

# **Guide to the Merry-Go-Rounders Records, 1944 - 1974**

**(S) \*MGZMD 211**

## **Jerome Robbins Dance Division**

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
New York, New York**

### Contact Information

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division  
40 Lincoln Center Plaza  
New York, New York 10023-7498  
Phone: 212/870-1657  
Email: [dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)  
Web address: <http://www.nypl.org/research/lpa/dan/dan.html>

Processed by: Roland Clark  
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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Merry-Go-Rounders Records, 1944-1974</b>
<b>Collection ID:</b>	<b>(S) *MGZMD 211</b>
<b>Creator:</b>	<b>Merry-Go-Rounders</b>
<b>Extent:</b>	<b>6 linear feet (9 boxes)</b>
<b>Repository:</b>	<b>Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts</b>

Abstract: The Merry-Go-Rounders Records follow the activities of the *Merry-Go-Rounders* children's theater group from 1944 to 1974. This collection includes administration files, production materials, music scores, and photographs of the *Merry-Go-Rounders*.

The majority of content consists of materials from the company's productions. Notable productions are *Ballet Charades*, *Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma*, *The Goops*, *A Love for Three Oranges*, and *The Snow Queen*.

### Administrative Information

#### Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

#### Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

#### Preferred Citation

Merry-Go-Rounders Records, (S) \*MGZMD 211, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

#### Custodial History

The Merry-Go-Rounders Records were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 1993

#### Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2007.

## Historical Note

The Merry-Go-Rounders were established in November 1952 as a non-profit children's dance and theater group to perform educational dance performances. From the beginning they were multicultural, which was reflected in the performances and the audiences. The Merry-Go-Rounders were founded by a number of faculty and teachers at the Children's Dance Department of the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), which sponsored the Merry-Go-Rounders from 1952 - 1961. Doris Humphrey was the artistic director for The Merry-Go-Rounders from the beginning. Choreographers for the Merry-Go-Rounders have included Eva Desca, Geoffrey Holder, Lucas Hoving, Lucy Venable, and John Wilson.

The repertoire from 1952 to 1964 included *Celestial Elephant*, *Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma*, *The Goops*, *A Love for Three Oranges*, *Weather or Not*, and *1-2-3 Follow Me*. According to the administrative records, the performances were 40 to 45 minutes, and were usually kept to three production pieces, with one of the production pieces reserved for new works.

The Merry-Go-Rounders operated as an independent dance company from 1961 to 1968. Although they primarily performed in the New York City greater metropolitan area, they also performed in such places as North Carolina, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

In 1967 the Merry-Go-Rounders received the Jennie Heiden Award for Creative Effectiveness. By 1968, their repertoire included new works such as *I Can Dance Too!*, *The Comedians*, *Harrison Loved His Umbrella*, *Caribbean Holiday*, *Dirty Air is Everywhere*, and *On The Turtle's Back*.

From 1968 to about 1974 the Merry-Go-Rounders were operated under the Center for Modern Dance Education (CMDE) with a new cast and administrative crew including Artistic Director Shirley Ubell and Director Irene Poltis. Under CMDE the Merry-Go-Rounders also held dance classes for children. By the early 1970's *Dirty Air is Everywhere* had become one of the most popular production pieces and was highly regarded for its educational value. After 1974 the Merry-Go-Rounders were disbanded.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Merry-Go-Rounders Records follow the Merry-Go-Rounders from 1952, when they were founded and sponsored by the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association, until their 1974 performances before they were disbanded.

The collection contains primarily administrative files with information on the Merry-Go-Rounders' finances, publicity, and organizational structure, as well as production materials, arranged by individual production and containing scripts with annotations in many revisions of the same production. There are also production notes detailing choreography movements, as well as costume sketches. The music scores, like the production scripts, also exist in many revisions with annotations. The collection also includes several photographs that follow the Merry-Go-Rounders from 1952 to 1964, and are mostly of the performers on stage, back stage, rehearsing, and of audiences. The oversized photographs contain many contact sheets of the same photographs in the photographs series.

