

**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

## **Welland Lathrop papers**

1930-1986 (bulk 1935-1966)

(S) \*MGZMD 265

Compiled by Lea Jordan, July 2011

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Lathrop, Welland

**Title:** Welland Lathrop papers, 1930-1986 (bulk 1935-1966)

**Size:** 5.57 linear feet (16 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by the Nina Lathrop Estate

**Abstract:** Welland Lathrop (1905-1981) was a dancer, teacher, painter, and choreographer and a leader of the west coast modern and avant-garde dance movement. The Welland Lathrop papers consist of materials reflecting his decades long career as an artist. The collection is divided into five series: Costume Design, Labanotation, Photographs, Scores, and Subject Files.

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

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

**Copyright information:** Donor retains copyright of materials. Library policy on photocopying will apply. For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

**Preferred citation:** Welland Lathrop papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

### **Processing note**

Collection refoldered and arranged into series. A portion of the photographs series had been previously processed.

## Creator history

Welland Lathrop (1905-1981) was a dancer, teacher, painter, and choreographer and a leader of the west coast modern and avant-garde dance movement. Born in upstate New York, he initially trained in costume and scenic design at the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York. In 1928 he moved to San Francisco to continue his design education under Rudolph Schaeffer. While in San Francisco, he began studying dance with Ann Mundstock of the Laban School. Later training included the Cornish School in Seattle, Washington (1930-1934) and the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theater (1938-1941) where he was an assistant in dance composition to Louis Horst. During this time Lathrop performed in several Broadway shows as well as with the Martha Graham Dance Company.

In 1946 he established the Welland Lathrop School and Dance Company, where he was joined shortly by dancer Ann Halprin. The two collaborated as the Halprin-Lathrop Studio Theater from 1948 to 1955. They presented both solo and duo pieces as well as group works they choreographed for their studio company. After their professional separation in 1956, Lathrop continued his school and dance company under his own name for another 10 years. During this time he taught dance at San Francisco State College and Dominican College.

Lathrop referred to his work as "contemporary theatre-dance." His aim was to fully integrate movement, sound, and visual design within his pieces. He believed that any artist must consider all the components of a performance, and took pride in being able to design the visual display of many of his compositions.

Lathrop choreographed dozens of modern dance works, including *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight*, *Comment on Space and Freedom*, *Partita*, and *Pieces of Nothing*.

In 1960, he married Nina Cummings, a prominent psychotherapist in the Bay Area. In the late 1960s, Lathrop retired and closed his school, but continued to advise and choreograph for other San Francisco area groups, including the Shela Xoregos Performing Company. In 1977 he choreographed his last work with this group, *Endangered Species*. In that year he also traveled to Jerusalem to give master classes at the Rubin Academy.

Welland Lathrop died in San Francisco in 1981.

## Scope and content note

Welland Lathrop (1905-1981) was a dancer, teacher, painter, and choreographer and a leader of the west coast modern and avant-garde dance movement. The Welland Lathrop papers consist of materials reflecting his decades long career as an artist. The collection is divided into five series: Costume Design, Labanotation, Photographs, Scores, and Subject Files. The costume design series contains both sketches and full realizations with fabric. Lathrop's labanotation holds the choreography for his works. The photographs consist of pictures of specific choreographed works as well as rehearsal and publicity photographs. Series IV contains handwritten music for Lathrop's dance compositions. The subject files are composed of materials relating to Lathrop's involvement in all aspects of the West Coast arts scene.

Additionally, the collection holds audio recordings for several of Lathrop's dances including *Partita*, and a set of records with Southwestern Native American music.

