

The New York Public Library  
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

## John Martin papers

1890-1985 (bulk 1920-1975)

(S) \*MGZMD 260

Compiled by Lea Jordan, June 2011

### Summary

**Creator:** Martin, John Joseph, 1893-

**Title:** John Martin papers, 1890-1985 (bulk 1920-1975)

**Size:** 17.14 linear feet (45 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by the Zachary Solov Foundation, 2011

**Abstract:** John Martin (1893-1985) was America's first major dance critic. The John Martin papers (1890-1985) document the pioneering critic's career, as well as his interests in theater, the history of dance, and dance education.

**Access:** To request materials, please contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)) in advance.

Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

**Copyright information:** Donor retains copyright of materials. Library policy on photocopying will apply. For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

**Preferred citation:** The John Martin papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

### Processing note

Collection rehoused, published books removed for transfer to LPA. Before arriving at the New York Public Library, the collection was partially processed by the Zachary Solov Foundation. During the processing an artificial arrangement was imposed on the collection. An attempt has been made to restore the collection to its original order where possible.

### Related collections

Zachary Solov papers. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

### Creator history

John Martin (1893-1985) was America's first major dance critic. His early career was as an actor, publicist, and editor in both Louisville, Kentucky, and New York. After serving in World War I, Martin

worked with the Chicago Little Theatre where he met his wife, Hettie Mick. Martin also studied the actor Konstantin Stanislavsky's system which emphasized moving with dramatic impulses that come from within.

In the early part of the century, ballets and other dance performances were reviewed by music or theater critics, who often had little to no interest in dance as an art. With the growth of modern dance and dancers – Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham, and others – developing a language and protocol for dance criticism became necessary.

The New York Times hired Martin as its very first dance critic in 1927. As this was completely uncharted territory, Martin had to both educate the audience as to how to analyze what was happening onstage, and educate the dancers as to standards of professionalism. Determined that dance criticism would not become just a side note to general arts criticism, Martin began giving lectures on the role of the audience and other topics at the New School for Social Research and at Bennington College. Eventually, his thoughts on dance were compiled into his 1933 book *The Modern Dance*. Throughout his many articles and books over the years, Martin emphasized the need for the audience to keep an open mind to what the dancers were saying with their bodies, and for dancers to dance completely through inner compulsions, thus bringing about a truly honest art form. Other books by Martin include *An Introduction to the Dance*, *John Martin's Book of the Dance*, and *America Dancing*.

After retiring from the New York Times in 1962, Martin took a position at the University of California at Los Angeles. He remained there until 1967, when he returned to New York. In 1971 he moved to Saratoga Springs, New York to share a house with his close friend Zachary Solov. While in Saratoga Springs he continued to write, publishing *Ruth Page: An Intimate Biography*. He remained in there until the end of his life in 1985.

### **Scope and content note**

The John Martin papers (1890-1985) document the pioneering critic's career, as well as his interests in theater, the history of dance, and dance education. The collection includes professional correspondence, personal and family documents, a large collection of dance photographs, programs and playbills from performances Martin attended, scrapbooks of his work for the New York Times, and plays and articles Martin wrote before he began work as a dance critic.

### **Arrangement**

The John Martin papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: Correspondence, 1929-1966

Series II: Personal Documents, 1890-1980

Series III: Photographs, 1927-1961

Series IV: Programs and Playbills, 1900-1985

Series V: Scrapbooks, 1927-1962

Series VI: Writings, 1920-1968

**Key terms**

**Subjects**

Ballet

Dance critics

Dance photography

Modern dance -- 20th century

Modern dance -- History

**Names**

Martin, John Joseph, 1893-  
New York Times

**Special formats**

Clippings

Lantern slides

Photographs

Programs

Scrapbooks

Slides

## Container list

### Series I: Correspondence, 1929-1966

This series holds primarily business related correspondence. Letters from dancers, producers, managers, and fans highlight Martin's important role in the New York dance community. Many letters are letters of introduction of dancers who were new to New York or to the United States. Written by company managers or producers, they attempt to curry favor with Martin or invite him to attend a performance. Dancers often corresponded with Martin thanking him for his support. Letters from Martha Graham in the 1940s discuss the need for dance programs in high schools, and give a report on the limited dance syllabus available to current students. Other notable correspondents include Murray Louis, Carmelita Maracci, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Lincoln Kirstein. Arranged alphabetically.