## **Organization**

The collection is organized into 6 series. They are:

- Series I: Administration files, 1955 – 1974, undated
- Series II: Production materials 1944 – 1964, undated
- Series III: Music scores, 1963, undated
- Series IV: Photographs, 1952 – 1964, undated
- Series V: Oversized photographs, 1953 – 1961, undated

## **Series Descriptions**

### **Series I: Administration files, 1955 - 1974, undated**

**1 box**

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains administrative documents of the Merry-Go-Rounders Production Company. It includes bookings, lists of company members, costumes, financial statements, meetings, publicity, and sketches with handwritten notes. Publicity makes up the bulk of the series and includes many flyers and news releases of the Merry-Go-Rounders performances.

## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

### **Series II: Production materials, 1944 - 1964, undated**

**3 boxes**

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains documents related to the individual production pieces performed by the Merry-Go-Rounders. The bulk of the items include scripts with many revisions, as with *Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma*. Other contents of this series include production notes, drawings and costume sketches. In this collection it should also be noted that *Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma* and *Music Please* are the same production piece.

### **Series III: Music scores, undated**

**2 boxes**

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains the music score sheets of several of the productions, with scores by Robert de Cormier, Norman Curtis, Beatrice Rainer, F.J. Hayden, William Mayer, and John Wilson. Choreographers included Eva Desca, and Lucy Venable. There is also a transcription of *...ing* by Paul Spong. The score sheets are in various stages of the composition process with annotations.

### **Series IV: Photographs, 1952 – 1964, undated**

**2 boxes**

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains photographs of many of the Merry-Go-Rounders productions in performance, rehearsal, as well as audience reactions. Photographers include Albert Fenn, Nat Finkelstein, Lionel Freedman, Eugene Green, Helen Schoenberg, Camall Siskind, Sam Vandivert, and Matthew Wysocki. If cast and production members were identified in the photographs, then their names were also added in the folder note. Most of the photographs are approximately 8 X 10 inch black and white.

### **Series V: Oversized photographs, 1953 – 1961, undated**

**1 box**

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains oversized photographs and contact sheets. The contact sheets are of 2 1/4 inch frame negatives, stapled to cardboard with notes detailing the frame image description and frame number. Not all the contact sheets are complete and frequently missing frames. There are also several prints larger than 8 X 10 inches. Production, photographer, and cast credits are listed on the folder note when possible.

## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

### Series I: Administration, 1955 - 1974, undated

#### Box 1

- F. 1 Bookings, 1955 - 1962
- F. 2 Company members, undated
- F. 3 Costumes, undated
- F. 4 Financial statements, 1959 - 1962, undated
- F. 5 Meetings, 1959 - 1962 (Contains board meeting and executive committee meeting notes.)
- F. 6 1959
- F. 7 1961 - 1962
- F. 8 Meetings notebook, 1958 - 1961
- F. 9 Outline for a Plan and Program for the Future, undated
- F. 10 Publicity, 1959 - 1974, undated (Contains publicity release, program, brochures, and news clippings.)
- F. 11 1959
- F. 12 1960
- F. 13 1962
- F. 14 1964
- F. 15 1965
- F. 16 1966
- F. 17 1967
- F. 18 1968
- F. 19 1969
- F. 20 1970
- F. 21 1971
- F. 22 1972
- F. 23 1973
- F. 24 1974
- F. 25 Undated
- F. 26 Sketches, undated (Contains original sketches by Barbara Stuvitz.)

### Series II: Production, 1944 - 1963, undated

#### Box 2

- F. 1 *Airplane IV* script, undated
- F. 2 *Ballet Charades*, 1959 - 1963, undated
- F. 3 Costumes, undated
- F. 4 Production notes, 1959 - 1963, undated
- F. 5 Scripts, undated
- F. 6 *The Celestial Elephant*, undated (Contains original drawings, in both positive and negative copies.)

## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

- Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma*, 1960 - 1961, undated (Script by Nancy Cole.  
Choreography and Music by John Wilson.)
- F. 6 Production notes, undated  
Scripts, undated
- F. 7 Later versions
- F. 8 "Lost version", (Original folder titled *Lost Version*.)
- F. 9 Older versions (Original folder titled *10,000 out of date versions of Fasolati*.)
- F. 10 Study guide, 1960 - 1961
- F. 11 *Emperor's Nightingale*, undated (Contains script, costume sketches, set design sketches, and production notes.)

