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Guide to the

**David Lichine and Tatiana Riabouchinska papers**

1920-1981 [bulk 1930-1956]

(S) \*MGZMD 267

Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2011

## Summary

**Creator:** Lichine, David

**Title:** David Lichine and Tatiana Riabouchinska papers

**Date:** 1920-1981 [bulk 1930-1956]

**Size:** 20.3 linear feet (15 boxes, 13 volumes)

**Source:** Purchased from Tania Lichine Crawford, 2008.

**Abstract:** David Lichine (1910-1972) was a noted choreographer, teacher, and dancer. Tatiana Riabouchinska (1917-2000) was an internationally celebrated ballet star and teacher. The David Lichine and Tatiana Riabouchinska papers document the professional life of the dance couple. These files contain correspondence, photographs, calling cards, choreographic notes, and scrapbooks.

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**Preferred citation:** David Lichine and Tatiana Riabouchinska papers, (S) \*MGZMD 267. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Lea Jordan, 2011

### Related Materials:

Michael P. Riabouchinsky papers, 1917-1960. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

## Creator History

David Lichine (1910-1972) was a noted choreographer, teacher, and dancer. He was born in Rostov-on-Don, in Russia. His family left Russia during the revolution and settled in Constantinople. He was later sent to Paris for his education, studying dance in Paris with Lubov Egorova and Bronislava Nijinska.

He made his debut with Ida Rubinstein's Company in 1928 and with Anna Pavlova's company in 1930. Lichine danced with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo from 1932 to 1945, where he met and began dancing with Tatiana Riabouchinska. While with Ballet Russe, he created roles in George Balanchine's *Cotillion* and *Le Bourgeois*, and Massine's *Jeux d'Enfants*, *Le Beau Danube* and *Beach* (all in 1932) among many others. Lichine began work as a choreographer in 1933. His many ballets included *Francesca de Rimini* in 1937, *Prodigal Son* in 1938 and *Graduation Ball* in 1940.

Lichine and his dance partner Tatiana Riabouchinska joined Ballet Theatre (now American Ballet Theater) in 1941. When Mikhail Fokine died in 1942, Lichine finished his ballet *Helen of Troy*. In 1943 Lichine and Riabouchinska married, and continued working together. They had one child, Tania. In 1952 the couple moved to Los Angeles, opening a ballet school in Beverly Hills, where they taught for many years.

Lichine continued teaching and traveling throughout the United States and Europe, choreographing new ballets and restaging his previous ballets for Netherlands Dance Theatre, Festival Ballet in London, Royal Danish Ballet, and Theatre Colon in Buenos Aires. In 1957 he choreographed a new *Nutcracker* for the Festival ballet in London. In 1968 he founded the Ballet Society of Los Angeles in an effort to bring a professional, permanent company to the area. He died in Los Angeles in 1972.

Tatiana Riabouchinska (1917-2000) was an internationally celebrated ballet star and teacher. Born in Russia, her parents fled the revolution for Paris when she was 2 years old. In Paris, she trained under Mathilde Kschessinska, and by age 15 she had attracted the attention of George Balanchine, who recruited her for the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. Together with Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova she was the third of De Basil's "baby ballerinas" in the 1930s. During her childhood and well into her young adult years her career was managed by her father, Mikhail Riabouchinsky.

Riabouchinska was popular not only with audiences but with choreographers – who created roles specifically for her talents. These included Balanchine's *La Concurrence* and *Cotillon* in 1932, Massine's *Jeux d'Enfants*, and Fokine's *Cendrillon*. Riabouchinska traveled the world as a guest artist for the Australian Ballet, the Ballets des Champs-Élysées and the London Festival Ballet.

She was the model for Hyacinth Hippo, the hippopotamus in the Dance of the Hours segment of Disney's *Fantasia* for which Lichine provided the model for the Alligator. They also danced together on-screen in the "Two Silhouettes" segment of Disney's *Make Mine Music* in 1946.

