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Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Carola Trier papers

1932-2000

(S) *MGZMD 266

Compiled by Janine Veazue, 2011; Additions integrated by Heather Halliday, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Trier, Carola S.

Title: Carola Trier papers

Date: 1932-2000

Size: 7.32 linear feet (15 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Carola Trier, 2001.

Abstract: Carola Strauss Trier (1913-2000) was a dancer, acrobat, and roller-skating contortionist who worked closely with Joseph Pilates to develop and popularize the Pilates Method. Her papers, which date from 1932 to 2000, document her early life, her career as a performer and as a Pilates instructor. The collection includes photographs, correspondence, studio records, research files, clippings, files pertaining to a children's book she wrote, performance programs, immigration documents, and artifacts.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: <https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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Creator History

Carola Strauss Trier was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1913. Her parents were Beatrice Rosenberg, an American citizen, and Eduard Strauss, a German chemist and philosopher. She had an interest in

dance from a young age, attending the Laban School in the 1920s. By the 1930s, Trier was performing as a dancer around Europe. In 1938, her parents immigrated to the United States, while Trier stayed in France, frequently performing with Marcel Neydorf, until 1940, when she was sent to the Gurs concentration camp in France. Trier was released from Gurs in 1942, and with the help of her parents and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, she immigrated to the United States as a refugee later that year. She settled in New York City, where her parents lived, and married Edgar Trier. She supported herself as a dancer, acrobat, and roller-skating contortionist throughout the remainder of the 1940s. A knee injury ended hTrier's performance career in 1950. In the course of seeking treatment, she met Dr. Henry Jordan of Lenox Hill Hospital, who introduced her to Joseph Pilates. Jordan and Pilates became mentors to Trier, as she studied and worked with both of them throughout the 1950s. Trier assisted Dr. Jordan with research and patient rehabilitation at Lenox Hill Hospital. During this period, she also studied under Joseph Pilates, becoming an expert in his Pilates Method of exercise and strength-training. In 1960, with support from Joseph and Clara Pilates, she opened one of the first Pilates studios. Her studio, located at 200 West 58th Street, developed new techniques and helped popularize the Pilates Method with an influential clientele, many of whom were dancers, actresses and actors. Some of Trier's students went on to become prominent Pilates instructors themselves. In 1982, Trier authored a book for children entitled *Exercise, What it is, What it Does*, which introduced and emphasized the benefit and enjoyment of exercising both alone and with friends. Trier was an active teacher, lecturer, and practitioner until the late 1980s, serving as a coach for choreographer Gloria Contreras until 1985. Carola Trier died in New York City on October 28, 2000 at the age of 87.

Scope and Content Note

The Carola Trier papers document Trier's personal and professional life as a performer and Pilates instructor through photographs, correspondence, studio records, writing files, clippings, reference material, and artifacts. The bulk of the photographs in the collection depict Trier performing specific Pilates poses and sequences, sometimes using Pilates Reformer equipment, alone and with others, in a studio and outdoors. Some of these photographs were taken or staged by Joseph Pilates. Later photographs depict Trier's students performing Pilates routines in her studio. Photograph files relating to Clara and Joseph Pilates include candid snapshots of them on vacation with Carola and her husband Edgar Trier; studio portraits; and Christmas greeting portraits of Joseph and Clara. A file of photographs relating to *France-Amérique*, a magazine about French exiles in the United States, is also present. Correspondence ranges from routine business matters to warm notes from Joseph and Clara Pilates, Gloria Contreras, Helen Gurley Brown, and Dr. Henry Jordan, among others. Studio records include an alphabetical index of students, notes for hiring studio staff, and documents relating to Trier's retirement from the studio in 1986. Files relating to *Exercise, What it is, What it Does* include exercise diagrams, manuscripts, galley proofs, and a published version of the book. Other writings files include notes for books and drafts of articles. Clippings files from 1939 through the 1940s hold announcements of Trier's performances in France and across the United States. Many of these contain photographs or illustrations of Trier in costume and on skates. Later clippings relate to Trier's studio and clients. Anatomical notes and medical reference books are included among the reference files. Artifacts include small brass plates for the Universal Reformer apparatus and a pair of roller skates.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged in three categories: Personal; Performing Career; and Pilates.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Artifacts (object genre)

Correspondence

Photographs

Programs (documents)

Occupations

Dancers
Educators
Refugees

Subjects

Modern dance
Pilates method
Roller-skating

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)

Names

Balanchine, George
Contreras, Gloria, 1947-
Jordan, Henry H., 1897-
Pilates, Clara
Pilates, Joseph H. (Joseph Hubertus)
Strauss, Eduard, 1876-1952
Trier, Carola S.

