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

Guide to the

Judith Ren-Lay papers

1965-1999

(S) *MGZMD 283

Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, October 2011

Summary

Creator: Ren-Lay, Judith

Title: Judith Ren-Lay papers, 1965-1999

Size: 2.77 linear feet (7 boxes)

Source: Donated by Judith Ren-Lay, 2008.

Abstract: Judith Ren-Lay (b. 1943) is a New York City-based dancer and performance artist. The Judith Ren-Lay papers, dating from 1965 to 1999, contain scores, scripts, programs, notes, and photographs which document Ren-Lay's solo and group productions.

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

Inquiries regarding audio-visual materials from the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio-visual materials may be subject to preservation 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: Judith Ren-Lay papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Processing note

Duplicate clippings, programs, and fliers were removed and returned to LPA. Audio-visual material was previously separated from the collection.

Related collections

Danspace Project records. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Gus Solomons papers and the Gus Solomons Company/Dance Inc. records. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Creator history

Judith Ren-Lay (b. 1943) is a New York City-based dancer and performance artist. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Ren-Lay began attending the University of Colorado in 1960, studying drama. She continued her education at the University of Maryland in the late 1960s, majoring in dance and performing with the Maryland Dance Company.

Ren-Lay moved to Connecticut in the early 1970s, and was known briefly under her married surname, Galligan. She trained with modern dancer Ernestine Stodelle, and performed as a member of Stodelle's Choreo-Lyric Dancers. Ren-Lay also danced with and choreographed for the New Haven Dance Ensemble from 1970 to 1975. In Connecticut, she taught dance and movement workshops, worked as a visiting artist, and performed original works with the support of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and the Connecticut Ballet. From 1975 to 1980, Ren-Lay was a principal and soloist with the Solomons Company/Dance in New York City. She toured with the company, and served as Gus Solomons, Jr.'s teaching assistant at the California Institute for the Arts during the company's residency in California.

In 1980, Ren-Lay left Solomons Company/Dance and established herself in New York City as a performance artist, blending theatre, dance, and music. She began performing original solo works, producing between eight to ten new pieces each year. She regularly performed at New York City venues such as Performance Space 122, the Knitting Factory, and the Danspace Project, in addition to touring successful pieces in California, Colorado, and Europe. In 1985, Ren-Lay received a commission from avant-garde art organization Franklin Furnace to develop *The Grandfather Tapes*, a piece that included recorded interviews with Ren-Lay's grandfather, a birth control pioneer and the inventor of Tampax. Ren-Lay received a New York Dance and Performance Award (known as a Bessie) for choreography in *The Grandfather Tapes*. The next year, she received her first of two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships for choreography.

Ren-Lay was hospitalized for five months in 1989 following complications from open-heart surgery. She returned to performing the next year, and developed the piece *To the Beat of Impossible Causes* in response to the experience. Ren-Lay performed throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, in addition to mounting art exhibitions and writing poetry. As of 2011, she continues teaching and choreographing in New York City.

Scope and content note

The Judith Ren-Lay papers date from 1965 to 1999 and trace the career of Ren-Lay as a dancer and performance artist. The collection includes scripts, choreographic notes, correspondence, technical specifications, contracts, programs, clippings, and photographs documenting most of Ren-Lay's solo productions from 1980 to 1999.

The bulk of the collection is comprised of files for Ren-Lay's solo productions. Contents of the production files vary, though most contain a script, notes, and promotional material such as programs or fliers. Productions that are documented from early concept to performance include research notes, drafts of scripts, and clippings related to the subject of the production. Ren-Lay's contracts with venues, door counts, and box office sales receipts highlight the business aspects of her performances. Technical specifications—which detail aspects of the performance such as lighting, sound, and props required—and choreographic notes help to clarify the visual qualities of the performance that are not otherwise discussed in the scripts.

Several production files include photographs, with publicity shots and scenes from the performances. Many of the photographs in the collection are the work of Dona Ann McAdams, a performance photographer based in New York City.

