



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Letters to Barton Mumaw**

1940-1971

(S) \*MGZMD 126

Processed by Charles Perrier.

## Summary

**Creator:** Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972

**Title:** Letters to Barton Mumaw

**Date:** 1940-1971

**Size:** 52 folders in 4 document size boxes + 1 typescript in 2 document size boxes

**Source:** Gift. Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives. Received: November 20, 1998

**Abstract:** Photocopies of correspondence between Ted Shawn and Barton Mumaw, primarily during the years 1942-1945, when Mumaw was in military service.

**Location of Originals:** Originals in: the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives

**Preferred citation:** Shawn, Ted Letters to Barton Mumaw 1940-1971, (S) \* MGZMD 126, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Charles Perrier.

## Creator History

Ted Shawn (1891-1972), well known for his pioneering efforts in American modern dance, began dancing as a means of physical therapy. In his third year of studying for the ministry at the University of Denver, he contracted a case of diphtheria, which left him paralyzed from the waist down. While he was nursing himself back to health, he realized that dancing would become his lifetime career.

Shawn's first teacher was Hazel Wallack in Denver, with whom he studied ballet and ballroom exhibition dancing. At the same time he worked independently and began to perform his own choreographic works. In 1912 Shawn moved to Los Angeles, where he established a school and small performing company. The following year he and his dancing partner, Norma Gould, embarked with their company of Interpretive Dancers upon a cross-country tour and reached New York after nineteen performances.

While in New York Shawn arranged his first meeting with Ruth St. Denis. He had seen her perform in Denver and was convinced that they should work together. During their first meeting they discussed their artistic ideas and ambitions, and Shawn returned the next day to demonstrate his dancing. He was then hired by Miss St. Denis' brother and manager to be her partner. On April 13, 1914, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn began a tour of the southern United States. In August of the same year they were married.

In 1915 they founded the first Denishawn school in Los Angeles with the intent of providing students with a diversified dance education. They believed that a dancer should learn all styles of dance rather than concentrating on one form; therefore, they offered classes in ballet, modern, ethnic, and creative dance. Within a few years Shawn and Miss St. Denis had established Denishawn schools throughout the United States. They built up an extensive repertory of spiritual, ethnic, character, and "music visualization" dances, which they performed with their company of Denishawn Dancers on tours of the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Far East from 1915-1932. Some of their dancers, including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman, later went on to develop the field of modern dance. In 1932 Denishawn disbanded, and Shawn and Miss St. Denis pursued separate careers.

Shawn established a company of all male dancers in an effort to prove that dancing was an acceptable art form for men. They rehearsed, choreographed, and trained at Jacob's Pillow, Shawn's farm in Lee, Massachusetts, and performed throughout the United States from 1933 to 1940. Shawn continued to perform, generally as a solo artist, until 1962, but after 1940 his efforts became more concentrated upon dance in education. He established the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and University of the Dance which, by combining daily classes and evening performances, became the first intensive summer dance program in the United States. Shawn's primary aim again was to provide students with a well-rounded dance background, which he achieved by inviting performers and instructors from all over the world.

In addition to his work at Jacob's Pillow, Shawn lectured at universities and other institutions throughout the United States. During his lifetime he also published nine books, including: *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet*(1920), *The American Ballet*(1926), *Gods who Dance*(1929), *Fundamentals of a Dance Education*(1935), *Dance We Must*(1940), *How Beautiful Upon the Mountain*(1944), *Every Little Movement*(1954), *Thirty-three Years of American Dance*(1959), and *One Thousand and One Night Stands*(with Gray Poole, 1960).

Shawn continued to direct Jacob's Pillow every summer and also pursue his career as a scholarly speaker and writer until his death in 1972.

