

Guide to the Clark Center Records, 1960-1995

(S) *MGZMD 176

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Clark Center Records
Collection ID:	(S) *MGZMD 176
Creator:	Clark Center for the Performing Arts
Extent:	18.5 linear feet (38 boxes)
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: The Clark Center Records document the activities of the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, an arts organization focusing on dance training and the presentation of new talent and emerging dance companies. The collection covers the years 1960-1995. It contains information reflecting both of Clark Center's primary operations, as well as their, ultimately unsuccessful, efforts to secure a permanent space for instruction and performances. A dominant figure in the materials is Louise Roberts, the Center's director from 1970-1986, and compiler of this collection.

Administrative Information

Access

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Preferred Citation

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Source

The Clark Center Records were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 1995 by Louise Roberts.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2007.

Historical Note

The Clark Center for Performing Arts was established in 1959 by Alvin Ailey as a studio and performance space in the building of the Westside YWCA. Originally conceived as a multi-arts center, by 1970 it had developed into a Center for the Performing Arts specializing in dance. The programs offered focused on two areas: dance instruction, and the support and presentation of young choreographers and small, developing dance companies of multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and particularly African-American origins.

The Clark Center's dance curriculum offered classes in jazz, ballet, tap and modern dance, as well as dance techniques of African and other ethnic traditions. Prices for all classes were kept deliberately low, while a Scholarship Program was available by audition to promising performers, dance teachers or choreographers. Among the Clark Center faculty were Alvin Ailey, Fred Benjamin, Pepsi Bethel, Thelma Hill, Mary Hinkson, Carmen de Lavallade, Anna Sokolow and Bertram Ross.

In the 1970s the Clark Center entered the most active phase of its presentations program. Through its renowned New Choreographers Concerts and, from 1975 onwards, a series of Summer Dance Festivals held in the Mall of the CUNY Graduate Center on West 42nd Street, Clark Center gained city-wide recognition as a dance presenter. A notable exception to its overall focus on dance was Playwrights Horizons, which was founded in 1972 under the direction of Robert Moss and remained affiliated with the Clark Center until 1974. Among the many dance professionals who can trace their early steps to the Clark Center are Margie Beals, George Faison, Meredith Monk, and Kei Takei.

In 1970 Louise Roberts became its director for the following 16 years, previously having had a career as dancer, producer and administrator of the June Taylor Dance School. From then onwards, she was a central figure in the shaping of the Clark Center's development. A serious challenge Roberts and the Clark Center had to face was the search for a suitable space to house both its teaching and presenting programs. In 1974 the YWCA building, in which Clark Center had been housed, was sold. As they tried unsuccessfully to lease the space from the Y until the building was sold, relations between the two organizations became strained, and eventually the dance school was moved to temporary quarters in 939 Eighth Avenue and Clark Center was established as an independent not-for-profit corporation. Until 1978 the CUNY Mall was used as a performance space. When this option was not available any longer, the decision was made to create a permanent dance theater. Plans were made for a 250-seat theater and additional studios for instruction, which would require the renovation of a building on West 42nd Street's Theater Row. After several years of work toward this project, which was primarily funded through a vigorous fundraising campaign, operations reached a standstill in 1983. Due to legal obstacles in the fulfillment of the contract that provided city funds, the following three years became a long struggle of escalating rents and cancelled grants. By the end of 1985 the project had officially failed, leaving the Clark Center in serious financial strain. Louise Roberts resigned as director of the Clark Center in August 1986, while the Center continued its operations amid considerable financial struggles until 1989.

Sources:

- Carmody, Deirdre. "Dance Group's Fate in City's Hands." *New York Times*, 1983 October 7, B4.
- Zimmer, Elizabeth. "Clark Center Theater Row Project Collapses." *Village Voice*, 1985 October 29, 86.

