

**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

## **Vincenzo Celli papers**

1936-1982

(S) \*MGZMD 262

Compiled by Janine Veazue, Queens College, CUNY, 2012, July 2011

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Celli, Vincenzo

**Title:** Vincenzo Celli papers, 1936-1982

**Size:** 1.63 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Source:** Source of collection is unknown.

**Abstract:** This collection contains correspondence, scrapbooks, studio photographs, and various personal items of choreographer Vincenzo Celli. A few items in the collection appear to have been created by Celli's wife, Marion Ivell. Of note are photographs of Celli and his pupil, Katherine Rutgers, taken during the planning and performance of his piece *Religion of the Dance*.

**Access:** To request materials, please contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)) in advance.

**Preferred citation:** Vincenzo Celli papers, 1936-1982, (S) \*MGZMD 262, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library.

### **Processing note**

The papers were arranged alphabetically according to format and rehoused. Several confidential financial documents and loose postage stamps were deaccessioned.

### **Related collections**

Cecchetti class taught by Vincenzo Celli (motion picture). Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Photographic Scrapbook of Vincenzo Celli, 1919-1936?. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Scrapbook of Vincenzo Celli, 1925-1937. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

### **Creator history**

Vincenzo Celli was born Vincenzo Yacullo on May 4, 1900 in Salerno, Italy, immigrating soon thereafter with his parents to Chicago, Illinois. Celli was first exposed to ballet as a teenager and was awed by the movements of dancer Vaslaw Nijinsky, whom he saw perform during the only American tour of the

Ballets Russes, under the direction of Serge Diaghilev. Several years later Celli moved to New York City, where he performed as an actor both on and off-Broadway with the Washington Square Players. Impressed by Celli's range and ease of movement, choreographer Adolph Bohm approached him to appear in a minor role in his ballet production of *Le Coq d'Or*. A few years later, Celli moved back to Italy, where he studied dance privately for several years under the famed choreographer and dancer Enrico Cecchetti, maestro to dozens of star pupils including Anna Pavlova and, not coincidentally, Nijinsky. Celli would later be referred to as "the son of Cecchetti," as he was the last of his favored private pupils. Celli married opera singer Marion Ivell in 1925. In 1926, he made his debut at the La Scala Opera House, which earned him the prestigious title of danseur/primmo ballerino. Celli returned to the United States after performing abroad to begin teaching ballet and continuing the legacy of the Cecchetti style of grace and movement. During his successful private teaching career, Celli served as the ballet master of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo from 1938 to 1940. Among his pupils were Agnes de Mille, Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, Katherine Rutgers, and contemporary New York City maestro Jerome Robbins. Celli died of a heart attack in Greenwich, Connecticut in 1988.

### **Scope and content note**

The Vincenzo Celli papers contain address books and journals, correspondence, memorabilia (including scrapbooks), and photographs.

Celli's journals are filled with poems, inspirational quotes from noted authors, and various preparatory performance notes for his 1960s production, *Religion in the Dance*, which also featured Katharine Rutgers. The address books in the collection are from both Celli and his wife, Marion Ivell, and include the names and addresses of friends and associates.

Celli's correspondence consists of letters, postcards, and greeting cards from his extended family and various grateful pupils, as well as correspondence from the Cecchetti Council and other organizations. Correspondence is arranged chronologically when date is known.

Memorabilia includes programs from various Celli and Rutgers performances, as well as an issue of *Dance Index* honoring Enrico Cecchetti, which contains a lengthy biographical essay about Cecchetti written by Celli. Scrapbooks contain newspaper and magazine clippings, personal photographs, greeting cards, and blank postcards. One of the scrapbooks appears to have been created by/for Marion Ivell, as it contains clippings related to Royal British coronations, film stars, and political events.

The bulk of the photographs, although undated, appear to have been taken between the 1920s and 1940s, during the apex of Celli's career. Two of the photo albums hold studio headshots of young pupils, notable stage performers, and celebrities, many of which are warmly inscribed to Celli. A third album contains photographs of Alicia Markova, a student of Celli's, taken by Carl Van Vechten. There are also loose photographs which include professional headshots of Celli and photographs of Katharine Rutgers and other unidentified pupils.

### **Arrangement**

Materials in the Vincenzo Celli papers are arranged alphabetically by format.

### **Key terms**

#### **Subjects**

Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

Choreographers -- Italy

Choreographers -- United States -- Portraits

**Names**

Cecchetti, Enrico, 1850-1928  
Celli, Vincenzo  
Ivell, Marion, 1880 or 81-1969  
Markova, Alicia, Dame, 1910-2004  
Rutgers, Katharine  
Slavenska, Mia  
Toscanini, Arturo, 1867-1957  
Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964  
Wickham, Florence, 1882-1962

**Special formats**

Address books  
Correspondence  
Journals (accounts)  
Photograph albums  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks

## Container list

### Address Books and Journals

- b.1 f.1-2 Address books, undated
- b.1 f.3 Journals, undated

### Correspondence

- b.1 f.4-5 General, 1945-1980
- b.1 f.6 Postcards (blank), undated

### Memorabilia

- b.2 f.1 Honorary certificate from the Governor of Louisiana, 1982
- b.2 f.2 Newspaper clippings, 1950s-1970s
- b.2 f.3 Promotional items and programs, 1970s
- b.2 f.4 Essays and poems, undated
- b.2 f.5-9 Scrapbook, 1936-1940s
- b.3 f.1-8 Scrapbook, 1950s-1970s

### Photographs

- b.4 Album, 1943
- b.5 f.1-9 Albums, undated
- b.5 f.10 Collages, undated
- b.6 f.1 Loose photographs and clippings, 1979, undated
- b.6 f.2 Loose photographs, undated (Arranged by subject)