



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Agnes de Mille papers**

1926-1975

(S) \*MGZMC-Res. 27

## Summary

**Creator:** De Mille, Agnes

**Title:** Agnes de Mille papers

**Date:** 1926-1975

**Size:** 145 folders

**Source:** No information available.

**Abstract:** Comprises correspondence, scenarios, choreographic notes, notebooks and notes pertaining to articles, monographic works, stage and television productions, unpublished materials, and early memorabilia. Includes drafts and revisions in holograph and typescript as well as carbon copies and photocopies. De Mille's writing in this collection, parts of which appear in note and draft form, include: *And Promenade Home*, *Dance to the Piper*, *Speak to Me*, *Dance with Me*, *Where the Wings Grow*, and the "Russian journals" kept by de Mille (1966 and 1969). Also included are materials relating to the ballets *Fall River Legend*, *Golden Age*, *Rodeo*, *Black Ritual*, *A Rose for Miss Emily*, and the ballet sequences in *Carousel*, *Brigadoon*, and *Oklahoma*. Major correspondents include Lily Bess Campbell, Lucia Chase, Allan Devoe, Beulah Flebbe, Carmelita Maracci, Oliver Smith, and Joseph Welch.

**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:**

Permission required.

**Preferred citation:** De Mille, Agnes. *Early Papers*, (S)\*MGZMC-Res.27, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Language of the Material:** English

## Creator History

Agnes George de Mille, dancer, choreographer, writer and spokesperson for the arts, was born September 18, 1905 in New York. She was the daughter of playwright William Churchill de Mille (1879?-1955) and Anna George de Mille (1878-1947), who was in turn the daughter of writer and single-tax advocate, Henry George (1839-1897). Agnes' uncle was the film producer/director, Cecil B. de Mille (1881-1959). She had a younger sister, Margaret (1908-1978). In 1914, the de Milles moved to Hollywood where William was joining forces with Cecil in the motion picture industry. Agnes attended the Hollywood School for Girls, graduating in 1922, and went on to graduate from University of California in 1926 with a degree in English. William and Anna separated that year, being divorced in 1927, and Agnes spent that summer after graduating traveling in western Europe with her mother and sister. William married Clara Beranger, a colleague in the movie industry, in 1928 and lived with her in California for the remainder of his life. Agnes' formal dance training did not begin until early adolescence in California with Theodore Kosloff. She did some performing in college shows although she did not train continuously during her college years. Soon after graduating, she began to give solo recitals and later with Warren Leonard in her own works. Her mother helped her produce these and accompanied her to concerts in various cities in the United States and in Europe. During this period, she settled once again in New York, at first living with her mother and sister, and then on her own. Agnes moved to England in 1932 where she continued her dance training in ballet with Marie Rambert. She performed in her own work and those of her peers such as Antony Tudor under the auspices of Rambert. Upon her permanent return to New York ca. 1939, she met Walter Prude (1909-) through Martha Graham who was under Prude's management. Agnes and Walter were married on June 14, 1943, in Hobbs, New Mexico during the time when Prude was in military service. The two were separated-except for infrequent visits-due to the war until 1945. Their son, Jonathan de Mille Prude, was born in 1946. It was in this time in the early 1940's that de Mille's work as a choreographer began to be recognized in the United States. Her ballet "Rodeo" in 1942, created for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, brought her immediate acclaim and popularity as did her choreography for the Broadway show "Oklahoma!" the following year. She worked steadily for the next two decades both on Broadway and in the ballet, creating over a dozen works in each field. She had a long-enduring relationship with Ballet Theatre (American Ballet Theatre) and The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, for whom she created many of her ballets. In 1953 she formed the Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre (Heritage Dance Theatre), which functioned most actively in 1953-1954 and 1973-1975. She strove to represent in its repertoire indigenous American dance forms by native choreographers and composers as well as folk forms. On the eve of a major New York performance of her company in her lecture/performance of "Conversations About the Dance," she suffered a serious cerebral hemorrhage. From the day of the stroke, May 15, 1975, onward, she has remained partially paralyzed on the right side of her body although she recovered from some of the other initial losses of her faculties. On November 9, 1977, she went on stage to realize the performance of "Conversations About the Dance," and resumed an active, if limited, life in dance. Agnes de Mille has long been a dominant figure in dance and the arts-as a creator as well as a spokesperson and writer. Before and since her appointment as a founding member of the National Council for the Arts in 1965, she took the cause of dance and the arts to millions of readers and viewers, hundreds of organizations and political conventions. She continues to do so. In 1980, Agnes de Mille received the Kennedy Center Award - the highest nonmilitary award in the United States.