In addition to documentation of her solo works, the collection holds material related to Ren-Lay's work as a member of Gus Solomons Company/Dance and the New Haven Dance Ensemble, as well as her time as an independent choreographer and dance instructor in New Haven, Connecticut. These files consist of notes and annotated dance scores, as well as her contracts and agreements with the companies. Correspondence with Gus Solomons, Jr. details the growth of the dance company and Ren-Lay's decision to begin performing as a solo act. Also included are instructional documents such as grooming and dress guidelines for members of Ernestine Stodelle's company.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject or production title. Oversize posters are stored separately.

Key terms

Subjects

Choreography and dance
Dance -- United States
Dance companies
Performance art

Places

New York (N.Y.)

Names

McAdams, Dona Ann
Ren-Lay, Judith

Special formats

Photographs
Posters
Programs

Container list

General

- b.7 f.1 Bessie Award, 1985
- b.1 f.1 Bloomgarden Head Shots, 1980
- b.1 f.2 Clippings, 1979-1996
- b.1 f.3 Club Performance Fliers, 1981-1983
- b.1 f.4 Grasmere, Robert Publicity Shoot, 1977
- b.1 f.5 Performance Announcements, 1981-1999
- b.1 f.6 Press Releases, 1980-1999
- b.1 f.7 Publicity Materials and Programs, 1981-1999
- b.1 f.8-9 Resume Materials, 1970-1999
- b.1 f.10 Reviews by Judith Ren-Lay, 1979-1980

Connecticut Dance Companies

- b.1 f.11 Choreo-Lyric Dancers and Ernestine Stodelle, 1968-1971
New Haven Dance Ensemble
- b.1 f.12 Notes and Press, 1969-1975
- b.2 f.1 Photographs, 1970-1975

Connecticut Teaching and Choreography

- b.2 f.2 *Aluminum Aspic*, 1974
- b.2 f.3 Connecticut Ballet, 1974
- b.2 f.4 *Finding it at the Movies*, 1975
- b.2 f.5 *Gropings*, 1970
Hamden Hall
- b.2 f.6 Presentations, 1965-1968
- b.2 f.7 Slide Dance, 1972-1973
- b.2 f.8 *Innovation I*, 1975-1976
- b.2 f.9 *Kinetics I*, 1970
- b.2 f.10 Music/Dance Performance Grant, 1975
- b.2 f.11 *Not for Everybody*, 1975
- b.2 f.12 *Slots*, 1972-1973
- b.2 f.13 Solo Concert, 1971
- b.2 f.14 *Something's Going On*, 1976

Teaching

- b.2 f.15 Fliers and Demonstrations with Students, 1970-1972
- b.2 f.16 Photographs, 1967-1973

Solomons Company/Dance

- b.3 f.1 Contracts and Press, 1975-1979
- b.3 f.2 Notes, 1976-1978, undated
- b.3 f.3 *Starting Blocks Solo*, 1977

Performance Files

- b.3 f.4 *Age*, 1990
- b.3 f.5 *A La Mudd*, 1981
- b.3 f.6 *All the Moms You've Ever Had or Known*, 1982

Performance Files (cont.)

