. Clippings and a scrapbook from the series provide the most comprehensive mentions of Andersen as a performer in the collection, especially her work with the May O'Donnell and Norman Walker companies, in addition to articles that discuss her career holistically and her volunteer efforts in the community. Andersen's speeches and presentations include research-based lectures on aspects of Renaissance and 20th-century modern dance, as well as personal narratives on her experience as a dancer and choreographer. Correspondence contained herein is both personal and work-related, with items such as letters of recommendation from her colleagues at USU, UW, and other modern dance choreographers. Lastly, Andersen's private dance lessons, which she offered outside of her faculty work at UW, is documented in a ledger.

- b. 7 f. 7 Clippings 1950-1982
- Correspondence
- b. 7 f. 8 1971-1995
- b. 8 f. 1-2 1971-1995
- b. 8 f. 3 Notes 1975-1980
- b. 8 f. 4 Private Lesson Ledger 1981-1983
- Scrapbook
- b. 25 1952-1994
- b. 8 f. 5 1972-2002
- b. 8 f. 6 Sheet Music 1954-1956
- b. 8 f. 7 Speeches and Presentations 1988-1993

Series III: May O'Donnell Research 1930-2000 (3.75 boxes)

This series, with material dating from 1930 to 2000, holds Andersen's research and documents she collected related to the career of 20th century dancer and choreographer May O'Donnell. Correspondence in the collection states that she compiled this research with the ultimate goal of writing a book on O'Donnell, though the project was not completed before Andersen's death.

The first sub-series consists of programs covering five decades of O'Donnell's career, and documents both her own performances and dance productions she choreographed. The programs are arranged chronologically by year, and include a small number of photographs, reviews, and journals from O'Donnell for the relevant time period.

The largest portion of the series contains research notes and correspondence collected by Andersen. Her research includes shorthand and typescript notes from viewing performances, compiling reviews, and consulting with archival collections. Correspondence in the series consists of letters to and from Andersen regarding O'Donnell, as well as letters to and from O'Donnell and other dancers. Andersen also gathered files on associated dancers of O'Donnell's era, such as Gertrude Shurr and Ruthanna Boris. In addition to consulting published interviews with O'Donnell, Andersen conducted and transcribed interviews with O'Donnell and Shurr.

Series III: May O'Donnell Research (cont.)

III. A. Programs 1940-1988

- b. 9 f. 1-8 1940-1981
- b. 10 f. 1-3 1982-1988

III. B. Research Files 1930-2000

- b. 10 f. 4 Boris, Ruthanna 1992
- b. 10 f. 5 Chronological Listing of Programs 1987-1988
- Correspondence
- b. 10 f. 6-7 General 1952-2000
- b. 10 f. 8 With Former Dancers 1987-1989
- b. 10 f. 9 Dances--Descriptions undated
- b. 11 f. 1 Graham, Martha 1947-1958
- Interviews
- b. 11 f. 2 About O'Donnell 1987
- b. 11 f. 3 O'Donnell, May 1979-1988
- b. 11 f. 4 Original Interview Notes: May O'Donnell and Gertrude Shurr 1988
- b. 11 f. 5 Shurr, Gertrude 1987
- b. 11 f. 6 Lang, Nancy 1944-1989
- b. 12 f. 1 Oakland Ballet 1989
- Photographs
- b. 11 f. 7 General undated
- b. 12 f. 3 Shannon, Terry 1976-1989
- b. 11 f. 8-11 Research Notes 1988-1994
- b. 12 f. 2 Reviews 1930-1985
- b. 12 f. 4 Shawl-Anderson Dance Company 1975-1989
- b. 12 f. 5-6 Shurr, Gertrude 1935-1997
- b. 12 f. 7 Smith, Lida Nelson at West Chester State College 1968-1990

Series IV: University of Utah 1959-1980 (4 boxes, 2 oversize folders, and one poster tube.)

This series covers Andersen's time at the University of Utah, as a member of May O'Donnell's company during their residency and as Artist-in-Residence. Dating from 1959 to 1980, the series consists of programs, posters, photographs, correspondence, and course material. Files are organized into three sub-series and arranged alphabetically. Performance Files contain clippings, programs, photographs, and notes related to dance concerts organized by or featuring Andersen, including solo and O'Donnell company shows, guest artist performances, dance student concerts, and productions by the University of Utah Dance Theatre. Concert notes for these performances describe casting, costume, and publicity issues; generally, these files differ in scope from material in Series I, as they are more administrative in nature.