## Scope and Content Note

Comprises correspondence, scenarios, choreographic notes, notebooks and notes pertaining to articles, monographic works, stage and television productions, unpublished materials, and early memorabilia. Includes drafts and revisions in holograph and typescript as well as carbon copies and photocopies. De Mille's writing in this collection, parts of which appear in note and draft form, include: *And Promenade Home*, *Dance to the Piper*, *Speak to Me*, *Dance with Me*, *Where the Wings Grow*, and the "Russian journals" kept by de Mille (1966 and 1969). Also included are materials relating to the ballets *Fall River Legend*, *Golden Age*, *Rodeo*, *Black Ritual*, *A Rose for Miss Emily*, and the ballet

sequences in *Carousel*, *Brigadoon*, and *Oklahoma*. Major correspondents include Lily Bess Campbell, Lucia Chase, Allan Devoe, Beulah Flebbe, Carmelita Maracci, Oliver Smith, and Joseph Welch. Sections of ms possibly pertaining to *Speak to Me*, *Dance with Me*: VI-3 VIII-1,2,3,4,5,6 IX-3,7,8 X-1,2,3,4,5,6 XII-1,2,3,4

**Arrangement:** I. Correspondence II. Scenarios III. Choreographic Notes IV. Writings V. Television Scripts Miscellaneous/Unarranged Material

## Key Terms

### Titles

Gift of Agnes de Mille, 1966-1972

### Subjects

Manuscripts -- Collections

### Names

De Mille, Agnes

Chase, Lucia, 1897-1986

Maracci, Carmelita, 1911-1987

Smith, Oliver Lemuel, 1918-1994

American Ballet Theatre

## Container List

### I. Correspondence

The de Mille correspondence is grouped in two subseries. The first series is arranged chronologically, including a "No date" group. The second subseries is arranged alphabetically by name of the correspondent.

#### 1. Chronological series

f. I-1	1927
f. I-2	1940-42
f. I-3	1943
f. I-4	1944
f. I-4a	1945
f. I-5	1946
f. I-6	1947
f. I-7	1948
f. I-8	1949
f. I-9	1950
f. I-10	1951
f. I-11	1952
f. I-12	1953
f. I-13	1954
f. I-14	1955
f. I-15	1956
f. I-16	1957
f. I-17	1958
f. I-18	1960
f. I-19	1961
f. I-20	1962
f. I-21	1963
f. I-22	1964
f. I-23	1965
f. I-24	1966-67
f. I-25	1968
f. I-26	1971
f. I-26a	1972
f. I-27	No Date

#### 2. By Correspondents subseries

f. I-28	Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (re: Rodeo)
f. I-29	Campbell, Lily Bess
f. I-30	de Mille, Agnes to Anna G. de Mille
f. I-31	de Mille, Agnes to Michael Hertz
f. I-32	de Mille, Agnes to miscellaneous correspondents
f. I-33	de Mille, Agnes to miscellaneous correspondents

I. Correspondence (cont.)  
2. By Correspondents subseries (cont.)

- f. I-34 Devoe, Allan
- f. I-35 Flebbe, Mrs. George
- f. I-36 Macdougall, Allan Ross
- f. I-37 Maracci, Carmelita
- f. I-38 Reed, Ramon
- f. I-39 Robbins, Jerome 1971
- f. I-40 St. Denis, Ruth
- f. I-41 Small World Television
- f. I-42 Oliver Smith
- f. I-43 Welch, Joseph N.
- f. I-44 Wind, Edgar

II. Scenarios

The scenarios for de Mille ballets and ballet sequences are arranged alphabetically by the title of the complete work.