Barton Mumaw, born August 20, 1912 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania but raised in Eustis, Florida, started dance training in his hometown, taking part in infrequently offered ballet and modern dance classes, as well as dance correspondence classes through the mail. After seeing the Denishawn troupe perform during a Florida tour, he went to New York to take the 1930 summer course at the Denishawn School. After New York, he returned to Orlando, Florida to study music at the Rollins College. In 1931, Mumaw left Rollins to become Ted Shawn's chauffeur and dresser, and a member of Denishawn, in exchange for tuition, board, and meals. When Denishawn disbanded in 1932, Mumaw followed Shawn to Becket, Massachusetts, to the farm later called Jacob's Pillow. Their relationship was as fellow dancers, choreographers, lovers, and companions. In 1933, Shawn put together an all-male touring group called Ted Shawn's Men Dancers. Mumaw created many leading roles in the company as for seven years, the troupe travelled across the United States and Canada. Mumaw not only danced in Shawn's choreographies, but also created many of his own. With the approach of World War II, Ted Shawn's Men Dancers was disbanded and Mumaw launched a solo recital tour, which continued even in the armed forces where he served as an Entertainment Specialist from 1942-1946. Mumaw worked from 1948-1958 in the world of musical theater, performing on Broadway and in touring musicals such as

*Oklahoma, Annie Get Your Gun, The Golden Apple, and My Fair Lady.* Mumaw's connection with Ted Shawn and Jacob's Pillow continued as he performed and taught at the summer dance camp. In 1973, Mumaw reconstructed Shawn's *Kinetic Molpa* for the Alvin Ailey Dance Company. Working with the former Denishawn dancer, Jane Sherman, Mumaw published his biography, entitled *Barton Mumaw, Dancer: from Denishawn to Jacob's Pillow and Beyond*. In 1991, he coached revivals for a Shawn centennial program known as Jacob's Pillow's Men Dancers, performed at New York City's Joyce Theater and toured nationally. He died in Clearwater, Florida June 18, 2001.

## Scope and Content Note

Photocopies of correspondence between Ted Shawn and Barton Mumaw, primarily during the years 1942-1945, when Mumaw was in military service. The correspondence documents not only Shawn and Mumaw's relationship but the growth and development of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and the Jacob's Pillow School of the Dance. Other correspondents (in the folder marked Correspondence - Miscellaneous) include Barton Mumaw, Fern Helscher, Genevieve Oswald, Grace Boderek, and many others identified only by first names. The collection also includes Mumaw's address book and Shawn's typed manuscript narrative based on these letters. The originals of both the letters and the manuscript are held by the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives. Folders are arranged chronologically, with undated and miscellaneous correspondence following all dated letters, and the Shawn manuscript last.

**Arrangement:** Folders are arranged chronologically, with undated and miscellaneous correspondence following all dated letters, and the Shawn typescript last

## Key Terms

### Titles

Gift of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Letters (correspondence)

### Subjects

Manuscripts -- Letters

### Names

Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972

Mumaw, Barton, 1912-

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

Jacob's Pillow School of the Dance

## Container List

### 1940 - 1943 June 4

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence 1940 (5 Items)
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1942 June 5-June 21 (17 Items)
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence 1942 June 22-July 9 (18 Items)
- b. 1 f. 4 Correspondence 1942 July 10-July 17 (13 Items)
- b. 1 f. 5 Correspondence 1942 July 18-Aug. 23 (19 Items)
- b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence 1942 Aug. 14- Aug. 24 (13 Items)
- b. 1 f. 7 Correspondence 1942 Aug. 25-Sept. 3 (11 Items)
- b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence 1942 Sept. 4-Sept. 9 (10? Items)
- b. 1 f. 9 Correspondence 1942 Sept. 9-Sept. 18 (14 Items)
- b. 1 f. 10 Correspondence 1942 Sept. 19- Sept. 29 (18 Items)
- b. 1 f. 11 Telegrams 1942 (4 Items)
- b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence 1943 Jan. 10-Feb. 27 (22 Items)
- b. 1 f. 13 Correspondence 1943 Mar. 1-Apr. 30 (16 Items)
- b. 1 f. 14 Correspondence 1943 May 1-May 15 (15 Items)
- b. 1 f. 15 Correspondence 1943 May 16-June 4 (20 Items)

