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Guide to the

Zachary Solov papers

1870-2005 (bulk 1937-1977)

(S) *MGZMD 261

Compiled by Lea Jordan, July 2011

Summary

Creator: Solov, Zachary, 1923-

Title: Zachary Solov papers, 1870-2005 (bulk 1937-1977)

Size: 8.72 linear feet (25 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Zachary Solov Foundation, 2011

Abstract: Zachary Solov (1923-2004) was a dancer and choreographer who spent many years as the ballet master at the Metropolitan Opera. The Zachary Solov papers (1870-2005) contain programs, notes, photographs, posters, scrapbooks and personal materials relating to the career of the noted dancer, choreographer, and ballet master.

Access: To request materials, please contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division (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.

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Preferred citation: The Zachary Solov papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note

Two boxes of published books and sheet music were removed from the collection and returned to LPA. The collection was sorted, organized, and foldered. General date ranges were given to undated photographs.

Related collections

John Martin papers. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Zachary Solov (1923-2004) was a dancer and choreographer who spent many years as the ballet

master at the Metropolitan Opera. He was born to deaf parents in Philadelphia and studied dance at the Dauphin School of the Arts and the Littlefield Ballet School. He was a child tap-dancer and appeared in acts all over the northeast, as well as on radio shows such as *The Horn & Hardart Children's Hour*.

He began his career by dancing with various up and coming ballet companies, including the Littlefield Ballet, George Balanchine's American Ballet Caravan and Eugene Loring's Dance Players. He accompanied the American Ballet Caravan to South America in 1941 as part of their tour.

In 1943, Solov was drafted into the Army. During his time with the military he danced in and choreographed 35 Army revues in the United States and in India where he developed an interest in Indian dance. Upon his discharge from the Army, he performed with the American Ballet Theatre until being invited to be ballet master of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet in 1951.

While with the Metropolitan Opera, Solov worked to have dance feature more prominently within opera productions. He also engaged ballerina Janet Collins – the first black artist to be under regular contract at the Metropolitan Opera. She was engaged for the 1951 production of *Aida* and stayed with the opera, dancing many roles, until 1954. Solov remained as the full time ballet master until 1958, but he worked with the opera as a guest choreographer until the mid-1980s.

In addition to creating ballets specifically for operas, Solov choreographed independent ballets, including *Vittorio* (in which he appeared) in 1954 and *Soiree* in 1955. In 1960 he started his own group, the Zachary Solov Ballet Ensemble, and created dances for regional ballet troupes and musicals. He was able to re-imagine classic Broadway shows (often in the round) at the Musicircus, Melody Fair, and other large regional summer theaters. He also wrote *Basic Ballet: A New Way to Learn the Fundamentals* alongside William English.

Later in life, he resided in Sarasota Springs, New York with John Martin, a dance critic and a close friend. He remained there until his death in 1994.

Scope and content note

The Zachary Solov papers (1870-2005) contain programs, notes, photographs, posters, scrapbooks and personal materials relating to the career of the noted dancer, choreographer, and ballet master. The collection includes programs and materials from the dance companies and theaters in which Solov worked, production materials from various ballets and musicals, photographs (both work related and personal), marked scores, scrapbooks, and subject files.

The collection also includes video of the Kansas City Ballet, the Littlefield Ballet, and a movie narrated by Solov - *Dance on Film: 1894-1912*.

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

Arrangement

The Zachary Solov papers are organized into the following series:

- Series I: Dance Companies, 1938-1980
- Series II: Productions, 1967 and undated
- Series III: Photographs, 1870-1994
- Series IV: Scores and Music, undated
- Series V: Scrapbooks, 1937-1955

Series VI: Subject Files, 1935-1992

Key terms

Subjects

Ballet -- 20th century

Choreography

Dance photography

Opera -- 20th century

Names

Martin, John Joseph, 1893-

Metropolitan Opera (New York, N.Y.). Ballet

Solov, Zachary, 1923-

Special formats

Photographs

Posters

Programs

Scores

Scrapbooks

Container list

Series I: Dance Companies, 1938-1980

This series houses programs, playbills, advertisements, notes, and other materials relating to Solov's work with various dance companies, theaters, and institutions. The majority of the material is programs, with Solov usually credited as choreographer. Solov's extensive career with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet is documented, including not only his time as ballet master (1951-1958) but stints as a guest choreographer through the early 1980s. Work with other companies such as the Littlefield Ballet, the New York City Ballet, and the Operetta Carnival is represented. Of interest is evidence of Solov's work for the Melody Fair Theater in Buffalo, New York and St. John Terrell's Music Circus in New Jersey - where he choreographed for numerous summer tent musicals - such as *South Pacific*, *No, No Nannette*, and *Bloomer Girl*. Materials from the Zachary Solov Ballet Ensemble's 1961-1962 American tour are also here, and contain company lists as well as programs and some clippings.

