



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Edwina Seaver Fontaine papers

1927-2003

(S) *MGZMD 447

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Fontaine, Edwina Seaver

Title: Edwina Seaver Fontaine papers

Date: 1927-2003

Size: 1.76 linear feet (4 boxes, 2 volumes)

Source: Donated by Arthur Schwartz, 2015.

Abstract: Edwina Seaver Fontaine (née Seaver, 1927-2014), was a Balanchine dancer, dance instructor, and teacher of Pilates. The Edwina Seaver Fontaine papers, dated 1927 to 2003, reflect Fontaine's career mostly through her correspondence and photographs. Related material includes brochures, clippings, notes, a poster, programs, and scrapbook.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Dance Division at dance@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: Edwina Seaver Fontaine papers, (S) *MGZMD 447. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, 2016.

Creator History

Edwina Seaver Fontaine (née Seaver, 1927-2014), was born in Woodstock New York, the daughter of Edward Seaver, a writer, and Vera (Bass) Seaver. Early in her career, she selected Fontaine as her stage name.

At the age of nine, Fontaine audition for George Balanchine and won a full scholarship to the School of American Ballet. *Life Magazine* wrote a feature article about her for a 1940 issue based upon her impressive talent. At sixteen, Fontaine became a member of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo along with ballerina Maria Tallchief (1925-2013). Both women would become life-long friends.

In 1948, George Balanchine asked Fontaine to become a member of his newly formed company the

New York City Ballet. She accepted his invitation and performed eight years for the Ballet. After leaving the company, Fontaine became an instructor and taught dance at the American Ballet Academy for thirteen years. Her diversified experience also includes a stint as guest artist at the New Haven Dance Center (see collection's poster).

Fontaine's dance training led her ultimately to become a physical fitness instructor in Pilates. Fontaine died in New York City, in 2014.

Scope and Content Note

The Edwina Seaver Fontaine papers, dated 1927 to 2003, reflect Edwina Seaver Fontaine's career as a ballerina and dance instructor mostly through photographs. There are three photograph albums; one album documents her early ballet training with various dance instructors, as a teenager practicing alone, selecting ballet slippers, in costume, stage performances as an adult, and enjoying activities beyond the dance world. The other two albums are less focused on her as a ballerina and hold photographs of non-dance activities, including her transition to becoming a dance instructor for children. Several non-album photographs show Fontaine on tour in Europe with Balanchine.

The collection also holds letters between Fontaine and her mother while she was on tour; letters from her students, friends and colleagues; and two letters from Maria Tallchief. Other material includes a drawing by Fontaine as a child, negatives, notes for teaching (including a case), a passport, copy of her birth certificate, a poster featuring Fontaine as a guest instructor; and a scrapbook about ballet.

Key Terms

Occupations

Ballerinas
Dance teachers

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Photographs
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks

Names

Balanchine, George
Seaver, Edwina
New York City Ballet
School of American Ballet

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Articles Regarding Fontaine 1987-1991
- Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 2 General Correspondence 1947-1963
- b. 1 f. 3-7 Letters between Fontaine And Her Mother 1947-1963
- b. 1 f. 8 Letters From Students Undated
- b. 1 f. 9 Tallchief, Maria 1963
See also: Scrapbook, volume 2. There is an undated letter and note card.
- b. 1 f. 10 Drawing 1937
- Legal Documents
- b. 1 f. 11 Agreement For Screen Test 1947
Draft Copy.
- b. 1 f. 12 Birth Certificate
Copy.
- b. 1 f. 12 Passport 1950
- b. 1 f. 13-22 Notes For Barre, Assorted
- Photographs and Photograph Albums
- b. 2 f. 1 Fontaine, Edwina undated
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Fontaine On Tour In Europe undated
- b. 2 f. 4 Teaching Students c. 1980
- b. 2 f. 5-6 Vacation, Friends, Assorted c. 1970
- b. 2 f. 7 Negatives
- v. 1 Album
- b. 3 Albums 1927-1980s
There are two albums.
- b. 4 Poster undated
- Programs
- b. 2 f. 8 American Ballet Academy 1982-1986
- b. 2 f. 9 The Ballet Class Of Rye 1991-1997
- b. 2 f. 10 Greenwich Academy Of Ballet 1981
- v. 2 Scrapbook 1937-2003
- b. 2 f. 11 Case For Notes
Small zipper case.