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)). Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

## **Arrangement**

The Welland Lathrop papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: Costume Design, 1930-1970

Series II: Labanotation, 1935-1961

Series III: Photographs, 1932-1966

Series IV: Scores, 1939-1966

Series V: Subject Files, 1939-1986

## **Key terms**

### **Subjects**

Artists -- 20th century

Costume design

Dance -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area --

History

Dance -- Education

Modern dance -- 20th century

### **Names**

Lathrop, Welland

### **Special formats**

Photographs

Scores

Scrapbooks

## Container list

### Series I: Costume Design, 1930-1970

The costume design series contains costume sketches and full realizations with fabric samples created by Lathrop, as well as some sketches by designer Eugene Schultz. There are designs for specific and unidentified Lathrop performances, and notebooks filled with ideas and inspiration. Mediums include pen and ink, pastels, and acrylic paints. There is also a file on Rudolf Schaeffer, Lathrop's design teacher which includes his essay on *Rhythmo-Chromatic Design and the Creative Process*. This series reflects Lathrop's early training as a designer as well as his intention to infuse visual design elements into his dances. Notable in this series is a Lathrop designed skirt that was used in the performance of *Partita*. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

Lathrop, Welland

- b.1 f.1 Designs, undated
- b.10 f.2-3 Designs, undated
- b.1 f.2 Sketchbooks, undated
- b.16 Skirt from *Partita*, undated
- b.1 f.3 Schaeffer, Rudolph, undated
- b.1 f.4 Schultz, Eugene, undated

### Series II: Labanotation, 1935-1961

Series II holds handwritten labanotation for many of Lathrop's works. All labanotation is marked on graph paper in pencil, and often accompanied by notes, changes, cuts, and additions. One can ascertain how much Lathrop's choreography evolved even after he reached the point of transcribing it. Most are bound in notebooks. There is also a workbook used by Lathrop when he was learning to use labanotation, as well as several unidentified pages of notes, which may be portions of a dance or just a record of ideas.

- b.1 f.5 *Allemande*, undated
- b.1 f.6 *Blue Dance*, undated
- b.1 f.7 *Comedy of Errors*, undated
- b.1 f.8 *Cantos*, undated
- b.1 f.9 *The Enchantment of Quixote*, undated
- b.1 f.10 *Jacob*, undated
- b.1 f.11 *Medaeval Dance*, undated
- b.1 f.12 *Minstrel Show*, undated
- b.2 f.1 *Partita*, undated
- b.2 f.2 Study Book, undated
- b.2 f.3 Unlabeled notes, undated

### Series III: Photographs, 1932-1966

The photographs series consists of pictures of Lathrop's choreographic works, performed by other dancers and him, as well as photographs of his company dancers. The choreography photographs are often undated. When they are dated, the date indicates the specific performance photographed, and not the date the work premiered. Lathrop's works were performed many times through the decades under his direction. The company dancers photographs includes shots of individual dancers working, publicity shots, rehearsal images, and studio shots.

Choreography

- b.2 f.4 *Before Buddha*, undated
- b.2 f.5 *Cantos on the Chinese Flute*, undated

**Series III: Photographs** (cont.)

Choreography (cont.)

- b.2 f.6 *Comment on Space and Freedom*, undated
- b.2 f.7 *Cry*, 1932
- b.2 f.8-9 *The Enchantment of Quixote*, undated
- b.2 f.10 *Fern Hill*, undated
- b.2 f.11 *First Half Century or Life and Times of the Gadget*, 1950
- b.2 f.12 *Gesano der Junglige*, undated
- b.2 f.13 *Hamlet*, undated
- b.2 f.14 *Harlequinade Cycle*, 1950
- b.2 f.15 *Jacob*, undated
- b.2 f.16 *Johnny Appleseed*, undated
- b.3 f.1 *Lamentation*, 1959
- b.3 f.2 *Legend for the Navajo*, undated
- b.3 f.3 *The Lonely Ones*, 1949
- b.3 f.4 *Master Peter's Puppets*, 1957
- b.3 f.5 *Minstrel Show*, 1951
- b.3 f.6 *Night Club*, undated
- b.3 f.7 *Partita*, undated
- b.3 f.8 *Pieces of Nothing*, undated
- b.3 f.9 *Story of a Soldier*, 1961
- b.3 f.10 *The Thing That Wasn't There*, undated
- b.3 f.11 *This is His Birthday*, undated
- b.3 f.12 *Three Characters for a Passion Play*, undated
- b.3 f.13 *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*, undated
- b.4 f.1 *White Writing*, 1959
- b.4 f.2-4 *Winter Song for Spring*, 1961
- b.4 f.5-13 Unknown Works, undated

