

**Guide to the Walter Sorell Research Files on Mary Wigman, 1927-1976
and undated**

(S)*MGZMD 189

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

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

Contact Information:

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

40 Lincoln Center Plaza

New York, New York 10023-7498

Phone: 212/870-1657

Email: dance@nypl.org

Web address: <http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/ead/dance>

Processed by: Thea Constantine

Date Completed: November 2006

Processed and encoded through a gift from Robert W. Wilson.

© 2006 The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title:	Walter Sorell Research Files on Mary Wigman
Collection ID:	(S)*MGZMD 189
Creator:	Sorell, Walter
Extent:	.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: This collection contains noted dance critic Walter Sorell's research files on Mary Wigman.

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

Walter Sorell Research Files on Mary Wigman, (S)*MGZMD 189, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Walter Sorell Research Files were donated by Walter Sorell to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in November 1988.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2006.

Biographical Note

Walter Sorell, dance critic, author (novels, plays and poems), educator and painter, was born on May 2, 1905 in Vienna. In 1939, fleeing the Nazis, he settled in New York City. From 1950-1966, he was the NY dance critic for *The Providence Journal*, as well as a contributor to publications like *Dance News*, *Dance Magazine*, *Dance Observer* and *Ballet Today*. His published books (more than 25 in German and English) include *The Dance Through the Ages*, *Dance in Its Time* and *Hanya Holm*. Furthermore, his “interest in modern-dance history led him to translate two anthologies of writings by the German Expressionist choreographer Mary Wigman: ‘The Language of Dance’ and ‘The Mary Wigman Book’” (NY Times).

Walter Sorell died on February 21, 1997 in New York City.

Mary Wigman (née Karoline Sophie Marie Wiegmann), dancer and choreographer, was born on November 13, 1886 in Hannover, Germany. In 1910, she enrolled in School of Rhythmic Gymnastics at Hellerau (outside of Dresden). In 1913 (at age of 27), she began studying at Monte Verita under Rudolf Laban, an important innovator in contemporary dance at the time.

Although she made only three tours of the United States, Mary Wigman left a lasting influence in American modern-dance through disciples such as Hanya Holm and Alwin Nikolais. Mary Wigman’s choreographies often employed non-Western instrumentation: fifes, bells, gongs, and drums from India, Thailand, Africa, and China. The primary musical accompaniment for her most well known dances was percussion, which contrasted greatly with her use of silence. Mary would often employ masks in her pieces, influenced again by non-western motifs.

Mary Wigman died on September 18, 1973 in Berlin.

Sources:

- “Mary Wigman.” Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Wigman on October 26, 2006.
- New York Times Obituary. “Mary Wigman, Dance Innovator, Dies,” Proquest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1857-Current file): Sept. 20, 1973, p. 50.
- New York Times Obituary. “Walter Sorell, 91, Who Wrote About Dance and Culture,” Proquest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1857-Current file): Feb. 24, 1997, p. B10.

Scope and Content Note

Mary Wigman is the focus of this collection created by Walter Sorell. The clippings, correspondence and reference / writing materials found in the collection were research files for *The Mary Wigman Book-Her Writings Edited and Translated* by Walter Sorell. Items in this collection are arranged alphabetically.

Box/Folder	Description
<u>Walter Sorell Research Files on Mary Wigman, 1927-1976 and undated</u>	
Box 1	
F. 1	Clippings, 1927-1958 (German articles written by Mary Wigman) Correspondence
F. 2	Cullberg, Brigit, 1965-1966 and undated
F. 3	Cunningham, Merce, 1955 and 1957
F. 4	Dlugoszewski, Lucia, 1964 and undated
F. 5	Fisher, Ruth Page, 1960-1972 and undated
F. 6	Hoyer, Dore, 1957-1959 (German and English; Handle carefully)
F. 7	Martin, John, 1952, 1957 and undated
F. 8	Shawn, Ted, 1963-1964
F. 9	Wigman, Mary, 1965-1973 and undated (German and English)
F. 10	B-T, 1955-1976 and undated (1 letter each: Rosalia Chladek, Martha Graham, Merle Marsicano, Jerome Robbins, Trudi Schoop, Ruth St. Denis, Pavel Tchelitchew and Violette Verdy; 2 letters each: Angna Enters, Ann Halprin and Alwin Nikolais) Reference / Writing Material (Chapter numbers referenced in following folders are for <i>The Mary Wigman Book-Her Writings Edited and Translated</i> by Walter Sorell)
F. 11	<i>Dance of Death (Totentanz)</i> performance in 1926 described by Mary Wigman, 1963 (Typescript in German with pencil notations—used in Chapter 2 of book)
F. 12	Memoir (draft) by Mary Wigman, undated (Copy of holograph in German—used in Chapter 1 of book)
F. 13	Poetry by Mary Wigman, 1957-1961 (Typescript in German—used in Chapter 6 of book)
F. 14	General, undated (Wigman's curriculum vitae—typescript in German included)
F. 15	General, 1929 and undated