Scope and Content Note

The Clark Center Records document the activities of the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, an arts organization focusing on dance training, and the presentation of new talent and emerging dance companies. Materials date from 1960, the first year of the Clark Center's operation, until 1995, six years after its dissolution in 1989. The collection consists of professional correspondence; administrative files and legal records generated as part of the Clark Center's instruction and scholarship programs. There are also production and publicity materials, such as clippings, brochures, press releases, and photographs representing the first or early steps of several dance professionals. A significant part of the collection consists of grant applications and other fundraising efforts reflecting Clark Center's endeavors to fund their programs, and to create and build a school and theater for dance as part of Theater Row, Phase II Development, a project of the 42nd Street Development Corporation. A dominant figure in the materials is Louise Roberts, Clark Center's director from 1970-1986, and compiler of this collection. With the exception of a few letters of personal nature by Louise Roberts, there are no personal materials.

Organization

The collection is organized into 3 series. They are:

- Series I: Dance School, 1960-1995 and undated
- Series II: Theater Development Project, 1975-1990 and undated
- Series III: Oversized Materials, 1964-1986 and undated

Series Descriptions

Series I: Dance School, 1960-1991 and undated

28 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains correspondence, class schedules, scholarship audition materials, administrative files, financial and legal records related to the operation of the Clark Center as a dance school. It also contains photographs, publicity and production materials related to the organization of the various workshops, concerts and dance festivals produced by the Clark Center.

Series II: Theater Development Project, 1975-1990 and undated

8 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains correspondence; notes, reports and publicity materials; and financial records, including a large number of loan and grant applications that were produced during the Clark Center's efforts to create a 250-seat theater and teaching studios on West 42nd Street's Theater Row.

Series III: Oversized Materials, 1964-1986 and undated

2 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains architectural plans and blueprints; mounted awards to the Clark Center; and flyers and posters of Clark Center productions.

Series I: Dance School, 1960-1995, Undated

Administrative files, 1966-1995, Undated

Address cards, Undated

Box

1	A-B
2	C-D
3	E-G
4	H-J
5	K-L
6	M-O
7	P-R
8	S
9	T-W
10	X-Z Child students Professional organizations

Board of Directors, 1974-1986

Box

11

Fol

1

Lists of members, 1981, Undated

Includes manuals about managing the Board of Directors

2

Meetings minutes, 1974-1986, Undated

3

Calendar of events, 1969-1970

4

The Clark Center Record, 1972-1995, Undated

Materials collected in 1993-1995 by Louise Roberts in an effort to produce a narrative history of Clark Center

5

Color painting, Undated

Entitled: *Camelia*

Conferences, 1974-1978

First American Congress of Theatre, June 2-6 1974. Includes conference materials, correspondence, clippings, and Louise Roberts's notes

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1974

7

1977-1978

8

Facilities renovations, 1971

Proposal, estimates and invoices for the renovation of facilities and equipment for the Clark Auditorium at YWCA

Form letters, 1970-1988, Undated

9

To Faculty, Staff, and Students, 1972-1988, Undated

Includes Louise Roberts's letter of resignation to the Board of Directors in 1986, and an early copy of the Clark Center Policy for distribution to students

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Promotional, 1970-1988, Undated

Friends of Clark Center, 1977-1985

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1977

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1983-1985

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Fundraising contact lists, 1977

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List of clerk responsibilities, Undated

