



The New York Public Library
Music Division

Guide to the

Judith Ren-Lay papers

1981-2005

JPB 17-17

Processed by Matthew Snyder, 2018.

Summary

Composer: Ren-Lay, Judith

Title: Judith Ren-Lay papers

Date: 1981-2005

Size: 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated by Judith Ren-Lay, 2017.

Abstract: Judith Ren-Lay (born in 1943) is a New York City-based dancer, vocalist, and performance artist. The Judith Ren-Lay papers, dating from 1981 to 2005, document the musical portions of Ren-Lay's artistic output through notes, scores, lyrics, publicity literature, clippings, programs, and business documents.

Preferred citation: Judith Ren-Lay papers, JPB 17-17. Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Matthew Snyder, 2018.

Related Materials:

Judith Ren-Lay papers, (S) *MGZMD 283. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator History

Judith Ren-Lay (born in 1943) is a New York City-based dancer, vocalist, and performance artist. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Ren-Lay began attending the University of Colorado in 1960, studying drama. She continued her education at the University of Maryland in the late 1960s, majoring in dance and performing with the Maryland Dance Company.

Ren-Lay moved to Connecticut in the early 1970s, and was known briefly under her married surname, Galligan. She trained with modern dancer Ernestine Stodelle, and performed as a member of Stodelle's Choreo-Lyric Dancers. Ren-Lay also danced with and choreographed for the New Haven Dance Ensemble from 1970 to 1975. In Connecticut, she taught dance and movement workshops, worked as a visiting artist, and performed original works with the support of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and the Connecticut Ballet. From 1975 to 1980, Ren-Lay was a principal and soloist with the Solomons Company/Dance in New York City. She toured with the company, and served as Gus Solomons, Jr.'s teaching assistant at the California Institute for the Arts during the company's residency in California.

In 1980, Ren-Lay left Solomons Company/Dance and established herself in New York City as a performance artist, blending theatre, dance, and music. She began performing original solo works, producing between eight to ten new pieces each year. She regularly performed at New York City venues such as Performance Space 122, the Knitting Factory, and the Danspace Project, in addition to touring successful pieces in California, Colorado, and Europe. In 1985, Ren-Lay received a commission from avant-garde art organization Franklin Furnace to develop *The Grandfather Tapes*, a piece that included recorded interviews with Ren-Lay's grandfather, a birth control pioneer and the inventor of the style of tampon later known as Tampax. Ren-Lay received a New York Dance and Performance Award (known as a Bessie) for choreography in *The Grandfather Tapes*. The next year, she received her first of two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships for choreography.

Ren-Lay has also produced music-centered work, such as scores to the silent films *Witchcraft Through The Ages* and *Girl Of The Rancho*; live collaborations with Mark Helias; Soup, a performing collaboration with Cebello Morales, Mio Morales, and Mark White; *Strata* and *Out Of Nowhere* (recorded compilations of Ren-Lay's work); and vocal works such as *Boomerang*.

Ren-Lay was hospitalized for five months in 1989 following complications from open-heart surgery. She returned to performing the next year, and developed the piece *To the Beat of Impossible Causes* in response to the experience. Ren-Lay performed throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, in addition to mounting art exhibitions and writing poetry. As of 2017, she continues teaching and choreographing in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Judith Ren-Lay papers, dating from 1981 to 2005, document the musical portions of Ren-Lay's artistic output. Comprised of notes, scores, lyrics, publicity literature, clippings, programs, and business documents, the collection has files on compositions, recorded compilations, and other projects. These include the compositions *Boomerang* and *The Grandfather Tapes*; the scores for the silent films *Witchcraft Through The Ages* and *Girl Of The Rancho*; the Soup performing ensemble; and the compilations *Strata* and *Out Of Nowhere*. Scores in the collection consist of written notes and narratives, not notated music.

The projects with the most content are *Out Of Nowhere* and *Witchcraft Through The Ages*. Files for *Out Of Nowhere* include CD art, a recording contract, and a score for an unidentified work. The files for *Witchcraft Through The Ages* contain research notes on silent films, development notes, film editing notes, and the finished score, as well as programs and press releases regarding showings in the United States and at the International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

The collection also holds a substantial collection of audio and moving image recordings dating from 1975 to 2000. These consist of rehearsals; performances; multi-track work and studio recordings; and

the original interviews with Ren-Lay's grandfather on which *The Grandfather Tapes* was based. Other projects represented in the recordings include the Soup performing ensemble, *Boomerang*, *Half A Life*, *In Consistency*, *Invisible Evidence Of Our Angelic Residue*, *Psyche's Crib*, *raW*, *Undercurrent Events*, *Witchcraft Through The Ages*, and the CD compilation *Out Of Nowhere*.

Also present among the recordings are work tapes not clearly associated with particular works or projects. These include early vocal experiments and rehearsals dating from 1979 to 1984; 1990s rehearsals with various musicians; and a poetry performance. The only moving image in the collection is a print of the film *Häxan* (English title: *Witchcraft Through The Ages*), edited by Ren-Lay for showings with her live accompaniment.

Arrangement: The papers are arranged by project title or format.

Key Terms

Occupations

Composers

Musicians.

Singers.

Titles

Ha_xan (Motion picture)

Subjects

Music -- United States -- 20th century

Music -- United States -- 21st century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Silent film music

Names

Ren-Lay, Judith

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-2 *Boomerang* 1997-1999
- b. 1 f. 3 Cassette Tape Inserts 1983-1995
- b. 1 f. 4 Demo Audio Editing Notes 1987-1988
- b. 1 f. 5 *Girl Of The Rancho* 1996
- b. 1 f. 6 *The Grandfather Tapes* 1985
Out Of Nowhere
- b. 1 f. 7 Art 2002
- b. 1 f. 8 Publicity and Reviews 2002
- b. 1 f. 9 Recording Contract and Royalties 2000-2005
- b. 1 f. 10 Recording Notes 2002
- b. 1 f. 11 Score 2002
- b. 1 f. 12 Soup 1987-1988
- b. 1 f. 13 *Strata* 1981-1991
Witchcraft Through The Ages
- b. 1 f. 14 International Festival of Arts and Ideas 1996
- b. 2 f. 1 Programs and Press Releases 1995-1997
- b. 2 f. 2 Promotional Material 1995-1997
- b. 2 f. 3 Research File 1996
- b. 2 f. 4 Score, Development, and Editing Notes 1995-2000