



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Joyce Trisler papers

1950-1979

(S) *MGZMD 55

Processed by Henley Haslam.

Summary

Creator: Trisler, Joyce, 1934-1979

Title: Joyce Trisler papers

Date: 1950-1979

Size: 4 document boxes 61 folders

Source: Gift of Harry Rubenstein. Received: July 1989.

Abstract: Joyce Trisler was an American modern dancer, choreographer and teacher; her papers, 1950-1979, reflect these professional activities. The papers also contain some of Trisler's writings and high school memorabilia. The collection, which is not extensive, is divided into 8 series (see organization section).

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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Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Henley Haslam.

Creator History

Trisler, Joyce, American modern dancer and choreographer; born in 1934 in Los Angeles, California; died October 13, 1979 in New York City. Trisler studied with Lester Horton and performed with his Dance Theatre as an adolescent, creating roles in his *Seven Scenes with Ballabilli*, *Prado de Pena*, and *Dedication in Our Times* (all 1952). After Horton's death, Trisler moved to New York to attend the Juilliard School. There, she studied with Antony Tudor and created roles in works by her teachers

Donald McKayle (*Out of the Chrysalis*, 1958), Anna Sokolow (*Session '58*), and Doris Humphrey, for whom she danced in *The Rock and the Spring* (1955), *Descent into the Dream* (1956), and *Dawn in New York* (1956). From the mid-1950s through the 1960s, Trisler worked as a freelance performer in the established and ad hoc companies of John Wilson and Alvin Ailey, and in concerts at the 92nd Street YMHA, dancing for James Truitte (in *Bagatelle*, 1960, and *Variations*, 1958), and in her own works. She also performed with the Valerie Bettis group in the 1965 concerts of the American Dance Theatre, a cooperative venture among traditional modern dancers and choreographers. One of the foremost experts in the teachings and choreography of Lester Horton, she supervised the reconstruction of his *The Beloved* for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre. Although a prolific choreographer, Trisler was occasionally better known for her revivals of the works of Horton and, after 1977, of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. Her group, Danscompany, frequently performed the Denishawn repertory for entire seasons in New York and on tour without featuring her own works. Trisler also choreographed extensively for opera companies, among them the New York City, San Francisco, and Boston Operas, and for theatrical productions. She was especially well known for her work on the New York Shakespeare Festival productions in the Delacorte Theater in Central Park each summer from 1967 to 1971. Her Broadway shows, unfortunately, were uniformly unsuccessful. *Works Choreographed:* CONCERT WORKS: *Playthings of the Wind* (1956); *Journey* (1958); *The Pearl* (1958); *Place of Panic* (1958); *Bewitched* (1959); *Theater Piece* (1959); *Bergamesca* (1960); *Bronx Zoo Cantata* (1969); *Dance for Percussion* (1960); *Nite Life* (1960); *Primera Cancion* (1960); *Brandenberg Concerto* (1961); *Eccosaises* (1961); *Ballroom* (1964); *Dance for Six* (1964); *Rite of Spring* (1974); *Soliliquy of a Bhiksuni* (1974); *Four Temperaments* (1975); *Little Red Riding Hood* (1975); *Four Against the Gods* (1976); *Fantasies and Fugues* (1978); *By Dawn's Early Light* (1979); *Concerto in E* (1979). OPERA: *King Arthur* (1968); *Beatrix Cenci* (1973); *Death in Venice* (1975); *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1976). THEATER WORKS AND INCIDENTAL DANCES: *Everyman Today* (1958); *Put It in Writing* (1963); *Titus Andronicus* (1967); *Henry IV* (1968); *Romeo and Juliet* (1968); *Peer Gynt* (1969); *La Strada* (1969); *Look to the Lillies* (1970); *Timon of Athens* (1971); *Great Scott!* (1971); *Ambassador* (1972). Source: Biographical Dictionary of Dance Barbara Naomi Cohen-Stratynier New York, Schirmer Books, 1982.

Scope and Content Note

Joyce Trisler was an American modern dancer, choreographer and teacher; her papers, 1950-1979, reflect these professional activities. The papers also contain some of Trisler's writings and high school memorabilia. The collection, which is not extensive, is divided into 8 series (see organization section).

Arrangement: I. Biographical Information II. Incoming Correspondence III. Writings IV. Material for Beatrix Cenci V. Legal and Financial Information VI. High School Memorabilia VII. Scripts and Music Scores, annotated and non-annotated VIII. Miscellaneous

Key Terms

Titles

Gift of Harry Rubenstein

Subjects

Manuscripts -- Collections

Names

Trisler, Joyce, 1934-1979
 Horton, Lester, 1906-1953
 Sherman, Jane, 1908-2010
 Denishawn Dancers

Container List

I. Biographical Information (7 items)

The Biographical Information Series consists mainly of several lists of Trisler's professional credits as performer and choreographer.

- b. 1 f. 1 Resume and Lists of Works Choreographed (6 Items)
- b. 1 f. 2 Juilliard Transcript 1957 (1 Item)

II. Correspondence, incoming (41 Item)

The Incoming Correspondence Series is both personal and professional. The more important is filed by correspondent and includes letters from Jane Sherman with her comments about Danscompany's performances of Denishawn works. The miscellaneous letters, notes, and cards are filed chronologically.

