



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Murray Spalding papers**

circa 1953-2011

(S) \*MGZMD 486

Processed by Heather Halliday, 2018.

## Summary

**Creator:** Spalding, Murray

**Title:** Murray Spalding papers

**Date:** circa 1953-2011

**Size:** 4.75 linear feet (10 containers); 526.7 megabytes (90 files)

**Source:** Gift of James F. Bleakley Jr., Spalding's husband and administrator of her estate.

**Abstract:** Murray Spalding (1944-2010) was an American choreographer, dancer, and teacher most known for her spiritually evocative Mandala dance series. The Murray Spalding papers date from about 1953 to 2011 and outline her career through performance production files; performance and publicity photographs; choreographic notebooks; scrapbooks; clippings; dance company records, and teaching files.

**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:

Audio and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

**Preferred citation:** Murray Spalding papers, (S) \*MGZMD 486. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Heather Halliday, 2018.

## Creator History

Lynn Murray Spalding was born January 30, 1944 in Louisville, Kentucky to Margaret Rodman Murray and J. Grieg Spalding. Her study of dance began with ballet lessons as a child. In 1968, she earned a BA and MFA in dance from Sarah Lawrence College, where dance pioneer Bessie Schönberg was her teacher and mentor. She also studied under choreographer William Dollar at the American Ballet Theater School and at the Robert Joffrey School.

Early in her career, Spalding was based in Washington, D.C., where she established the Murray Spalding Movement Arts dance company. After 1981 Spalding phased out her own performing and devoted all her time to choreography, managing the dance company, and teaching. Her performances and choreography drew influences from traditional ballet and modern dance, as well as yoga and Tai Chi. Her earlier work frequently included humorous or surreal elements.

In the 1990s, she relocated to New York City, bringing Murray Spalding Movement Arts along with her. In New York, having grown less interested in narrative and more concerned with spirituality, she embarked on her *Mandala* series, which she worked on for the remainder of her career. The *Mandalas* were minimalist, circular, patterned dances that Spalding described as "movement meditations that occupy a place between prayer and performance."

Spalding died at her Washington, D.C. home on November 8, 2010.

## Scope and Content Note

The Murray Spalding papers outline Spalding's career through performance production files; photographs; choreographic notebooks; scrapbooks; performance reviews; dance company records; teaching files; and other materials. Notable performance titles appearing frequently throughout the collection include: *Bathroom Games*; *Be*; *Crossings*; *Blue Ring*; *Doubtful Guest*, which was a collaboration with Edward Gorey; *A Fine Romance*, and the *Mandalas* series. The photographs and performance production files comprise the largest share of the collection and, together with the choreographic notebooks and scrapbooks, demonstrate a full picture of Spalding's career, her thought processes, and creative practice.

The performance production section holds files for dance works Spalding either performed in or choreographed. These files may include programs, promotional materials, rehearsal notes, choreography and staging notes, and dancer contact information. They are arranged chronologically.

The photograph files include publicity portraits, photographs of rehearsals, and photographs of performances. Most are labeled with dates or titles of performances. George A. Peterson, a professional photographer and Spalding's first husband, shot many of the images from the 1970s. Photographs from the 1970s and 1980s are primarily black and white 8 X 10" prints, sometimes including negatives. Most photographs from the 1990s are color 4 x 6" prints and those from the 2000s are digital files.

Choreographic notebooks date mostly from Spalding's student years and her later choreographic work. They include sequence lists, choreographic diagrams, and journal entries. Some loose pages of choreographic notes are also included in this section.

Three scrapbooks provide a timeline of Spalding's life in dance from her teen years up to 1988 through carefully affixed photographs, clippings, programs, and fliers.

Several files of clippings contain reviews of performances and other articles about Spalding or her dance company. Many are photocopies.

The Murray Spalding Movement Arts files contain sporadic business records of the dance company including theater floor plans, some correspondence, and board of advisors meeting notes.

Teaching files relate to workshops Spalding taught and classes offered through Murray Spalding Movement Arts.

Other materials include: resumes and biographic sketches of Spalding; grants; correspondence; a file on her teacher and mentor Bessie Schönberg; Spalding's education; publicity materials; and a memorial service held in Spalding's honor.