#### General

- b.1 f.1 1929-1936
- b.1 f.2 1937-1939
- b.1 f.3 1940-1960
- b.1 f.4 1962-1969
- b.1 f.5 1970-1975
- b.2 f.1 1976-1985
- b.2 f.2 Kirstein, Lincoln, 1933-1954
- b.2 f.3 Maracci, Carmelite, 1969-1983

### Series II: Personal Documents, 1890-1980

Series II consists of materials related to Martin's personal life and growth. Family photographs (many of Martin as a child), plays, manuscripts, and art produced by friends and colleagues, educational materials including Martin's labanotation books, legal papers, financial material, and awards are held here. Martin's educational materials include his labanotation study books and pamphlets, diplomas, and photographs and materials from his honorary degree ceremony at Ohio University in 1974. The financial materials in this series primarily concern receipts for gifts, including the gifts of his wife's marionettes to the Museum of the City of New York after her death. Legal documents consist of Martin's honorary discharge certificate from the army and estate and will documents. Martin retained scripts and screenplays written by his acquaintances from his time working with the theater, such as a marionette adaptation of *The Rose and the Ring* written by his wife before their marriage. Martin's family and personal photographs are also held within this series, and consist of pictures of his parents, siblings, and his wife, as well as some later photographs of Martin with colleagues. A small amount of material relating to his wife, Hettie Louise Martin is here. A scrapbook created in 1969 by friend Brad Bjork contains photographs of Martin accompanied by some of his most famous quotations regarding dance. Of interest in this series is Martin's proposal for a dance company at UCLA in 1962. Arranged alphabetically.

This series also contains two reel to reel tapes of Martin's 1970 lectures on Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

- b.2 f.4 Art by Friends, undated
- b.2 f.5 Awards, 1969-1973
- b.36 f.1 Awards, 1969-1973
- b.2 f.6 Dance Catalogs, 1920-1980
- b.2 f.7 Dance Newsletters, 1930-1969

**Series II: Personal Documents** (cont.)

- b.3 f.1-4 Educational Materials , 1923-1974
- b.36 f.2-3 Educational Materials, 1923-1974
- b.3 f.5 Financial Materials, 1954-1971
- b.3 f.6 Legal Documents, 1918-1974
- b.3 f.7 Martin, Hettie Louise, undated
- b.4 f.1 Music, 1915
- Other's Writings
- b.4 f.2-3 Bennet, Isadora, undated
- b.4 f.4 Burchenal, Elizabeth, 1929
- b.4 f.5 Burgess, Gelett, undated
- b.4 f.6 Goldoni, Carlo, undated
- b.4 f.7 Mick, Hettie Louise, 1919
- b.4 f.8 Shankar, Vday, 1940-1941
- Photographs
- b.4 f.9 1890-1930
- b.5 f.1 1890-1930
- b.5 f.2 1949-1980
- b.5 f.3-4 Promotional Materials, 1933-1972
- b.5 f.5 Proposal for a UCLA Dance Company, 1967-1968
- b.5 f.6 Scrapbook, 1969

**Series III: Photographs, 1927-1961**

The dance photographs contained in this series document the history of American dance throughout the middle of the 20th century. Martin retained press photographs that were sent to him by dance companies, dancers, and their managers even when he was not planning on using them in publication. The result is a collection of dance photographs with a wide breadth of subjects and genre. Photographs are arranged in one of two ways: by company name or by individual. Individuals with large amounts of material have their own folder, otherwise researchers should look under the alphabetical folders when attempting to locate a specific dancer. Researchers should keep in mind that to find images of a specific dancer, one should additionally check under the name of their related dance companies or partners. For example, Nora Kaye often partnered with Igor Youskevitch, and photographs of both can be found under their respective names.

Dancers represented in this series include Alicia Markova, Maria Gambirelli, Martha Graham, Pearl Primus, Hadassah, Alexandra Danilova, William Dollar, Hugh Laing, Jerome Robbins, Ruth St. Denis, and Helen Tamiris. Arranged alphabetically.

By Company

- b.6 f.1 African Dance Companies, undated
- b.6 f.2 The American Ballet, undated
- b.6 f.3 American Ballet Theatre, undated
- b.6 f.4 Asian Dance Companies, undated

**Series III: Photographs** (cont.)

By Company (cont.)

