



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Frederick Melton photographs**

1949-1954

\*MGZEB 19-562

Processed by Tara D. Strongosky in 2019.

## Summary

**Title:** Frederick Melton photographs

**Date:** 1949-1954

**Size:** 0.84 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Frederick Melton, 1961.

**Abstract:** Atlanta-born photographer Frederick Melton (1918-1992) came to Manhattan in 1939, where he worked in a variety of creative media. He was eventually introduced to George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins of the New York City Ballet, where he photographed nearly every facet of the company from the late 1940s through the 1950s. The Frederick Melton photographs collection of negatives and contact prints capture some of the company's most well-known productions, including intimate backstage moments, and set and costume designs. Many notable principal dancers are represented, including Tanaquil Le Clercq and Maria Tallchief, as well as co-founders Jerome Robbins and George Balanchine. Melton also focused on the School of American Ballet, the associate school founded by George Balanchine, where he photographed classrooms, students, and faculty.

**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:** Frederick Melton photographs, \*MGZEB 19-562. 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 in 2019.

## Creator History

Born in Atlanta in 1918, Frederick Melton came to Manhattan in 1939 where he worked in a variety of creative media, the most successful being silk-screen printing. In the late 1940s, Melton became

acquainted with New York City Ballet co-founders Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine through personal connections at informal salons he hosted with his then partner Wilbur "Billy" Pippin. This led Kirstein and Balanchine to invite him to photograph early productions including *The Cage*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Nutcracker*, among many more. Melton continued to photograph New York City Ballet until the mid-1950s. In the early 1960s, Melton permanently departed from the New York City art world; he then spent time living in Puerto Rico and Florida until his death in 1992.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Frederick Melton photographs date from 1949 to 1954 and are comprised of negatives and contact prints. The series are arranged into sections, the first by Productions; Individuals; and Designs. The second series is arranged by Classroom and Action Shots; and Faculty. The files are arranged alphabetically. Melton photographed nearly every facet of the New York City Ballet including its most well-known productions, intimate backstage moments, and artists who designed costumes and sets for several ballets. He also focused on the School of American Ballet, the associate school of New York City Ballet, where he photographed classrooms, students, faculty. The collection is arranged into two series, New York City Ballet and School of American Ballet.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Ballet companies -- Photographs

Ballet dancers -- Photographs

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Negatives (photographs)

### **Occupations**

Photographers.

### **Names**

Balanchine, George

Le Clercq, Tanaquil

Melton, Frederick

Robbins, Jerome

Tallchief, Maria

New York City Ballet

School of American Ballet

## Container List

### Series I: New York City Ballet 1949-1954 (46 folders)

The New York City Ballet series is comprised of photographs of ballet productions, individual dancers, and set and costume designs. There are several files dedicated to George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*. These files include numerous studio portraits of principal dancers in costume, including Robert Barnett as Candy Cane, Diane Adams as the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Pat Wilde as the titular Nutcracker. Melton also set up the nutcracker object and prop in the studio for its own portrait session.

Of the many individuals photographed, there is an emphasis on New York City Ballet co-founders George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. Balanchine and Robbins were photographed in studio portraiture, backstage meetings, and rehearsals. Melton also captured star principal dancers of New York City Ballet, including Todd Bolender, André Eglevsky, Melissa Hayden, Tanaquil LeClercq, and Maria Tallchief.

Several notable surrealist artists contributed designs to the New York City Ballet. The collection includes photographs of Dorothea Tanning's costumes for *Bayou*, and multiple set designs by painter Esteban Francés, including *Tyl Ulenspiegel*. Additionally, there are photographs of Cecil Beaton's costume designs for both *Swan Lake* and *Picnic at Tintagel*.

#### Productions 1952-1954

- b. 1 f. 1 *Afternoon of a Faun* 1953 May 14  
Includes dancers Francisco Moncion and Tanaquil Le Clercq.
- b. 1 f. 2 *Á La Française* circa 1950s  
Creation of the ballet with George Balanchine, Janet Reed, Maria Tallchief, and André Eglevsky.
- b. 1 f. 3 *Bayou* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Melissa Hayden and Hugh Laing.
- b. 1 f. 4 *Bond Sign Marquee* 1954  
Negatives of a Bond sign marquee displaying New York City Ballet at the City Center with dancers' names.
- b. 1 f. 5 *The Cage* circa 1950s
- b. 2 f. 8 *Cakewalk* circa 1950s  
Ruthanna Boris during a rehearsal of *Cakewalk* with Janet Reed and Frank Hobi.
- b. 1 f. 7 *Caracole* circa 1950s  
Includes Nicholas Magallanes in costume for *Caracole* as well as Pat Wilde, Diana Adams, Maria Tallchief, Tanaquil Le Clercq, and Melissa Hayden.
- b. 1 f. 8 *Con Amore* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Jacques d'Amboise and Pat Wilde.
- b. 1 f. 9 *Filling Station* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Janet Reed, Jacques d'Amboise, and Michael Maule.
- b. 1 f. 10 *La Gloire* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Hugh Laing and Nora Kaye in Antony Tudor's ballet *La Gloire*.
- b. 1 f. 11 *Jardin aux Lilas* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Hugh Laing, Nora Kaye, Tanaquil Le Clercq, and Brooks Jackson on stage.
- b. 1 f. 12 *Jeu de Cartes* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Roy Tobias, Herbert Bliss, and Una Kai in costume.
- b. 1 f. 13 *Miraculous Mandarin* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Melissa Hayden, Hugh Laing and other in stage shots. Also includes Todd Bolender and the first New York City Ballet cast during the choreographing and formation of the ballet.