- b.1 f.1 Army and Air Force Productions, 1943-1945
- b.1 f.2 Ballet Theatre, 1946
- b.1 f.3 Dallas Civic Opera, 1968
- b.1 f.4-5 Kansas City Civic Ballet, 1971-1976
- b.1 f.6 The Littlefield Ballet, 1938
- b.1 f.7 Melody Fair, 1965-1960
- b.2 f.1-3 Metropolitan Opera Ballet, 1951-1980
- b.2 f.4 Music Circus, 1950-1952
- b.2 f.5 National Ballet of Canada, 1963-1964
- b.2 f.6 New York City Ballet, 1951
- b.2 f.7 Operetta Carnival, 1973
- b.3 f.1 Palm Beach Musicarnival, 1961
- b.3 f.2 San Francisco Opera, 1966
- b.3 f.3 Westside Civic Light Opera, undated
- b.3 f.4 World's Fair, 1939-1940
- b.3 f.5-7 Zachary Solov Ballet Ensemble, 1961-1962

Series II: Productions, 1967 and undated

Series II consists of materials relating to specific productions on which Solov worked as a choreographer. Materials may include librettos, notes, sketches, programs, and dancer lists. Often there is no year or venue listed. The *Don Giovanni* file contains the original labanotation for Solov's choreography for the minuet dance within that opera.

- b.4 f.1 *Don Giovanni*, undated
- b.4 f.2 Egyptian Dance, undated
- b.4 f.3 *Great Babylon*, undated
- b.4 f.4 *The Lives and Times of Archie and Mehitabel*, undated
- b.4 f.5 *Love-In*, undated
- b.4 f.6 *The Merry Widow*, undated
- b.4 f.7 *Ophelia*, undated
- b.4 f.8 *Orpheus in the Underworld*, 1967
- b.4 f.9 *Show Boat*, undated
- b.4 f.10 *The Student Prince*, undated

Series III: Photographs, 1870-1994

The photographs series contain both images of Solov at work (dancing and teaching), and personal snapshots. The dance photographs consist of a selection of general dance photographs, which include many posed studio shots of Solov as well as other dancers, and Solov dancing in various locations such as on the beach, the woods, and for friends and family. Other dance photographs include Solov as a child performer, photographs of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, loose photographs of his Army productions, and scrapbook pages containing photographs from Ballet Caravan's 1941 tour of South America.

Oversized photographs, primarily consist of headshots and various dance poses of Solov, and Metropolitan Opera productions, 1952-1958

Dance

- b.5 f.1-6 General, 1941-1965
- b.6 f.1-2 General, 1941-1965
- b.6 f.3-4 Army Revues, 1943-1945
- b.22 f.1 Ballet Caravan South American Tour, 1941
- b.6 f.5-6 Metropolitan Opera Ballet, 1951-1958
- b.21 f.1 Metropolitan Opera Ballet , 1951-1958 (oversized)
- b.21 f.2 Solov, Zachary, 1943-1965 (oversized)
- b.22 f.4 World's Fair, 1939-1940

Family and Personal

- b.7 f.1-5 1870-1935
- b.22 f.2-3 1870-1935
- b.7 f.6 1935-1940
- b.8 f.1-2 1940-1959
- b.8 f.3 1960-1970
- b.8 f.4-5 1970-1994
- b.9 f.1-4 1970-1994

Series IV: Scores and Music, undated

The scores and music series holds a selection of sheet music, bound scores, and other materials Solov used in his work as a choreographer. None are identified as to which specific production in which they were utilized. For example, a score for *Otello* does not specify at which opera company it was used. Items range from full bound scores of operas, handwritten music labeled *Indian Dance*, scores for musical theater, and music for ballet. Some are unmarked save Solov's name, but other scores are marked with the entrances and exits of specific dancers, ideas for movements to accompany the music, cuts and repeats, and other notations made by Solov in the course of his work.

- b.9 f.5 *Boccacio*, undated
- b.9 f.6 *Carousel*, undated
- b.9 f.7 *Coppelia*, undated
- b.10 f.1 *Chez Tschaikovsky*, undated
- b.10 f.2 *Hungarian Dances*, undated

Series IV: Scores and Music (cont.)

