



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Marcia B. Siegel papers**

1959-1995

(S) \*MGZMD 401

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

## Summary

**Creator:** Siegel, Marcia B.

**Title:** Marcia B. Siegel papers

**Date:** 1959-1995

**Size:** 4.62 linear feet (11 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Marcia B. Siegel, 1996.

**Abstract:** The Marcia B. Siegel papers (1959-1995) document Siegel's career as a dance critic, teacher, and advocate for professional dance criticism. The papers contain her writings, correspondence with editors, publishers, and fellow critics, information about courses and workshops that she taught, and administrative records from organizations that she was involved with. The materials address subjects such as the status of dance criticism in American journalism, the role of the dance critic, and the observation and description of movement.

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**Preferred citation:** Marcia B. Siegel papers, (S) \*MGZMD 401. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2014

## Creator History

Marcia B. Siegel (b. 1932) is an American dance critic. She began her writing career as a journalist. She became interested in dance in 1962 while working in the press office of Connecticut College, where she was in charge of publicity for the School of Dance and the American Dance Festival.

Siegel served as the editor of *Dance Scope*, a publication of the National Dance Guild, from 1964 to 1966. Beginning in the late 1960s, she wrote criticism for the *Kenyon Review*, *New York* magazine, the *Hudson Review*, and *SoHo Weekly News*, among other publications. She also contributed to *Current Biography* and *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Her first collection of criticism was published in 1972, titled *At the*

Vanishing Point.

Siegel became certified in Laban Movement Analysis in 1971. She taught and lectured on dance, dance history, and dance criticism, often with an emphasis on analyzing and describing movement. She frequently led movement workshops for non-dancers.

Siegel worked to improve the public image of professional dance criticism, and to help new and aspiring dance critics improve their writing. She directed the 1974 West Coast Institute of Dance Criticism held at Mills College, and taught at the 1975 East Coast Institute. Siegel was active in the Dance Critics Association (DCA), serving on the board of directors and editing the DCA newsletter from 1978 to 1980. She served on the DCA board again in the 1990s.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Marcia B. Siegel papers (1959-1995) document Siegel's career as a dance critic, teacher, and as an advocate for professional dance criticism. The collection includes writings, correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, clippings, publications, and photographs. The materials address subjects such as the status of dance criticism in American journalism, the role of the dance critic, and the observation and description of movement.

Correspondence files chiefly contain letters written to Siegel in the 1970s. Letters are from fellow critics, aspiring critics, editors, teachers, and dancers, and are often accompanied by typescripts and clippings of reviews. Letters discuss Siegel's writings, the West Coast Institute for Dance Criticism, trends in dance and dance criticism, and recent works by dancers. Correspondents include Jane Goldberg, Janet Light, Suzanne Shelton, writer Laura Shapiro, Diane Jacobowitz, John Mueller, and Oliver Roosevelt.

The collection documents Siegel's work with the Dance Critics Association (DCA), the West Coast Institute for Dance Criticism, and Dance Scope magazine. DCA files contain meeting minutes, correspondence, and the organization's publications. The West Coast Institute files contain information on logistics and planning, sessions and workshops, and Institute applicants; the materials consist primarily of correspondence, schedules, clippings, reports, and writings by participants. Dance Scope files contain records such as minutes from meetings of the magazine's board, statements of purpose, correspondence about the editorship of the magazine, reports on the magazine's administration and finances, and fundraising correspondence.

Writing and editing files contain Siegel's correspondence with editors and publishers, and manuscripts of her books and articles. Correspondence includes book proposals, contributor guidelines, ideas for articles and reviews, and rejection and acceptance letters. Manuscripts include typescripts of Siegel's articles, both published and unpublished; a draft manuscript of her book, *The Shapes of Change: Images of American Dance*, with handwritten corrections; a draft manuscript and research material for *Please Run on the Playground*, a report on movement education in Connecticut; and draft articles from the summer 1969 issue of *Dance Perspectives*, which Siegel guest-edited. The files also contain a few magazines and dance programs containing Siegel's writing, and clippings of Siegel's early work for local newspapers and alumni publications, which are unrelated to dance.

Files on teaching and speaking engagements contain correspondence regarding pay and scheduling, and descriptions and proposals for Siegel's courses, workshops, lectures, and panel discussions. In some cases, the files also contain Siegel's notes and students' assessments of classes. Siegel also worked as a consultant or advisor on various dance-related projects in both paid and volunteer capacities. Consulting files contain correspondence, reports, and notes relating to museum exhibits,

oral history projects, dance performances, and other projects.