Riabouchinska gradually retired from dance after opening the ballet school in Beverly Hills with her husband. She maintained the school until 1998, and she continued teaching ballet at Academy 331 in West Hollywood until her death in 2000.

## Scope and Content Note

The David Lichine and Tatiana Riabouchinska papers document their lives as professional dancers and teachers. The papers consist of correspondence, contracts, art, photographs, choreographic notes, calling cards, programs, ballet materials, and identification papers. There are also scrapbooks,

documenting Riabouchinska and Lichine as separate artists and their work together.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Ballet -- France -- Paris  
Ballet -- United States -- 20th century  
Dance -- Education

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Notebooks  
Photographs  
Programs  
Scrapbooks

### **Names**

Riabouchinska, Tatiana  
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

## Container List

### Series I: Lichine, David 1920-1970

Series I contains materials relating to the personal and professional life of dancer, choreographer, and teacher David Lichine. These include ballet materials, choreographic notes, correspondence, contracts, identity papers, programs, and photographs. The ballet materials hold photographs, notes, press releases, and plot breakdowns. Choreographic notes consist of two notebooks with ideas and sketches, one in Russian. Lichine's correspondence is business related, with many telegrams of congratulations, letters referring to reviews, and contract negotiations. Lichine's many identification documents reflect his status as a refugee, and allowed for his passage between countries while he was an immigrant in France and before being granted his United States Citizenship. There are photographs of Lichine in costume and rehearsing dancers for his many ballets. Screenplays written (but never produced) by Lichine during his time in Hollywood are here. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

#### Ballets

- b. 1 f. 1-2 *Corrida* 1955-1956
- b. 1 f. 3 *Image* undated
- b. 1 f. 4 *Francesca de Rimini* 1955-1956
- b. 1 f. 5 *Graduation Ball* undated
- b. 1 f. 6 *La Belle Epoque* undated
- b. 1 f. 7-8 *The Nutcracker* 1957
- b. 1 f. 9-10 Choreographic Notes 1933-1939
- b. 1 f. 11 Contracts 1943-1953
- b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence 1947-1969
- b. 1 f. 13-14 Identity Cards and Papers 1937-1951
- b. 1 f. 15 Photographs 1933-1959
- b. 2 f. 1-2 Programs 1937-1958

#### Screenplays

- b. 2 f. 3-4 *General* undated
- b. 2 f. 5 *Ninth Place* undated
- b. 2 f. 6 *Rapture* undated

## Series II: Riabouchinska, Tatiana 1930-1981

Series II contains materials relating to the career of noted ballerina and teacher Tatiana Riabouchinska. The bulk of the papers reflects her early ballet career. Items include fan art, calling cards, Christmas cards, correspondence, identification cards, photographs, documents relating to Mikhail Riabouchinsky's management of her career, and a home-made book about the creation of *Graduation Ball*.

Of note in this series are the calling cards, which were sent backstage by fans and admirers often accompanied by flowers. Riabouchinska counted royalty, heads of state, and other prominent figures among her fans. The correspondence is both personal and professional, with the bulk of the letters being requests for autographs, programs, or photographs. There is some personal correspondence with Lichine, other family members, and friends such as Lucia Chase, Richard Buckle, John Martin, Cyril Beaumont, Norman Demuth, Sonia Gaskell, and Margaret Caron.

Photographs consist of pictures of Riabouchinska in costume as well as professional shots of other dancers, both signed and unsigned. There is correspondence and contract negotiations to and from Mikhail Riabouchinsky, who was monitoring Riabouchinska's early career. Some of the correspondence concerns her 1935 bout with scarlet fever.

There is also a notebook entitled *The Story of Graduation Ball* in which Riabouchinska describes the costumes, the staging, and other details about the creation of one of Lichine's most famous ballets. She uses black and white photographs and colored pens to record how the costumes were made and what colors were used in the original staging.