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Notes, 1974-1976, Undated

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Relocation lists, 1985

To-do lists, cost estimates and notes regarding the school's move to 588 Ninth

- Avenue
- 17 Sketch, Undated
- Space searches, 1974-1977
- 18 1974
 - Notes and descriptions of potential locations
- 19 1976-1977
 - Planning notes and offers from potential locations
- 20 Staff contact lists, Undated
- 21 Staff meetings minutes, 1966-1987
- 22 Staff resumes and biographical notes, 1971-1986, Undated
 - Includes evaluation reports for Louise Roberts
- 23 Wallpaper sample, Undated
- Correspondence, 1959-1996, Undated
- 12 1 A-B, 1972-1986, Undated
- 2 Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, 1976-1984, Undated
- 3 Arthur, Karen, 1982-1983
- 4 Arts and Business Council, 1975-1992
 - Includes drafts from Clark Center's entries in *Winterfare* and *Summerfare* issues
- 5 Blanco, Sylvia, 1984
- 6 C-E, 1970-1986, Undated
- 7 City University Graduate Center, 1975-1978
 - Includes letters regarding the organization of the annual Dance Festivals at the Mall
- 8 Cultural Council Foundation, 1975-1977
- 9 Eisenstein Realty Company, 1981-1982
 - Real estate managers for 939 Eighth Avenue
- 10 F-H, 1959-1987, Undated
- 11 Fund for the City of New York, 1977-1985
- 12 Hauslohner, Robert, 1977-1987
 - Member of the Board of Directors. Includes correspondence regarding the Theater Development Project
- 13 J-L, 1970-1991, Undated
- 13 1 Jablonski, Joel, 1975-1980
 - Real estate managers for 939 Eighth Avenue
- 2 Jackson Smith, Posy, 1986-1987
- 3 Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Firm, 1984-1985
- 4 Leva, Harvey, 1980-1986
 - Member of the Board of Directors. Includes correspondence regarding the Theater Development Project
- 5 M-N, 1971-1992, Undated
- 6 National Endowment for the Arts, 1975-1991
- 7 New Dance Group Studio, 1988-1992
- 8 New York City Agencies, 1974-1985
 - Includes a 1975 Certificate of Appreciation to the Clark Center
- 9 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, 1974-1994
 - Includes materials related to Louise Roberts's services as consultant for the Department of Cultural Affairs in 1979-1980
- 10 New York State Council on the Arts, 1973-1989
- 11 New York Times, 1971-1985, Undated
- 12 O-Q, 1971-1991, Undated
- 13 Off-Off Broadway Alliance, 1972-1973
- 14 Powers, William, 1981-1985
 - Member of the Board of Directors
- 15 Prendergast, Shirley, 1976-1986
 - Member of the Board of Directors

- 16 R-T, 1973-1987, Undated
 - 7A Administrators
 - Building supervisors at 939 Eighth Avenue
- 17 Brown, Jerry, 1981-1982
- 18 Moore, William, 1982-1983
- 19 Shin World Corporation, 1984
- 20 Stairs, Stanley, 1975-1986
 - Attorney for Clark Center. Includes information regarding the Theater Development Project
- 14 1 U-Z, 1971-1996, Undated
 - 2 United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1981-1984
 - Applications for approval of school to accept non-immigrant students
 - Young Women's Christian Association, 1971-1974
 - 3 1971-1974
 - 4 Petition letters, 1974
 - Letters by individuals, urging YWCA to allow the Clark Center to remain at the West Side Branch premises until the building is sold
 - Unidentified, 1974-1991
 - 5 Letters received, 1974-1985, Undated
 - 6 Letters sent, 1976-1991, Undated
 - Letters of recommendation and confirmation, 1972-1991, Undated
 - Letters are arranged according to the name of the individual for whom they are written
 - 7 A-M, 1974-1991, Undated
 - 8 N-Z, 1972-1989
 - Financial records, 1967-1988, Undated
 - 9 Bank receipts, 1973-1984
 - 10 Budget lists, 1967-1978
 - Payroll, 1988, Undated
 - 11 1988
 - 12 Undated
 - 13 Rent receipts, 1978-1984
 - Grants, 1971-1990
 - 1 Chase Manhattan Bank, 1975-1986, Undated
 - 2 Clark Foundation, 1971-1972
 - Includes cost estimates and construction receipts for the remodeling of facilities at the YWCA
 - 3 Compton Foundation, 1985
 - 4 Cultural Council Foundation, 1985
 - Application for funds to assist the operations of the dance company Vintage
 - 5 Exxon Corporation, 1978-1986
 - 6 Fanton Foundation, 1972
 - 7 The Joe and Emili Lowe Foundation, 1983-1985
 - 8 Mobil Foundation, 1978
 - National Endowment for the Arts, 1975-1990
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 - Expansion Arts Program, 1975-1990

