

**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

## **Kent Baker papers**

1964-1994

(S) \*MGZMD 287

Compiled by Marian H. O'Brian, Palmer School of Library and Information Science 2012, October 2011

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Baker, Kent, 1947-1994

**Title:** Kent Baker papers, 1964-1994

**Size:** 1.26 linear feet (3 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Laurence Mercier, 2009.

**Abstract:** Kent Baker was the founder and choreographer of A Baker's Half Dozen, the first modern dance company based in Brooklyn, New York. The papers document the professional career of the choreographer and include the records of his company, his master's thesis, choreographic notes, photographs, and biographical materials.

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

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**Preferred citation:** Kent Baker papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

### **Processing note**

Original folders and folder titles have been retained when possible.

### **Related collections**

Eye on Dance records. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts..(See: Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company)

John Willis's Dance World papers. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

### **Creator history**

Kent Baker was the founder and choreographer of A Baker's Half Dozen, the first professional modern dance company based in Brooklyn, New York. Born in Oblong, Illinois, in 1947, he studied dance at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, and also at the University of California at Berkeley and Mills

College in Oakland, California, before completing his masters degree in Theater and Dance at Southern Illinois in 1972. He began his choreographic career there, and continued it after he moved to New York City in 1972.

In New York City, Baker studied at the Nikolais-Louis Dance Theater Lab, Hunter College, American Ballet Center, and the Dance Theater Workshop, where he studied under Phyllis Lamhut. Baker joined her company, toured, and conducted master classes from 1974 to 1982. While a member of the Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company, he began his professional choreographic career with *Changing Ambience*, performed at a benefit for The Rockefeller Children's School in 1975.

Baker choreographed over fifty additional works over the next nineteen years, most for his own modern dance company, A Baker's Half-Dozen. He ran the company for twelve years, from its founding in 1976 through 1988. Baker firmly believed in a community-based company, and expressed his desire to choreograph works using community-based dancers whenever possible. The company, which consisted of six dancers including Baker, performed in spaces ranging from P.S. 9 in Brooklyn to Alice Tully Hall in Manhattan; averaged thirty performances a year; and was the dance company for the Brooklyn Bridge Centennial in 1983. In 1988, he closed down A Baker's Half Dozen, in part due to repeated injuries, and moved with Laurence Mercier, his companion and the company costume designer, to New Orleans.

In New Orleans, Baker worked as office manager of the Quality Assessment department at Children's Hospital. In 1991, he became an adjunct dance instructor and choreographer at Newcomb College of Tulane University, and performed as a dancer and guest choreographer for New Orleans Dance. Kent Baker died in New Orleans in February 1994.

### **Scope and content note**

The collection documents Kent Baker's entire dance career, from student performances to his final work as a choreographer, with an emphasis on his choreography and performances. Original choreographic notes document approximately half of his body of work, including notes for works that were never performed publicly, as well as notes for various aerobic routines for fitness classes. Photographs illustrate his career as a dancer, spanning his work with the Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company to A Baker's Half Dozen's various performances, up to his last choreographic work for Newcomb College. The A Baker's Half Dozen corporate records contain the company's incorporation and tax exempt filings, as well as board meeting minutes that detail the early days of a small, struggling dance company. The programs and publicity files contain programs of virtually every performance of his professional career, as well as correspondence, fliers, interviews, press clippings and releases, and reviews of his choreography not available elsewhere, as well as Baker's obituary. The collection also contains résumés and biographical material, including a short autobiography. The Kent Baker papers do not contain correspondence or financial records related to A Baker's Half Dozen or Baker's personal life.

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' dance research collection includes additional materials related to Kent Baker. Press clippings and reviews can be found by conducting individual subject searches for "Baker, Kent" and "Baker's Half Dozen (Company)," while video recordings can be found by conducting an author search for "Baker, Kent" in the catalog ([www.nypl.org/catalog](http://www.nypl.org/catalog)). When conducting an author search, Baker will be listed separately as a dancer and as a choreographer, costume designer, and dancer.

### **Arrangement**

Alphabetical by subject.

**Key terms**

**Subjects**

Choreography  
Modern dance

**Occupations**

Choreographers

**Names**

Baker, Kent, 1947-1994  
Baker's Half Dozen (Company)  
Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company

**Special formats**

Photographs

## Container list

### A Baker's Half Dozen

- b.1 f.1 Corporate Records, 1977-1981
- b.1 f.2 Program Notes--Films, 1975-1981
- b.1 f.3 Program Notes--Videos, 1976-1993
- b.1 f.4 Choreography File, 1975-1987

### Photographs

- b.1 f.5 General, 1970s-1985
- b.1 f.6 Contact Sheets, 1972-1983, undated

### Dances

- b.1 f.7 *Bagniks-Circus Assortment*, 1981-1985
- b.1 f.8 *Dance Game-Insistent Rorschach*, 1975-1986
- b.1 f.9 *Incline-Points of Oblong*, 1975-1993
- b.1 f.10 *Regreso al Amor-Suite Country*, 1978-1992
- b.1 f.11 *The Span of Time-Wintershape*, 1975-1983
- b.2 f.1 Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company, 1973-1983
- b.2 f.2 "Poor Polluted Me", 1972 (Master's thesis)
- b.2 f.3-12 Programs and Publicity, 1964-1980
- b.3 f.1-11 Programs and Publicity, 1981-1994
- b.3 f.12 Résumés and Biographical Information, circa 1993, undated