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Guide to the

Martha Hill research materials

1870-2002 (bulk 1934-1986)

(S) *MGZMD 264

Compiled by Lea Jordan, July 2011

Summary

Creator: Hill, Martha, 1900-1995

Title: Martha Hill research materials, 1870-2002 (bulk 1934-1986)

Size: 5.71 linear feet (14 boxes)

Source: Donated by Janet Soares, 2011

Abstract: Martha Hill (1900-1995) was one of the most influential dance instructors of the 20th century and the first director of the Juilliard Dance Division. Janet Mansfield Soares worked with Martha Hill as a student, colleague, and teacher of dance composition at the Juilliard School. The Martha Hill research materials (1870-1995) contain personal and professional papers created by Martha Hill and compiled by Janet Soares, as well as materials created by Soares in the course of her research for her book on Martha Hill, *Martha Hill and the Making of American Dance*.

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

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

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Preferred citation: Martha Hill research materials, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note

Collection sorted, arranged, and foldered. The collection was assembled and used for research by Janet Soares.

Related collections

Martha Hill papers, 1951-1985. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Martha Hill (1900-1995) was one of the most influential dance instructors of the 20th century and the first director of the Juilliard Dance Division. She was born in East Palestine, Ohio and attended the Battle Creek Normal School of Physical Education in Battle Creek, Michigan. After her graduation in 1920, she accepted the position of dance instructor there, teaching ballet and Swedish gymnastics. In 1923, she was hired as dance instructor at Kansas State Teachers College, remaining there until her move to New York City in 1926.

Hill had traveled to New York to study Dalcroze eurhythmics at the Institute of Musical Art and dance technique with Anna Duncan. While in the city, she attended a Martha Graham concert – spurring Hill to take a position as Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Oregon in 1927 to earn some money. After two years there, she returned to join Martha Graham's studio.

In addition to dancing with the Martha Graham Dance Company, Hill began teaching high school students at the Lincoln School of Teachers College. During this time she was listed in Martha Graham dance programs as "Martha Todd" since it was felt her career as a professional dancer would be frowned upon since she had influence over young girls – even though she was a dance teacher.

She was hired to teach at New York University in the Physical Education Department of the School of Education in 1930. She was compelled to leave the Martha Graham Dance Company in 1931 because of an increasingly demanding teaching schedule. In 1932, Hill began work at the brand new Bennington College in Bennington, Vermont as chairman of the Dance Department. She held positions at New York University and Bennington College simultaneously until 1951.

In the summer of 1934, Hill initiated a summer dance festival on the Bennington College campus – the Bennington School of the Dance, which ran as a summer program until 1942. Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm were key faculty members who spent their summers teaching and performing at Bennington. Hill was convinced that dance should be taught – and dance teachers should be taught – not as an extension of physical education departments, but as an art form.

Hill received her Masters degree in Dance Education from New York University in 1941. In 1948 she formed a School of the Dance at Connecticut College calling it the "Connecticut College School of the Dance". This new summer festival hired many of the same teachers and choreographers from the Bennington School. This festival was a precursor of the American Dance Festival.

In 1951 the president of the Juilliard School, William Schuman, hired Hill to be the school's first Director of Dance. Schuman and Hill had a bold new concept of creating a training program for dancers that would be equally split between ballet and modern dance. It was her belief that the two should not be mutually exclusive, but should be studied in tandem to produce well-rounded dancers. Hill married Dr. Thurston Davies in 1952.

Hill remained the director of dance at Juilliard until 1985, training dozens of students. Some of these included Paul Taylor, Martha Clarke, Susan Marshall, Jenny Coogan, Robert Garland, and Stanley Love. She was named Artistic Director Emeritus in 1985, but continued to teach senior seminars at Juilliard for several years. She died at the age of 94 on November 19, 1995.

Janet Mansfield Soares, is a dancer, choreographer, and author of *Martha Hill and the Making of American Dance*. She was a student, colleague, and teacher of dance composition with Martha Hill at the Juilliard School Dance Division. She is a professor emerita of dance at Barnard College, Columbia University, and lives in Tucson, Arizona, and Lyme, Connecticut.

Scope and content note

The Martha Hill research materials (1870-1995) contain personal and professional papers created by Martha Hill and compiled by Janet Soares, as well as materials created by Soares in the course of her research for her book on Martha Hill, *Martha Hill and the Making of American Dance*. The Martha Hill series holds documents relating to her time as head of the Juilliard Dance Division, as well as her work with the Bennington School of the Dance. Correspondence, photographs, and subject files are also included. The Janet Soares series contains notes, correspondence, and research materials. The correspondence primarily relates to the Martha Hill Dance Fund and her research into the Davies family.