**Arrangement:** The Murray Spalding papers are arranged alphabetically by section.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Black-and-white photographs  
Clippings (information artifacts)  
Color photographs  
Scrapbooks

### **Occupations**

Choreographers  
Dancers

### **Subjects**

Choreography  
Dance teachers -- United States  
Women choreographers -- United States  
Women dancers

### **Names**

Peterson, George Arvid  
Scho\_nberg, Bessie  
Spalding, Murray

## Container List

- b. 1 Artist Certification 1990
- b. 1 f. 2 Biographies and Artist's Statements 1980-2007
  - Choreographic Notes and Notebooks
- b. 1 f. 3 circa 1967-1972
- b. 1 f. 4 Loose Items from Notebook circa 1967-1972
- b. 1 f. 5 *Bathroom Games* circa 1973-1975
- b. 1 f. 6 1974-1980s
- b. 1 f. 7 *Be* circa 1974
- b. 1 f. 8 *P.A.C.E.* 1974
- b. 1 f. 9 *The Trained* 1974
- b. 1 f. 10 *The Joy of Cooking* 1975
- b. 1 f. 11 *The Last Dance* circa 1975
- b. 1 f. 12 *Offered* 1975
- b. 1 f. 13 *In July* circa 1976
- b. 1 f. 14 *Mandalas* late 1990s-2000s
- b. 2 f. 1 2003-2004
- b. 2 f. 2 2004-2005
- b. 2 f. 3 2005-2007
- b. 2 f. 4 *Mandalas VII and VIII* circa 2007
- b. 2 f. 5 2007
- b. 2 f. 6 2007-2010
- b. 2 f. 7 Correspondence 1972-2005
- b. 3 f. 1 Education 1962-1982
  - Includes memorabilia from Spalding's high school years, her time at Sarah Lawrence College, subsequent alumni activities, and various dance schools.
- b. 3 f. 2 Memorial Service 2011
  - Murray Spalding Movement Arts Dance Company
- b. 3 f. 3 mid-1970s-1990
- b. 3 f. 5 Video Lists 1980s-2000s
- b. 3 f. 6 Masters Thesis 1983
  - Typescript of a thesis studying Murry Spalding Movement Arts written by Louise Powers, a Performing Arts /Arts Management student at American University in Washington, D.C.
- b. 3 f. 6 Board of Advisors 1998-2000
- b. 3 f. 4 1999-2010
- b. 3 f. 8 New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Grant 2002
  - Performance Production
- b. 3 f. 9 1959
- b. 3 f. 10-13 1967-1979
- b. 4 f. 1-3
- b. 4 f. 4 Edward Gorey / Grace Church 1979
- b. 4 f. 5 Colorado Tour 1979

Performance Production (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 6-8 1980-1982
  - b. 4 f. 9 *Bathroom Games, Oklahoma* 1982
  - b. 4 f. 10 Corcoran Ball 1982
    - Crossings*
    - b. 4 f. 11 1982
    - b. 10 f. 1 Score 1982
    - 1983
  - b. 4 f. 13 Washington, D.C. Dance Center 1983
    - b. 5 f. 1 1984
    - b. 5 f. 2 *Tables, Titterings, and Travel* 1986
    - b. 5 f. 3 City Dance 1988
    - b. 5 f. 4 *Blue Ring* 1990-1994
    - b. 5 f. 5-9 *Scho\_nberg Dancycle Salon* 1992-1996
    - b. 5 f. 10 *Dancycle Salon* 1997
    - b. 5 f. 11 *Soho Dance Festival Mandalas in Movement* 1997
  - b. 5 f. 12-13 *Mandalas in Movement* 1998-1999
  - b. 5 f. 14-15 1999-2000
    - b. 5 f. 16 *Mandalas Santa Fe* 2001-2002
    - b. 5 f. 17 Festivals 2002
    - b. 5 f. 18 Danspace, St. Mark's Church 2002
  - b. 5 f. 19-20 *Mandalas* 2003-2007
    - b. 6 f. 1 *Mandalas: Past and Present* 2008
      - er. 1 circa 2010  
(1 computer file 917.9 kilobytes)
    - b. 6 f. 2 *Mandalas XIII* 2010-2011
- Photographs
  - b. 6 f. 3 circa 1968
  - b. 6 f. 4 Palm Beach Florida 1969
  - b. 6 f. 5 early 1970s
  - b. 6 f. 6 *The Attitude* 1970
  - b. 6 f. 7 Publicity 1970
  - b. 6 f. 8 *Be* 1972
  - b. 6 f. 9-10 circa 1974
  - b. 6 f. 11 *Bathroom Games* 1974
  - b. 6 f. 12 *P.A.C.E.* 1974-1975
  - b. 6 f. 13 *Waltz* 1974
  - b. 6 f. 14 *Bathroom Games* 1975
    - The Last Dance* circa 1975
  - b. 6 f. 16 *Offered* 1975
  - b. 6 f. 17 *Circus Pomp and Circumstance* circa 1976
  - b. 6 f. 18 *In July* circa 1976

