



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Radford Bascome collection

circa 1950-1959

*MGZEB 18-6812

Processed by Tara D. Strongosky, 2019.

Summary

Title: Radford Bascome collection

Date: circa 1950-1959

Size: 2.29 linear feet (6 boxes)

Source: The New York Public Library acquired the collection as a gift from James Olinkiewicz in April 2018.

Abstract: The Radford Bascome collection contains over 8,600 negatives that documents dance from 1954 through 1958 with the majority of the collection representing New York City Ballet. Other companies included are American Ballet Theatre and Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, as well as performances from Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Also included are Bascome's commercial and advertising work as well as some personal photographs. Brief biographies of Bascome's subjects are provided throughout the collection as well as correspondence from dancers whom he photographed.

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>

Status note: Collection closed pending digitization.

Preferred citation: Radford Bascome collection, *MGZEB 18-6812. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Tara D. Strongosky, 2019.

Creator History

W. Radford Bascome, Jr., born 1913 in New York, made his living in the field of public relations until he developed his hobby of photography into a profession in 1953. He descended from a military family and

maintained status in the United States Marine Corps reserves while also being active in honing his photography skills. His avenue into dance photography was by chance when he used dancers to test a new electronic flash unit on his camera. His first dance pictures sold and led to Bascome becoming a significant photographer of the New York ballet scene in the mid-20th century. In 1955, just two years into his professional career, the New York City Center gallery held an exhibition of his photographs of the New York City Ballet titled *The Ballet in Mood and Movement*. The exhibition featured mostly black and white 35mm candid pictures taken backstage during rehearsals and performances. He was one of George Balanchine's favored artists and was given unparalleled access to the New York City Ballet as a result. Bascome's work was also seen in print such as his experimental "Rorschach Ballet" photographs which were featured in a 1954 *Life Magazine* spread. In the early 1960s he contributed to *Dance Magazine's Cook of the Month* articles featuring favorite recipes of dancers Violette Verdy and Lupe Serrano. He both wrote and photographed for the articles. In addition to his dance photography, he also is credited for various Mercury Records album covers most notably the conductor and composer Antal Doráti. Bascome died in 1984 at age 70 on Long Island.

Scope and Content Note

The collection comprises over 8,600 black and white negatives by the photographer Radford Bascome and represents an extensive understanding of his output as a dance photographer. The photographs can be roughly dated to the 1950s with some of the photographs identified between the years 1954 through 1958. The majority of the material represents dancers of the New York City Ballet and the works of George Balanchine. Other ballet companies included are American Ballet Theatre and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, as well as performances from Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Bascome's advertising and commercial clients included Pappagallo shoes, Tiffany and Company, and Kislav perfume. Photographic formats included in the collection are black and white 120mm negatives, 35mm negatives, contact sheets, and some proof prints.

Included among the notable dance figures are Yvonne Mounsey, Alicia Markova, Merce Cunningham, José Limón, André Eglevsky, Violette Verdy, Nora Kaye, Melissa Hayden, Tanaquil LeClercq, Mia Slavenska, Allegra Kent, Diana Adams, Maria Tallchief, and Janet Reed. Many of New York City Ballet's productions are documented in the collection such as Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, *The Cage*, *Fanfare*, and *Western Symphony*.

The photographs were originally housed in three-ring binders. The original order in which the binders were received has been retained. Each binder includes a typed table of contents, though the material is not arranged in any discernible order. These tables of contents will also be available as an additional online resource. Each binder also includes brief biographies of Bascome's subjects which were acquired by the donor from various online resources. Some binders contain handwritten correspondence addressed to Bascome from dancers whom he photographed. Much of this correspondence directly addresses the photographs present in the collection. The fourteenth binder contains a combination of unidentified negatives, contact prints, and full size prints.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet companies -- Photographs

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Negatives (photographs)
Photographic prints

Names

Adams, Diana, 1926-1993
Balanchine, George
Bascome, Radford
Bolender, Todd
Cunningham, Merce
Dorati, Antal
Eglevsky, Andre_
Hayden, Melissa
Jillana
Kaye, Nora, 1920-1987
Kent, Allegra
Le Clercq, Tanaquil
Limo_n, Jose_
Markova, Alicia, Dame, 1910-2004
Mounsey, Yvonne
Reed, Janet, 1916-2000
Slavenska, Mia
Tallchief, Maria
Verdy, Violette, 1933-2016
American Ballet Theatre
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
New York City Ballet

