



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Charles Weidman papers, Additions

1887-1975

(S) *MGZMD 320

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013

Summary

Creator: Weidman, Charles

Title: Charles Weidman papers, Additions

Date: 1887-1975

Size: 3.4 linear feet (9 boxes)

Source: Donated by Linda Mann Reed.

Abstract: Charles Weidman (1901-1975) was a dancer, choreographer, and teacher known for his roles as a member of the Denishawn Company, and later for founding his own companies: the Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company, Theatre Dance Company, and An Expression of Two Arts. The additions to the Charles Weidman papers contain material related to choreographed works he performed with the Theatre Dance Company and An Expression of Two Arts; files representing his time with the Denishawn Dancers; photographs; and scrapbooks.

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Preferred citation: Charles Weidman papers, Additions, (S) *MGZMD 320. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013 The collection was rehoused in boxes, and folders were replaced if original folders were deteriorated. One scrapbook (1902-1922) was disassembled and each page encapsulated in mylar. Some of the material in this collection had been fastened together by straight pins and researchers should use care when handling.

Related Materials:

Charles Weidman papers, (S) *MGZMD 99. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Charles Weidman School of Modern Dance, Inc. records, (S) *MGZMD 190. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator History

Charles Weidman (1901-1975) was a dancer, choreographer, and teacher known for his roles as a member of the Denishawn Company, and later for founding his own companies: the Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company, Theatre Dance Company, and An Expression of Two Arts. Weidman was born in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1901, the son of Charles Weidman Sr., and Vesta Hoffman. He spent part of his childhood in Panama, where his father served as head of the fire departments during construction of the Panama Canal. Weidman studied dance as a child and performed in recitals and pageants in Lincoln before moving to Los Angeles in 1920 to study at the Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Arts. A year later, he was dancing with the Denishawn Dancers, the company founded by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. He toured with the company for eight years and was a soloist in *Danse Americaine* (1923) and *The Crapshooter* (1924).

Weidman left the Denishawn company in 1928 when he formed a company with Doris Humphrey, who had been his first teacher at the Denishawn School and a fellow dancer in the company. The Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company was based in New York City and produced major works such as *On My Mother's Side* (1940), *Flickers* (1942), and *And Daddy Was a Fireman* (1943). Weidman was known for being gifted at mime and being versatile with both dramatic and comic works. In 1947, soon after Humphrey's retirement from dance, he choreographed a series of works based on writings by James Thurber called *Fables for Our Times*.

In 1948, he formed the Theatre Dance Company. In the 1960s, Weidman developed an interest in the intersection between fine art and dance and founded *An Expression of Two Arts* with sculptor Mikhail Santaro. Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Weidman continually performed with both companies and often revisited past works. He died in New York City in 1975.

Scope and Content Note

The additions to the Charles Weidman papers contain material related to choreographed works he performed with his two companies, Theatre Dance Company and *An Expression of Two Arts*; files representing his time with the Denishawn Dancers; programs and news clippings; photographs; and scrapbooks. The papers document his childhood in Lincoln, N.E., including his interest in dance from a young age, and his later work choreographing and performing in the 1960s and early 1970s. Material from the Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company is occasionally present if a work from that era was revisited by one of his later companies.

Files regarding choreographed works make up the bulk of the collection and primarily represent works performed in New York City and in Berkeley from 1961 to 1975. The files all contain choreographic notes and many contain costume designs, lighting cues, photographs, programs, and scores. Files for *And Daddy Was a Fireman*, *A House Divided*, and *Jacob's Wedding* contain typescript narratives written by Weidman that informed, or perhaps were part of, the work. The file on *New Dance* contains a statement from Doris Humphrey from 1936, when the work was first performed, and the file on *Fables* and *Further Fables* contains material from the original mounting of *Fables for Our Times*.

Weidman often wrote his choreographic notes on the back of press releases, programs, and form letters from his companies, repurposing these documents as scrap paper. There is one file titled *Singers and Actors Charts* that consists of news clippings, photographs, and prints that portray various expressions and movements of athletes, actors, and dancers.

The Denishawn Dancers files are arranged in chronological order, from 1920 to 1929, and contain news

clippings, programs, and photographs depicting Weidman's time with the company. There are additional files for the an Expression of Two Arts and the Theatre Dance Company that contain programs and informational material.