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 19 Play Group Theatre, Knoxville, Tennessee 1976
- b. 6 f. 20 Publicity 1978
- b. 6 f. 21 circa 1979-1980
- b. 6 f. 22 *Doubtful Guest and Duet for Glass Harmonica* circa 1979
- b. 7 f. 1 *A Fine Romance* 1979
- b. 7 f. 2 Grace Church Retrospective 1979
- b. 7 f. 3 *L'Histoire du Soldat* 1979
- b. 7 f. 4 Murray as Scarlet 1979
- b. 7 f. 5 Publicity circa 1979
- b. 7 f. 6 *Dick and Jane* 1980
- b. 7 f. 7 *Doubtful Guest* 1980
- b. 7 f. 8 *A Fine Romance* 1980
- b. 7 f. 9 Solo 1980
- b. 7 f. 10 Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Florida 1980
- b. 7 f. 11 *Bathroom Games* 1981
- b. 7 f. 12 Corcoran 1981
- b. 7 f. 13 circa 1982
- b. 7 f. 14 *Crossings* 1982
- b. 7 f. 15 Cunningham Studio 1982
- b. 7 f. 16 *Metropolitan Home* 1982
- b. 7 f. 17 *Across and Around* circa 1983
- b. 7 f. 18 Publicity 1983-1985
- b. 7 f. 19 *Tables, Titterings, and Travels* 1986
- b. 7 f. 20 *Blue Ring* circa 1990
- b. 7 f. 21 *Mandala III* 1998
- b. 7 f. 22 2000s
- b. 7 f. 23 *Mandalas in Movement* 2000
- b. 7 f. 24 University Settlement circa 2000
- b. 8 f. 1 Portraits, Santa Fe 2001 March
- b. 8 f. 2 Santa Fe 2001 April
- b. 8 f. 3 circa 2002
- b. 8 f. 4 St. Mark's Church 2002-2003
  - er. 2 2005-2008  
(58 computer files 383.4 megabytes)
  - er. 3-4 *Mandala XIII* 2010-2011  
(31 computer files 142.32 megabytes)
- b. 8 f. 5 Publicity Materials 1970s-2000s  
Includes fliers, post cards, and newsletters.
- b. 8 f. 6 Resumes 1970s-2003
- b. 8 f. 7-13 Review Clippings 1973-2005
- b. 9 f. 1-8
- b. 9 f. 9 Schönberg, Bessie 1968-1997  
Includes letters, clippings, and invitations related to Bessie Schönberg.

b. 10 f. 2-4 Scrapbooks circa 1953-1988

Teaching

b. 9 f. 10 1970s

b. 9 f. 11 Workshop for Choreographers 1989-1997

b. 9 f. 12 Connecticut Residency 1996-1997

Mandalas

b. 9 f. 13 2000s

b. 9 f. 14-15 Student Designs circa 2000

b. 9 f. 16 Workshops 2002

Audio and Moving Images

Includes 84 videos and 16 audio recordings of performances, interviews, and music that accompanied performances.

Audio and video recordings are unavailable pending digitization.