



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Mura Dehn photographs

1930s-1950

*MGZEB 22-0011

Processed by Heather Lember in 2022.

Summary

Creator: Dehn, Mura

Title: Mura Dehn photographs

Date: 1930s-1950

Size: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Abstract: Mura Dehn was a dancer, filmmaker, and dance historian known for her study and documentation of Black social jazz dancing in New York City. The collection holds photographs depicting these dancers, as well as some images of Dehn and James Berry.

Preferred citation: Mura Dehn photographs, *MGZEB 22-0011. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Heather Lember in 2022.

Related Materials:

Mura Dehn Papers on Afro-American Social Dance, (S) *MGZMD 72, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Mura Dehn collection, (S) *MGZMD 483. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Mura Dehn notebooks, (S) *MGZMD 408. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator History

Mura Dehn (1905-1987) was born in Russia, where she trained in ballet and modern dance. After witnessing Josephine Baker's jazz dancing while performing in Paris, Dehn moved to New York City,

where she worked as a performer, teacher, and choreographer. Dehn formed a dance company with James Berry to promote Jazz dancing, and began filming dancers at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. This footage would ultimately become part of her documentary, *The Spirit Moves*, which chronicles Black social jazz dancing throughout the twentieth century.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains photographs which mostly depict jazz dancing and musicians in a jazz club setting. All of these images are unlabeled and undated. There is also a small selection of headshots and performance photographs of Mura Dehn, as well as a contact sheet and print depicting James Berry.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American dancers
Dance -- Photographs
Dance -- United States -- History
Dance, Black
Jazz dance

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Names

Berry, James J., 1914-1969
Dehn, Mura