- b.6 f.5 The Australian Ballet, undated
- b.6 f.6 Ballet Alicia Alonso, undated
- b.6 f.7-8 Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, undated
- b.6 f.9 Ballet Theatre, undated
- b.6 f.10 Ballets des Champs-Élysées, undated
- b.6 f.11 The Bolshoi Ballet, undated (also includes slides)
- b.6 f.12 The Bolshoi School, undated
- b.6 f.13 Chicago Opera Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.1 Indian Dance Companies, undated
- b.7 f.2 Kansas City Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.3 Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, undated
- b.7 f.4 National Ballet Company of Canada, undated
- b.7 f.5 Negro Dance Theatre, undated
- b.7 f.6 New York City Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.7 The Royal Ballet, undated  
Also includes earlier Salders Wells materials
- b.7 f.8 The Royal Danish Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.9 Paris Opera Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.10 Polish State Folk Ballet, undated
- b.7 f.11 San Francisco Ballet, undated
- b.8 f.1 Soviet Union Companies, undated
- b.8 f.2 Spanish Dance Companies, undated
- b.8 f.3 Ukrainian Dance Company, undated
- b.8 f.4 World's Fair, 1939-1940

By Individual

- b.8 f.5 A, undated
- b.8 f.6 Adams, Diana, undated
- b.8 f.7 Alonso, Alicia, undated
- b.8 f.8 Amaya, Carmen, undated
- b.8 f.9 Argentinita, undated
- b.8 f.10 Arlova, Lydia, undated
- b.8 f.11 Astaire, Fred, undated
- b.9 f.1-2 B, undated
- b.9 f.3 Balanchine, George, undated
- b.9 f.4 Barnova, Irina, undated
- b.9 f.5 Bolender, Todd, undated
- b.9 f.6 Boone, Agnes, undated
- b.9 f.7 Boris, Ruthanna, undated
- b.9 f.8 Bowman, Patricia, undated

**Series III: Photographs** (cont.)

By Individual (cont.)

b.9 f.9	Brown, Vida, undated
b.9 f.10	C, undated
b.9 f.11	Cartier, Jacques, undated
b.9 f.12	Coles, Joyce, undated
b.9 f.13	Conrad, Karen, undated
b.9 f.14	D, undated
b.10 f.1	D'Amboise, Jacque, undated
b.10 f.2	Danielian, Leon, undated
b.10 f.3	DeBurton, Edward, undated
b.10 f.4	Delakova, Katya, undated
b.10 f.5	Danilova, Alexandra, undated
b.10 f.6	DeMille, Agnes, undated
b.10 f.7	Dolin, Anton, undated
b.10 f.8	Dollar, William, undated
b.10 f.9	Douglas, Scott, undated
b.10 f.10	Dubrovskia, Felia, undated
b.10 f.11	Duby, Dora, undated
b.10 f.12	Duncan, Isadora, undated
b.10 f.13	Dunham, Katherine, undated
b.10 f.14	E-F, undated
b.10 f.15	Eglevsky, Andre, undated
b.10 f.16	Enters, Angna, undated
b.10 f.17	Erdman, Jean, undated
b.10 f.18	Escudero, Vicinte, undated
b.10 f.19	Fokina, Vera, undated
b.10 f.20	Fokine, Michel, undated
b.10 f.21	Fonteyn, Margot, undated
b.10 f.22	Franklin, Frederic, undated
b.11 f.1	G, undated
b.11 f.2	Gambarelli, Maria, undated
b.11 f.3	Georgi, Yvonne, undated
b.11 f.4	Gollner, Nana, undated
b.11 f.5	Goslar, Lotte, undated
b.11 f.6	Goya, Carola, undated
b.11 f.7	Graham, Martha, undated
b.11 f.8	Greco, Jose, undated
b.11 f.9	H-I, undated
b.11 f.10	Haakon, Paul, undated
b.11 f.11	Hadassah, undated

**Series III: Photographs (cont.)**

By Individual (cont.)

