



The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Virginia Myers papers

1906-1934 [bulk 1912-1923]

(S) *MGZMD 442

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Myers, Virginia, 1906-1975

Title: Virginia Myers papers

Date: 1906-1934 [bulk 1912-1923]

Size: 1.09 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Donated by Barry Downes, 2014.

Abstract: Virginia Myers (1906-1975) was a child dance prodigy who began performing for New York audiences at the age of four. Her parents were Ethel Myers, a sculptor, and Jerome Myers, a painter. Her papers date from about 1906 to 1934 and include photographs, programs, flyers, clippings, contracts, personal writings, artwork by Virginia Myers and Jerome Myers, and letters from prominent members of New York society.

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Preferred citation: Virginia Myers papers, (S) *MGZMD 442. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2016. The collection was prepared for donation by Barry Downes, and some of his notes are included in the collection. Downes also created transcripts of some of the letters in the collection, which are available online as an "Additional Resource." The transcripts are drafts; some are incomplete, and not all letters have been transcribed. The letters have numbers that were assigned by Downes.

Creator History

Virginia Myers (1906-1975) was a child dance prodigy who began performing for New York audiences at the age of four. Her parents were Ethel Myers, a sculptor, and Jerome Myers, a painter.

Through the 1910s, her dancing received praise from artists, writers, poets, critics, and dancers. In 1912, at the age of five, she was featured in a film, *Dream Dances*, produced by the Thomas A. Edison

company.

Myers gave her last major solo public performance at Carnegie Hall in 1923. She subsequently performed in several Broadway shows. In 1930, she married actor and stage manager Edward R. Downes.

Custodial History

The material in this collection was assembled by Virginia Myers' mother, Ethel Myers, and kept in storage until found by Myers' son, Barry Downes, in 2012.

Scope and Content Note

Virginia Myers was a child dancer who began performing publicly at the age of four. The Virginia Myers papers date from 1906 to 1934, with the majority of materials dating from 1912 to 1923. The collection includes photographs; clippings; programs; flyers; press releases; contracts with the Edison film company and theaters where Myers performed; diary entries and other personal writings; artwork by both Virginia and Jerome Myers; letters from prominent members of New York society; and an account of Myers' career, written by her parents.

Photographs depict Myers in dance poses and with her parents, husband, and child; they also include film stills from *Dream Dances*. Letters are mostly addressed to Ethel Myers and contain reactions to Virginia's performances and responses to invitations to see her perform. Several of the letters include poems. Among the writers are Ridgely Torrence, Ivah Wills Coburn, Mary Fanton Roberts, Percy MacKaye, Alice Lewisohn, and Jessie Tarbox Beals. There is one short note from Ruth St. Denis, and a note from Mabel Pollen saying that she would like to bring Sylvia Pankhurst to see Virginia dance.

Artwork by Jerome Myers includes an original print and sketch, and photographs of portraits he painted of his daughter.

Some clippings, flyers, and photographs are gathered into a scrapbook, which is fragile.

The collection also contains some research notes made by Myers' son, Barry Downes.

Key Terms

Subjects

Child dancers

Names

Myers, Ethel

Myers, Jerome, 1867-1940

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-12 **Photographs, Clippings, Programs, Flyers, Press Releases, and Contracts**
1906-1934
Also contains a receipt for dance lessons from the 1920s.
- b. 2 f. 1-5 **Scrapbook and Oversize Photographs** 1912-1920s
- b. 3 f. 1-12 **Letters, Writings, and Artwork** 1910s-1920s
Includes an account of Virginia Myers' childhood career written by her parents.