- b. 1 f. 3 Cullberg, Birgit 1973 (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 4 Logan, Joshua 1973 (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 5 McCormick, Malcolm 1972 (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 6 Price, Theodore 1971 (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 7 Sherman, Jane 1976-77 (5 Items)
- b. 1 f. 8 Wilson, John [?] 1979 (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 9 Misc. Letters and Notes (8 Items)
- b. 1 f. 10 Cards and Invitations (10 Items)
- b. 1 f. 11 Graduation Cards (13 Items)

III. Writings (10 items)

The Writings Series is small but contains the only expressions of thoughts and opinions by Trisler, herself, in this collection. It includes several drafts of a paper on Lester Horton, with whom she studied and performed, after his death; brief notes on her time at the Juilliard School; and her thoughts on nudity and sex in the theater, prompted by seeing *Hair*.

- b. 1 f. 12 "Essay on the Arts", High School 1952 (2 Items)
- b. 1 f. 13 Notes on "The Juilliard Years" (2 Items)
- b. 1 f. 14 Paper on Lester Horton: various drafts (4 Items)
- b. 1 f. 15 Notebook: writings about Lester Horton and miscellany (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 16 Notes on nudity and sex in the theater (1 Item)

IV. Material for *Beatrix Cenci* (11 Items)

The Material for *Beatrix Cenci* Series contains some notes for her choreography for this opera, which was presented at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

- b. 1 f. 17 Notes for choreography (9 Items)
- b. 1 f. 18 Research notes on torture (2 Items)

V. Legal and Financial Information (ca. 11 Items)

The Legal and Financial Series contains contracts for productions for which Trisler did, or planned to do, the choreography; records of royalties paid to her by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company; and a record of a teaching fee from the New Dance Group.

A. Contracts

- b. 1 f. 19 The Ambassadors (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 20 Beatrix Cenci (1 Item)

V. Legal and Financial Information (cont.)

A. Contracts (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 21 Death in Venice (2 Items)
- b. 1 f. 22 Die Fledermaus (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 23 Fusion Dance Company (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 24 Look to the Lilies (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 25 Most Happy Fella (2 Items)

B. Royalties, Fees

- b. 1 f. 26-27 Royalties: Alvin Ailey American Dance Company
- b. 1 f. 28 Fees: New Dance Group

VI. High School Memorabilia (ca. 6 items)

The High School Memorabilia Series includes Trisler's diploma, three year-books with autographed notes from classmates, and miscellaneous items such as ticket stubs and flyers for class events which are arranged chronologically.

- b. 1 f. 29 Diploma and Commencement Program
Year books (autographed by friends)
 - b. 4 f. 55 1950
 - b. 4 f. 56 1951
 - b. 4 f. 57 1952
- b. 4 f. 58 Phi Beta Award (plaque) 1952
- b. 1 f. 30 Misc.

VII. Scripts and Music Scores (25 Items)

The Scripts and Music Scores Series contains scripts and music scores with brief annotations or stage directions by Trisler; there are also a number of scripts and music scores which are not annotated.

A. Scripts

1. annotated

- b. 2 f. 31 *Beatrix Cenci (Shand and Girri)*
- b. 2 f. 32 *Boarding School (Worthing)*
- b. 2 f. 33 *Death in Venice (Piper)*
- b. 2 f. 34 *King Arthur (Dryden)*
- b. 2 f. 35 *On the Town (Comden and Green)*
- b. 2 f. 36 *Theatre Piece in Five Sections (Leach)*

2. non-annotated

- b. 2 f. 37 *Holiday (Barry, Shevelove)*
- b. 2 f. 38 *Hot Ginger and Dynamite (Walden)*
- b. 2 f. 39 *It's a Funny Old World... (Bricusse, Newley)*
- b. 2 f. 40 *Love's Labor's Lost (Shakespeare)*
- b. 2 f. 41 *Object (Teague)*
- b. 2 f. 42 *Peer Gynt (Ibsen)*
- b. 2 f. 43 *Prompter of Genius (Sorell)*
- b. 2 f. 44 *La Strada (Peck, Bart, based on Fellini, Pinelli)*

B. Music Scores

VII. Scripts and Music Scores (cont.)

B. Music Scores (cont.)

1. annotated

- b. 3 f. 45 *Die Fledermaus (Strauss)*
- b. 3 f. 46 *King Arthur (Purcell)*
- b. 3 f. 47 *Most Happy Fella (Loesser)*
- b. 3 f. 48 *Rite of Spring (Stravinsky)*

2. non-annotated

- b. 3 f. 49 *Beatrix Cenci (Ginastera)*
- b. 3 f. 50 *Soliloquy of a Bhiksuni (Chou)*

C. Sheet Music

- b. 4 f. 59 "The Habit Waltz"
- b. 4 f. 59 "Literary Cocktail Party"
- b. 4 f. 60 "Di quella pira" (Verdi)
- b. 4 f. 60 "Questa e quelle" (Verdi)
- b. 3 f. 51 The Upstairs at the Downstairs Songbook

VIII. Miscellaneous (6 items)

The Miscellaneous Series includes some address lists of people who worked with Trisler in *Beatrix Cenci* and in a workshop, and a handmade book of sentiments which was possibly made by participants in a workshop.

- b. 3 f. 52 *Address Lists: Beatrix Cenci; workshop*
- b. 4 f. 61 Book of sentiments of workshop participants 1971
- b. 3 f. 53 Brochure: Harry Partch instruments
- b. 3 f. 54 Burdick, William: Resume and article on period dance