### Box 3

- Enchanted Balloons*, undated (Contains introduction script, notes on costumes, set pieces, and props.)
- F. 1 Inventory of costumes, set pieces and props
- F. 2 Scripts
- F. 3 *Folksay*, 1944, undated (Contains scripts.)
- Forest Adventure*, 1958, undated
- F. 4 Notes, 1958 (Contains choreographers notes, costume design sketches, music outline, production notes.)
- F. 5 Script, undated (Original folder title "Forest adventure introduction animal participation.")
- The Goops*, 1952 - 1962, undated
- F. 6 Costumes, undated
- F. 7 Music notes, 1952 (By Eva Desca, music by Dea Rainer.)  
Production notes, 1961 - 1962, undated
- F. 8 1961 - 1962
- F. 9 Undated
- F. 10 Scripts, undated  
*...ing* 1962, undated
- F. 11 Scripts, 1962, undated (Contains production drawings and notes including choreography by Lucas Hoving, music notation sketches by Lucy Venable.)
- F. 12 Sketches, undated (Contains production drawings and notes.)
- F. 13 *The Lion Hunt* Scripts, 1962, undated
- A Love for Three Oranges*, undated
- F. 14 Costumes (Contains sketches.)
- F. 15 Crew production credits
- F. 16 Scripts
- F. 17 Sketches
- F. 18 *1-2-3 Follow Me*, undated

### Box 4

## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

- Snow Queen*, 1964, undated
- F. 1 Notes, undated (Contains production notes.)  
Scripts, 1964, undated
- F. 2 *The Goblin* script, undated
- F. 3 Handwritten script, undated
- F. 4 Script for Showcase, 1964
- F. 5 *Submarine Trip* scripts, undated  
*A Tangled Tale*, undated
- F. 6 Production notes
- F. 7 Scripts
- F. 8 *Tyrolean Wedding*, undated (Sketches.)
- F. 9 *Weather or Not* script, 1961  
Unidentified scripts, undated
- F. 10 Closing script
- F. 11 First show script (Contains script from *First Show*.)
- F. 12 Opening
- F. 13 Various scripts (Possible link to *Photographs - Television Rehearsal in Color Forms*.)

### **Series III: Music scores, undated**

#### **Box 5**

- F. 1 *Ballet Charades*, undated (Music by Beatrice Rainer, Choreography by Eva Desca and Lucy Venable.)
- F. 2 *The Enchanted Balloons*, undated (Music by Robert de Cormier.)  
*Forest Adventure*, undated
- F. 3 Earlier copy
- F. 4 Later copy  
*The Goops*, undated (Music by Bea Rainer, choreography by Eva Desca.)
- F. 5 Annotated
- F. 6 Music negatives
- F. 7 ...ing, undated (Music by F.J. Hayden, transcribed by Paul Spong.)  
*A Love for Three Oranges*, undated
- F. 8 Inversed lithographic print, undated
- F. 9 Published, 1936
- F. 10 *The Merry-Go-Round Song*, undated

#### **Box 6**

- F. 1 -3 *Music Please or Dr. Fasolati's Dilemma*, undated (Music by John Wilson.)  
*Snow Queen*, 1963, undated (Music by William Mayer.)
- F. 4 1963



## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

- F. 5 Undated  
F. 6 *Tyrolean Wedding*, undated  
F. 7 *Weather or Not*, 1961 (Music by Norman Curtis.)