b.11 f.12	Hamilton, Peter, undated
b.11 f.13	Harrison, Ruth and Fisher, Alex, undated
b.11 f.14	Hayden, Melissa, undated
b.12 f.1	Hightower, Rosella, undated
b.12 f.2	Holm, Hanya, undated
b.12 f.3	Iberia, Sinda, undated
b.12 f.4-5	J-K, undated
b.12 f.6	Jeanmaire, Renee, undated
b.12 f.7	Kaye, Nora, undated
b.12 f.8	Kinch, Myra, undated
b.12 f.9	Kitchell, Iva, undated
b.12 f.10	Klekovic, Patricia, undated
b.12 f.11	Koner, Pauline, undated
b.12 f.12	Krassovska, Nathalie, undated
b.12 f.13	Kriza, John, undated
b.13 f.1-2	L, undated
b.13 f.3	Laing, Hugh, undated
b.13 f.4	La Meri, undated
b.13 f.5	Lang, Pearl, undated
b.13 f.6	Littlefield, Catherine, undated
b.13 f.7	Lyon, Annabelle, undated
b.13 f.8-9	M, undated
b.14 f.1	Maracci, Carmelita, undated
b.14 f.2	Marie-Jeanne, undated
b.14 f.3	Markova, Alicia, undated
b.14 f.4	Marmein, Irene, Phyllis and Miriam, undated
b.14 f.5	Maslow, Sophie, undated
b.14 f.6	Messerer, Asaf, undated
b.14 f.7	Moore, Jack, undated
b.14 f.8	Moore, Lillian, undated
b.14 f.9	Moylan, Mary Ellen, undated
b.14 f.10	Mouradoff, Grant, undated
b.14 f.11	Muman, Barton, undated
b.14 f.12	N-O, undated
b.14 f.13	Nagrin, Daniel, undated
b.14 f.14	Nerina, Nadia, undated
b.14 f.15	Novak, Nina, undated
b.14 f.16	O'Donnel, May, undated
b.14 f.17	Osato, Sono, undated



**Series III: Photographs (cont.)**

By Individual (cont.)

b.14 f.18	P, undated
b.14 f.19	Page, Ruth, undated
b.14 f.20	Parnova, Lisa, undated
b.15 f.1	Primus, Pearl, undated
b.15 f.2-3	R, undated
b.15 f.4	Reed, Janet, undated
b.15 f.5	Robbins, Jerome, undated
b.15 f.6	Robenne, Anna, undated
b.15 f.7	S, undated
b.15 f.8	Sakharoff, Clotilde, undated
b.15 f.9	Serrano, Lupe, undated
b.15 f.10	Shawn, Ted, undated
b.16 f.1	Shearer, Moira, undated
b.16 f.2	Slavenska, Mia, undated
b.16 f.3	St. Denis, Ruth, undated
b.16 f.4	Strawbridge, Edward, undated
b.16 f.5	Svetlova, Marina, undated
b.16 f.6	Szony, Giselle and Francoise, undated
b.16 f.7	T, undated
b.16 f.8	Tallchief, Maria, undated
b.16 f.9	Tamiris, Helen, undated
b.16 f.10	Tapps, George, undated
b.16 f.11	Taylor, Paul, undated
b.16 f.12	Tetley, Glen, undated
b.16 f.13	Theilade, Nini, undated
b.16 f.14	Tourmanova, Tamara, undated
b.17 f.1	U-V, undated
b.17 f.2	Ulanova, Galina, undated
b.17 f.3	Valentinoff, Valia, undated
b.17 f.4	Vance, Norma, undated
b.17 f.5	Verdy, Violette, undated
b.17 f.6	W, undated
b.17 f.7	Weidman, Charles, undated
b.17 f.8	Wigman, Mary, undated
b.17 f.9	Winslow, Miriam, undated
b.17 f.10	Y-Z, undated
b.17 f.11	Youskevich, Igor, undated
b.32 f.1	Lantern Slides, undated
b.33 f.1	Lantern Slides, undated

**Series III: Photographs** (cont.)

b.31 f.1-3 Oversized Photographs

**Series IV: Programs and Playbills, 1900-1985**

The Programs and Playbills series contains theater playbills, dance programs, flyers, and concert handbills dating from 1900 to the 1980s. The majority of the programs are organized by decade. These document not only the hundreds of dance performances that Martin reviewed over the years, but also his interest in theater and other art forms. Following the date arrangement are programs of selected dancers, dance companies and dance venues. These programs provide a glimpse into the sheer volume of dance performances Martin attended during his career, as well as his efforts to attend not just major performances but minor works by up and coming dancers and companies.