Arrangement

The Martha Hill research materials are organized into the following series:

Series I: Hill, Martha, 1870-1995

I.A: The Bennington School of the Dance, 1934-1982

I.B: Correspondence, 1940-1995

I.C: Juilliard Dance Department, 1951-1986

I.D: Photographs, 1870-1995

I.E: Subject files, 1870-1990

Series II: Soares, Janet, 1995-2002

Key terms

Subjects

Dance teachers -- United States -- 20th century

Modern dance -- History

Modern dance -- United States

Names

Bennington School of the Dance

Connecticut College American Dance Festival

Hill, Martha, 1900-1995

Juilliard School. Dance Division.

Soares, Janet Mansfield

Special formats

Address books

Correspondence

Photographs

Programs

Container list

Series I: Hill, Martha, 1870-1995

The Martha Hill series contains correspondence, subject files, photographs, and materials from the Bennington School of the Dance and the Juilliard Dance Division. This series is arranged into five subseries: The Bennington School of the Dance, Correspondence, Juilliard Dance Department, Photographs, and Subject Files.

I.A: The Bennington School of the Dance, 1934-1982

Subseries I.A is composed of files from Hill's time as director of the Bennington School of the Dance, which operated from 1937 through 1942. The files include programs, student lists, schedules, annual reports, budgets, correspondence, photographs, and transportation information. The programs feature both student performances and those of the instructors and guest artists - including the Ballet Caravan, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Hanya Holm. There is also correspondence relating to the *Bennington Dance Pioneers* reunion in 1979, as well as research correspondence related to an effort to write a history of the Bennington School of the Dance in the early 1980s.

General

b.1 f.1	1934
b.1 f.2	1935
b.1 f.3	1936
b.1 f.4-5	1937
b.1 f.6	1938
b.2 f.1	1939
b.2 f.2	1940
b.2 f.3	1941
b.2 f.4	1942
b.2 f.5	Bennington Dance Pioneers, 1979
b.2 f.6	Honorary Degree, 1969
b.2 f.7	Research Correspondence for Book Project, 1978-1982
b.3 f.1	Research Correspondence for Book Project, 1978-1982

I.B: Correspondence, 1940-1995

The correspondence contains primarily personal notes and cards from friends and family, birthday and Christmas greetings, and news. Most of Hill's professional correspondence lies within subject files or other sub-series (for example, within subseries I.A). Of note in the personal correspondence is a series of letters from dancer Seth Cooper (1942-1944) - ending with a letter to Hill from his sister reporting him killed in action. Cooper discusses his dance ideas as well as those for physical rehabilitation of soldiers wounded in combat. Other notable correspondents include Paul Taylor, Marian Van Tyul, and notes from the Guthrie family (1947), written by Woody or Marjorie, but signed by the children - including newborn Arlo Guthrie's birth announcement, written from his perspective.

b.3 f.2	1940-1944
b.3 f.3	1945-1956
b.3 f.4	1970-1991
b.3 f.5	1993-1995

Series I: Hill, Martha (cont.)

I:C: Juilliard Dance Department, 1951-1986

The Juilliard Dance Division sub-series houses materials from Hill's 33 year stint as the director of the division, as well as materials from her time as Artistic Director Emeritus. The general files contain programs, letters from her superiors (including her hiring letter with her initial offer), course lists, clippings, and class schedules. There is correspondence and ephemera from a performance trip to Hong Kong and a scrapbook created by the division about a performance given in her honor in 1985: *A Love for Miss Hill*. The scrapbook holds letters of congratulation from former and current students, sheet music, photographs, art, poetry, clippings, and programs.

General

- b.4 f.1 1951-1973
- b.4 f.2 1974-1985
- b.4 f.3 1986-1993
- b.4 f.4 Hong Kong, 1986
- b.4 f.5 *A Love for Miss Hill*, 1985

I.D: Photographs, 1870-1995

Series I.D consists of photographs of both family and friends in snapshots as well as professional photographs. The family photographs include cabinet cards dating back to the 1870s, although most are unidentified. Some of the photographs appear to be of the Davies family. There are many studio portraits of Hill as a small child. The professional photographs show both posed and candid shots of Hill and those she taught. The New York University photographs are of interest as they show a dance club Hill led during her time there. In these photos, the students are often dressed in their street clothes and saddle shoes. The photographs from Bennington School of the Dance primarily depict students, though there are some full campus shots with the staff as well. The dancers are seen rehearsing and performing everywhere - lobbies, spare rooms, and even the grounds of the campus.

