

Guide to the Martha Hill Papers, 1951-1985

(S) *MGZMD 200

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

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

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Martha Hill Papers
Collection ID:	(S) *MGZMD 200
Creator:	Hill, Martha
Extent:	2 linear feet (4 boxes)
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Abstract:	Martha Hill, a pioneer in the field of dance instruction, served as the first director of dance at The Juilliard School from 1951 until 1985. She mentored several generations of important dancers and choreographers through her teaching and work with dance festivals, government committees and nonprofit organizations devoted to promoting dance. The bulk of this collection relates to Hill's involvement with these organizations.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Preferred Citation

Martha Hill Papers, (S) *MGZMD 200, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Source

The Martha Hill Papers were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 1992.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2008.

Biographical Note

Martha Hill was born in East Palestine, Ohio in 1900. Miss Hill (as she was known throughout her life) graduated from the Battle Creek (Michigan) Normal School of Physical Education in 1920, and taught ballet and Swedish gymnastics there and at Kansas State Teachers College.

In 1926, Hill moved to New York City to study with Martha Graham and other dance teachers, and in 1927, Hill accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Oregon, where she taught for two years. Among her students was Bessie Schonberg, who danced with the Martha Graham Dance Company and became an influential dance teacher at Sarah Lawrence College.

Hill returned to New York in 1929, danced with the Martha Graham Dance Company and completed her bachelor's degree at Teachers College, Columbia University. She became the Director of Dance at New York University soon after, beginning work in the School of Education in 1930. When her teaching responsibilities increased, Miss Hill left the Martha Graham Dance Company in 1931 and, in 1932, was hired by Bennington College in Vermont to be Chairman of the Dance Department, serving until 1951 in both the NYU and Bennington College positions. She received a master's degree from NYU in 1941.

At Bennington, Miss Hill founded the Bennington School of the Dance and its summer festival in 1934, and at Connecticut College, she started the School of the Dance in 1948 and also the American Dance Festival, which she co-directed until 1952. Among her Bennington College students was former First Lady Betty Ford, who later served with Hill on the board of directors of the Association of American Dance Companies. In Hill's obituary, the *New York Times* remarks that such festivals "provided exposure and creative opportunities to...major modern-dance choreographers at crucial times in their young careers."¹ Participants included dancers Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and Hanya Holm, and choreographers José Limón, Alwin Nikolais, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor and Alvin Ailey.

Miss Hill became the first director of dance at The Juilliard School in 1951 and remained in that role until her retirement in 1985, when she was named Artistic Director, Emeritus. A major influence on several generations of dancers, Miss Hill taught dance at Juilliard until her death in 1995 at the age of 94. The description of the Dance Division notes that Miss Hill's "influence on the development of modern dance in the United States was profound. She assembled a faculty that included some of the greats in modern dance...[and under] Hill, the School became the first major teaching institution to combine equal dance instruction in both modern and ballet techniques."²

During her long career, Miss Hill served on a variety of boards and organizations committed to promoting dance and dance instruction in the United States, including the Association of American Dance Companies and the National Association for Regional Ballet. She worked with the American National Theatre and Academy's Board of

¹ New York Times, Martha Hill, Dance Educator, is dead at 94, [Obituary], 1995, November 21, B.9.

² Dance Division. The Juilliard School. <http://www.juilliard.edu/college/dance/dance.html> (accessed July 2, 2008).

Directors in the 1950s and 1960s, and the U.S. State Department's Office of Cultural Presentations in the 1960s. She served on the board of directors of the Association of American Dance Companies from its inception in 1966, received an award from that organization for her contributions to dance in 1975, and remained active in the AADC until its dissolution in 1980. Miss Hill also served on the board of directors of the National Association for Regional Ballet (which was later absorbed into the organization Regional Dance America) from 1966 until 1985.

Miss Hill died in 1995 at her home in Brooklyn; she was married to Dr. Thurston Davies from 1952 until his death in 1961. She was survived by her brother, Lewis Hill, of Lake Alfred, Florida and step-daughter, Judith Dilts, of San Jose, California.

Scope and Content Note

The Martha Hill papers span the years 1951-1985 and consist of correspondence, board meeting materials, dance program schedules and planning materials, personal remembrances, performance notes and appraisals, press releases and newspaper clippings, mainly relating to her work with the Association of American Dance Companies, the National Association of Regional Ballet and the American National Theatre and Academy, which was part of the U.S. State Department's Office of Cultural Presentations.

The collection contains primary source material reflecting the history of government committees and nonprofit organizations devoted to promoting dance in the 20th century. It includes Miss Hill's personal reflections, notes and appraisals of many different American regional and international ballet performances and organizations from the 1950s until the 1980s.