Series I: New York City Ballet (cont.)  
Productions (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 14-22 *The Nutcracker* 1954  
*The Nutcracker* files have a variety of images including portraits of various characters such as Herbert Bliss as Chocolate, Robert Barnett as Candy Cane, Roy Tobias as Soldier, Diane Adams as Dewdrop, and Pat Wilde as Marzipan. There are also portraits of the Nutcracker prop and rehearsals.
- b. 1 f. 23 *Picnic at Tintagel* circa 1950s  
Includes dancers Jacques d'Amboise, Diana Adams, and Francisco Moncion.
- b. 2 f. 1 *Roma* circa 1950s  
Images of the stage setting for *Roma*.
- b. 2 f. 2 *Swan Lake* circa 1950s  
Includes Marie Tallchief in Balanchine's version of *Swan Lake* Act II.
- b. 2 f. 3 *Tyl Ulenspiegel* circa 1950s  
Includes Brooks Jackson in costume studies and Jerome Robbins during a performance.

Individuals 1949-1952

- b. 2 f. 4 Ashton, Frederick circa 1950s  
Frederick Ashton with Cecil Beaton, Maria Tallchief, Helen Huntington Hull, and an unidentified woman backstage at the City Center.
- b. 2 f. 5 Balanchine, George 1949-1951  
Includes negatives of Balanchine with his cat; his birthday celebration in 1951; with Lincoln Kirstein and members of New York City Ballet arriving from England in 1950; studio portraits; and backstage shots with Maria Tallchief, André Eglevsky and Newbold Morris.
- b. 2 f. 6 Barnett, Robert circa 1950s  
Negatives of the dancer in costume for *Ballade*.
- b. 2 f. 7 Bolender, Todd circa 1950s  
Todd Bolender in costume for *The Pied Piper*.
- b. 2 f. 9 Eglevsky, André circa 1950s  
André Eglevsky rehearsing at School of American Ballet with George Balanchine and Maria Tallchief.
- b. 2 f. 10 Hayden, Melissa circa 1950s
- b. 2 f. 11 Kaye, Nora circa 1950s  
Nora Kaye after the premiere of Jerome Robbins' *Ballade*.
- b. 2 f. 12 Le Clercq, Tanaquil 1952  
Tanaquil Le Clercq in costume for Jerome Robbins' *Ballade*.
- b. 2 f. 13 Mounsey, Yvonne circa 1950s
- b. 2 f. 14 Robbins, Jerome 1951  
Includes portrait studies of Robbins; and with Jean Babilée after a performance of Balanchine's *Tyl Ulenspiegel* at the City Center.
- b. 2 f. 15 St. Denis, Ruth 1951  
St. Denis backstage at the City Center with Maria Tallchief.
- b. 2 f. 16 Tallchief, Maria circa 1950s  
Tallchief in backstage shots at the City Center.
- b. 2 f. 17 Tompkins, Beatrice circa 1950s  
Beatrice Tompkins in costume for *Tyl Ulenspiegel*.
- b. 2 f. 18 Wilde, Patricia circa 1950s
- b. 1 f. 6 Miscellaneous 1952  
Candids of New York City Ballet company at Idlewild airport on their way to Covent Garden in London. Includes Lincoln Kirstein, Tanaquil Le Clercq, Nora Kaye, and Melissa Hayden.

Designs 1952

- b. 2 f. 19 *Bayou costume designs* 1952  
Dorothea Tanning's costume designs for *Bayou*.

Series I: New York City Ballet (cont.)

Designs (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 20 *Picnic for Tintagel costume designs* circa 1950s  
Cecil Beaton's costume designs for *Picnic at Tintagel*.
- b. 2 f. 21 *Swan Lake costume designs* circa 1950s  
Cecil Beaton's costume designs for Act II of *Swan Lake*.
- b. 2 f. 22 *Tyl Ulenspiegel set designs* circa 1950s  
Esteban Francés designing sets for *Tyl Ulenspiegel*.
- b. 2 f. 23 Unidentified set designs by Esteban Francés circa 1950s

Series II: School of American Ballet 1953 (2 folders)

The School of American Ballet series is comprised of photographs of classroom shots and faculty portraits including the instructors Felia Doubrovska, Pierre Vladimiroff, and Muriel Stuart.

- b. 2 f. 24 Classroom and Action Shots 1953
- b. 2 f. 25 Faculty 1953