



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Irma Duncan papers

1905-1977

(S) *MGZMD 47

Processed by Diane Coburn Brüning.

Summary

Creator: Duncan, Irma

Title: Irma Duncan papers

Date: 1905-1977

Size: 1458 items in 185 folders and two boxes

Source: Gift of Irma Duncan.

Abstract: The Irma Duncan papers document her professional and personal life from 1905 to 1977.

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>

Preferred citation: Irma Duncan Papers, (S) *MGZMD 47, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Diane Coburn Brüning.

Creator History

Irma Duncan was born Irma Dorette Henriette Ehrich-Grimme on February 26, 1897, in Schleswig-Holstein near Hamburg. Becoming a pupil of Isadora Duncan in January 1905 at her Grunewald school near Berlin, her name was legally changed to Irma Duncan in 1917. Along with Isadora's five other original pupils, she became an adopted daughter. In 1918 these six formed an independent group known as the Isadora Duncan Dancers. Irma's debut as such occurred at Carnegie Hall on June 27 of that year. In 1921 she accompanied Isadora to Russia to found, at the government's invitation, a school of dance. Irma served as a teacher in Moscow for seven years making her solo debut there on April 29, 1923. After Isadora's death in 1927 until 1930, she directed the Moscow school. She toured with her

students to Europe and to the United States (the latter during the 1928-1929 and 1929-1930 seasons). When her group, known as the Isadora Duncan Dancers of Moscow, were forced to return to Russia, Irma chose to remain in the United States. Duncan became a U.S. citizen in 1935. She married Sherman S. Rogers, a New York attorney, on September 19, 1935. She authored several books on Isadora Duncan and her technique. Irma Duncan Rogers died on September 20, 1977.

Scope and Content Note

The Irma Duncan papers document her professional and personal life from 1905 to 1977. The entire collection is testimony to Irma Duncan's lifelong dedication to the theories, ideals, and life of Isadora Duncan. Material is in English with some German, Russian, and French.

Key Terms

Titles

Gift of Irma Duncan

Subjects

Manuscripts -- Collections

Names

Duncan, Irma

Craig, Edward Gordon, 1872-1966

Duncan, Anna, 1894-1980

Duncan, Erica

Duncan, Isadora, 1877-1927

Duncan, Lisa

Maria-Theresa, 1896-1987

Singer, Paris Eugene

Isadora Duncan Dancers (Isadora Duncan)

Container List

I. Correspondence 1905-1977

The weight of importance and quantity in this collection lies in the correspondence series, 1905-1977 (1326 items). It traces Irma's years from first joining Isadora Duncan as a young student in 1905, to her years as a mature artist with and after Isadora until her death in 1977. The early correspondence includes letters with her own mother as well as three letters (holographs) from Isadora to Irma, and another to her adopted daughters. There are extensive runs of letters later from, and in some cases to, the other adopted daughters after Isadora's death. These include Erika, Anna, Lisa, and Theresa. Other noteworthy professional correspondents are E. Gordon Craig, Paris Singer, Augustin Duncan, and Edward Steichen. A selected index of professional correspondence is included in the register, as all letters are arranged chronologically.

- f. 1 Irma and the Duncan school's letters to Irma's mother ca. 1905-1909 (5 Items)
- f. 2 1918 (1 Items)
- f. 3 Letters between Isadora and Irma (three holographs by Isadora, two holographs by Irma) 1920 Sept.-Oct (5 Items)
- f. 4 Holograph letter by Isadora to her adopted daughters (1 Items)
- f. 5 1921 (5 Items)
- f. 6 1922 letters between Isadora and Russian officials (3 Items)
- f. 7 1923 (3 Items)
- f. 8 1924 (2 Items)
- f. 9 1925 (1 Items)
- f. 10 1926 (2 Items)
- f. 11 1927 (2 Items)
- f. 12-13 1928 (17 Items)
- f. 14 1929 (14 Items)
- f. 15 1930 (5 Items)
- f. 16 1931 (4 Items)
- f. 17 1932 (5 Items)
- f. 18 1935 (1 Items)
- f. 19 1937 (1 Items)
- f. 20 1938 (3 Items)
- f. 21 1939 (4 Items)
- f. 22 1940 (4 Items)
- f. 23 1943 (1 Items)
- f. 24 1944 (4 Items)
- f. 25 1945 (5 Items)
- f. 26 1946 (7 Items)
- f. 27 1947 (4 Items)
- f. 28-29 1948 (18 Items)
- f. 30-31 1949 (17 Items)
- f. 32-33 1950 (9 Items)
- f. 34 1951 (6 Items)
- f. 35-36 1952 (23 Items)

