



The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Kirk Peterson papers

1910-2015 [bulk 1971-2009]

(S) *MGZMD 365

The collection was processed by Lea Jordan in 2014.

Summary

Creator: Peterson, Kirk A.

Title: Kirk Peterson papers

Date: 1910-2015 [bulk 1971-2009]

Size: 2.64 linear feet (8 boxes)

Source: Donated by Kirk Peterson, 1999-2009.

Abstract: Kirk Peterson is an American dancer, teacher, and choreographer. The Kirk Peterson papers hold awards; correspondence; press releases; writings; and ballet company, theater, and workshop files. There are also family papers detailing Peterson's early dance training and the career of his aunt, Honey Wagner.

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Processing note: Compiled by Lea Jordan and Valerie Wingfield, 2017 The collection was processed by Lea Jordan in 2014; additions integrated by Valerie Wingfield in 2017.

Creator History

Kirk Peterson is an American ballet dancer, teacher, and choreographer originally from New Orleans, Louisiana. He studied from the age of three at Wagner's School of Dance which was owned and operated by his mother and aunt, former acrobatic dancers Dottie and Honey Wagner. He also studied ballet at Lelia Haller's studio in New Orleans.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Peterson was a principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), London Festival Ballet, Harkness Ballet and the National Ballet of Washington. He was San Francisco Ballet's resident choreographer from 1980 to 1985.

He collaborated with Michael Smuin to choreograph the Broadway shows *Anything Goes* (1987) and *Shogun* (1990), and was artistic director of Hartford Ballet from 1993 to 1998. Peterson served as resident choreographer of Cincinnati Ballet from 2002 to 2008. His choreography has also been seen with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Washington Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, BalletMet, San Francisco Opera and The Royal Ballet School.

Peterson rejoined the American Ballet Theatre (ABT) as ballet master in 1999 and began performing character roles with the company. He was named artistic director of ABT Studio Company in 2006, and that same year was appointed an official repetiteur of the Antony Tudor Ballet Trust. Peterson began receiving outside choreographic commissions in 2007, including a new full-length *Othello* for the Alberta Ballet, and Javelin for the Cincinnati Ballet. Peterson was nominated for the prestigious Prix Benois de la Danse in Moscow for *Othello*. In 2008, he transitioned to the role of Master Teaching Associate at ABT to allow him to pursue other commissions. Peterson left ABT to join the Alberta Ballet as their associate assistant director for the 2009-2010 season.

Kirk Peterson continues to work as a freelance choreographer and teacher.

Scope and Content Note

The Kirk Peterson papers hold awards, correspondence, ballet company and theater files, and workshop files documenting his career as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. There are also family papers detailing Peterson's early dance training and the career of his aunt, Honey Wagner.

The bulk of the files are company files which document his work with individual ballet organizations. These files may hold legal documents, rehearsal schedules, cast lists, annotated scores, rehearsal notes, programs, flyers, and photographs of Peterson or his works in performance. The American Ballet Theatre file also holds the scripts for various skit nights which include song parodies about ballet life or individual staff members.

Theater files hold scripts, annotated music, and programs for Peterson's collaborations with Michael Smuin on *Anything Goes* and *Shogun*. The *Anything Goes* material exclusively documents Peterson's supervision of the restaging of the show in London and Australia.

Correspondence is both personal and professional, and holds letters from various dance companies requesting Peterson's appearance as a guest artist or choreographer, and Christmas cards from dancers and other company staff. A frequent correspondent is Bobbie Willard, the daughter of his ballet teacher Lelia Haller.

Family records include photographs of Peterson and Wagner's relatives, Wagner School of Dance recital programs, and photographs of Dottie and Holly Wagner in costume. A scrapbook (1940) created by Douglas Booth depicts a young Holly Wagner practicing her acrobatics outside. The files also contain Lelia Haller's annotated score for *Coppélia*.

Awards hold notifications of nominations or award ceremonies. Workshops files hold class schedules and itineraries from various guest lecture positions. Writings are compositions on composer John Lanchbery (after his death) and Lupe Serrano. There is also a copy of Peterson's 2003 interview with Serrano for *Ballet Review*.

Peterson also collected ballet history files such as photographs, correspondence, and other documents.

Items include a letter to Igor Youskevitch from Sol Hurok with an accompanying photograph, as well as original photographs of Tatiana Grantzeva, Irina Baronova, Leonide Massine, Alicia Markova, Erik Bruhn, and Jolinda Menendez.

Arrangement: Alphabetical by file type.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet -- 20th century
Choreographers -- United States
Dance -- Study and teaching

Geographic Names

New York -- New York (N.Y.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Programs
Scrapbooks

Names

American Ballet Theatre

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 - b. 8 f. 12 Peterson, Kirk. Report Cards 1964-1965
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