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 **Book 1, pages 1-42**
Includes photographs of Gossard ads, the High School of Performing Arts, Yvonne Mounsey in *The Prodigal Son*, Jean Bandler, and Pat Turner.
- b. 1 f. 2 **Book 1, pages 43-84**
Includes photographs of Hugo Fiorato; Jane Mason; James Starbuckp; Mia Slavenska; Leslie Francis; Bascome's house in Rumson, New Jersey; and ads for Pappagallo shoes.
- b. 1 f. 3 **Book 2, pages 1-52**
Includes photographs of Bascome's cat Marvin, Antal Doráti, Nancy King, and Marian Winters.
- b. 1 f. 4 **Book 2, pages 53-101**
Includes photographs of Bascome's cat Marvin, Myra Kinch, Emily Frankel, Mark Ryder, and *The Nutcracker*.
- b. 1 f. 5 **Book 3, pages 1-32**
Includes photographs of Alicia Markova, Zachary Solov, Lee Becker, Merce Cunningham, and Violette Verdy.
- b. 2 f. 1 **Book 3, pages 33-72** 1958 October 20
Includes photographs of Jean Erdmann, Jean Cebron, Donna Brooks, Ted Shawn, Toni Lauder, and Joan Wolf.
- b. 2 f. 2 **Book 4, pages 1-41**
Includes photographs of Sylvia Shay (of Ziegfeld Follies), Yvonne Chouteau, Nancy Lang, Erick Hawkins, and Antal Doráti.
- b. 2 f. 3 **Book 5, pages 1-57** 1954 June 5
Includes photographs of Todd Bolender, Nicholas Magallanes, Ray Tobias, *Ivesiana* rehearsal, George Li in *The Nutcracker*, Maria Youskevitch, Melissa Hayden, and correspondence from Suzanne Ames to Bascome.
- b. 2 f. 4 **Book 5, pages 58-101** 1954 January 6-February 5
Includes photographs of Janet Reed in *The Nutcracker*, Roland Petit, Imogene Coca, Bob Herget, Pat Turner, and Paula Caputo.
- b. 3 f. 1 **Book 5, pages 102-148** 1954 November-December
Includes photographs of *The Nutcracker*, the New York City Ballet orchestra, *County Line*, Zachary Solov, Jillana, and Robert Barnett.
- b. 3 f. 2 **Book 6, pages 1-55**
Includes photographs of Margreth Schanne, Tanaquil Le Clercq, Diana Adams in *Daphnis and Chloe*, Nora Kaye in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and Wilma Curley.
- b. 3 f. 3 **Book 6, pages 56-108**
Includes photographs of Yvonne Mounsey in *Fanfare*, Jillana, Diana Adams in *Picnic at Tintagel*, James Starbuck, Mia Slavenska, and Melissa Hayden in *The Cage*.
- b. 3 f. 4 **Book 7, pages 1-33** 1954 January-June 30
Includes correspondence from Margery Beddow, Phyllis Curtin, and Bob Herget to Bascome; photographs of Gaby Monet; *County Line*; and Laurie Lambert.
- b. 4 f. 1 **Book 7, pages 34-62** 1954 July 8
Includes photographs of *The Nutcracker*, the lobby of the David H. Koch theater, Dana Wynter, *The Prodigal Son*, *Swan Lake*, André Eglevsky, Pat Wilde and Frank Moucion in *Firebird*, and Phyllis Curtin in *Salome*.
- b. 4 f. 2 **Book 8, pages 1-33** 1954 November 26
Includes photographs of Edith Brozak; Pat Wilde and André Eglevsky in *Sylvia Pas de Deux*; Jonathan Watts; Diana Adams, Tanaquil Le Clercq, and André Eglevsky in *Pas de Trois*; Jacques D'Amboise; Jackie Cecil; and Vida Brown.

- b. 4 f. 3 **Book 8, pages 34-65** 1954 July 21
Includes photographs of Eva Valencia, *County Line*, and Tanaquil Le Clercq.
- b. 4 f. 4 **Book 9, pages 1-33** 1954 December 8
Includes photographs of Kathy Nolan, André Eglevsky, Melissa Hayden, Will Marshall, Jillana in *Fanfare*, and ads for Kislav 6 1/2 perfume and Pappagallo shoes.
- b. 4 f. 5 **Book 9, pages 34-66**
Includes photographs of Tanaquil Le Clercq, Yvonne Chouteau, Pappagallo advertisement tests, Allegra Kent, Pat Savoia, and Roberta Meiers.
- b. 5 f. 1 **Book 10, pages 1-37**
Includes photographs of Sallie Wilson, Diana Adams, André Eglevsky, Tanaquil Le Clercq, and a letter from Dorothea Douglas.
- b. 5 f. 2 **Book 10, pages 38-69** 1954 June 5-July 1
Includes photographs of Mary Moylan, Walter Kerr, and Maria Tallchief.
- b. 5 f. 3 **Book 11, pages 1-36** 1954 February 1
Includes photographs of Melissa Hayden, Pat Wilde, and André Eglevsky in *Pas de Trois*, Tanaquil Le Clercq and Jacques D'Amboise in *Western Symphony*, and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo performing in White Plains, New York.
- b. 5 f. 4 **Book 11, pages 37-60** 1954 October
Includes photographs of Melissa Hayden and *County Line*.
- b. 5 f. 5 **Book 12, pages 1-47** 1954 March 12-May 1
Includes photographs of Janet Reed, Paul Nickel, Tanaquil Le Clercq in *The Nutcracker*, Frank Moncion, André Eglevsky, Patricia Wilde, *Western Symphony*, Tiffany and Company ads, and Mia Slavenska.
- b. 6 f. 1 **Book 13, pages 1-50** 1954 June 8
Includes photographs of André Eglevsky, Jillana in *Harpquinade*, Una Kai, Nicholas Magallanes in *The Nutcracker*, Bob Herget, José Limón, Diana Adams, Louise Gilkes, Todd Bolender, and Jacques D'Amboise.
- b. 6 f. 2 **Book 14, pages 1-16**
All photographs are unidentified.