



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Katy Matheson papers

1960-2003

(S)*MGZMD317

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013

Summary

Creator: Matheson, Katy

Title: Katy Matheson papers

Date: 1960-2003

Size: 24.82 linear feet (60 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Katy Matheson Estate, 2005

Abstract: Katy Page Matheson (1948-2005) was an American editor, writer, performer, teacher, and dance historian. The Katy Matheson papers (1960-2003) reflect Matheson's professional work, as well as her graduate work in dance history. To a limited extent, her own career in dance is documented.

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>

Conditions Governing Access:

Library policy of photography and photocopying will apply. Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division (dance@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Conditions Governing Use: For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Preferred citation: Katy Matheson papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Susan Malsbury, 2013 Material was rehoused in boxes and loose material was put in folders. Original arrangement and folder titles were retained when apparent.

Creator History

Katy Page Matheson (1948-2005) was an American editor, writer, performer, teacher, and dance historian. Matheson began her study of ballet and modern dance while attending Duke University where she performed with the Duke University Dance Group and at the Synergic Theatre. Between her junior and senior years, Matheson spent two years in Washington, D.C., where she danced in improvisations and works choreographed by others, including revivals of Doris Humphrey's *Water Study* and *Shakers*.

Matheson moved to New York City in 1975 and continued dancing, performing with dancers like Ellen Cornfield, Marjorie Gamso, Kenneth King, Jim Self, Harry Sheppard, and Elaine Shipman, among others. Her first original piece, a group work called *Secretarial Suite*, was performed in 1980. She held a series of open rehearsal performances called *Five Mondays* in January, 1983, and later that year participated in the group work *Dancers and Characters*. From 1992 to 1994, she performed a series of solo improvisations, as part of dance programs at *The Field* and the *Knitting Factory*. In addition to modern dance, Matheson studied historical and early dance, and was an active member of the *New York Historical Dance Company*.

Matheson's own career as a dancer was secondary to her interest in dance history and scholarship. In 1978, Matheson was an assistant coordinator, interviewer, and transcriber for the Oral History Project at the Dance Division in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. She was the initial editor and researcher for *American Modern Dance: The Early Years* (1981), was the principle researcher for the book *Choreography* by George Balanchine (1983), and in the early 1980s assisted Dale Harris with his unpublished book *the Concise History of Ballet and Modern Dance*.

In 1985, she began her graduate work in Performance Studies at New York University. Matheson graduated in 1991, and her thesis on *Niblo's Garden*, a 19th-century concert saloon, was later published in the Theatre Library Association monograph *Pleasure Gardens* (1998). At the same time, Matheson began contributing articles, reviews, and essays to dance publications and in 1989 was hired full-time at *Dance Magazine*, first as assistant to the editor and later as associate editor, a position she held until 1992.

Throughout the 1990s, Matheson continued writing and began to teach. She wrote the "Breaking Boundaries" section of Selma Jeanne Cohen's *Dance as a Theatre Art* (1992), in which she profiled Steve Paxton, Twyla Tharp, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Pina Baush, Garth Fagan, and Mark Morris; and wrote the chronology and did photo research for *Costumes* by Karinska (1996). Matheson also contributed articles on dance forms, dancers, and choreographers to various encyclopedias, including entries on Laura Dean and David Gordon for *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*. In the mid-1990s, she taught courses on the history of dance at the College of New Rochelle and at Hofstra University. Matheson died in 2005 in New York City.

Custodial History

Files were maintained by Katy Matheson prior to donation.

Scope and Content Note

The Katy Matheson papers reflect Matheson's work as researcher, editor, writer, teacher, and dance historian, as well as her graduate work in dance history. To a limited extent, her own career in dance is documented. The collection consists of files related to conferences, festivals, and workshops she

attended; graduate school work from her studies at New York University; personal material; photographs; annotated programs and news clippings; project files that represent Matheson's work as an editor, researcher, and writer; and her teaching files from the College of New Rochelle and Hofstra University. Matheson often wrote about topics and subjects for multiple projects and repurposed research material. For example, an interview Matheson conducted with dancer Nikita Dolgushin for Dance Theatre Journal was later used for an entry in the International Encyclopedia of Dance. She occasionally filed material from an earlier project with the succeeding project on the same topic.