- f. II-1 CAROUSEL
- f. II-2 FALL RIVER LEGEND
- f. II-3 GOLDEN AGE BALLET
- f. II-4 OKLAHOMA
- f. II-5 RODEO

III. Choreographic Notes

Choreographic notes for de Mille's ballet and ballet sequences are arranged alphabetically by title of the completed work.

- f. III-1 BRIGADOON
- f. III-2 OKLAHOMA AND RODEO

IV. Writings

The de Mille writings include notes and notebooks, holograph and typewritten drafts of articles and monographic works grouped under the title of the final work and arranged alphabetically by those titles. Folders 10-31 contain the mss. of Miss de Mille's *Lizzie Borden: A Dance of Death* grouped in three parts. Also included are: notes from the "Russian Journals" used for two articles, and notes and notebooks for miscellaneous works the identities of which are as yet undetermined.

- f. IV-1-3 And Promenade Home
- f. IV-4-7 Dance to the Piper
- f. IV-8 "Goodnight C.B." (in *Esquire* 1964 Jan.
- f. IV-9 *I, Jupiter- Type script carbon copy of deMille's criticism of the musical*
- f. IV-10-31 *Lizzie Borden: A Dance of Death*
  - f. 10-17 Part I- Background
  - f. 18-28 Part II- Fall River Legend
  - f. 29-31 Ms. with editing by Edward Weeks
- f. IV-32-34 Miscellaneous Notebooks
  - f. 32 Notebook containing essay on a trip to France (?)
  - f. 33 *Notebook on "Dance climate in America" and Omnibus T.V. production of Fall River Legend 1957*

IV. Writings (cont.)

Miscellaneous Notebooks (cont.)

- f. 34 Notebook: "Agnes de Mille 1926"  
Contains de Mille's poetry and early school report cards
- f. IV-35-39 "Russian Notebooks"
- f. 35-36a "*The Legend of the Autumn River*" (in *Dance Perspectives 44* Winter 1970
- f. 37-39 "*Judgment in Moscow*" (in *Dance Perspectives 44* Winter 1970
- f. IV-40-41 "*Whatever became of Mommy?*" (in *Horizon Magazine, Holograph notes and typewritten draft of article.* Summer, 1966

V. Television Scripts

Grouped here are handwritten and typed drafts and revisions, rehearsal scripts, etc., arranged chronologically by the date of the telecast production

- f. V-1 *Typescript draft with corrections of "The Art of Choreography" (Omnibus 1956 Dec.*
- f. V-2 *Rehearsal scripts for "The Art of Choreography" (Omnibus 1956 Dec. 30*
- f. V-3 *Typed and handwritten drafts and revisions of script for "Fall River Legend" (Omnibus production 1957 Mar. 24*  
NOTE: Separately cataloged in \*MGZMB-Res are: Proof annotated by de Mille of *To a Young Dancer*Ms. of *Lizzie Borden: A Dance of Death*

Miscellaneous/Unarranged Material

Material in the following in the Miscellaneous/Unarranged Series is listed in order receipt and is not arranged or organized in series or subseries.

- f. VI-1 Letters from J. Wedgwood (member of House of Lords) to Anna de Mille, plus photograph of Wedgwood
- f. VI-2 Sections of hand-written mss
  - "Dance to the Piper"
  - "White Dress"
  - "Russian Journals"
- f. VI-3 *Section of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. VI-4 Notebook
- f. VI-5 *Notebook [includes notes for Black Ritual]*  
Studies for make-up  
Tracings of Blake
- f. VI-6 *Sections of ms [Where the Wings Grow?]*
- f. VI-7 Letters from de Mille to Terese Burger
- f. VI-8 Letter from Norah Stevenson to de Mille
- f. VII-1 Notebook [draft of a ms?]
- f. VII-2 Sections of ms labeled "obsolete" [about her family]
- f. VII-3 Notebook and pages of a ms
- f. VII-4 Notebooks [mss?]
- f. VII-5 Sections of ms
- f. VII-6 Programs, early memorabilia
- f. VIII-1 *Section of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. VIII-2 *Notebook labeled "Mother's Letters" [used in Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. VIII-3 *Sections of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*

Miscellaneous/Unarranged Material (cont.)