The collection is mostly professional material, with a few items reflecting Miss Hill's work in the field of dance education.

Organization

The collection is organized into 5 series. They are:

- Series I: American National Theatre and Academy and related materials, 1958-1972 and undated
- Series II: Association of American Dance Companies and related materials, 1966-1980 and undated
- Series III: National Association for Regional Ballet materials, 1966-1985 and undated
- Series IV: Regional ballet festivals and choreography conferences, 1963-1974 and undated
- Series V: General office files, 1951-1977 and undated

Series Descriptions

Series I: American National Theatre and Academy and related materials, 1958-1972 and undated [0.5 box]

Arrangement: Alphabetical

These files relate to Martha Hill's participation on the Dance Advisory Panel of the International Cultural Exchange Service of the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA) from 1959 until 1966. The Dance Advisory Panel, in association with the U.S. State Department's International Cultural Program, produced dance programs that showcased American dance culture through tours to the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc nations. Included are reports detailing international programs, board meeting schedules, minutes, press clippings, correspondence, and dance programs.

Series II: Association of American Dance Companies and related materials, 1966-1980 and undated [0.5 box]

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Martha Hill served as a member of the board of directors of the Association of American Dance Companies (AADC) from its inception at the 1966 National Dance Conference through its dissolution in 1980. These materials provide a chronicle of the association's goals, initiatives, and activities through board meeting minutes, press clippings, correspondence and conference program materials. Included are materials from the original dance conference at which the Association was formed, along with materials from the American Symphony Orchestra League, upon which the AADC was modeled, as well as other organizational documents related to the founding and eventual demise of the organization.

Series III: National Association for Regional Ballet materials, 1966-1985 and undated

[1 box]

Arrangement: Chronological

The National Association for Regional Ballet (NARB) was incorporated in 1963 as a national organization to promote the artistic development of regional dance companies in the United States. Martha Hill served on the board of directors and on the advisory committee from 1966 until 1985, when the association dissolved. These materials provide a chronicle of the association's initiatives, goals and activities through board meeting minutes and organizational materials, press releases, promotional and conference materials and correspondence.

Series IV: Regional ballet festivals, choreography conferences, 1963-1974 and undated [.5 box]

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Included are schedules, promotional materials, reports, reviews and Miss Hill's personal reflections relating to regional ballet and choreography conferences throughout the years 1963 until 1974.

Series V: General office files, 1951-1977 and undated [.5 box]

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Included are general office files relating to the Dance Division at The Juilliard School, along with a script and an article about the dance program at Bennington College.

Series I: American National Theatre and Academy and related materials, 1958-1972 and undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	American Ballet Theatre, 1960
		American National Dance Advisory Panel
	2	1958-1959
	3	1961-1966, undated
	4	ANTA City Center American Dance Marathon press clippings, schedule, 1972
	5	ANTA reports, press clippings, 1962
	6	Office of Cultural Presentations correspondence, 1964

Series II: Association of American Dance Companies and related materials, 1966-1980 and undated

Board materials

	7	1966
	8	1967
	9	1968
	10	1969
	11	1970
	12	1971
	13	1972
	14	1973
<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	1974
2	1	
	2	1975
	3	1976
	4	1977
	5	1978
	6	1979
	7	1980
	8	American Association of Dance Companies National Dance Conference, 1967
	9	American Symphony Orchestra League, 1966
	10	National Dance Conference, 1966
	11	New York Dance Alliance, 1975-1977

Series III: National Association for Regional Ballet, 1966-1985 and undated

Board materials

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	1966
3	1	
	2	1968
	3	1969
	4	1970
	5	1971
	6	1972

	7	1973
	8	1974
	9	1975
	10	1976
	11	1977
	12	1978
	13	1979
	14	1980
<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	1981
4	1	
	2	1982
	3	1983
	4	1984
	5	1985

Series IV: Regional ballet festivals and choreography conferences, 1963-1974 and undated

6	Craft of Choreography conferences, 1971-1972 and undated
	Northeast Regional Ballet Festival
7	1963-1972 and undated
8	1965 and undated
9	Pacific Western Regional Ballet Festival, 1966-1972
10	Regional ballet festivals, workshops, 1963-1965 and undated
	Southeastern Regional Ballet
11	Association bylaws, 1969
12	Festival, 1964
	Southwestern Regional Ballet Festival
13	1963-1967
14	1969-1974

Series V: General office files, 1951-1977 and undated

<u>Fol</u>	
15	<i>Bennington, An Historic Mile post</i> article, 1968
16	Magritte, Magritte script, undated
17	Juilliard Dance Ensemble, 1964
18	Juilliard general office files, 1969-1977 and undated
19	Metropolitan Opera Ballet School, 1958-1977
20	Modern Dance Symposium, 1951