Container List

Personal

- b. 2 f. 4 General 1962-2000
- b. 3 f. 1 Correspondence with Parents 1934-1945, 1958
- b. 3 f. 2 Dance Schools 1932-1935
- b. 3 f. 3 English Language Notebook 1942
- b. 3 f. 4 French Travel Documents 1939-1941
- b. 3 f. 5-7 Immigration 1940-1942

Photographs

- b. 2 f. 12 General undated
- b. 3 f. 8 1960s, 1975
- b. 3 f. 9 Edgar Trier and Clara Pilates circa 1958
- b. 3 f. 10 From Clara Pilates 1958
- b. 3 f. 11-12 Joseph and Clara Pilates circa 1950 -1961
- b. 3 f. 13 Painting of Central Park circa 1930s
Reproduction print of a watercolor painting by A. Marc.
- b. 3 f. 14 Will 1999

Performing Career

- b. 3 f. 15 Announcements 1938-1939
 - b. 1 *Book, Balanchine by Bernard Taper (New York: Harper & Row, 1963)*
- b. 3 f. 16 Choreography Notes 1940-1947

Clippings

- b. 3 f. 17 France 1939-1942
- b. 3 f. 18 United States 1943-1946
- b. 4 f. 1 Correspondence 1942-1946
- b. 4 f. 2 Entertainment Magazines 1943-1944
- b. 4 f. 3 European Performance Licenses 1937-1943
- b. 4 f. 4-5 *France-Amérique* 1958-1978

Original Artwork, Depicting Trier Roller-skating and Dancing

- b. 2 f. 10 undated
 - b. 14 circa 1944
- b. 4 f. 6-7 Performance Contracts 1935-1942

Photographs

- b. 4 f. 8 Neydorf, Marcel 1930s, 1960s
- b. 2 f. 9 Programs 1951-2000, undated
- b. 4 f. 9 Scrapbook 1932-1960s
- b. 4 f. 10 Teaching 1932-1950
 - b. 5 Roller Skates circa 1930s-1940s

Pilates

- b. 4 f. 11 Andrews, Jerome 1966-1996
- b. 4 f. 12 Bush, Jonathan 1988

Pilates (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 13 Business Cards 1977-1978
- Clients
- b. 4 f. 14 Clippings 1960s
- b. 6 f. 1-2 Clippings 1970s-1994
- b. 6 f. 3 Hessel, Jillian 1998-1999
- b. 7 Index, A-L
- b. 8 Index, M-Z
- b. 6 f. 4 Moncion, Francisco 1958-1999
- Clippings
- b. 2 f. 1 1951-1999
- b. 6 f. 5-6 1950s-1995
- Correspondence
- b. 6 f. 7-8 1950s-1998
- b. 2 f. 5 1955-2000
- Clients
- b. 6 f. 9-10 1958-1987
- b. 9 f. 1-2 A - Z 1976-1987
- b. 9 f. 3 Closing the Studio 1987-1988
- b. 2 f. 3 Contreras, Gloria 1985-1999
- b. 9 f. 4 Gurley Brown, Helen 1979-1980
- b. 9 f. 5 Horosko, Marian 1959-1960
- b. 9 f. 6 Institute for the Pilates Method 1991-1995
- Jordan, Henry
- b. 2 f. 6 1953-1970, undated
- b. 9 f. 7 1975
- Pilates, Joseph and Clara
- b. 2 f. 7 1956, undated
- b. 9 f. 8 1951-1956
- b. 9 f. 9 Studio Facility 1977-1984
- b. 9 f. 10 Thank You Letters 1976-1984
- b. 9 f. 11 Massage Certification 1954-1991
- Medical Research Notes
- b. 2 f. 11 undated
- b. 10 f. 1-2 1950-1962
- b. 10 f. 3 Medical, Therapeutic, and Rehabilitation Research 1953-1954
- Memorabilia
- b. 2 f. 8 1957-1997, undated
- b. 10 f. 4 Badge 1970s
- b. 14 Original Artwork
- By Valli Farhi
- Photographs

Pilates (cont.)

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 10 f. 5-15 *A - Dance Magazine* 1920s-1983
- b. 11 f. 1-12 De - S 1950s-1969
 - b. 14 circa 1956-1963
- b. 11 f. 13-14 Pilates, Joseph 1920s-1966
 - Includes Joseph Pilates' book *Return To Life*
 - b. 12 f. 1 Queen Elizabeth II Cruise Ship Lecture 1978
 - Reprints
 - b. 2 f. 2 1951-1984, undated
 - b. 14 1965-1972
 - b. 15 Scrapbook 1960s-1985
 - b. 12 f. 2-3 Seminars, Lectures, and Workshops 1988-1992
 - b. 2 f. 11 Spinal Goniometer (physical therapy tool) undated
 - b. 12 f. 4-5 Studio 1960s-1970s
 - b. 1 *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary, 5th edition by C. W. Taber (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1951)*
 - b. 12 f. 6-7 Tributes to Joseph and Clara Pilates 1956-1993
 - b. 12 f. 8 Universal Reformer Patent Plates circa 1925
 - Writings
 - b. 2 f. 11 Draft of Book Introduction undated
 - Book Projects
 - b. 12 f. 9 1972
 - b. 12 f. 10-15 *Exercise: What It Is, What It Does* 1977-1985
 - b. 13 f. 1 *Exercise: What It Is, What It Does Champagne Cork from Book Party* 1982
 - b. 13 f. 2 "Can We Dance With Effortless Grace?" circa 1960
 - b. 13 f. 3 Drafts 1970s-1980s
 - b. 13 f. 4 "Exercises" 1957
 - b. 13 f. 5 "Should My Child Study Ballet?" circa 1960