- f. VIII-4 *Sections of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. VIII-5 *Sections of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. VIII-6 *Notebook with sections of ms [Speak to Me, Dance with Me?]*
- f. IX-1 Letters from Catherine Drinker Bowen to de Mille 1958-70
- f. IX-2 Letter from de Mille to Richard LaMarr 1952  
Letter from Oliver Smith to de Mille 1959
- f. IX-3 *Section of ms titled "In Spite of Myself"[possibly Speak to Me, Dance with Me]*
- f. IX-4 Ms by de Mille [2 copies, 1 with corrections] "Briefing for Beginners"
- f. IX-5 *Ms by de Mille [2 copies, revised corrected] Judgment in Moscow*
- f. IX-6 *Ms by de Mille, Russian Journal: American Ballet Theatre Tour 1966*
- f. IX-7 *Section of ms, Speak to Me, Dance with Me*
- f. IX-8 *Sections of ms, Speak to Me, Dance with Me*
- f. IX-9 Section of unidentified ms
- f. IX-10 *Letters pertaining to Kiss Me Kate*
  - from de Mille to John C. Wilson 1948
  - from John C. Wilson to de Mille 1948
  - from de Mille to John C. Wilson 1949
- f. X-1-6 Xerox copies of "London Letters" mainly from de Mille to her mother [in order as received in Dance Collection] 1933-34
- f. X-7 Correspondence [original letters or copies]
  - 4 letters from Anna George de Mille to Leonarde Keeler 1928-30
  - letter from Leonarde Keeler to de Mille 1941
  - 3 letters from de Mille to Leonarde Keeler 1941-43
  - 2 letters, 1 postcard from Francis Biddle to de Mille 1963, n.d
  - letter from de Mille to Dr. Calvin H. Plimpton 1966
  - letter from de Mille to Carl Carner 1966
  - letter from de Mille to Howard da Silva 1966
  - letter from de Mille to Bonnie Wyckoff 1973
  - letter from de Mille to Lincoln Kirstein 1973
  - letter from de Mille to Rebecca West 1973
  - letter from de Mille to Pres. of Macy's 1973
  - letter from de Mille to Marie Rambert 1974
  - letter from de Mille to Donald McKayle 1974
  - letter from de Mille to Genevieve Oswald re Leonarde Keeler correspondence 1975
- f. X-8 2 letters from de Mille to Kenneth 1933
  - letter from de Mille to Mrs. Gilbert 1948
  - letter from Jane Grant to de Mille 1958
  - letter from de Mille to Roger Stevens 1959
  - postcard from Therese Horner to de Mille 1972
  - note from Martha Graham to de Mille 1975

Miscellaneous/Unarranged Material (cont.)

Correspondence [original letters or copies] (cont.)

letter from de Mille to Genevieve Oswald 1975

- f. XI-1 Notes on Russian trip
- f. XI-2 *Preliminary notes for A Rose for Miss Emily*
- f. XI-3 Script [for lectures?]
  - “The Art of Ballet/History of Balletic Style”
- f. XI-4
  - “Ballet Technique”
  - “The Theatre-Dancing as Entertainment”
- f. XII-1 *Draft A of ms, Speak to Me, Dance with Me, pp. 1-160*
- f. XII-2 Misc. scripts [for lectures?], includes
- f. XII-3 *Draft B of ms, Speak to Me, Dance with Me, pp. 1-160*
- f. XII-4 *Draft B of ms, Speak to Me, Dance with Me, pp. 161-344 + postscript, misc. pages*
- f. XIII-1 *Notebook [short section of ms for Where the Wings Grow?]*
- f. XIII-2 2 small notebooks
  - wardrobe lists with a few receipts
  - 1933-44 record of income/expenses for performances and classes
- f. XIII-3 Miscellany from early years, includes
  - school report card 1917-18
  - programs for early dance & music recitals
  - program for de Mille's commencement, Univ. of California, Southern Branch 1926
- f. XIII-4 Notebook with script for play, “A Little Captive Lad,” written by de Mille at c. 11 years, with her brief note of explanation