- b.3 f.7 *Animal Tendencies*, 1994
 - Asterisk*
 - b.7 Review, 1982
- b.3 f.8 Score, Research, and Press, 1981
- b.3 f.9 *Bite the White Dragon*, 1993
- b.3 f.10 *Boomerang*, 1997-1999
- b.3 f.11 *Cassandra's Quilt*, 1981
- b.3 f.12 *Categories of Unrest*, 1983
 - Collaborations: Where the Fish-Net Hose Sunk Deep-Cut into the Purple Navel of My Cabbage Sandwich*
- b.3 f.13 Business Files, 1980
- b.3 f.14 Development, Script, and Scores, 1980
 - Continuous Work/Current Parts*
- b.3 f.15 Contracts, 1981
- b.4 f.1 Photographs, 1981
- b.4 f.2 Research, Script, and Press, 1981
- b.4 f.3 Corners of a Room Gallery Exhibition, 1997
 - European Tour
- b.7 f.2 Flat Posters, 1983-1984
 - b.7 Rolled Posters, 1983-1984
- b.4 f.4 *Fences*, 1981
- b.4 f.5 Fight Dances, 1980
- b.4 f.6 *Foot/Tongue/Web*, 1992
- b.4 f.7 *Four Suits*, 1987
- b.4 f.8 *Ghoul Post*, 1982
 - The Grandfather Tapes*
- b.4 f.9 Notes and Draft Scripts, 1985
- b.4 f.10 Original Performance Script and Notes, 1985
- b.4 f.11 Photographs, 1984-1985
 - b.7 f.3 Posters and Original Artwork, 1985
- b.4 f.12 Press and Performances, 1985
- b.4 f.13 *Half a Life*, 1993
- b.4 f.14 *Horse Drawn Dream Catcher* at St. Mark's Poetry Project, 1993
 - Hot Cloud Mountain*
- b.4 f.15 Business Files, 1978
- b.5 f.1 First Drafts and Notes on Choreography, 1978
- b.7 f.4 Poster, 1978
- b.5 f.2 *Hummingham Bird*, 1983
- b.5 f.3 *Ice Age Syntax*, 1987

Performance Files (cont.)

- b.5 f.4 *In Consistency*, 1996
- b.5 f.5 *Invisible Evidence of Our Angelic Residue*, 1994
- b.5 f.6 *The Last Taboo*, 1993
- b.5 f.7 *Live OP Maandag*, 1983
- b.7 *Loose Change* Poster, 1995
- b.5 f.8 *Metal Jello*, 1982
- Minor Venom*
- b.5 f.9 Notes, Script, and Press, 1984
- b.7 f.5 Poster, 1984
- b.5 f.10 *Moon Rituals*, 1986
- b.5 f.11 *Monkey Wards*, 1984
- b.5 f.12 *Mosaic Mountain*, 1990
- b.5 f.13 NHK Japan Public Television Performance, 1996
- Orphan*
- b.5 f.14 The Changing Scene Performance, 1987
- b.5 f.15 Connecticut, Colorado, and New York City Performances, 1986-1987
- b.5 f.16 Pearl Theater Performance, 1987
- b.5 f.17 *Portrait of America*, 1982
- b.5 f.18 *Psyche's Crib*, 1998
- b.6 f.1 *Punctuation Pieces and The Wacky Adventures of Punkin' Buns*, 1982
- b.6 f.2 *raW*, 1991
- b.7 *Scale Slicing* Poster, 1995
- b.6 f.3 *Scarcity/Scare City*, 1987
- b.6 f.4 *Separating the Parts* Series, 1995
- b.6 f.5 *A Shiksa Blessing*, 1997
- b.6 f.6 *Skeletal Waves*, 1982
- b.6 f.7 *Songs off the Fringe*, 1983
- b.6 f.8 *Soup*, 1986-1988
- Stake*
- b.6 f.9 Original Ideas, Notes, and Research, undated
- b.6 f.10 Script, Press, and Notes, 1983
- b.6 f.11 *Storybook Dolls*, 1981
- b.6 f.12 *To the Beat of Impossible Causes*, 1990
- Undercurrent Events*
- b.7 Light Plot Drawing by Stephen Petrilli, 1991
- b.6 f.13 Photographs, 1991
- b.6 f.14 Scripts, Press, and Notes, 1991-1992
- b.6 f.15 Sound Technician Notes and Script, 1992
- b.6 f.16 Visual Ideas and Research Materials, 1991, undated

Performance Files (cont.)

Warrior Hostess

b.6 f.17 Notes, Outline, and Press, 1987

b.7 f.6 Poster, 1987

Witchcraft Through the Ages Film Score

b.6 f.18 Film Score, 1995-1997

b.7 Posters, 1995-1997

b.6 f.19 *XX Chromosomes*, 1993