- b.10 f.3 *Indian Dance*, undated
- b.10 f.4 *Invitation*, undated
- b.24 f.2 *Love-In*, undated
- b.10 f.5 *Madame Butterfly*, undated
- b.10 f.6 *Matinée Musicale*, undated
- b.23 *The Merry Widow*, undated
- b.10 f.7 *The Nutcracker*, undated
- b.10 f.8 *Orphee aux Enfers*, undated
- b.11 f.1-3 *Orpheus*, undated
- b.11 f.4 *Otello*, undated
- b.11 f.5 *Pas de Deux*, undated
- b.23 *Pas de Deux*, undated
- b.11 f.6 *Rumanian Folk Dances*, undated
- b.11 f.7 *Samson and Delilah*, undated
- b.11 f.8 *Si J'étais Roi*, undated
- b.23 *Sleeping Beauty*, undated
- b.11 f.9 *Le Sourd*, undated
- b.12 f.1 *South Pacific*, undated
- b.12 f.2-3 *Sylvia*, undated
- b.12 f.4 *Tristan and Isolde*, undated
- b.12 f.5 *Le Trouvere*, undated
- b.13 f.1 *Il Trovatore*, undated
- b.13 f.2-3 *Vittorio*, undated
- b.13 f.4 *Wooden Soldiers*, undated

Series V: Scrapbooks, 1937-1955

This series houses eight scrapbooks created by Solov early in his career. Three of the scrapbooks, dating from 1936-1938, detail Solov's performances as a teenager. Kept almost like a diary, they include notes on what dances were done, signed photographs from other performers he encountered, cards, programs, souvenir buttons and radio scripts from various venues. Solov often made note of any prize money won or tips received for his performances.

Three scrapbooks document his time with the military in a performance capacity. Scrapbooks for the *Air Force Caperers*, *The AIR WAC Revue*, and one general scrapbook contain photographs, programs, and newspaper clippings. Since the revues toured the United States, there are reviews from nearly every city stop as well as candid photographs of the cast as they toured the country. These scrapbooks date from 1943 to 1945.

There are also two scrapbooks of clippings, dated 1951-1952 and 1954-1955, detailing Solov's choreographic work as well as his work as a dance master with the Metropolitan Opera.

- b.16 Childhood Performances, 1937-1939

Series V: Scrapbooks (cont.)

- b.17 Childhood Performances, 1937-1939
- b.18 Childhood Performances, 1937-1939
- b.16 Metropolitan Opera Ballet, 1951-1952
- b.25 Metropolitan Opera Ballet, 1954-1955
- Military
- b.18 General, 1943-1945
- b.19 f.1-2 *Air Force Caperers*, 1943-1945
- b.20 *AIR WAC Revue*, 1943-1945

Series VI: Subject Files, 1935-1992

The subject files series contains materials from various aspects of Solov's professional life. Files consist of art, awards, autographs, correspondence, committee and society materials, a thesis written about Solov's work by Patricia Masden, and his writings.

Art includes unsigned abstract art, scenic design paintings, and copies of inspirational art (for example, Egyptian art for use in designing ballet segments for the Metropolitan Opera Ballet). The autographs consist of photographs of dancers and other personalities that have been personalized either to Solov or occasionally to John Martin. There are letters, notifications, and certificates on awards given to Solov over the course of his career, including the Capezio Dance Award and the Philadelphia Arts Festival Dance Award.

Solov's contracts are held in this series. They contain not only the actual legal contracts, but accompanying correspondence, negotiations, and more informal agreements spanning his entire career.

There is a limited selection of correspondence, primarily of a business nature. Notable correspondents include Ted Shawn (asking Solov to dance solo at the Jacob's Pillow festival) and Agnes DeMille (who wrote a heartfelt letter upon the death of John Martin). Congratulatory telegrams were kept separately and are included in this series.

The oversized posters document both Metropolitan Opera Ballet productions as well as the Zachary Solov Ballet Ensemble's tour.

Solov's writings include a lecture he gave at Ithaca College in 1980 where he discusses his childhood, working in the opera, the negative effect of unions on the creative process, and a typed essay entitled *Opera Ballet*.

- b.24 f.1 Art, undated
- b.13 f.5 Autographs, 1935-1960
- b.13 f.6 Awards, 1955-1973
- b.13 f.7-8 Ballet Scenarios, undated
- b.14 f.1 Ballet Technique, undated
- b.14 f.2 Choreographic Notes, undated
- b.14 f.3-5 Contracts, 1943-1975
- b.15 f.1 Correspondence, 1942-1992

Series VI: Subject Files (cont.)

- b.15 f.2 Dance Masters of America Convention, 1963
- b.15 f.3 Dance Notation Bureau, undated
- b.15 f.4 Dance on Film Project, undated
- b.15 f.5 Membership Cards, 1940-1951
- b.15 f.6 Other's Choreography, undated
- b.25 f.1 Posters, undated
- b.15 f.7 Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, undated
- b.15 f.8 Telegrams, 1954-1956
- b.15 f.9 Thesis on Solov, 1965
- b.15 f.10 Writings, 1965-1980