I. Correspondence (cont.)

- f. 37-38 1953 (18 Items)
- f. 39-40 1954 (13 Items)
- f. 41-42 1955 (19 Items)
- f. 43-45 1956 (34 Items)
- f. 46-48 1957 (31 Items)
- f. 49-52 1958 (47 Items)
- f. 53-55 1959 (34 Items)
- f. 56-58 1960 (31 Items)
- f. 59-62 1961 (48 Items)
- f. 63-69 1962 (53 Items)
- f. 70-73 1963 (31 Items)
- f. 74-78 1964 (58 Items)
- f. 79-84 1965 (85 Items)
- f. 85-86 1965 Wesleyan University Press (47 Items)
- f. 87 1965 Dance Perspectives Selma Jeanne Cohen (18 Items)
- f. 88-95 1966 (95 Items)
- f. 96-97 1966 Wesleyan University Press (20 Items)
- f. 98-104 1967 (102 Items)
- f. 105-109 1968 (74 Items)
- f. 110-111 1969 (22 Items)
 - f. 112 1970 (1 Items)
 - f. 112 1971 (7 Items)
 - f. 112 1972 (2 Items)
 - f. 113 1973 (10 Items)
 - f. 114 1973 Mignon Garland & students (28 Items)
- f. 115-116 1973 Francis Steegmuller (31 Items)
 - f. 117 1974 Howard L. Holtzman (12 Items)
 - f. 118 1975 Howard L. Holtzman (9 Items)
 - f. 119 1976 (21 Items)
 - f. 120 1977 (10 Items)
- f. 121-124 Dance Collection-Genevieve Oswald 1969-1977, n.d. (50 Items)
- f. 125-128 Dance Horizons-A.J. Pischl 1967-1977 (63 Items)
 - f. 129 Anna Duncan n.d. (6 Items)
 - f. 130 Lisa Duncan n.d. (5 Items)
 - f. 131 Margherita Sargent Duncan n.d. (2 Items)
 - f. 132 (Maria-) Theresa Duncan (26 Items)
- f. 133-134 n.d. arranged alphabetically by last name (38 Items)
 - f. 135 n.d. unidentified (26 Items)

II. Writings and Memorabilia

The writings and memorabilia series is divided into three sub-series: those of Irma (67 items), Isadora (9 items), and other authors (28 items). Of note in the first are Irma's diaries of 1921, the year she accompanied Isadora to Moscow, and her notebook "Guide Through the Duncan System of Dancing." Within Isadora's writings are two autobiographical holographs on her activities in 1904 and 1905, as well as her own sketch of the Moscow school uniforms. The last of the sub-series reflects the great impact Isadora had on many people who were then compelled to express it in articles and poems.