Family and Friends

- b.5 f.1-2 1870-1923
- b.5 f.3 1940-1952
- b.5 f.4 1952-1961
- b.5 f.5 1965-1989
- b.6 f.1 1990-1995
- b.6 f.2 Davies, Dr. Thurston, undated

Professional

- b.6 f.3-4 Bennington School of the Dance, 1934-1939
- b.6 f.5 Dance (general), undated
- b.6 f.6 Hill, Martha, undated
- b.7 f.1-2 Juilliard, 1960-1986
- b.7 f.3 Kellog and Kent State, 1920-1929
- b.7 f.4 New York University, 1930-1940
- b.7 f.5 Shelly, Mary Josephine, 1935-1954

Series I: Hill, Martha (cont.)

I.E: Subject files, 1870-1990

The subject files contain Hill's address books, art, appointment books, personal family materials, notes, proposals, files on other dancers as well as schools where Hill taught, and drafts of her last will and testament.

This sub-series includes several drafts of a 1937 proposal for the American School of the Dance – which Hill wanted to found in New York City to be a year round version of the Bennington School of the Dance. There are tribute letters written in 1966 by prominent dancers, choreographers, educators, and scholars presented to Hill at the Heritage Luncheon – an event sponsored by the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

Art includes two works by Ben Belitt - one a reproduction of a man sitting in a chair and one a pencil sketch of Hill at Bennington College entitled *Martha Dispenses the Word*. There is also a pen and ink drawing of Hill signed Ignacio Aguine.

A booklet from Louise Klopper's memorial service, José Limón programs and an article written by Hill about Limón are here. Notes contain several notebooks in which Hill jotted down ideas and words for inspiration. There is correspondence regarding Hill's participation in an oral history project conducted at the 1990 International Dance Festival in Hong Kong.

Personal and family materials include her mother's schoolgirl autograph book from 1887 and her address book from after her marriage to Grant Hill, a family genealogy, a pamphlet questioning the morality of dance, and Hill's grammar school commencement program from 1914.

There is also a folder of materials relating to Mary Jo Shelly, who was the president of Bennington College until 1951, when she became the director of Women in the Air Force. Included in her materials are a notebook with course notes and an essay – *Facts and Fancies About the Dance in Education* and her unpublished manuscript *Bennington and the Dance in America*.

Hill's writings include a draft of an essay entitled *New Directions in the Dance* as well as unidentified or untitled drafts of other essays or speeches.

Address Books

b.7 f.6	1973
b.7 f.7	Undated
b.8 f.1-4	Undated
b.8 f.5	American School of the Dance Proposal, 1937
b.14 f.1	Art, 1944-1945
b.9 f.1	Awards, 1975-1986
	Appointment Books
b.9 f.2	1957-1958
b.9 f.3	1964-1967

Series I: Hill, Martha (cont.)

I.E: Subject files (cont.)

Appointment Books (cont.)

- b.9 f.4 1968-1971
- b.9 f.5 1972-1975
- b.10 f.1 1976-1979
- b.10 f.2 1980-1983
- b.10 f.3 1984-1987
- b.10 f.4 1988-1990
- b.11 f.1 Choreographic Notebook, undated
- b.11 f.2 Connecticut College School of the Dance, 1950-1955
- b.11 f.3 Heritage Luncheon, 1966
- b.11 f.4 Kloepper, Louise, undated
- b.11 f.5 Limón, José , undated
- b.11 f.6 Mount Holyoke College Honorary Degree, 1966
- b.11 f.7-8 New York University, 1932-1940
- b.11 f.9 Notes, undated
- b.12 f.1 Oral History Project - Hong Kong, 1990
- b.12 f.2 Personal and Family, 1870-1930
- b.12 f.3 Rubin Academy of Music and Dance, 1987
- b.12 f.4-5 Shelly, Mary Jo, undated
- b.12 f.6 Speeches, 1954-1968
- b.12 f.7 Wills, 1954-1962
- b.12 f.8 Writings, undated

Series II: Soares, Janet, 1995-2002

The Janet Soares series is composed of notes, correspondence, interview transcripts, and research materials. The correspondence primarily relates to the Martha Hill Dance Fund and Soares' research into the Davies family. Research materials contain photocopies of programs, articles and documents that were not included in Martha Hill's personal papers. For example, Soares had copies made of dance programs from Kansas State Teacher's College and articles from the East Palestine newspaper. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

This series also contains interviews conducted by Soares for the Martha Hill book. Interviewees include Ethel Winter, Florence Sloan, Martha Hill, Sylvia and Blake Brown, Beth Mitchell, Hortense Zera, Ben Belitt, Jan Erdman, and Carl Wolz.

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- b.13 f.1 Correspondence, 1995-1997
- b.13 f.2 Interview Transcripts, undated
- b.13 f.3 The Martha Hill Dance Fund, 2002
- b.13 f.4 Notes, undated

Series II: Soares, Janet (cont.)

b.13 f.5-6 Research Materials, undated