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	10	Noble Foundation, 1972-1974
	11	Proposal for Playwright's Horizons, 1972
	12	Proposal for Office Automation, Undated
	13	The Shubert Foundation, 1973
	14	Application Drafts, ca. 1985

		Rejections, 1972-1985
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	17	The McGraw-Hill Foundation, 1981-1984
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	9	Bethel, Pepsi, 1975-1977
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	10	Hill, Thelma, 1975-1977
		Summer courses
	11	Nelson, Richard, 1972
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	14	1979-1980
		Includes audition results, evaluations, as well as notes on policies and changes for the scholarship program
	15	1980-1981
		Includes audition results, class schedules, and evaluations
	16	1981
		Includes audition results, class schedules and some applications
	17	1981-1982
		Includes audition materials, class schedules and a letter by Jorge Monsalve with comments and recommendations for the audition process
	18	1982-1983
		Includes audition results, announcements and form letters
	19	1983-1984
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	7	Children's scholarships, 1982-1986 Includes attendance lists and contact information
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	9	Workstudy responsibilities, 1988
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	10	Scholarship program, 1982-1986 Includes follow-up on former scholarship students and clippings, and some budget information
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 - 6 *Atheist in a Foxhole*, 1974
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 - 7 *Battery*, 1976
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 - 8 Brooklyn Community College performance, Undated
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 - 9 Centrifugal Theatre, 1973
 - 10 Charles Moore Dance Theatre, ca. 1986-1987
- Dance Festival at the Mall
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- 11 *Bleachers*
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 - 12-13 Fred Benjamin Dance Company
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 - 14-15 Kei Takei's Moving Earth
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 - 16 Louis Johnson Dance Theatre
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 - 20-21 Theatre Dance Collection
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 - 2 Ballet Hispanico of New York
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 - 3 Capoeiras of Bahia
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 - 4 Charles Moore, Dances and Drums of Africa
 - 5-6 Gus Solomons Company / Dance
Includes contacts
 - 7 The Joan Miller Dance Players
 - 8-9 Jose Coronado and Dancers
Includes contacts
 - 10 Loretta Abbott and Al Perryman / Dynamic Duo
 - 11 Mariko Sanjo Dance Company
 - 12 May O'Donnel Concert Dance Company
 - 13-14 New Choreographers Concert
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 - 15-16 Pepsi Bethel Authentic Jazz Dance Theatre
Includes contacts
 - 17-18 Satoru Shimazaki & Dancers
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- 19 Asian American Dance Theatre
 - 20-21 Capoeiras of Bahia
Includes contacts
 - 22-23 Chiang Ching Dance Company

- Includes contacts
- 24 Diamond, Matthew
- 25-26 Dibble, Susan
- Includes contacts
- 24 1 Marcus Schulkind Dance Company
- 2-3 New Choreographers Concert
- Includes contacts
- 4 Pepsi Bethel Authentic Jazz Dance Theatre
- 5-6 Ransom, Lucinda
- Includes contacts
- 7 *Grand American Exhibition, 1974*
- Negatives only
- 8 *Incredible Journey, 1974*
- 9-10 *Marry Me! Marry Me!, 1973*
- Includes negatives
- McIntyre, Diane
- 11 1974
- Contacts only
- 12 Undated
- Contacts only
- 13 Multigravitational Experiment Group
- Contacts only
- 14-15 The New York Mime Duet, 1973
- Includes contacts and negatives
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- 16 Battle, Hinton
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- Includes contacts
- 21 Urban Bush Women, 1986
- 22 Unidentified performances, Undated
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- 2 *The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Benefit Concert, 1971*
- 3 Ballet Hispanico of New York, 1974-1977
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- 14 *Dance Genesis: Three Generations Salute Syvilla Fort, 1975*
- 15 *Dance to a Nosepicker's Drum, 1971*
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- 17 Fred Benjamin Dance Company, 1972-1976