Andersen's teaching files include course schedules, lecture notes, and memos organized by academic quarter. Andersen's research, lectures, and course materials on Renaissance dance history and techniques show her early academic interest in the topic. Class rosters, attendance records, and student papers are restricted from patron use until 2024, as they contain identifying student information and grade assignments.

IV. A. General 1959-1974

- b. 12 f. 8 Butler Dance Supply and Music Centre 1969-1972
- b. 12 f. 9-10 Correspondence 1967-1972
- b. 13 f. 1 Scrapbook 1973-1974

Series IV: University of Utah (cont.)

IV. A. General (cont.)

- b. 13 f. 2 Utah Division, Western Conference of American Association of Dance Companies 1971-1972
- b. 13 f. 3 Yocom, Dr. Rachael 1959-1968

IV. B. Performance Files 1960-1980

- b. 13 f. 4 Clippings 1965-1972
- b. 13 f. 5 Concert Dances Notes and Source Material 1964-1974
- Photographs
- b. 13 f. 6 General 1964-1974
- b. 13 f. 7 *Liebeslieder Waltzes* undated
- b. 13 f. 8 *Night Figures* 1971, undated
- b. 14 f. 1 Opening Dance undated
- b. 26 f. 2 Oversize undated
- b. 14 f. 2 *A Time to Dance* undated

Programs

- b. 14 f. 3 General 1960-1972
- b. 14 f. 4 USU Dance Theatre 1968-1974
- b. 14 f. 5 Publicity 1968-1980
- b. 14 f. 6 Spring Concert 1970
- b. 14 f. 7 Theatre and Music Department Dances 1974-1975
- b. 14 f. 8 Winter Concert 1969

Posters

- b. 26 f. 3 1970-1972
- t. 27 1970-1974

IV. C. Teaching Files 1967-1974

- b. 14 f. 9 Class Attendance Registers 1967-1974  
RESTRICTED UNTIL 2024
- b. 15 f. 1 Class Grade Sheets and Student Papers 1967-1973  
RESTRICTED UNTIL 2024
- b. 15 f. 2 Class Rosters and Attendance 1968-1974  
RESTRICTED UNTIL 2024
- b. 15 f. 3-4 Historical Dance Lecture Notes and Research 1971
- Quarters
- b. 15 f. 5 Summer Quarter 1968
- b. 15 f. 6 Summer Quarter 1969
- b. 15 f. 7-8 Winter and Fall Quarters 1970
- b. 16 f. 1-4 Winter through Fall Quarters 1971
- b. 16 f. 5-6 Winter and Spring Quarters 1972
- b. 16 f. 7 Fall and Winter Quarters 1973-1974



**Series V: University of Washington 1969-1982** (3.75 boxes, two oversize folders, and one poster tube.)

This series documents Andersen's tenure as a faculty member at the University of Washington, dating from 1969 to 1982. The material is arranged alphabetically in three sub-series. The first sub-series includes correspondence and memos from other dance faculty at UW, as well as fellow dancers. Programs and clippings discuss performances and events from both the Division of Dance and the University of Washington Dance Theatre.

The Division of Dance sub-series highlights Andersen's work as a faculty member at UW, such as her contributions to the creation of a dance courses and curriculum. Andersen's teaching files, organized by academic year, contain her faculty schedules, course lecture notes and exercises, and interdepartmental correspondence on schedules and concerts. Her faculty activity analyses detail extracurricular work taken on for the division and community, such as student advising, private lessons, and producing dance concerts.

The third sub-series, University of Washington Dance Theatre, holds Andersen's notes and correspondence related to her founding of the student dance company, as well as programs, posters, and photographs from performances. Andersen led the company's efforts to gain outside funding for productions, and her correspondence with donors and planning notes for fundraisers are included.