Company Dancers

Dancers

- b.4 f.14-16 Ford, Richard, undated
- b.4 f.17 Keuter, Cliff, undated
- b.5 f.1-6 Lathrop, Welland, 1934-1960
- b.11 f.5-7 Lathrop, Welland, 1945-1961
- b.5 f.7 Sausville, Fred, undated
- b.5 f.8-11 Rehearsal and Publicity, 1948-1961
- b.10 f.1-3 Rehearsal and Publicity, 1948-1961
- b.11 f.1-4 Rehearsal and Publicity, 1948-1961
- b.15 f.1 Rehearsal and Publicity, 1948-1961

#### **Series IV: Scores, 1939-1966**

Series IV contains handwritten music for Lathrop's dance compositions. Many of the scores were written specifically for his needs. All are undated. Most scores are marked with Lathrop's notes and dance ideas. Some are split into orchestra parts, including percussion, but most are simply basic piano scores.

- b.9 f.1 *Comment on Space and Freedom*, undated
- b.9 f.2 *Discovery*, undated
- b.10 f.6 *Drawing Room Comedy*, undated
- b.9 f.3 *The Enchantment of Alonzo Quixano*, undated
- b.10 f.4 *The Enchantment of Alonzo Quixano*, undated
- b.9 f.4 *Jacob*, undated
- b.10 f.5 *Marchen*, undated
- b.9 f.5 *Pavana*, undated
- b.9 f.6 *People Unaware*, undated
- b.9 f.7 *Sarabande*, undated
- b.9 f.8 *Three Characters for a Passion Play*, undated
- b.9 f.9 *Three Dances for Orchestra*, undated

#### **Series V: Subject Files, 1939-1986**

Series V is composed of files relating to Lathrop's involvement in all aspects of the West Coast arts scene. This series contains art, correspondence, interviews, programs, scrapbooks, posters, dance institution files, and writings.

Lathrop was not only a talented choreographer and dancer, he was a designer and artist. Although the collection does not contain any of his paintings, there are slides of 72 of his works in this series. There is also a collection of art by his friend and colleague Charlotte Townsend, who depicted dancers and their motion through a series of simple line drawings. Townsend's other work includes a book about Lathrop entitled *A Dancer Prepares to Create a Dance* as well as original sketches of Lathrop and his company dancers.

The correspondence in this series is limited and primarily personal. There are notes from friends and colleagues and letters to and from his wife, Nina. More correspondence can be found in the file on Lathrop's *Endangered Species*, for which he was awarded an NEA grant. This file covers the financial and logistical negotiations for his creation of the piece in tandem with the Xorgos Performing Company.

The scrapbooks in this series hold photographs, programs, and some clippings. The bulk of the writings files contain Lathrop's essays for *Impulse Dance Magazine*, which was founded and published by the Halprin-Lathrop studio as a contemporary dance magazine. The collection holds a selection of issues from 1949-1966.

##### Art

- b.6 f.1 Lathrop, Welland  
Towbridge, Charlotte
- b.6 f.2 *A Dancer Prepares to Create a Dance*, 1940

**Series V: Subject Files** (cont.)

Art (cont.)

Towbridge, Charlotte (cont.)

- b.6 f.3 *Dance Drawings of Martha Graham, 1947*
- b.6 f.4 Original Sketches, undated
- b.6 f.5 Awards, 1957-1986
- b.6 f.6 Balasaraswati School of Dance, undated
- b.6 f.7 Correspondence, 1941-1980
- b.7 f.1 *Endangered Species, 1976-1978*
- b.7 f.2 Interviews, undated
- b.7 f.3 Lectures and Courses, undated
- b.7 f.4 Martha Graham Dance Company, 1941
- b.12 f.1 Posters, undated
- b.7 f.5-6 Programs, 1939-1977
- Scrapbooks
  - b.13 Lathrop, Welland, 1935-1957
  - b.14 Lathrop, Welland, 1937-1961
- b.8 f.1 Welland Lathrop Dance Company, 1955-1961
- b.8 f.2 Television and Radio Appearances, 1952-1954
- b.8 f.3-4 Writings, 1949-1966