Photographs date from 1894 to 1925 and consist of studio portraits of Weidman as a child and his family members, including many pictures of his father as a young man. There is one photograph of Weidman as an adult. Also present is a signed photograph of a Japanese dancer named Takio dated 1925 and a note regarding his role as God of the Mountain in the play Mamijigari. The programs and news clippings are for and about performances that Weidman danced in or choreographed.

There are two scrapbooks in the collection. One scrapbook, from 1902 to 1922, documents Weidman's childhood and early career in dance. It is composed of photographs of Weidman as a young child with his sister, and studio portraits of his mother and his aunt, Jessie Hoffman; programs from and news clippings about his early dance performances in Lincoln; publicity photographs of people he admired including Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham, and Ted Shawn; and personal material such as his confirmation certificate, report cards from middle school, news clippings regarding his family's social activities from the local paper, sketches, and a small amount of correspondence. The second scrapbook dates from 1901 to 1914 and consists of news clippings documenting his father's career as fire chief of Lincoln and his later work in Panama.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject, format, or title.

Key Terms

Subjects

Choreographers -- United States -- 20th century
Dance teachers -- United States -- 20th century
Dancers -- United States -- 20th century
Fire extinction
Modern dance -- United States -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Drawings
Photographs
Scores
Scrapbooks

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)

Names

Santaro, Mikhail
An Expression of Two Arts
Denishawn Dancers
Theatre Dance Company

Container List

Choreographic Works

- b. 1 f. 1 General 1960-1963, undated
- b. 6 f. 1-2 General undated
- b. 1 f. 2 Dialogue undated
- b. 1 f. 3 Flickers 1942, circa 1972-1973
- b. 1 f. 4 Fables and Further Fables 1962-1974
- b. 5 f. 17 Fables and Further Fables 1962-1974
- b. 1 f. 5 Ruth St. Denis circa 1972
- b. 1 f. 6 Suite Intriga 1967, undated
- b. 1 f. 7 Easter Oratorio 1969
- b. 1 f. 8 And Daddy Was a Fireman undated
- b. 1 f. 9 Mostly (Farce) undated
- b. 1 f. 10 David and Goliath 1963, undated
- b. 1 f. 11 A House Divided 1965-1972
- b. 5 f. 18 A House Divided undated
- b. 1 f. 12 Diabellie 1962-1975
- b. 2 f. 1 Traditions 1971
- b. 2 f. 2 Jacob's Marriage undated
- b. 2 f. 3 Dance of Streets undated
- b. 2 f. 4 Block Quadrille undated
- b. 2 f. 5-6 Dialogue Situation Two 1972
- b. 2 f. 7-8 Saint Matthew Passion circa 1970-1972
- b. 2 f. 9 Scorpion undated
- b. 2 f. 10-11 New Dance 1936-1972
- b. 2 f. 12 On My Mother's Side circa 1972
- b. 2 f. 13 Bargain Counter undated
- b. 2 f. 14 Et Vous Mers 1963
- b. 3 f. 1 Brahms's Waltzes (Liebeslieder Waltzes) 1963
- b. 3 f. 2 Wiggly Fingers undated
- b. 3 f. 3 Singers and Actors Charts, etc 1947-1970
- b. 3 f. 4 Immitations undated
- b. 3 f. 5 Gideon undated
- b. 3 f. 6 Malady of Sound undated
- b. 3 f. 7 Paulene undated
- b. 3 f. 8 To Make a Farm circa 1963
- b. 3 f. 9 War 1963
- b. 3 f. 10 Of and Out of This World undated
- b. 3 f. 11-12 A Bach Oratorio, Celebrating Easter undated
- b. 6 f. 3 A Bach Oratorio, Celebrating Easter undated

- b. 7 f. 1 Expression of Two Arts undated
- b. 4 f. 1-5 Denishawn Dancers 1923-1929
- b. 6 f. 4 Denishawn Dancers 1925
- b. 3 f. 13-4 Denishawn Dancers undated
- b. 4 f. 6 Denishawn Dancers undated
- Photographs
- b. 4 f. 8 General circa 1890s-1925
- b. 4 f. 7 Childhood and Early Career 1901- 1910
- b. 5 f. 19 King David 1963
- b. 7 f. 2-6 Programs and News Clippings 1948, 1958-1969
- b. 8 f. 1-8 Programs and News Clippings 1969-1975
- b. 9 f. 1-2 Programs and News Clippings undated
- b. 4 f. 9 Scrapbook 1887-1917
- b. 5 f. 1-16 Scrapbook 1902-1922
- b. 9 f. 3 Theatre Dance Company 1972