- 18 *From Fool to Hanged Man*, 1972
 19 *Gallimaufry*, ca. 1973
 20 The George Faison Universal Dance Experience, 1972
 21 *Hits Bits and Skits*, 1972
 22 Housewarming party, 1974
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 23 Interboro Civic Ballet Company Debut Concert, 1970
 24 *Japan Camera Show*, 1976
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 25 *June Festival*, 1970
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 27 McKayle, Donald, 1963
 28 Miller, Joan and the Chamber Arts/Dance Players, 1977
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 10 *A Poor Fool*, 1971

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 13 Sanjo, Mariko, 1977
 14 Seamus Murphy Dance Company, 1971
 15 *Solo Dance Festival*, 1974
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 16 Stanley, Charles, with the Barbara Gardner Construction Company, 1971

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 2 *Dancing Feet*
 3 Gala
 4 Jane Comfort Dance Company
 5 Paul Andrew Thompson and Troop Three
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 10 Theater Dance Collection, 1973-1974
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 12 *Three One-Act Plays*, 1971
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- 18 Production statistics and budget, 1977
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 - 5 *Winterfare*, 1979-1980
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 - 3 Davis, Gordon, 1983-1984
 - Includes clippings
 - 4 Dember Construction Corporation, 1980
 - Architectural bid proposal. Includes comparative chart
 - 5 42nd Street Development Corporation, 1976-1985
 - 6 Franklin Community Credit Union, 1980
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 - 8 Levy, Robert, 1983-1986
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 - Includes cost estimates for various stages of the project
 - 11 Overseas Data Service, 1982
 - 12 Russo & Sonder, 1985
 - Architects and planners. Includes building permits for 588 Ninth Avenue, and microfilms

- 13 Theatre Row Phase II Associates, 1981-1986
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- April 10, 1984. Includes correspondence
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- 9 Planning notes and invoices
- 10 Promotion and Publicity
Includes correspondence
- 11 *A Gala for Gower* Fundraiser, 1981
- Partnership with The Acting Company, 1982-1985
- 12 Correspondence, 1982-1985
- 13 Joint proposals materials, 1985
- 14 Theater rental survey, 1981-1985
Contains booklet with information on rental for the Joyce Theater, and
correspondence with interested organizations
- 36 1 Petition signatures, 1982
- Planning notes, 1979-1986
- 2 1979-1986
Materials presented to the Board of Directors
- 3 1980-1981
- 4 1982
- 1983
- 5 Funding reports and strategy
- 6 Funding sources lists
- 7 Fundraising form letters
Includes a list of foundations and individuals to whom letters should be
sent
- 8 Resumes of marketing consultants
- 9 1984-1985
- Progress reports, 1983-1985
- 10 1983
First quarter. Includes list of sponsoring organizations to which the report was
sent
- 11 1985
January 1985
- 12 Proposal summary, 1985
- Publicity, 1976-1986
- 13 42nd Street Press Conference, 1979
May 22, 1979. See also Dance School, Photographs
- 14 Various materials, 1976-1986
Includes photographs, clippings, press releases, and a copy of an award to
Louise Roberts for Improvement of the City of New York and
Contribution to the Well-being of the Community
- 15 Statistics and Evaluation, 1975-1985

Series III: Oversized Materials, 1964-1986, Undated

- Box
- 37 Architectural blueprints, 1981-1983
- 38 1 Architectural plans, 1978-1985
- 2 Awards, 1975-1979
- 3 Flyers and Posters, 1964-1986, Undated