The folders dated before 1930 contain playbills from the Chicago Little Theater, where Martin often performed as an actor. He is credited as Jack Martin.

The dance programs demonstrate a diverse range of dance interests. Represented performers include Argentinita, Katherine Dunham, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Anna Pavlova, Pearl Primus, Ruth St. Denis, and many other well known dancers. Arranged alphabetically and by date.

General

b.18 f.1-2	1910-1919
b.18 f.3-5	1920-1929
b.19 f.1-4	1930-1939
b.20 f.1-4	1930-1939
b.21 f.1-4	1930-1939
b.21 f.5	1940-1949
b.22 f.1-5	1940-1949
b.23 f.1-2	1940-1949
b.23 f.3-4	1950-1959
b.24 f.1-4	1950-1959
b.25 f.1	1950-1959
b.25 f.2-5	1960-1969
b.26 f.1-2	1960-1969
b.26 f.3	1980-1985

Dance Companies

b.26 f.4	American Ballet, 1935-1937
b.26 f.5	New Dance Group, 1934-1954
b.27 f.1	New York City Ballet, 1948-1950

Dancers

b.27 f.2	Graham, Martha, 1929-1959
b.27 f.3	Humphrey, Doris, 1928-1944
b.27 f.4	Limon, Jose, 1932-1951
b.27 f.5	Page, Ruth, 1924-1960

**Series IV: Programs and Playbills** (cont.)

Venues

- b.27 f.6 Bennington Festival, 1935-1941
- b.28 f.1 Connecticut College School of Dance, 1949-1958
- b.28 f.2 92nd St. Y.M.H.A., 1936-1959
- b.36 f.4 Oversized, 1935

**Series V: Scrapbooks, 1927-1962**

The scrapbooks cover the dates 1927 through 1962, and are a well kept record of Martin's work with the New York Times. Scrapbooks dating from between 1929 and 1935 have been unbound and have had preservation work done. Scrapbooks dating 1936 or later are still bound. The scrapbooks not only contain Martin's regular column for the Times, but also writings for the Saturday Review and special year-end pieces. Columns are displayed with their title, date, and any accompanying photographs. Arranged by date.

- b.35 1927-1929
- b.34 f.1 1929-1930
- b.34 f.2 1930-1931
- b.35 f.1 1932-1933
- b.35 f.2 1933-1935
- b.37 1935-1938
- b.38 1938-1941
- b.39 1941-1946
- b.40 1946-1949
- b.41 1949-1953
- b.42 1953-1957
- b.43 1957-1960
- b.44 1960-1962

**Series VI: Writings, 1920-1968**

Series VI contains articles, drafts, and lecture notes kept by Martin, as well as more than a dozen scripts and screenplays written between the years 1920 and 1940. The articles are comprised of notes, drafts and ideas for his professional writings. The lecture notes are more thorough, though often undated and untitled. The scripts and screenplays are mostly unpublished. These are often accompanied by correspondence indicating he was attempting to get some of them produced or made into films. Many of the scripts are romantic comedies. This series provides insight into the early period of Martin's life, and his struggles to succeed as an actor and in theater. Arranged alphabetically.

Articles and Lectures

- b.28 f.3-8 Articles, 1934-1968
- b.29 f.1-3 Lectures, undated

Scripts and Screenplays

- b.29 f.4 *Daisy Burley*, undated
- b.29 f.5 *The Diddle*, 1922
- b.29 f.6 *Gimbling in the Wabe*, 1933

**Series VI: Writings** (cont.)

Scripts and Screenplays (cont.)

- b.29 f.7        *Hynd Horn*, 1934
- b.29 f.8        *Legend in Japanese*, undated
- b.29 f.9        *Pardon My Riveting*, 1930
- b.29 f.10       *Robin-the-Glee*, 1922
- b.30 f.1        *Romanzia*, 1920
- b.30 f.2        *Quiet Honeymoon*, undated
- b.30 f.3        *Sketches from a County Poor Farm*, 1940
- b.30 f.4        *Too Too Divine*, 1937
- b.30 f.5        *The Wife of Usher's Well*, 1919
- b.30 f.6        *Yesterday's Husband*, 1921
- b.30 f.7        *Yniard*, undated
- b.30 f.8        *Yoo Hoo, Mr. Thimbletripper!*, undated