### **Series IV: Photographs, 1952 - 1964, undated**

#### **Box 7**

- F. 1 Audience at performance, undated (Photography by Matthew Wysocki. Original folder titled "Company audience at park performance.")  
F. 2 Auditions, 1955, undated (Photography by Matthew Wysocki.)  
F. 3 *Cake Walk*, 1959 – 1961 (Cast with Jennifer Tipton, Jim Payton, Kelly Marry Berry, and Elizabeth Weil. Choreography, costumes, and music by Geoffrey Holder.)  
F. 4 Cast with audience, 1952 - 1953 (Photography by Albert Fenn.)  
F. 5 *Celestial Elephant*, 1960 – 1961 (Cast with Jennifer Tipton. Photography by Sam Vandivert.)  
F. 6 *Charades*, undated (Photography by Lionel Freedman and Matthew Wysocki. Cast with Eva Desca and Lucy Venable.)  
F. 7 Child audience reactions, 1953 - 1955 (Photography by Matthew Wysocki.)  
F. 8 *Election*, 1954 (Cast with Bernice Mendelsohn, photography by Helen Schoenberg.)  
F. 9 *Enchanted Ballons*, 1952 – 1953 (Photography by Matthew Wysocki.)  
F. 10 *Fable of a Donkey*, 1952 – 1953 (Photography by Lionel Freedman.)  
F. 11 *Forest Adventure*, undated (Photography by Lionel Freedman and Matthew Wysocki. Includes one contact sheet.)  
F. 12 *The Goops*, 1952 – 1954, undated (Photography by Nat Finkelstein and Lionel Freedman.)  
F. 13 *Holiday in Israel*, 1954 – 1955 (Photography by Matthew Wysocki. Contains one contact sheet.)

#### **Box 8**

- A Love for Three Oranges*, 1955 - 1962, undated (Photography Helen Schoenberg.)  
Cast photographs, 1955 - 1962  
F. 1 1955 - 1956  
F. 2 1961 - 1962  
F. 3 Rehearsals with Lucas Hoving, undated  
F. 4 *Mechanic and Ringmaster*, undated (Photography Lionel Freedman. Includes one contact sheet and photographs of Ringmaster Curt Lowens and Mechanic Bunny Mendelsohn.)  
The Merry-Go-Rounders, undated  
F. 5 At a Park Band Shell (Images similar to slides box 8 folder 10.)  
F. 6 Various photographs  
F. 7 *Old King Cole*, 1954 – 1955 (Photography by Lionel Freedman.)  
F. 8 *1-2-3 Follow Me*, 1961 - 1962 (Photography Eugene Greene.)  
Rehearsals and workshops, 1953 - 1955, undated  
F. 9 1953 - 1955 (Photography by Helen Schoenberg.)

## Merry-Go-Rounders Records

- F. 10 Undated (Photography by Nat Finkelstein.)
- F. 11 *The Snow Queen*, 1963 - 1964
- F. 12 *A Tangled Tale*, 1959 - 1960
- F. 13 Television rehearsal in color forms, undated (Possible link to items in  
*Production – Various Scripts* Box 3, folder 21.)  
*Tyrolean Wedding, 1954 - 1957* (Photography by Lionel Freedman and  
Matthew Wysocki.)
- F. 14 1954 – 1955
- F. 15 1956 – 1957
- F. 16 Various repertory photographs, 1953 (Photography by Matthew Wysocki.  
Includes one contact sheet.)
- F. 17 Slides, 1959 (Original box title *Merry-Go-Rounders* in the Park Awards July 27,  
1959.)

### **Series V: Oversized photographs, 1953 - 1961, undated**

#### **Box 9**

- F. 1 Dancers, undated
- F. 2 *A Fable of a Donkey* contact sheets, undated (Photography by Lionel  
Freedman. Contains 2 1/4 square inch contacts stapled to cardboard with one  
sheet describing image subjects.)
- F. 3 *The Goops*, 1953 (Choreographed by Eva Desca. Performers Barbara and  
Shivitz, and Rina Sokloff. Photography by Lionel Freedman. Additional  
notes on the back of the photograph.)
- F. 4 *The Lion Hunt*, 1953 (Photography by Albert Fenn for *Life Photo*.)
- F. 5 *A Love for Three Oranges*, 1961 (Photography by Camall Siskind. Notes on  
back of photographs.)  
The Merry-Go-Rounders, undated
- F. 6 Cast with merry-go-round (Photograph by Eugene Green.)
- F. 7 Contact sheets, (Photography by Lionel Freedman.)
- F. 8 *Old King Cole*, undated (Photography by Camall Siskind.)
- F. 9 *1-2-3 Follow Me*, 1960 - 1961 (Photograph by Eugene Green.)