**V. A. General 1972-1982**

- b. 16 f. 8-9 Correspondence 1972-1982  
Programs and Clippings
- b. 16 f. 10 1974-1982
- b. 17 f. 1-3 1974-1982

**V. B. Division of Dance 1969-1982**

- b. 17 f. 4 Boris, Ruthanna 1974-1982
- b. 17 f. 5 Faculty Activity Analyses 1974-1982
- b. 17 f. 6 Photographs undated  
Proposals
- b. 17 f. 7 B. A. in Dance--Research and Drafts 1969-1979
- b. 17 f. 8 Courses in Contemporary Dance 1975  
Dance Curriculum, Dance Major Programs, and Proposed School of Dance
- b. 17 f. 9 1969
- b. 18 f. 1 undated
- b. 18 f. 2-10 Teaching Files 1974-1982

**V. C. University of Washington Dance Theatre 1972-1982**

**General Files**

- b. 18 f. 11 1977-1981
- b. 19 f. 1 1977-1981
- b. 19 f. 2 Bartok Festival 1981
- b. 19 f. 3-4 Berkeley Tour 1980
- b. 19 f. 5 Fundraising and Expenses 1972-1982  
Photographs  
General
- b. 20 f. 1 1977-1981
- b. 20 f. 2 1979, undated

Series V: University of Washington (cont.)  
V. C. University of Washington Dance Theatre (cont.)  
Photographs (cont.)

- b. 19 f. 8      Contact Sheets 1977, undated
- b. 20 f. 3      *Man of La Mancha* undated  
                 Oversize
- b. 26 f. 4-5      Contact Sheets 1979-1981
- b. 26 f. 6      Prints undated
- b. 20 f. 4      *Play* undated
- b. 19 f. 6      Sabado, Keith 1980-1981
- b. 19 f. 7      Skahen, Patty 1980
- t. 27      Posters 1979-1981

Series VI: Valley Dance Ensemble 1980-2001 (4.5 boxes and two oversize folders)

This series contains programs, photographs, posters, financial and administrative documents, and teaching materials for Valley Dance Ensemble, dated 1980 to 2001. The series is organized into three sub-series and arranged alphabetically.

Administrative Files primarily holds financial papers related to Valley Dance Ensemble, such as grant paperwork, fundraising documents, and income and expense reports for each fiscal year. These reports detail the financial aspects of running a community dance company, with costume, publicity, and event costs represented. Andersen's work in the establishment of the company is documented in Board of Directors minutes and founding materials, such as the company's mission statement and multiple revisions of the Artistic Director's job description.

Programs, reviews, and posters for dance concerts are housed in the Performance Files, spanning Andersen's tenure with Valley Dance Ensemble from its first performance to her final staging of *Suspension* in 2001. This sub-series also covers guest artists who collaborated with the company, including Terry Heller and Morris Johnson. Andersen's notes on administrative and publicity tasks associated with each concert are stored together in the Concerts folders.

The role of the Valley Dance Ensemble as a dance school is explored in the Teaching Files, with promotional brochures, quarterly class schedules, instructor biographies, and class goals and descriptions. Andersen's class materials, gathered early in the founding of the company and school, contain her notes used to lead class sessions, and ledgers show the size and growth of the school into the early 1990s.

VI. A. Administrative Files 1984-2001

- b. 20 f. 5      Board of Directors 1987-1996
- b. 20 f. 6      Campbell Scientific Donations 1990-2000
- b. 20 f. 7      Contributions 1992-1993
- b. 20 f. 8      Funding 1987-1991
- b. 20 f. 9      Grant Applications 2001  
                 Income and Expenses
- b. 20 f. 10      1984-1988
- b. 21 f. 1-4      1988-1991
- b. 21 f. 5      Tax Exempt Status 1988-1992

VI. B. Performance Files 1983-2001

- b. 21 f. 6      Brochure Draft undated  
                 Concerts
- b. 21 f. 7-10      1983-1996
- b. 22 f. 1-2      1995-2001
- b. 22 f. 3      Johnson, Morris 1999-2000  
                 Photographs
- b. 22 f. 4      General 1997, undated

Series VI: Valley Dance Ensemble (cont.)

VI. B. Performance Files (cont.)

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 22 f. 5        *Three for Three* 1997
- b. 22 f. 6        Programs 1983-2001
- b. 22 f. 7        Publicity 1988-1996
- b. 22 f. 8        *Suspension* 1993-1994
- b. 26 f. 7-8      Posters 1980-2001

VI. C. Teaching Files 1980-2001

Valley Dance Ensemble School--General

- b. 23 f. 1-5      1980-1998
- b. 24 f. 1        1983-2001
- b. 24 f. 2        Class Materials 1982-1984, undated
- b. 24 f. 3-4      Ledgers 1984-1991