Files for conferences, workshops, and festivals include transcripts from a talk on improvisation Matheson gave at the Talking Dance Project conference in Berkeley (1994) and correspondence and notebooks from her trip to the Leningrad State Conservatory Festival of Music and Dance (1989). Graduate work contains extensive research material for Matheson's thesis on Niblo's Garden and consists of notes arranged by chapter, subject, or repository visited; typescripts of her thesis; and slides. Other subjects include Kenneth King and the dance partnership of Ted Shawn and Margaret Wallman. Correspondence with King and Wallman is interspersed with her research notes. Files on King also contain detailed notes on Matheson's experience dancing in King's piece Battery.

Personal material consists of correspondence, juvenilia, poems, and diary entries, as well as fliers, programs, and choreographic notations that represent Matheson's own work as a dancer. Many diary entries take the form of unsent letters to friends, supervisors, and romantic interests, and represent the concerns, thoughts, and feelings of a young dancer trying to find her personal and professional niche. Photographs are primarily souvenir and publicity photographs of unidentified dancers and include many reproductions of Achille Volpe's images of dancers from the 1920s and 1930s.

Project files are arranged alphabetically by publication or subject. Of note is extensive correspondence with national and international theaters regarding stagings of Balanchine's choreography which Matheson collocated for Choreography by George Balanchine and a transcript of an interview Matheson did with Richard Bull, Cynthia Novack, and Peentz Dubble for her article on "Improvisation" for the International Encyclopedia of Dance. Additional interviews consist of a transcript of her interview with Nikita Dolgushin and audio recordings of Twyla Tharp and Mark Morris recorded for Dance as a Theatre Art. Files for her role of writer, and later associate editor, at Dance Magazine are loosely arranged by magazine section.

Inquiries regarding audio materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division (dance@nypl.org). Audio materials will be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject format or title.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings
Diaries
Interviews
Oral histories (document genres)
Photographs
Programs
Slides

Subjects

Dance -- History
Dance -- Study and teaching
Women dancers

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)
New York (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

Names

Balanchine, George
Bausch, Pina
Bull, Richard, 1931-1998
Dean, Laura, 1945-
Dolgushin, Nikita, 1938-
Fagan, Garth
Gordon, David, 1936-
Grant, Alexander, 1925-2011
Greenberg, Neil, 1959-
Karinska, Barbara
King, Kenneth, 1948-
Morris, Mark, 1956-
Novack, Cynthia Jean
Osborne, Gregory
Tharp, Twyla

Container List

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- b. 60 Photographs 1978-1992, undated
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- b. 25 f. 4-5 *Ballet Review* 2000-2001
- b. 25 f. 6-13 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 26 f. 1-25 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
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- b. 28 f. 1-28 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982

Project Files (cont.)

- b. 29 f. 1-19 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 30 f. 1-5 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 31 f. 1-38 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 32 f. 1-43 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 33 f. 1-2 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* 1980-1982
- b. 58 f. 1-4 *Concise History of Ballet and Modern Dance* 1981-1996
Unpublished
- b. 59 f. 1-4 *Concise History of Ballet and Modern Dance* 1981-1996
- b. 33 f. 3-12 *Costumes by Karinska* 1992-1995
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- b. 38 f. 1-8 *Dance as a Theatre Art* 1984-2001
Includes slides.
- b. 39 f. 1-9 *Dance as a Theatre Art* 1984-2001
- b. 40 f. 1-2 *Dance as a Theatre Art* 1984-2001
- b. 40 f. 3-8 *Dance Magazine* 1984-1995
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Unfinished project.
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Sound recordings

Mark Morris undated

origsr.221922

Original Sound recording unavailable until digitized.

Twyla Tharp undated

origsr.221923

Original Sound recording unavailable until digitized.