A. Irma Duncan

- f. 136a & b Diaries 1921 (2 Items)
recataloged to *MGYB Res. (Duncan) 88-710 and *MGYB Res. (Duncan) 88-711
- f. 137 "Outline Sketch from the Map of the Heavens at the Birth of Irma Duncan"
(1 Items)
- f. 138 "Guide Through the Duncan System of Dancing" lessons and exercises (1
Items)
- f. 139a "How Isadora Duncan Revolutionized the Dress of women" (1 Items)
- f. 139b "Notes for Interview on Isadora Duncan" (1 Items)
- f. 140 "Scenario for a film on Isadora Duncan's life" (1 Items)
- f. 141 Speech by Irma Duncan at the Commemorative Ceremony in San
Francisco 1973 May 31 (1 Items)
- f. 142 "A Visit with Raymond" (1 Items)
- f. 143 miscellaneous notes by Irma Duncan (14 Items)
- f. 144 Irma Duncan vs. Mignon Halpern alias Julia "Levine" (1 Items)
- f. 145 Testimonial letters for Irma Duncan 1930 (6 Items)
- f. 146 Address notebook (1 Items)
- f. 147 Irma's horoscope 1934-1935 (1 Items)
- f. 148 Postcards of Hamburg-Ohlsdorf (cemetery where her mother is buried) (6
Items)
- b. Boxes 6&7 Appointment books 1920-1968 (30 Items)

B. Isadora Duncan

- f. 149 "The highest summit reached by the dance..." (typescript) (1 Items)
- f. 150 "It was in Berlin Grunewald that in 1905..." (holograph) (1 Items)
- f. 151 "On Dec 1904 I opened..." (holograph) (1 Items)
- f. 152 "Isadora's Programme" (1 Items)
- f. 153 "Outline Story" (1 Items)
- f. 154 Copy of Isadora's baptismal certificate (1 Items)
- f. 155 Speeches by Russian officials at the Isadora Duncan memorial
performance in Moscow on October 1, 1928 (in Russian) (1 Items)
- f. 156 Russian pamphlet: "Opinions on the art and Work of Isadora Duncan" (in
Russian) (1 Items)
- f. 157 Sketch by Isadora of the Moscow school uniform (1 Items)

C. Other Authors (identified when known)

- f. 159 "The Antique Greek Dance and Isadora Duncan Illustrated" by Vassos
Kanellos (1 Items)
- f. 160 "As always, the new style begins not with the great performers..." (1 Items)
- f. 161 "The Bayreuth State Festival 1904" by Paul Busching (1 Items)

II. Writings and Memorabilia (cont.)

C. Other Authors (identified when known) (cont.)

- f. 162 "Dance as an Educational Tool" by Lori Belilove (1 Items)
- f. 163 "Dancing Girls Revitalize Art" by Redfern Mason (1 Items)
- f. 164 "Danse d'enfants Aux élèves de Miss Isadora Duncan" poem by Bugnet (?)
(1 Items)
- f. 165 "A Dream of Universal Peace" as outlined by "W.D." (2 Items)
- f. 166 "For want of any visual means other than static photographs..." (1 Items)
- f. 167 "From `Three Generations in the House Whanfried' " by Christian
Ebersberger (1 Items)
- f. 168 "In Athens the site of Isadora Duncan's first school exists in a state of
ruin..." (5 Items)
- f. 169 "Isadora" (poem) (1 Items)
- f. 170-171 "Isadora Duncan" by Ilya Schneider (2 Items)
- f. 172 "Isadora Duncan, The Dancer" (1 Items)
- f. 173 "Isadora Duncan's Dancers Evicted as Art and Rules Clash" (1 Items)
- f. 174 "Malmaison outline story" (1 Items)
- f. 175 "The many friends and admirers of Isadora still remaining..." (1 Items)
- f. 176 "Memories of Isadora Duncan" by E. Gordon Craig (typescript) (1 Items)
- f. 177 "Miss Duncan is always being misunderstood..." (1 Items)
- f. 178 "The Return of Isadora" by Alike Xenon (1 Items)
- f. 179 "Sonnet XXI in `The Harp-Weaver' " by Edna St. Vincent Millay (typescript)
(1 Items)
- f. 180 "A tavern has been swept away, and from next year there will be dancing
again in a school that Isadora Duncan built..." (1 Items)
- f. 181 "To a Girl Dancing" poem by George Sterling (1 Items)
- f. 182 Miscellaneous writings and notes by unidentified authors (14 Items)

III. Miscellaneous (unknown authors, artists)

- f. 183 Ink and pencil drawings (3 Items)
- f. 184 Excerpts from press reviews (1 Items)
- f. 185 Miscellaneous (9 Items)