

**The New York Public Library  
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division**

Guide to the

**Albert Butler Dance Studio records**

1910-1982

(S)\*MGZMD 318

Compiled by Allison Hughes, Palmer School of Library and Information Science, 2013, August 2013

## **Summary**

**Creator:** Albert Butler Dance Studios

**Title:** Albert Butler Dance Studio records, 1910-1982

**Size:** 2.52 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Josephine Butler, 1982.

**Abstract:** The Albert Butler Dance Studio, established in 1928, taught ballroom and social dancing to amateur students and provided training to dance instructors. The Albert Butler Dance Studio records contain instructional articles, promotional material, correspondence, and photographs, as well as files relating to Albert and Josephine Butler's other social dance-related projects.

**Access:** Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying and photography will apply. Advance notice may be required.

**Copyright information:** For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

**Preferred citation:** Albert Butler Dance Studio records, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

## **Creator history**

The Albert Butler Dance Studio, also known as the Albert Butler School of Dance, was established in Manhattan in 1928 to teach ballroom and social dancing. The studio taught children and adult students and provided training to dance instructors and New York City schoolteachers. The school was founded and run by Albert Butler (1893-1968) and, after their marriage in 1937, his wife Josephine DeNatale Butler (1911-1996), who continued to manage the school after her husband's death. The studio's instructional techniques were influenced by Albert Butler's training as a mechanical engineer, and Albert and Josephine's graduate studies in "body mechanics" at New York University. Their studies led them to create a unique method of dance instruction they dubbed "body engineering." In addition to teaching standard ballroom dances, the studio provided instruction in popular dances such as the Twist and the Hustle, and gained particular attention for introducing Latin American and Caribbean dances such as the Bossa Nova, Rumba, and Merengue to American audiences. During the 1960s, Albert and Josephine Butler made occasional television appearances demonstrating these dances, including on NBC's Today Show and the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.

In addition to running the school, the Butlers authored numerous articles on dance that appeared in American and British magazines, served as Ballroom Editors of Dance Magazine, and co-wrote and published the *Encyclopedia of Social Dance* in 1967. In 1972, Josephine Butler founded the Institute for Social Dance Studies, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a library documenting the history of social dance. The Institute also provided school teacher training, and developed original print and video teaching materials.

Both Albert and Josephine were active members of several professional organizations, including the American Dance Guild, Dance Educators of America, and International Dance Teacher's Association. They also had close ties with many social dance associations in England, where they traveled in 1966 as part of the World Congress of Dance Teachers. From 1959 to 1963, Albert Butler served as president of the New York City chapter of the Dance Masters of America, and after his death in 1968 the organization created the Albert Butler Award for contribution to social dance in his honor.

### **Scope and content note**

The Albert Butler Dance Studio records contain instructor and student files, correspondence, press releases, clippings, and diagrams and dance step charts. There are several typescripts of articles by the Butlers, as well as press clippings about the studio, and related correspondence with magazine editors and writers. These can be found in the Articles, Special Projects, and Dance Associations and Publications files. The Special Projects files largely document the studio's efforts to promote Latin American dances, and include correspondence with foreign ambassadors whose support the Butlers sought in promoting dances from their home countries. Other projects documented in the collection include the Butlers' collaboration with the Disc Company to create a series of records of ballroom dance music, and their consultation with Random House's dictionary editors for several dance-related definitions.

The *Encyclopedia of Social Dance* files hold orders and receipts for purchases of the book, as well as correspondence between Josephine Butler and Genevieve Oswald, curator of the New York Public Library's Library and Museum of Performing Arts, regarding Butler's donation of *Encyclopedia* notes and other material. The Institute for Social Dance Studies files contain the Institute's official charter, bylaws, and trustee correspondence dating from 1972 to 1982. There are files documenting the Butler's involvement with numerous professional organizations, both in the United States and England. These files hold correspondence, newsletters, and publicity material.

Photographs, dated from 1931 to 1982, consist primarily of professional photos taken at the studio or other dance events. There is also a small collection of dance cards, dated 1910 to 1913.

### **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged alphabetically by subject.

### **Key terms**

#### **Subjects**

Ballroom dancing  
Dance schools

#### **Occupations**

Dance teachers

**Names**

Albert Butler Dance Studios

Butler, Albert, 1893-

Butler, Josephine

**Special formats**

Dance cards

Photographs

Typescripts

## Container list

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