- b. 2 f. 7 Art 1932-1950
- b. 21 f. 1 Art 1932-1950  
oversized
- Calling Cards
  - b. 3 f. 1 1933-1938
  - b. 3 f. 2 1936
  - b. 3 f. 3-4 1937
  - b. 3 f. 5 1938
  - b. 4 f. 1-2 1939
- Christmas Cards
  - b. 4 f. 3 1934-1935
  - b. 4 f. 4-6 1937-1939
  - b. 5 f. 1 Undated
- Correspondence
  - b. 5 f. 2 1933
  - b. 5 f. 3 1934
  - b. 5 f. 4-5 1935
  - b. 5 f. 6 1936
  - b. 6 f. 1 1937
  - b. 6 f. 2-3 1938
  - b. 6 f. 4 1939
  - b. 7 f. 1 1939
  - b. 7 f. 2-9 1940-1949
  - b. 8 f. 1-2 1950-1956
  - b. 8 f. 3 1956-1981

Series II: Riabouchinska, Tatiana (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 4 Identity Cards 1933-1952
  - Photographs
  - Other Dancers
- b. 8 f. 5 Autographed undated
- b. 8 f. 6 Unsigned undated
- b. 21 f. 2 Oversized 1939-1956
- b. 8 f. 7-8 Riabouchinska, Tatiana 1933-1952
- b. 8 f. 9 Programs 1939-1952
  - Riabouchinsky, Mikhail
- b. 9 f. 1 Correspondence and Contracts 1930-1938
- b. 9 f. 2 Correspondence regarding Tatiana's Illness 1935
- b. 9 f. 3 *The Story of Graduation Ball* 1980

Series III: Scrapbooks 1927-1970

The scrapbooks hold clippings and photographs and pertain to Lichine's career, Riabouchinska's career, or both. There is also a scrapbook of clippings on choreographer and dancer Leonide Massine. The scrapbooks on Riabouchinska are part of a 12 book series put together by Mikhail Riabouchinsky. They are extensive and cover every aspect of her career between 1927 and 1943. Clippings from newspapers all over the world, photographs, and notes have been kept. Several of Lichine's scrapbooks have family photographs and clippings. The scrapbooks that document Lichine and Riabouchinska's work together have both professional and personal photographs as well as clippings and magazine articles. Notable among these is the scrapbook Riabouchinska kept about 1943's *The Waltz King*, which Lichine choreographed and in which Raibouchinska starred.

Lichine, David

- b. 9 f. 4 1945-1947
- b. 9 f. 5 1949-1956
- b. 16 1950-1961
- b. 9 f. 6 1952
- b. 10 f. 1 1957
  - b. 19 Family Album 1920-1960
  - b. 20 Massine, Leonide 1939
- Riabouchinska, Tatiana
  - b. 10 f. 2 1927-1933
    - b. 23 1930-1939
    - b. 24 1935-1938
  - b. 10 f. 3 1933-1934
    - b. 25 1935-1937
    - b. 26 1936-1940
  - b. 11 f. 1 1934-1936
    - b. 27 1935-1943
    - b. 28 1934-1940
  - b. 11 f. 2 1936-1937
  - b. 11 f. 3 1937

Series III: Scrapbooks (cont.)  
Riabouchinska, Tatiana (cont.)

- b. 12 f. 1 1937-1938
  - b. 12 f. 2-3 1938
  - b. 13 f. 1 1938-1939
  - b. 13 f. 2 1939-1940
  - b. 13 f. 3 1940
  - b. 13 f. 4 1943
- Riabouchinska and Lichine
- b. 14 f. 1-2 Berlin 1936
- Clippings
- b. 14 f. 3 1938-1940
  - b. 17 1940-1945
  - b. 15 1941-1943
- Photographs
- b. 22 1932-1970
  - b. 18 1933-1960
  - b. 14 f. 4 1942-1950
  - b. 14 f. 5 *The Waltz King* 1943