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Guide to the
Indrani Rahman papers

1940-1996
(S) *MGZMD 281

Compiled by Lea Jordan, October 2011

Summary

Creator: Rahman, Indrani, 1930-1999

Title: Indrani Rahman papers, 1940-1996

Size: 1.68 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Gift of Sukanya Rahman, 2006

Abstract: Indrani Rahman (1930-1999) was an Indian classical dancer who worked as a performer and educator in India and the United States. The Indrani Rahman papers contain choreographic notes, lectures, programs and writings from nearly 50 years of the dancer's career.

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

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Preferred citation: Indrani Rahman papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Collection arranged and foldered. Information on post-it notes transferred to folder titles.

Creator history

Indrani Rahman (1930-1999) was an Indian classical dancer who worked as a performer and educator in India and the United States. She was known professionally simply as Indrani. Born in Madras to Ramlal Bajpai and dancer Ragini Devi, Indrani began performing in her mother's troupe at the age of nine. As a child she accompanied her mother as she traveled through the Americas and Europe. Upon reaching adulthood she studied Bharata Natyam under some of the most respected teachers of the day. In 1945 she married Habib Rahman. They had two children.

In 1952, she won the very first Miss India pageant. Later, she joined her mother Ragini Devi's company. She was the first professional dancer to revive the long neglected Odissi style of dance. This style was virtually unknown outside of Odissa until Indrani performed it in Delhi in 1957. She subsequently performed the dances all over the world, helping to popularize the Indian classical dance form.

In 1961, she was the first dancer presented on a national tour by the Asia Society, and also performed for President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during Nehru's official visit to Washington, D.C.

Indrani received the Padma Shri in 1969, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in the performing arts and the Taraknath Das Award. She moved to New York City permanently in 1979, and continued to teach, perform and lecture there until her death in 1999.

Scope and content note

The Indrani Rahman papers contain choreographic notes, correspondence, lectures, programs, research materials and writings from nearly 50 years of the dancer's career. The choreographic notes are arranged by name and style where possible. Users should consult the general files for unlabeled or fragmented notes. The remainder of the notes are arranged by style – Bharata Natyam or Odissi. Notes contain drawings, time markings, and other diagrams Indrani used to describe the many dances used in her performance, both with her mother's company and then later on her own. The bulk of the notes are handwritten. Correspondence is limited and mostly consists of plans for Indian dance recitals.

The lecture notes are typed and have the text Indrani (or sometimes a speaker) would deliver at dancing demonstrations. These include explanations of the style of dance, which dancers would be performing, who arranged or choreographed each dance, and the story line of the dance itself if applicable. These notes will be helpful for use in tandem with the choreographic notes which contain none of this background information.

Programs are often undated handouts showing an evening's performance schedule. Research materials consist of Indian dance publications, notebooks, and other study aides. Indrani's writings include articles she submitted for publication. Most of the articles are written with the intent of explaining Indian dance to western audiences.

Arrangement

Alphabetical by subject.

Key terms

Subjects

Bharata natyam
Indian dance
Kathakali
Odissi dance

Names

Rahman, Indrani, 1930-1999

Special formats

Lecture notes
Programs

Container list

Choreographic Notes

b.4 f.1 General, undated

b.1 f.1-4 General, undated

Bharata Natyam

b.1 f.5 General, undated

b.1 f.6 Agni Stuti, undated

b.1 f.7 Alapana, undated

b.1 f.8 Alarippu, undated

b.1 f.9 Arutpa, undated

b.1 f.10 Chakravalaaur Jukis, undated

b.1 f.11 Geetam, undated

b.1 f.12 Gita Govinda, undated

b.1 f.13 Kamakshi lwyambo, undated

b.2 f.1 Kanhanai Kandathundo, undated

b.2 f.2 Kaustabham, undated

b.2 f.3 Kubera Saudhi, undated

b.2 f.4 Jetiswaram, undated

b.2 f.5 Mohanam Athi, undated

b.2 f.6 Niddirayil, undated

b.2 f.7 O Jagat Amba, undated

b.2 f.8 Padhari, undated

b.2 f.9 Pushysapata, undated

b.2 f.10 Qavartas, undated

b.2 f.11 Ra Rarnani Tavali, undated

b.2 f.12 Raga, undated

b.2 f.13 Raweswanii Pillai, undated

b.2 f.14 Sariga Kongu, undated

b.2 f.15 Shabdam, undated

b.2 f.16 Shiva Roopas, undated

b.2 f.17 Sindhu Bhairair, undated

b.2 f.18 Sloka, undated

b.2 f.19 Sri Gianapati, undated

b.2 f.20 Swaram, undated

b.2 f.21 Swarjathi, undated

b.2 f.22 Tillana, undated

b.2 f.23 Vada Karina, undated

b.2 f.24 Varnam Sakhiye, undated

b.2 f.25 Vatiswaraw, undated

b.2 f.26 Yeonkkithkanai Nodi, undated

Odissi

b.2 f.27-28 General, undated

b.2 f.29 Aslaeni, undated

Choreographic Notes (cont.)

Odissi (cont.)

- b.2 f.30 Assam, undated
 - b.2 f.31 Bhimpelesi, undated
 - b.2 f.32 Ganesh Nata, undated
 - b.3 f.1 Geeta Govinda, undated
 - b.3 f.2 Mangala Cheranam, undated
 - b.3 f.3 Mohini Attaru, undated
 - b.3 f.4 Nagarinarayana-Anandabhairair, undated
 - b.3 f.5 Nartana, undated
 - b.3 f.6 Natanyi, undated
 - b.3 f.7 Pahu Pata, undated
 - b.3 f.8 Pallavi Kalavati, undated
 - b.3 f.9 Pallavi Raza, undated
 - b.3 f.10 Rase, undated
 - b.3 f.11 Sthai Nritya, undated
 - b.3 f.12 Tisrani, undated
 - b.3 f.13 Vaishnevi, undated
 - b.4 f.2 Correspondence, 1963-1996
 - b.3 f.14 Lecture Notes, undated
 - b.4 f.3-4 Lecture Notes, undated
 - b.3 f.15 Natayam Indian Dance Magazine, 1949-1950
 - b.3 f.16-17 Programs, 1940-1980
 - b.4 f.5 Programs, 1940-1980
 - b.4 f.6-8 Research Materials
- Writings
- b.3 f.18 *The Classical Dance in India*, undated
 - b.3 f.19 *How To Watch the Indian Dance*, undated
 - b.3 f.20 *In Praise of Bharata Natyam*, undated
 - b.3 f.21 *India's Classical Dance: Past and Present*, undated
 - b.3 f.22 *Revival of Odissi Dance*, undated