### 1943 June 5-1944 June 30

- b. 2 f. 16 Correspondence 5 June-15 June (11 Items)
- b. 2 f. 17 Correspondence 1943 June 15-June 30 (20 Items)
- b. 2 f. 18 Correspondence 1943 July 2-July 19 (18 Items)
- b. 2 f. 19 Correspondence 1943 July 20-July 31 (14 Items)
- b. 2 f. 20 Correspondence 1943 Aug. 1-Aug. 31 (19 Items)

[Gap in correspondence during Mumaw's leave, 15 August-25 August, 1943]

- b. 2 f. 21 Correspondence 1943 Sept. 1-Sept. 21 (19 Items)
- b. 2 f. 22 Correspondence 1943 Sept. 22-Oct. 10 (20 Items)
- b. 2 f. 23 Correspondence 1943 Oct. 11-Oct. 25 (17 Items)
- b. 2 f. 24 Correspondence 1943 Oct. 23-Nov. 7 (17 Items)
- b. 2 f. 25 Correspondence 1944 Apr. 6-Apr. 30 (25 Items)
- b. 2 f. 26 Correspondence 1944 May 1-May 31 (35 Items)
- b. 2 f. 27 Correspondence 1944 June 1-June 30 (30 Items)

### 1944 July 1-1945 May 31

- b. 3 f. 28 Correspondence 1944 July 1-July 31 (31 Items)
- b. 3 f. 29 Correspondence 1944 Aug. 1-Aug. 31 (32 Items)
- b. 3 f. 30 Correspondence 1944 Sept. 1-Sept. 30 (29 Items)
- b. 3 f. 31 Correspondence 1944 Oct. 1-Oct. 31 (31 Items)
- b. 3 f. 32 Correspondence 1944 Nov. 1-Nov. 30 (30 Items)
- b. 3 f. 33 Correspondence 1944 Dec. 1-Dec. 31 (32 Items)
- b. 3 f. 34 Correspondence 1945 Jan. 1-Jan. 31 (31 Items)
- b. 3 f. 35 Correspondence 1945 Feb. 1-Feb. 28 (30 Items)

1944 July 1-1945 May 31 (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 36 Correspondence 1945 Mar. 1-Mar. 31 (32 Items)
- b. 3 f. 37 Correspondence 1945 Apr. 1-Apr. 30 (29 Items)
- b. 3 f. 38 Correspondence 1945 May 1-May 31 (31 Items)
- Barton Mumaw address book* 1945 June 1
- b. 4 f. 39 Correspondence 1945 June 1-June 30 (31 Items)
- b. 4 f. 40 Correspondence 1945 July 1-July 31 (31 Items)
- b. 4 f. 41 Correspondence 1945 Aug. 1-Aug. 31 (31 Items)
- b. 4 f. 42 Correspondence 1945 Sept. 1-Sept. 4 (4 Items)
- b. 4 f. 43 Correspondence 1945 Oct. 8-Oct. 31 (25 Items)
- b. 4 f. 44 Correspondence 1945 Nov. 1-Nov. 30 (30 Items)
- b. 4 f. 45 Correspondence 1945 Dec. 1-Dec. 31 (30 Items)
- b. 4 f. 46 Correspondence: Publication requests 1945 (53 Items)
- b. 4 f. 47 Correspondence 1946 Jan. 1-Jan. 29 (27 Items)
- b. 4 f. 48 Correspondence 1961-1962 (14 Items)
- b. 4 f. 49 Correspondence 1967-1971 (35 Items)
- b. 4 f. 50 Correspondence - (Ted Shawn to Barton Mumaw) Undated (3 Items)
- b. 4 f. 51 Correspondence - Miscellaneous (ca. 27 Items)
- b. 4 f. 52 Barton Mumaw - Address book (11 p)

Ted Shawn manuscript (typescript)

- b. 5 Manuscript (p. 1-254)
- b. 6 Manuscript (continued) (p. 255-547)