The collection contains one file of professional dance photographs, primarily taken at the American Dance Festival at Connecticut College in the 1960s by Fannie Helen Melcer. Subjects include Alvin Ailey, Merce Cunningham, Lucas Hoving, José Limón, and Paul Taylor.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged in seven categories: Correspondence; Dance Critics Association; Dance Scope; West Coast Institute for Dance Criticism; Writing and Editing; Teaching, Speaking, and Consulting; and Photographs. Teaching, Speaking, and Consulting files are arranged alphabetically by organization name.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Manuscripts for publication  
Photographs  
Typescripts

### **Subjects**

Dance criticism  
Movement, Aesthetics of

### **Occupations**

Dance critics

### **Names**

Dance Critics Association (U.S.)

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-7 Correspondence 1966-1981
- b. 2 f. 1-4 Correspondence 1971-1983
- b. 2 f. 5-8 Dance Critics Association 1974-1994
- b. 3 f. 1-3 Dance Critics Association 1978-1995
- b. 3 f. 4-7 Dance Scope 1962-1967
- b. 3 f. 8-11 West Coast Institute for Dance Criticism 1969-1975
- b. 4 f. 1-11 West Coast Institute for Dance Criticism 1973-1976
- Writing and Editing
  - Correspondence
    - b. 5 f. 1 Job Applications 1961-1974
    - b. 5 f. 2 Arts in Society 1966-1976
    - b. 5 f. 3 Boston Globe 1972-1973
    - b. 5 f. 4 Boston Herald Traveler 1970-1972
    - b. 5 f. 5 Cornell University Press 1968-1970  
Includes draft chapters of proposed book on choreographic style.
    - b. 5 f. 6 Current Biography 1967-1970
    - b. 5 f. 7 Dance Post 1984
    - b. 5 f. 8 The Dial 1981-1983
    - b. 5 f. 9 Encyclopedia of Dance and Ballet 1975-1976
    - b. 5 f. 10 Guggenheim Fellowship 1972-1976  
Fellowship project is a book called Moving: Essays on American Dance.
    - b. 5 f. 11 Kenyon Review 1968-1970
    - b. 5 f. 12 Los Angeles Times 1969-1972
    - b. 5 f. 13 Monde de la Danse 1976-1977
    - b. 5 f. 14-15 New York 1969-1979
    - b. 5 f. 16 North Atlantic Books 1977
    - b. 5 f. 17 Octopus Books 1973-1974
    - b. 5 f. 18 Peregrine Smith Books 1980-1984
    - b. 5 f. 19 Proscenium Publishers 1984
    - b. 5 f. 20 SoHo Weekly News 1976-1982
    - b. 5 f. 21 Vanity Fair 1984
    - b. 5 f. 22 Wall Street Journal 1970  
Includes edited copies of two articles.
  - Manuscripts
    - b. 7 f. 1-7 Articles--Published 1967-1978
    - b. 6 f. 9 Articles--Published 1978-1979
    - b. 6 f. 1 Articles--Unfinished 1965
    - b. 6 f. 2 Book Reviews 1967, 1970-1971
    - b. 6 f. 3 Dance Perspectives 38 1969  
Includes correspondence.

Writing and Editing (cont.)

Manuscripts (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 4      Encyclopedia Judaica Articles 1968-1970
- b. 6 f. 5      Giselle Synopsis 1977
- b. 8 f. 1-3     Please Run on the Playground 1973-1975  
Includes research and background material.
- b. 6 f. 6      Repertory Dance Theatre Brochure 1980
- b. 8 f. 4-6     The Shapes of Change 1970s
- b. 9 f. 1-2     The Shapes of Change 1970s
- b. 6 f. 7-8     Clippings, Magazines, and Programs 1959-1970

Teaching, Speaking, and Consulting

- b. 9 f. 3-13    A - D 1963-1989  
Includes files on the Connecticut Institute for Movement Exploration and on an ArtsConnection course, "Investigating Human Culture Through the History and Criticism of Dance."
- b. 10 f. 1-20   H - U 1966-1989  
Includes a file on the Texas Institute for Dance Criticism.
- b. 11 f. 1-8    U - Y 1971-1991
- b. 11 f. 9      Photographs 1960s